

HOW SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES IMPACT
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES
FOR GRADES 6-12 SCHOOL STUDENTS:
A CASE STUDY

by

Sherry Boyd Ballew

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this single instrumental case study was to explore how service learning (SL) opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning (TL) experiences for students in Grades 6-12. The model used to support this concept was the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model (WSCC), which views community involvement to be as important in the development of the child as traditional classroom instruction (Rooney, Videto, & Birch, 2015). The theory guiding this study is transformational learning (Mezirow, 2000). TL theory is a lens through which to view the learning experiences associated with SL. For this single instrumental case study, I examined the perspectives of seven students in Grades 6-12, five teachers, three administrators, six parents, and three community members affiliated with the students' SL experience at one high performing charter school located in North Carolina. Data collection consisted of teacher, parent, and community questionnaires, student reflections of SL, individual semi-structured interviews, student and adult focus group interviews, observations, and document analyses. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded. Data analysis consisted of exploratory and descriptive coding, sorting, interpreting, and synthesizing of emerging themes using QSR NVIVO software.

Keywords: case study, civic responsibility, coordinated school health, mental health, perspective transformational learning, SL, transformational learning, Whole School Whole Community Whole Child

Dedication

I dedicate this study to my four adult children and four grandchildren who without knowing helped to inspire the implementation of this study.

Acknowledgments

There have been a handful of individuals who have come along side me cheering me on, praying for me, and giving me words of affirmation and insight. Namely, my husband, Pastor Doug Ballew. He initiated my movement along this journey by first planting the idea for me to earn my doctorate. As opportunity presented itself, I sought to understand God's leading whether or not this would be of Him. Above all, I acknowledge His working and His helping me. Through the aid of His presence, and the sending of others, I have been helped, and I thank Him. Without doubt, I was supported and encouraged by my committee chair, Dr. Leldon Nichols. His insight early on, motivated my advancement, and supported my study through his prayers with me, his words of advice, and his suggestions along the way. I am especially grateful for my church family who supported me through their continued prayer. Additionally, Dr. Woltz, and Dr. Washington, both of my committee members, have been prayerful over me, and helpful through their continued reviews and critiques. Finally, for my research consultant, Dr. Randy Tierce, who continually maintained my efforts through his careful attentiveness to the detail of this study, and my committee who has helped to strengthen this study through their individual expertise, and suggestions, I have been grateful.

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List of Abbreviations

Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)

Chase Charter School (CCS)

Coordinated School Health (CSH)

Future Farmers of America (FFA)

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (NAPCS)

National Science Foundation (NSF)

Public School of North Carolina (PSNC)

Service Learning (SL)

Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

Transformational Learning (TL)

Virginia Department Of Education (VDOE)

Whole Child Model (WC)

Whole School Whole Community Whole Child (WSCC)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Service learning (SL) is a method of teaching that combines community service with the traditional classroom learning environment and has been an increasingly useful strategy for learning curriculum and supporting both the intrinsic motivation and mental health of students (Furco & Root, 2010; Soria & Thomas-Card, 2014; van Goethem, van Hoof, Orobio de Castro 2014, Van Aken, & Hart, 2014). SL is an avenue for learning whereby students provide a service in the community in order to meet a community need (Helm-Stevens, Fall, Havens, Garcia, & Polvi, 2014; Muturi, An, & Mwangi, 2013) and is recognized as earning course credit through service (Domegan & Bringle, 2010). However, SL is a term primarily associated with higher education and is a practice mostly implemented by colleges and universities (Bradley & Saracino, 2013; La Lopa, 2012).

Thus, meeting course requirements through community service is a common practice among colleges and is far less common among younger populations revealing an inconsistency with the terminology associated with this practice. For instance, van Goethem et al. (2014) affirmed this notion when stating, “There are relatively large conceptual and empirical overlaps among community service, volunteering, and SL” (p. 2114). Consequently, these inconsistencies pose a need to understand SL in other educational settings. Similarly, Hennes, Ball, and Moncheski (2013) affirmed the necessity for further research on SL after conducting a study involving community-based civic engagement experiences with Future Farmers of America (FFA) teachers and students. Hennes et al. stated that “more research is needed to better understand the benefits of a community approach to SL on other forms of social capital, as well as to quantify what aspects of SL most determine the formation of social capital” (p. 93).

Hennes et al. also stated that “further qualitative research is also needed to define and clarify the roles and the context of youth-adult partnerships, and to examine the rural context of community SL in more depth” (p. 93). In agreement with Hennes et al., a recommendation for future research was made to study these benefits in younger populations to better understand them and the factors contributing to youth development (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011).

This chapter includes the Whole School Whole Community Whole Child (WSCC) model in relation to the potential avenue of SL experiences supporting the tenets associated with the model, situation to self, and the problem and purpose statements. Also included in this chapter is an introduction to the research questions guiding this study, and a description of this qualitative, single instrumental case study research plan. The chapter concludes with pertinent definitions that will aid understanding.

Background

SL is a form of instruction that helps students make application of theory and understand the dynamics of community needs (Helm-Stevens et al., 2014; Muturi et al., 2013), and is recognized as coursework where students participate and earn credit through serving the community and gaining understanding of the course material (Domegan & Bringle, 2010).

This emerging practice of giving to and supporting the community has been encouraged, advocated, and celebrated throughout history (ASCD, 2015; Corporation for National and Community Service [CNCS], n.d.; Felton & Clayton, 2011; Hart, 2014; Lewallen, Hunt, Potts-Datema, Zaza, & Giles, 2015; Mtawa, Fongwa, & Wangenge-Ouma, 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2012a).

There continues to be a need and a responsibility to implement strategies for civic engagement (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012; Felton & Clayton, 2011;

Mtawa et al., 2016; Wimberley, 2016). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2012a), institutions of higher education and elementary and high need to both increase and change their tactic to civic learning and democratic engagement. Thus, there is a call for change in educational institutions (Mtawa et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2012a; Wimberley, 2016).

Participating in community SL experiences has the potential to change inconsistent patterns of behavior (van Goethem et al., 2014) and promote civic responsibility (Hart, 2014; Henderson, 2014; Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). This potential change in behavior for students in other learning environments should be of importance to educators. Disengagement among students has become an international crisis and should be considered (Wimberely, 2016; Wong, 2012). For instance, Natale and Doran (2011) stated that, “intervention is urgently needed” (p. 187) for students due to the absence of activities engaging them. This lack of engagement has severely handicapped student success (Wimberely, 2016). Furthermore, this pattern of disengagement only increases as children move through grade levels with the highest levels of engagement at the start of school (Graham & Weiner, 1996).

Moreover, mental wellness is evidenced through the act of engagement (Beauchemin, 2014; Lewallen et al., 2015; Meany-Walen, Davis-Gage, & Lindo, 2016) and is defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2015) as anything affecting one’s “emotional, psychological, and social well-being” (para. 1). Thus, the mental well being of a person affects how he relates to others and consequently determines how decisions are made (Department of Health and Human Services, 2015). The mental health of students can be reflective of their disengagement and is a growing concern for educators (Lewallen et al., 2015; Wong, 2012).

Mental health issues have been a significant factor in some of the alarming tragedies that have occurred in various communities (Crepeau-Hobson, Sievering, Armstrong, & Stonis, 2012; Wondemaghen, 2013). This trend of disengagement, poor mental health, and a host of other concerns triggered the formation of the WSCC (ASCD, 2014). The idea was for parents, educators, stakeholders, and community members to refocus attention on the development of the whole child instead of academic performance alone (ASCD, 2015; Lewallen et al., 2015; Rooney, Videto, & Birch, 2015). The WSCC aims to unite education and health issues to align learning and health for the benefit of all and is a recommended strategy for educators (ASCD, 2015; Lewallen et al., 2015). The WSCC offers a model for educators to connect learning to health, essentially fostering a sense of emotional wellness (ASCD, 2015; Lewallen et al., 2015). Thus, WSCC's model for bridging the gap between learning and health is significant because the emotional well-being of students affects their school and their academic achievement. Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger (2011) affirmed this when stating that "relationships and emotional processes" affect "how and what we learn in school" (p. 405). Additionally, Durlak et al. (2011) found that many students isolate themselves from their peers and lack the emotional competency to make progress in school. This lack of emotional competency negatively affects academic performance, mental health, and behavior (Durlak et al., 2011). As evidenced, emotional health is established by the relationships formed with others and has the potential to support mental health and academic learning for students in various learning environments (Hart, 2014; Lewallen et al., 2015; Umberson & Montez, 2010; Weare, 2002).

Further, SL is a potential avenue for meeting the components of the WSCC model wherein health is linked to learning (Lewallen et al., 2015; Roberts, 2013). By joining together, communities, health organizations, and schools can foster the five elements of the WSCC model

that students should be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged (ASCD, 2015; Lewallen et al., 2015). These five elements encompass the whole child, helping to communicate the goals associated with the WSCC model. Additionally, these components reflect the collaboration of the community (Lewallen et al., 2015). Through SL learning experiences, schools, health organizations, and community members have the potential to support the WSCC model for learning to foster a greater sense of well-being for students (Lewallen et al., 2015; Roberts, 2013). Additionally, to better support student learning, teachers are encouraged to include new ways to teach (McAteer, 2015).

Although SL experiences provide opportunities to build relationships and support mental health, community involvement of students in schools is lacking (ASCD, 2014; Celio et al., 2011; Jovanovic, Degooyer, & Reno, 2011; Furco, 2013; van Goethem et al., 2014). To illustrate, Jovanovic et al. (2011) suggested that experiences such as those which “position students to seek deeper understandings of political influences, to question the systemic and structural causes of social injustice, and to dialogically engage community members” (p. 1) are far less common in course design than expected. In addition, van Goethem et al. (2014) affirmed that when SL experiences are “incorporated in the school curriculum, (they are) thought to provide more authentic autonomous learning environments that can stimulate adolescents’ academic motivation, enjoyment of learning, and academic performance” (p. 15). Thus, the opportunity to cultivate change is present and confronts education with a viable avenue to improve learning (Mtawa et al., 2016). Furthermore, there is a need to transform educational practices in order to “produce critically, civically, and globally minded individuals who are experienced in problem solving and leadership roles” (Cress, Yamashita, Duarte, & Burns, 2010, p. 229). Community engagement practice is foundational to educational practices, according to

Stetsenko (2008), as evidenced in his study in which he stated, “human action is the foundation and core reality of development and learning, mind, and knowledge” (p. 479).

Educational institutions can benefit from understanding the role of SL in Grades 6-12 learning environments. Educators can benefit by having a renewed interest in understanding the potential role of SL in emotional health and learning. This understanding contributes to a redefining of how community service or civic engagement is viewed and utilized in Grades K-12 for the betterment of the society (Felton & Clayton, 2011; Geller, Zuckerman, & Seidel, 2014). Thus, I seek to extend the existing knowledge of SL and community engagement experiences in Grades 6-12 and potentially support the tenets of the WSCC model, which aims to align health and learning (ASCD, 2014). Finally, SL specifically affirms the need for community and schools to interact by verifying the alignment of schools and health services as an “untapped tool for raising academic achievement and improving learning” (ASCD, 2015, para. 3). In this study, I seek to understand the benefits associated with SL practices to support the desired alignment between schools and health.

Situation to Self

Prior to enrolling in the doctoral program at Liberty University, I served as a part-time instructor at Hayfield University (pseudonym) and taught the course *Math for Social Justice* to pre-service teachers. Part of the requirement for the course included an SL commitment from the education majors who were enrolled. The purpose of this course was to aid in the understanding of how teachers can apply math concepts while advocating for social justice.

When learning about the injustice of over a billion people living without clean water, the freshman college class was engaged in an activity mimicking the process of family members carrying water buckets long distances in pursuit of a water source. Just as the children in some

countries walked three to five miles carrying heavy water containers back to their families, college freshmen and sophomore students walked a fraction of the estimated distance around campus. Next, the college students went to the basement of the building to fill the buckets with water, eventually carrying the half filled, five-gallon buckets of water, around campus. The practice of college freshmen students carrying water buckets contributed to a greater understanding of the injustice of over a billion people with out water, and this new awareness triggered a change in the students. I wondered if this transformation was a result of what Mezirow (2000) referred to as a disorienting dilemma.

For instance, college students walked the distance around campus carrying their water buckets and came to the realization of over a billion people living without fresh, clean water. As a result, something changed in how the students were thinking about this experience. Afterward, a student articulated her vision for helping those families to have clean water. Within minutes the students planned their first 5k run in support of raising enough money to have a well dug in Africa. They partnered with The Water Project (2012) and also established a non-profit organization named *Waterwalk*. Three runs and two spaghetti dinners later, the students helped to raise more than \$10,000. As a result, a village in Africa now has a clean water source (The Water Project, 2012). This project made a significant impact on student learning as a result of their initiative to help a community.

I have continued to reflect upon and re-evaluate the teaching of courses and how students learn and contemplate implementing community service in earlier grades. Furthermore, I understand as a Christian, that I have a responsibility to others. I believe that SL activities such as The Water Project (2012) will provide an avenue of collaboration between educational institutions and the community, bridging a gap between learning and meeting a community need.

I operate from a participatory paradigm and believe students could begin engaging in SL activities at an earlier age.

For this reason, I understand the nature of reality. For example, the term *ontological* refers to the nature of reality (Creswell, 2007) and since multiple realities exist, including my own reality, it was important for me to report the different perspectives through a variety of participants in the study. For instance, my knowledge, ideas, and experiences with SL are likely to be different than those of the participants. However, I reported their “nature of reality” by examining the participant’s perspective closely, although mine might be vastly different.

Moreover, the term *axiological* refers to the value-laden aspect of qualitative research and acknowledges that researcher prejudices are present (Creswell, 2007). Thus it was important to admit my value-laden approach by “positioning myself in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18) and acknowledging my own voice, and my own interpretation of the data collected, as much as the voice and interpretation of the participant. In other words, I acknowledge that if this study were to be conducted by another person but was otherwise identical, the results could be different.

Additionally, the term *epistemological* refers to the claim of knowledge (Creswell, 2007). It was important for me to rely on statements as evidence from the participants. Spending ample time with the participants allowed me access as “an insider” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18) and helped me justify how “I know what I know” (Creswell, 2007, p. 18). Consequently, conducting multiple interviews with the participants, and recording and analyzing their statements offered a more persuasive contribution to the knowledge of SL experiences for Grades 6-12.

Finally, the term *rhetorical* refers to the language of research. For instance, qualitative research embraces the rhetorical assumption that writing is personal. To maintain this personal

rhetorical language of qualitative research, Creswell (2007) contended that researchers use language that is based on “the definitions that evolve during a study rather than being defined by the researcher” (p. 19). Consequently, the findings reflect the voices of the participants and not reflect my own. In summary, my motivation for conducting this study was evidenced through a participatory paradigm. Also, as evidenced through a pragmatic paradigm, my motivation was to seek and determine the lessons learned from how one charter school implemented SL in real world practice.

Problem Statement

Domegan and Bringle (2010) explained SL as “academic work that is intentionally designed around learning objectives” (p. 200) thus linking SL to a course credit in higher education. As a result, most studies involving SL address only students enrolled in college and consequently only note the benefits to this specific group. The problem is we do not know how SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for children in Grades 6-12.

Still, many examples of SL and community partnerships are shown to include the benefits of improved social capital (Geller et al., 2014; Henness et al., 2013; Muturi et al., 2013), mental health (Durlak et al., 2011), student engagement (van Goethem et al., 2014), better relationships, and improved behaviors (Jovanovic et al., 2011). Transformed behaviors are desirable outcomes for not just higher education students but also all school students (Wimberley, 2016). Other benefits associated with SL and community engagement functions include increased learning and improved social skills (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Additionally, a renewed sense of community (Ludden, 2011), a sense of civic responsibility, increased motivation, self-efficacy, and more authentic learning environments are benefits associated with community experiences (Hart, 2014). These experiences should be an intricate part of the public school curriculum (Jovanovic

et al. 2011). Though SL has noted benefits to students, particularly in higher education, those benefits in other educational settings, such as Grades K-12, are largely unknown due to a lack of research in those grades (Celio et al., 2011). Furthermore, in light of the newly formed model for linking learning and health, the WSCC model has not been studied in conjunction with SL practices.

Few studies provide an in-depth understanding of the benefits or integration of SL experiences associated with community service experiences among students in Grades 6-12 (Celio et al., 2011; Hennes et al., 2013; Jovanovic et al., 2011). For example, the majority of the literature on SL has focused on higher education coming from school placements, teacher programs, and internships (Hennes et al., 2013; Jovanovic et al., 2011). Other educational settings, such as Grades 6-12 schools, have not been studied, leaving a significant gap in the literature. For instance, Celio et al. (2011) reported that nearly two-thirds of the SL programs evaluated consisted of undergrad college students, while the K-12 setting was significantly lower: high school 16%, elementary 5%, middle school 5%, and graduate students 6% (p. 171), revealing a significant gap in literature associated with SL benefits in K-12 learning environments.

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is how SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for children in Grades 6-12.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single instrumental case study was to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. The location of the selected school was in the central part of North Carolina. Participants included seven students in Grades 6-12, their teachers, their

administrators, their parents, and three community members affiliated with the students' SL experience. SL was generally defined as an approach to teaching, whereby students engaged with their school and their community through meaningful community service that combined learning with the act of service (National Youth Leadership Council [NYLC], 2009).

The theoretical framework for this study is Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning theory (TL), which postulates that learning not only adds to an individual's storehouse of knowledge but also produces fundamental transformations in the person's mindset, outlook on life, and personality. TL helps the learner to become aware of their assumptions, and when the learner has new experiences, they revise those assumptions. This encounter between what was believed to be true and the new information seeming to be true can create a disorienting dilemma. Cranton (2002) helps to clarify this concept as "an activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard or read" (p. 66).

Mezirow's (2000) TL supports the concept that SL targets and improves certain distinct aspects of the learner's intellect through the transformation of how one thinks. This concept, referred to as habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000), should be better recognized for the vital part it can play in the development of young minds.

Significance of the Study

The progressing goal for education, according to Helm-Stevens et al. (2014), is to "produce critically, civically, and globally minded individuals who are experienced in problem solving and leadership roles" (p. 123). Similarly, the secretary of the Department of Education, Arne Duncan, stated that "the need to revitalize and reimagine civic education is urgent. But that urgent need brings a great opportunity-the chance to improve civic education in ways that will

resonate for years” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012, p. v). Additionally, the true measure of success is how well the next generation is able to work together in solving problems (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

Similarly, the Center for Disease Control (CDC, 2015) communicated that “to have the most positive impact on the health outcomes of young people, government agencies, community organizations, schools, and other community members must work together through a collaborative and comprehensive approach” (para. 1). Thus, through this collaborative effort to work together, the health and well-being of youth, and society as a whole, will benefit (Roberts, 2013).

The present study adds to the literature a more in-depth understanding of the transformations associated with SL experiences integrated into Grades 6-12, such as changes in lifestyle, belief systems, and self-perception. Ludden (2011) suggested that research could be extended to adolescents “by documenting civic activities across contexts and examining how involvement is associated with positive youth development” (p. 93).

Henderson (2014), helped to illustrate the potential role of community service and civic engagement thus supporting the significance of my study. Henderson (2014) suggested the potential impact on the thought processes of students as a result of SL experiences, will contribute to a renewed interest in redefining how civic engagement is viewed and utilized for the betterment of society. Furthermore, the WSCC initiative offers a model for educational institutions to support students’ mental health. This study incorporated practices of SL viewed through the tenets of the WSCC model, helping to further understand the role of civic engagement experiences in Grades 6-12.

The identification of themes will inform curriculum writers and policy makers when making decisions about factors that contribute to student learning. Policy makers will benefit from understanding the impact of SL in Grades 6-12 learning environments. The outcomes of students enrolled in schools engaged in SL environments may be academically and socially improved.

For instance, transformative learning is seen as a process and continues to be utilized to support various programs and curriculum. Developers of education working in larger researched based universities created a new curriculum redesign based on this type of process and the result has helped in supporting various needs and skills that that were present. Students and teachers, for example, have been impacted as a result of transformative processes. Specifically, teachers, programs, and the approach to learning for students were all changed. (Fowler, Lazo, Turner, & Hohenstein, 2015)

Theoretically, the findings refine the understanding of how SL in Grades 6-12 can be viewed in the context of Mezirow's (2000) TL theory. The concept of SL is based on the premise that it affords young people a distinct, even unique, educational experience that they cannot have in the classroom. In addition, Mezirow proposed that as a result of new experiences, individuals will develop changes in lifestyle, belief systems, and in their own self perception. For instance, Mezirow offered three key themes of transformational learning, and one theme specifically addressed the disorienting dilemma which triggers a change in the thought process when confronted with new information (Kitchenham, 2008). An improved mindset and a greater sense of outlook on life are fundamental to Mezirow's TL (Kitchenham, 2008).

Moreover, from a practical standpoint, as youth are encouraged to become active members of their communities and to develop an understanding of the world outside the

classroom, a greater sense of community is achieved and a reciprocal relationship is fostered (Soria & Weiner, 2013). SL experience can be an essential component in enabling youth to share a desire to be active citizens in their communities, as well as to help support change for social issues (Groh, Stallwood, & Daniels, 2011).

The results of this study could assist educators in inculcating the values associated with SL in Grades 6-12. Therefore, this single instrumental case study will assist in the growth of individuals where a mission of civic mindedness and mental health are desired.

Research Questions

The following research questions are designed to address the purpose of the study by examining how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for Grades 6-12. Additionally, the research questions are viewed through the theoretical framework of Mezirow's (2000) TL theory.

RQ1: How, if at all, are student participants in Grades 6 -12 transformed according to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL?

This first research question was framed around Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL, and seeks to understand if SL opportunities provide an avenue for students in Grades 6-12 to experience transformation. According to Mezirow, TL involves 10 phases that are essential to experience to some degree in order to claim that TL has occurred.

RQ2: How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience and in light of the WSCC initiative?

The WSCC calls for a greater association, between education and health in order to improve a child's physical, cognitive, social and emotional development. This alignment can be supported through community partnerships. (Lewallen et al., 2015). Similarly, the whole

child approach brings into question the school culture, and surrounding experiences (ASCD, H2015) Consequently, RQ2 helps to identify the the alignment between the school and the community and helps to capture the culture of the communitiy through the views of its members who are associated with the SL experiences.

RQ3: How do study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12?

Research question three helps to broaden the scope of understanding for transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12 by ascertaining all of the participant's views and without the criteria of the WSCC model described in RQ2. Consequently, this question helps to reveal associated benefites to students in younger grades (Celio et al., 2011).

Definitions

1. *Case Study* - An empirical review that examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real life framework, especially when the limitations between phenomenon and real life context are not clearly evident and therefore relies on numerous sources of verification (Yin, 2014).
2. *Civic Responsibility* - The recognition of how sharing and the desire to respond to authentic needs improve the quality of life in the community, which may promote a lifelong ethic of service and civic participation (Kaye, 2004).
3. *Coordinated School Health (CSH)* - A partnership between schools, families, and the surrounding community, formed to improve a student's health (California Department of Education, 2015).

4. *Mental health* - A mindset in which a person recognizes their own potential to successfully problem solve when facing difficulties and consequently an outlook fostering community participation (World Health Organization, 2014).
5. *Perspective Transformational Learning* - “A structural change in the way we see ourselves and our relationships” (Mezirow, 1978, p. 100).
6. *Service Learning* – Experiences where students are engaged with their school and their community through meaningful community service that combines learning with the act of service (National Youth Leadership Council [NYLC], 2009).
7. *Single Instrumental Case Study* - Focuses on an issue and chooses a bounded case to illuminate the issue (Creswell, 2007).
8. *Transformational Learning* - Where individuals change how they think about situations and use new experiences as a catalyst for change (Mezirow, 1996).
9. *Whole Child (WC)* - WC is a concept wherein “questions must be raised about school culture and curriculum; instructional strategies and family engagement; critical thinking and social emotional wellness” (ASCD, 2015, para. 2). The wellness of a child is considered in the context of environment and considers for example, family, curriculum, and emotional health and other elements surrounding the person potentially causing impact rather than a single aspect. Consequently the term, whole child, is used to convey a much larger concept of the complexities impacting a child and their learning, which should bring further consideration (ASCD, 2015).
10. *Whole School Whole Community Whole Child* - WSCC unites the whole child model and the CSH aiming to support a community partnership between school and community, which will link health, and learning (Lewallen et al., 2015).

Summary

Few studies provide an in-depth understanding of the benefits associated with SL experiences of students in Grades 6-12. The purpose of this qualitative single instrumental case study was to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. Specifically, the aim of this study was to answer the questions: (a) How, if at all, are student participants in Grade 6 -12 transformed according to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL? (b) How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience and in light of the WSCC initiative? and (c) How do study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12? School curriculum could potentially serve as a change agent for students, teachers, and other stakeholders if learning and health (ASCD, 2014) can be supported through the lens of SL experiences; the curriculum could contribute, perhaps, to the framework of the WSCC.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative single instrumental case study was to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. In particular, the current study was designed to determine the answers to these research questions: (a) How, if at all, are student participants in Grades 6 -12 transformed according to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL? (b) How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience and in light of the WSCC initiative? and (c) How do study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12?

This chapter serves as a review of the current literature related to SL experiences, the NYLC (2009) standards, and Mezirow's (2000) TL theory. This chapter also includes the related literature to support the significance of the study. For instance, nearly two-thirds of the SL programs evaluated consisted of undergrad college students, while the number of programs evaluated in the K-12 setting was significantly lower. Studies show SL experiences can be beneficial and provide a support to educational mission objectives.

Also found in this chapter is the history of Mezirow's (2000) TL theory, the supporting parallel between adult learners and adolescent learners, and the benefits associated with SL practices. Publishing the results of this study will serve the need of filling a gap in the current educational literature and provide an avenue for consideration in transforming the paradigms of teaching (Wimberley, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning (TL) guides this study. Mezirow

suggested that learning is not simply an addition to the learner's sum of knowledge, but rather actively transforms the learner. Mezirow proposed that perspective transformation is evidenced by changes in lifestyle, changes in belief systems, and changes in one's self-perception. For example, when old habits are replaced by new habits, according to Mezirow, a change in one's thoughts results in a new perspective and consequently new habits are formed.

Furthermore, Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL was originally designed for adult learners, but it can be applied to students who have experienced SL in Grades 6-12. The purpose of education should not be limited to information gathering and processing only, but should be understood in the broader context of community (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). This purpose is to produce students who are socially and intellectually capable (Helm-Stevens et al., 2014). SL has been an avenue by which students were supported emotionally and intellectually. Mezirow's theory of TL suggests the value of SL in producing young citizens who are fully integrated with and involved in their communities.

Similarly, Elsey (2011) communicated the following in reference to middle school students and Mezirow's (2000) TL theory:

Once considered the exclusive realm of adult learning, TL is equally effective in the teaching and learning of children. Adults and middle school learners have much in common. Amidst the desire for self-fulfillment and happiness TL includes the development of new learning and the jettison of outdated belief systems. By providing a self-directed, intact, and safe learning environment, students can exercise their unique proclivities and eccentricities to meet standardized goals. Elements of chaos are part of the transformative philosophy, and they will surely upset perceived norms for young and old alike. (p. 4)

Elsy (2011) also discovered that children were receptive to Mezirow's (2000) TL traits and further classified adults and middle schoolers as having similar learning tendencies. Elsy elaborated by stating, "adults and middle school learners have much in common" (p. 2). For example, students in middle school participated in rewriting a play where they were challenged with a number of obstacles that could easily parallel with obstacles adults may encounter (Elsy, 2011). Thus, Elsy's study affirms the integration of Mezirow's TL theory to working with a younger population.

In addition, community service experiences will help support mental health, which is a growing concern for educational institutions (ASCD, 2015; Lewallen et al., 2015; Macklem, 2014; Zins, 2004). According to Macklem (2014), more than 70% of students in high school experienced poor mental health. Students' lack of mental wellness interferes with their daily routines and greatly impedes their success in school (Tough, 2013; Zins, 2004). Furthermore, as many as 80% of students in Grades 6-12, who are suffering from some type of mental illness, do not receive the necessary health services (Macklem, 2014). Interpersonal skills and students' mental health are ongoing concerns for educators, prompting some schools to implement mental-wellness support programs (ASCD, 2015; Zins, 2004).

The concern of mental wellness is evidenced through the movement of social and emotional learning (SEL) which teaches students to manage emotions and build relationships. SEL is a strategy that educators have incorporated in an effort to support students' mental health (Durlak et. al, 2011; Lewkowicz, 2007). Additionally, Lewallen et al. (2015) stated that "a positive social and emotional school climate is conducive to effective teaching and learning" (p. 733). Furthermore, a working relationship with the community, according to Gujarthi and

McQuade (2002), where students will be serving is instrumental in ensuring a positive transformative initiative.

Additionally, Tough (2013) insisted that success in children has more to do with character than scores on a test. Furthermore, the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2016) recognizes the need for children to be engaged with civic responsibilities, which promotes an atmosphere of learning as stipulated in their mission, which is “to educate students in the fundamental knowledge and academic subjects that they need to become capable, responsible, and self-reliant citizens” (para. 1). Gujarthi and McQuade (2002) noted that developing a working relationship with community organizations where students will be serving is key to ensuring a successful transformative initiative.

Providing SL activities aids in the understanding of TL experiences (Darby, Longmire-Avital, Chenault, & Haglund, 2013; Furco & Root, 2010; McBrien, 2008). Specifically, a study involving SL and Mezirow’s (2000) TL experiences supported the belief that SL can be transformational. McBrien’s (2008) study with undergraduate students, who offered service through tutoring immigrant and refugee children, demonstrated that students experienced a transformation in their own thinking through SL practices. As a result of their participation, students reported a number of transformations. For instance, one specific transformation was recognized when students participating in a study expected to be the conveyers of knowledge, but later realized that they were the recipients of knowledge (McBrien, 2008). Thus, an understanding of the reciprocal benefit associated with SL initiatives became apparent. Additionally, the undergraduates’ perceptions of the refugee children quickly changed from feelings of alienation to personal thoughts, which were more empathetic to the refugees’ situation (McBrien, 2008). Additionally, the undergraduates’ transformation was evident when

40% of the students voiced their plans to continue with community engagement services (McBrien, 2008).

Developing character is a critical component of a child's self-perception, and is an efficient way to increase a student's emotional intelligence (Parker, Summerfeldt, Hogan, & Majeski, 2004). Activities performed for the betterment of others provide an avenue for students to engage with others outside of the normal constraints of traditional education, enabling students to mature socially, and ultimately become productive citizens throughout adulthood (Parker, et al., 2004). A student involved in civic engagement or community service is gaining critical thinking experiences through SL activities and is more likely to improve attitudes and develop traits necessary for good citizenship (Jovanovic et al., 2011); traits such as character and integrity, which are measures of intelligence essential throughout life (Tough, 2013).

Mezirow's (2000) TL theory suggested that learning not only adds to an individual's storehouse of knowledge, but also produces fundamental transformations in the person's mind-set, outlook on life, and personality. Areas of transformation associated with TL are: psychological, convictional, and behavioral. To further explain, a change in how one's self is viewed is psychological, a change in what one believes to be true is convictional, and a change in lifestyle is behavioral (Mezirow, 2000). The key to initiating any of these transformations is triggered by a disorienting dilemma (Mezirow, 1996).

Thus, changes in lifestyle, changes in belief systems, and changes in one's self-perception are three areas that will help guide this research study and potentially add to the understanding of the varied benefits associated with SL experiences integrated in Grades 6-12 learning environments.

There are 10 phases to TL (Mezirow, 2000). The first phase includes recognizing a disorienting dilemma. For instance, when new information is presented and new understanding conflicts with prior knowledge, a disorienting dilemma occurs. After this realization, the second phase includes a self-examination with feelings of either guilt or shame. The third phase involves carrying out a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions. The next phase involves recognizing that others share one's feelings of discontent and that the transformation process is shared by anyone who wanted the same change. The fifth stage involves looking for new roles, new relationships, as well as actions for transformation to take place. After looking for transformations, course of action follows in the sixth phase. The seventh phase includes acquiring new knowledge and skills to make the plans happen. Once knowledge and skills are acquired, the next step is to try out the new roles. New roles are followed by practicing the roles until competence and self-confidence have been established. The last phase involves a reintegration into one's life based on the circumstances dictated by one's perspective (Mezirow, 2000).

This aspect of gaining a new perspective when new experiences are encountered, is the thrust of this study. (Mezirow, 2000). For example, new knowledge can be obtained through new experiences. When this happens, the new information can pose a conflict with the prior knowledge, and thus a change in thought or a disorienting dilemma occurs (Mezirow, 2000). This change in thought results in a new perspective which may lead to changed behavior: "Learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1996, p. 162).

In order for significant changes of perspective to occur in one's mindset, Mezirow (2000) proposed that it is necessary for learners to reflect critically on their motivations for thought. As this happens, and new information is presented through the various circumstances being experienced, thoughts or perspectives are more likely to change profoundly (Fleischer, 2006). Participant perceptions will be explored through the lens of TL to determine how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to create TL experiences for students in Grades 6 -12.

Related Literature

A review of the literature led to a discovery of a meta-analysis of 62 studies by Celio et al. (2011) that assessed the impact of SL on students. The study was conducted in order to understand the benefits to participants engaged in SL experiences, and to evaluate the factors that potentially govern outcomes associated with SL. The results of the study disclosed by the researchers indicated that various-aged students who participate in SL experiences had significant improvements in their attitude toward themselves and toward school, and in learning, social skills, and civic engagement. Additionally, increased benefits were associated with practices linking learning objectives to the community experience and reflecting on the experience. Although benefits of SL have been documented and the strategy is being used in schools more frequently, the benefits associated with SL experiences are not clearly known. The study revealed the lack of SL programs present in K-12 settings. For instance, nearly two-thirds of the SL programs evaluated consisted of undergrad college students, while programs evaluated in the K-12 setting was significantly lower: high school 16%, elementary 5%, middle school 5%, and graduate students 6% (Celio et al., 2011, p. 171), revealing a significant gap in literature associated with SL benefits in K-12 learning environments.

Growth of Service Learning

SL deviates from traditional types of pedagogies in that it puts emphasis on community need and learning through service (Bradley & Saracino, 2013; Celio et al., 2011). This avenue of learning builds relationships through the partnerships between community members, schools and organizations (Celio et al., 2011; Penick, Fallshore, & Spencer 2014; van Goethem et al., 2014). SL experiences support learning of the students, the teachers, and even impacts the the type of learning experienced (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010; Fiume, 2009; Geller et al., 2014). Even though the service experience can be influenced by the academic discipline and the local community needs, students of SL programs commonly engage in approximately 20 hours of community-based learning within a semester, and engage in critical reflection activities as well (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012). Meeting needs in the community while earning course credit originated not too long ago as result of proponents for educational reform and social justice (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999).

In college, SL is used to improve students' understanding of their civic duties and increase their civic engagement (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2012). Researchers have found that students involved in SL are more engaged and active within their communities, even after they graduate from the higher education level (Bringle et al., 2010; Celio et al., 2011; van Goethem et al., 2014). The growth of SL has increased in recognition and has led to the creation of goals on the national level. For instance, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2012) called for high-impact educational practices to support strong teaching styles and to improve student learning. SL is recognized as high-impact practice. Evidence of SL can be traced back to the work of Paulo Friere when he became the director of the Department of Education in Brazil (Gadotti & Torres, 2009). Friere advocated for the poor

and implemented strategies that were unorthodox during that time (Gadotti & Torres, 2009). He was very concerned about connecting education and citizenship for the purpose of educational development (Gadotti & Torres, 2009).

Additionally, Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory has supported a number of changes reflective in student learning. For instance, recently there have been more opportunities for college students to study abroad for short term learning programs. This shorter period of time increased participation. These changes are reflective of the mounting evidence of the influence of these experiences on student learning, and their understanding of how they fit into a global society (Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017).

The call for civic action was also evidenced through social activists such as Martin Luther King and others who saw civic engagement as a necessity for the good of society (Mattson, 1999). This notion of social responsibility and civic duty expressed more explicitly in classrooms results in educators having a greater impact (Rodriguez & Janke, 2016).

Effects of SL

Most of the studies, including those that focused on colleges and universities, showed the positive effects of SL on students' behavior and academic achievement. Research studies involving civic engagement, SL experiences, and various community partnerships show a number of benefits (Bringle et al., 2010; Groh et al., 2011; Ludden, 2011; Payton, Barnes, Buch, Rorrer, & Zuo 2015; Soria & Weiner, 2013). Effects of SL can be divided into specific categories: positive attitudes toward self, improved attitudes toward learning and higher academic achievement, and civic engagement and social awareness.

Other effects of transformative learning are present. For example, transformative learning is seen as a process and continues to be utilized to support various programs and

entities. Students and teachers for example have been impacted as a result of transformative processes as evidenced through the change in curriculum (Fowler et al., 2015).

Positive attitudes toward self. Researchers have found positive effects of SL on the students' sense of self (Beck, Chretien, & Kind, 2015; Warren, 2012). Specifically, improved behavior, better relationships, self-discipline, improved communication, and coping skills were reflected in the findings of McLoughlin (2010). Similarly, motivation, excitement, personal growth, and self-reliance were themes reflected when researchers used a focus group to analyze the perceptions of SL (Diambra, McClam, Fuss, Burton, & Fudge, 2009). Petrov (2013) presented findings regarding the implementation of SL activities while learning Spanish. Petrov affirmed that in addition to academic achievement, the role of communication could be “potentially transformative for students” (p. 311). Furthermore, students who participate in community service develop sought after character traits and are more apt to become a support to other learners in the classroom (Petrov, 2013).

Students who participated in SL became more aware of what they want to do in terms of their career (Bringle et al., 2010; Groh et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2015). Through their community SL experiences, students were able to have opportunities to try out their career choices (Beck et al., 2015; Ellerton, Di Meo, Kemmerer, Pantaleo, Bandziukas, Bradley, & Fichera (2014). They were able to affirm their desires and objectives or modify their decisions, if they felt that the career was not for them (Beck et al., 2015). For instance, Beck et al. (2015) evaluated the experiences of medical students who participated as volunteers in a camp for children suffering from various medical conditions. The goal was to determine whether volunteering could lead to the professional identity development of the students. Data from nine, second-year medical students, who participated as counselors for a week at a medical specialty camp, showed that SL

is positively associated with professional identity development. In particular, students reported having motivating and career-reinforcing experiences. Volunteering helped the students learn and move beyond their textbook. In addition, the medical students claimed that volunteering reinforced their desires to serve future patients with compassion. Their professional identities were made stronger by the camp experience. Students rated the experience positively, although they were more descriptive of their daily activities and claimed they only engaged in limited critical reflection. Results from this study and others show that SL could be beneficial in improving attitudes and changing perceptions (Beck et al., 2015; Elsey, 2011; Henness et al., 2013; Ludden, 2011).

Improved attitudes toward learning and higher academic achievement. Attitudes toward school and learning improved as a result of community engagement (Bringle et al., 2010; Hart, 2014; Payton et al., 2015; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). Community service activities, positively affected behavior, and “can extend to behavior in school” (Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013, p. 354). Additionally, van Goethem et al. (2014) conducted a meta-analysis to determine “the role of reflection in the effects of community service on adolescent development” (p. 2114). Several assumptions and thoughts about how community service has been beneficial were presented. The consensus was that placing individuals into environments in which they serve resulted in innovative situations (Hart, 2014) where they can “learn, apply, and practice various behaviors and skills” (p. 2115). These experiences, “when incorporated in the school curriculum, are thought to provide more authentic and autonomous learning environments that can stimulate adolescents’ academic motivation, enjoyment of learning, and academic performance” (Hart, 2014, p. 2115).

Community SL also benefits schools (Bent, 2014; Ellerton et al., 2014; Helm-Stevens et al., 2014; Payton et al., 2015). Specifically, participation in community SL is positively related to student persistence (Bringle et al., 2010; Mitchell, 2015). Students who participated in community service were found to be more in tune with their career goals, and as a result, became more interested in persisting and continuing their education, even up to the graduate level (Bringle et al., 2010; Mitchell, 2015).

More specifically, when SL was integrated into a computer science course, the effects were evaluated, and Payton et al. (2015) concluded substantial benefits. In particular, they evaluated the effects of Students and Technology in Academia, Research, and Service (STARS) Alliance, which is a National Science Foundation (NSF) supported initiative designed to expand the computer science pipeline by using innovative teaching, as well as the promotion of established partnerships (Payton et al., 2015). They found that the STARS model of SL could improve students' computing effects commitment because they experience personal and professional development through the program (Payton et al., 2015).

Civic engagement and social awareness. Aside from their academic lives, community SL can also foster the citizenship identities of the students (Beck et al., 2015; Celio et al., 2011; Jovanovic et al., 2011; Mitchell, 2015). Schools have found SL to be an effective method to deepen students' political awareness and understanding of civic duties. They become more active citizens of their communities (Soria & Weiner, 2013; Von Salisch, Zeman, Luepschen, & Kanevski, 2013; Warren, 2012). Community service experiences often result in positive changes for students who previously held stereotypical beliefs. They become more aware of social diversity as well as the varied needs of their community (Warren, 2012). Communities naturally

benefit from having more citizens who are civic-minded, compassionate, and flexible (Groh et al., 2011; Soria & Weiner, 2013).

Researchers specifically found that students who participated in community SL not only have a deeper understanding of social problems, but also a greater sense of what their roles may be in alleviating these problems (Groh et al., 2011; Yamashita, Kinney, & Lokon, 2013).

Community SL expands students' interest and knowledge on civic responsibility (Furco & Root, 2010; Groh et al., 2011). Students with SL experience develop a belief that they can do more to make a difference in society and may even use their experience and learning in community service to derive solutions for existing problems (Groh et al., 2011; Price, Lewis, & Lopez, 2014; Yorio & Ye, 2011).

Students who engaged in community SL improved their academic and social skills, increased their active citizenship, showed improved engagement, and improved social skills (Furco & Root, 2010). Community SL empowers students by making them feel a sense of responsibility in their communities and providing them with opportunities to improve their skills (Else, 2011; Groh et al., 2011). There is evidence that higher academic learning is a result of engaging in community SL (Soria & Weiner, 2013). Many similar studies conclude, that as a result of actively engaging in SL, there was an increase in civic responsibility (Beck et al., 2015; Bringle et al., 2010; Celio et al., 2011).

Researchers also found that students exposed to community SL are more likely to appreciate diversity and are sensitive to cultural differences (Fuller et al., 2015; Groh et al., 2011). At the same time, community SL fosters students' interpersonal skills (Groh et al., 2011; Ludden, 2011; Mc Menamin, Mc Grath, Cantillon, & MacFarlane, 2014). Similarly, improved

mental health and a sense of community are benefits to the student engaged in community service. According to Ludden (2011) civic engagement is vital to the the well being of youth:

Community activities are a core part of positive youth development. Adolescents involved in voluntary civic activities have greater academic engagement, enhanced well being, less involvement in problem behaviors, and they are more likely to value connections to their community than those who are not involved. (p. 2011)

Von Salisch et al. (2013) also found that social responsibility can offer benefits by promoting positive interactions with others, and building social capital as students become more engaged. Other research findings further support benefits affiliated with SL practices such as social responsibility (Else, 2011; Henness et al., 2013; Petrov, 2013). To illustrate, a study that focused on the benefits of social capital was conducted with youth who participated in 4-H and Future Farmers of America (FFA) (Henness et al., 2013). The researchers sought to understand community-based civic engagement by probing at the perceptions of FFA students and teachers (Henness et al., 2013). Specifically, Henness et al. (2013) researched the youth living in rural areas and the adults being served, by addressing the partnerships between communities and SL experiences. For example, the aspects of SL offer an avenue for collaboration between schools and the community whereby partnerships may be formed to help support social capital (Geller et al., 2014; Henness et al., 2013). This study, in addition to others, revealed themes illustrating similar benefits such as student interactions with community members and genuine TL (Else, 2011; Henness et al., 2013; Ludden, 2011).

Results such as these are part of an emerging body of evidence showing that community engagement practices around the country and in various educational settings are building social capital and creating change in the community, as well as in the individual participating in the

community service (Geller et al., 2014; Hennes et al., 2013; Ludden, 2011; Petrov, 2013; Von Salisch et al., 2013). For example, Hennes et al. (2013) further elaborated on such benefits by maintaining, that as a result of SL practices, the feelings of youth changed in a positive way regarding how they felt toward and about their community. The investment made in these types of mentoring endeavors, such as through the practice of SL, can help support the concept of social capital, and thus help to explain why some youth are more likely to succeed and why some are more civically minded (Geller et al., 2014; Hennes et al., 2013). Thus, SL and civic engagement are reciprocal benefits of social capital.

The effects of SL have improved student behaviors and changed perspectives (Penick et al., 2014; Soria & Thomas-Card, 2014). Additional outcomes such as students experiencing meaningful relationships, and the ability to be more responsive to their peers and to others resulted from participating in a SL program where the chance to communicate with a community member was present (Penick et al., 2014; van Goethem et al. 2014). Changes in student attitudes toward adults surfaced during SL experiences (Penick et al., 2014).

Although these effects reveal that community service programs can be successful in changing feelings and perceptions of the participants toward the people or causes they provided the service to, attitudes toward community service may not necessarily be acquired (Muturi et al., 2013; Schelbe, Petracchi, & Weaver, 2014; van Goethem et al., 2014)

Improved leadership in low socioeconomic groups surfaced as a result of SL practices (Celio et al., 2011; Jovanovic et al., 2011; Ludden, 2011; Price et al., 2014). In particular, Price et al. (2014) evaluated the effects of a SL class for students belonging to racial minority groups, low-income families, and first-generation immigrant students. The researchers designed the study to understand the effects of SL on these under-researched groups of students, as most of

the studies in existence focused on White students from relatively wealthy backgrounds, working in non-university settings, with less affluent populations. Using a social-justice empowerment model, Price et al. revealed that SL can improve students' social and cultural capital as well as their social awareness. SL can lead to improved leadership, better networking skills, and enhanced organizing skills. SL improves students' understanding of the roles of community organizations.

Improved behavior and attitudes as a result of community engagement continues to surface as a trend in research where SL is a practice (Helm-Stevens et al., 2014; Kanenberg, Mapp, Dudley, & McFarland, 2014; Penick et al., 2014; Warren, 2012; Yamashita et al., 2013). For example, Kanenberg et al. (2014) designed and conducted a mixed-method comparison group study to evaluate how SL experiences could lead to improved student attitudes toward the elderly. Kanenberg et al. compared students who worked with seniors and those who did not. Gathering data from 151 traditional-aged students, results showed that both groups of students improved their perceptions of the elderly after the SL class, regardless of whether or not they were tasked to work with seniors (Kanenberg et al., 2014).

However, actual experience can reinforce classroom material, so a SL class is still valuable (Kanenberg et al., 2014). Similarly, Warren (2012) evaluated SL effects on student learning through a meta-analysis and found that data from 11 research studies revealed that student learning is positively influenced by SL, regardless of how learning was measured. For example, Yamashita et al. (2013) evaluated how a SL program, coupled with a gerontology course, influenced students' behavior toward people diagnosed with dementia, how it influenced their attitudes toward engaging in community service for older people, and toward working with people with disabilities. Data obtained from both pre-test and post-test surveys, as well as the

findings from previous literature, showed that students participating in a gerontology course experienced improvements in their attitudes toward the elderly, whether or not the course was coupled with a SL program (Yamashita et al., 2013). However, those who participated in both the gerontology course and the SL program experienced better attitudes toward people with disabilities as well. Those who only took the gerontology course had less positive attitudes toward working with people with disabilities (Yamashita et al., 2013). The findings from Warren's meta-analysis revealed that SL can lead to higher compassion and better attitudes in general, especially for those who require care and attention, such as the elderly or people with disabilities (Warren, 2012).

Academic SL is one of the more effective methods in helping students translate theory into practice, or generalize what they learned in the classroom to other areas (Celio et al., 2011; Darby et al., 2013; Furco, 2013; Helm-Stevens et al., 2014). SL can also improve students' understanding of certain issues within their communities and enhance their own personal development (Henderson, 2014; Jovanovic et al., 2011). Specifically, SL increases motivation for students when they can see its value in their overall goal achievement (Darby et al., 2013). For instance Darby and colleagues (2013) designed a study to determine what factors affect the motivation level of students in academic SL, and to determine the support system needed throughout the semester. Gathering data through questionnaires throughout the semester, Darby et al. showed that gender disparities exist in the motivation levels of students in academic SL programs. Results indicated that as long as the students enjoyed their experience, their motivation increased. In contrast, if they experienced communication problems, motivation levels decreased (Darby et al., 2013).

As students experienced SL, they cultivated an improved understanding and awareness of community need and poverty (Fuller et al., 2015; Kanenberg et al., 2014; La Lopa, 2012). For instance, Hughes et al. (2012) investigated whether participating in a SL program developed by a university can affect college students' understanding of social inequities and the reality of poverty outside of their school. The program was assessed based on five criteria: the quality of its mentor training, the quality of on-site mentoring in high poverty environments, the consistency of a mentor's reflection, the quality of class discussions on poverty-related issues, and social imbalances outside the four walls of the classrooms. Students, in general, reported positive experiences from being mentored and also reported an improved understanding of poverty and their possible roles in combatting the social issue (Hughes et al., 2012; Meens, 2014; Newman, Dantzler, & Coleman, 2015).

The importance of SL has become increasingly more recognized as a strategy for learning (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Cress et al., 2010; Elsey, 2011; Helm-Stevens et al., 2014; Yorio & Ye, 2011). For instance, industry and various community affiliates have come to recognize the importance of SL, because of the wide range of learning outcomes. (ASCD, 2014; Roberts, 2013; Schoenherr, 2015; Yorio & Ye, 2011) Specifically, the research of Yorio and Ye (2011) supports the findings of Helm-Stevens et al. (2014) showing that SL had positive effects on the students' understanding of social issues and improved students' cognitive functions. Consequently, SL can serve to make students more insightful (Lewallen et al., 2015; Meany-Walen et al., 2016; Yorio & Ye, 2011).

SL has been used as a pedagogical tool for career development and vocational training (Ellerton et al., 2014; Newman et al., 2015). Community colleges in particular focus on workforce development as a key objective for their existence (Ellerton et al., 2014).

SL has long-term effects on students' attitudes and behaviors toward social change (Fuller et al., 2015). Studying the long-term effects of SL on students in the context of a sports-based learning program, wherein students take part in interdepartmental university partnerships, results showed SL courses made students more culturally sensitive (Fuller et al., 2015). Aside from improved cultural competency, students have long term and future intentions toward civic participation. Fuller et al. (2015) interviewed 22 alumni on their social justice-related attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. All participants had experienced at least one semester in their courses. Findings revealed that graduates emerged from the course better at recognizing social inequities long after they stepped out of their classrooms. For example, study participants intended to be more involved in the activities and programs to address identified social inequities.

Mc Menamin et al. (2014) studied the effects of SL in the field of healthcare. According to the researchers, healthcare educators are striving to instill in their students the value of being socially responsive and being change agents for their respective communities. However, there are very few studies to determine if SL, as an educational intervention to achieve these goals, is effective. The researchers gathered and reviewed data related to SL from seven electronic databases; the researchers found that SL is effective in improving students' personal and interpersonal development. In addition, SL improves the students' abilities to understand and apply knowledge they get from their classroom. SL also improves students' civic engagement level as their curiosity on what is happening within their respective communities increased. Students become more reflective on what they see and experience within their communities. Overall, they become more critical and compassionate at the same time, not just as students, but also as citizens (Mc Menamin et al., 2014). Results showed that regardless of these positive effects, it remains unclear whether SL is effective in reciprocity between all partners and

increasing students' social responsiveness, not just awareness. The researchers called for more studies of this nature.

Mitchell (2015) investigated how the reflective practices in college SL programs affect the alumni's reflective practices when they moved beyond the four walls of the classroom. Mitchell also evaluated how the alumni's current reflective practice influenced their civil and professional identities. Through mixed-methods research, Mitchell found that reflective practice in college-level community engagement affected students' overall reflective practices, even after graduation. Results showed that multi-term, community engagement programs inclusive of critical reflection opportunities can lead to persistent and consistent reflective practices for program graduates, which aids in the development of civic and professional identities (Mitchell, 2015).

Researchers identified that SL could lead to positive effects. However, the benefits of SL and civic engagement involvement, though well-known and well-researched, have primarily been isolated to higher education, and thus the impact of SL or community service in Grades 6-12 settings has been lacking (Celio et al., 2011; Furco, 2013; Jovanovic et al., 2011). With the absence of such benefits, consequences are apt to follow. For instance, the absence of protective role models, results in having negative effects (Hurd, Zimmerman, & Xue, 2009). The practice of community service, along with protective role models can work to combat negative behavior tendencies (Hurd et al., 2009). Similarly, other researchers agreed that when students were actively engaged in civic activities, their mental health improved (Gallant, Arai, & Smale, 2010; Henness et al., 2013). This supports the idea that educational institutions have the potential to combat negative behavior and mental instability with SL experiences.

Not only is there potential for educational institutions to support change, but as a result of alarming statistics, a report from the U.S. Department of Education (2012b) was published examining how SL experiences are integrated into the curriculum. Within this report, the Department of Education stated, “At no school, college, or university should students graduate with less civic literacy and engagement than when they arrived” (U.S. Department of Education, 2012b, para. 13). Thus, understanding the benefits of service experiences and understanding how to integrate and improve civic learning practices into the core curriculum is essential at any educational institution.

Furthermore, the CNCS (n.d.) credits SL as being “one of the most effective approaches for engaging students and boosting learning” (para. 5). For example, benefits such as improved desire to attend school and to participate in community programs have resulted with SL participants (CNCS, n.d.).

Additionally, a study conducted by Jovanovic et al. (2011) relating to community service and the impacts of SL highlights the significance of this practice. For instance, 45 students were paired with low-income housing residents to engage in news talk, a term used for discussing current events in the daily paper. After newspaper subscriptions were given out freely to residents of a low-income housing unit, groups met twice a week to discuss current issues and events. Jovanovic et al. reported that this experience created an increase in “active community participation” (p. 13) and that active participation improved mental health. Although these are some of the many benefits to SL, there are also challenges associated with it.

Challenges Linked with Community Service Learning

One of the main challenges facing students regarding SL experiences in school is that they are inherently more complex to carry out and to implement compared to other forms of

experiential education (Götzen, Morelli, & Grani, 2014; Meens, 2014; Schoenherr, 2015). Some of the challenges for university students include having difficulty encountering real world problems. For instance, Schoenherr (2015) elaborated on the complexities of SL when encountered for the first time. The objectives of SL experience compared to the normal classroom course work are challenging for the student due to the real life phenomenon of the experience (Schoenherr, 2015). Additionally, van Goethem et al. (2014) conveyed that there were fairly large conceptual and practical overlaps between the meaning of community service, SL, and volunteering . Consequently, the complexity of these experiences not being completely understood and difficult to implement poses challenges.

Other challenges are encountered as well. For instance, universities have to ensure a safe experience for the students and the community (Schoenherr, 2015). Additionally, time management and the logistics of creating a partnership pose some challenges for the school and students participating in SL experiences (Schelbe et al., 2014; Schoenherr, 2015). Depending on the learning site, universities must require students to undergo policy checks and medical examinations to satisfy insurance requirements. Universities must also protect themselves by asking students to sign waivers that would reduce liability (Götzen et al., 2014; Meens, 2014). From the students' perspective, community SL can be more rigorous and time-consuming for them (Schoenherr, 2015). As such, even though community SL is associated with many benefits, the literature has revealed that there might be time and resource costs linked with this pedagogy (Götzen et al., 2014; Meens, 2014). For a university to offer such programs, careful planning is necessary. Significant amounts of time and resources are needed to ensure community SL will be successful. Communities and students require supervision throughout the duration of the community service. In addition, financial costs can act as a barrier

to implementation, due to the expense of such programs. Moreover, not all situations are fit for community SL, which makes other forms of experiential education necessary (Götzen et al., 2014; Meens, 2014).

Redefining Service Learning in Support of K-12

Furco (2013) asserted that there is a need to establish the benefits of implementing SL in primary and secondary schools. The majority of literature associated with SL is typically found within studies including students in college and coming from school placements, teacher programs, and internships (Bradley & Saracino, 2013; Jovanovic et al., 2011; La Lopa, 2012). Consequently, other educational settings such as elementary, middle, and high schools have not been as closely examined (Durlak et al., 2011; Ludden, 2011) leaving a significant gap in literature. Ludden (2011) suggested that research on adolescence be extended “by documenting civic activities across contexts and examining how involvement is associated with positive youth development” (p. 93). Ludden further attested qualitative research is needed in order to closely observe SL more “in depth” (p. 93). However, evidence of a strong link between SL participation and positive academic achievement in K-12 education is lacking. Most of the studies in the literature are focused on the implementation of SL programs in universities and colleges. According to Furco, there is a need for stronger evidence of the relationship between SL participation and students’ academic performance and achievement. It is especially needed in this climate of stringent educational assessment and accountability, so that the appropriate levels of institutional support for SL in K-12 education can be given. There are two issues with the current literature on SL according to Furco. First, even though the majority of the SL research studies published to date showed a relationship between SL and positive academic outcomes, the evidence is not strong enough to convince of SL’s efficacy. Second, even though there are

increasing numbers of published studies related to SL today, only a few studies pertained to the effects of SL on primary and secondary, or K-12 students (Furco, 2013). According to Furco, most researchers focused on SL at the college level. Only a small percentage of studies that focused on K-12 students included assessments of student academic outcomes. Even though the majority of researchers found positive outcomes in students' subject-matter learning, performance test scores, school attendance rates, and motivation levels, the findings were not robust enough to be considered conclusive (Furco, 2013). According to Furco, skepticism about the academic benefits of SL continues.

Earlier studies highlighted that the skepticism is because there is a general perception that the overall quality of the literature on K-12 SL is poor and affected by problems with methodologies. Existing studies have been criticized for having insufficient rigor, inadequate details, and invalid measures. According to Furco (2013), more research has become a constant recommendation among studies in the field of SL. Furco added that among all the research on pedagogical methods such as inquiry-based learning, cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and SL, the research literature on SL was found to be the weakest. For other pedagogical methods, a strong research base exists, with studies that can be replicated, randomized, and controlled. When studies could be replicated, randomized, or controlled, as in this strong research base, it was easier to see the academic merits of SL (Furco, 2013). SL research spanned three decades; however, the field still needs to effectively demonstrate evidence of quality research studies that can specifically justify the necessity to implement K-12 SL (Furco, 2013). Furco and Root (2010) specifically suggested that making the case for K-12 SL in an era of testing and accountability will require “the kinds of research designs that can raise the status of SL as an evidence-based practice” (p. 16).

Leadership skills were a focus of Richards, Sanderson, Celio, Grant, Choi, George, & Deane (2013) when they specifically evaluated SL effectiveness in middle school. Richards and colleagues evaluated a pilot SL program implemented for students in fifth and seventh grades in a large, urban, midwestern city. Gathering data from 86 students, the results showed that middle school students benefited greatly from the program. Compared to those in the control group, students who participated in the SL curriculum experienced improvement in their leadership skills. Comparing the results between fifth- and seventh-grade students, stronger effects were observed among fifth-grade students. However, students who participated in the pilot SL program did not show significant improvements in their acceptance of diversity. This may be attributed to their age (Richards et al., 2013).

Similarly, Dymond, Chun, Kim, and Renzaglia (2013) designed a study to evaluate the elements found in inclusive high school SL programs. They also looked at SL programs in high schools as well as the barriers that make implementation difficult. Dymond and colleagues conducted a statewide survey of coordinators of inclusive high school SL programs to collect data. Gathering this data from 655 SL coordinators, of which only 190 returned completed surveys, they found that coordinators rated the elements and methods higher in importance than actual use. The respondents reported few barriers. However, in particular, the participant respondents pointed to the lack of time to co-plan as one of the greatest barriers to the implementation of SL programs (Dymond et al., 2013).

Additionally, Bent (2014) assessed the effects of a SL instructional strategy on the level of engagement of senior high school students enrolled in a heterogeneous English class during the spring semester. In particular, Bent evaluated how SL performed as an instructional strategy in helping the students maintain their academic engagement. Through a mixed-method design,

findings revealed three themes: reciprocal learning, empowered learning, and persistence to graduation (Bent, 2014). The program led to students applying what they learned in school to a community setting. In addition, students were better able to make decisions with regard to their education. Students became more engaged in their learning, personally owning their learning process. Students also became more persistent to finish high school and graduate. Results of the study led to the conclusion that in high school, SL can serve to enhance traditional teaching methods and lead to higher academic achievement (Bent, 2014). In particular, traditional teaching methods employed in the English curriculum at the participants' school were more effective in instilling the knowledge and skills with the students when the students were given the opportunity to participate in a SL course during their senior year. A SL curriculum in a senior English class can positively influence academic engagement in a senior's final semester of high school (Bent, 2014).

Comparably, Helm-Stevens et al. (2014) evaluated the effects of a high risk school that implemented a SL curriculum, and the community affected by the program. The researchers involved in this pioneering study presented preliminary data demonstrating how SL benefited the community by exploring the relationships between a six-week SL project and the community partner. With the use of STAR test results, Helm-Stevens et al. found that once at-risk high school students became more aware of their individual strengths and motivation they became more confident about their career choices.

Likewise Newman et al. (2015) evaluated the effects of quality science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) SL projects on students' academic engagement in middle school science, civic responsibility, and resilience regarding at-risk behaviors. Specifically, Newman et al. evaluated the effects of the CNCS on the academic performance and behaviors of both

students and teachers. Newman et al. collected data from over 6000 middle school, at-risk students (students eligible for at least 50% free or reduced-cost lunch) and from 126 science teachers from 20 schools. These researchers indicated significantly positive effects on the use of SL pedagogy in classrooms. Students also experienced significant improvements on their academic engagement, civic responsibility, and resilience (Newman et al., 2015).

Additionally, Scott and Graham (2015) evaluated SL on pre-adolescent children's empathy and community engagement. Gathering data from 155 first, second, and fifth graders who participated in a five-session pilot SL program, researchers revealed that all students experienced improvements in their levels of empathy and community engagement. However, only fifth graders experienced improvements in their cognitive empathy. Fifth graders were also the only ones who experienced significant improvements in their civic efficacy. The researchers supposed that this might be because fifth graders are more cognitively prepared to understand their civic duties than their younger peers (Scott & Graham, 2015).

Relatedly, van Goethem et al. (2014) designed a meta-analysis to evaluate the effects of community service on adolescent development. In addition, they looked at whether reflection, community service, and adolescent characteristics all served as moderating variables on these effects. Data from 49 studies revealed that community service can positively affect students' academic, personal, social, and civic outcomes. They performed better at their school activities and made higher gains academically, personally and socially; they cared more about their communities, and were more aware of their civic duties. Moderation analyses demonstrated that reflection was a significant moderator. Students who reflected more experienced better outcomes academically, socially, and civilly. On the other hand, community service was not a moderator variable. Community service in the absence of reflection only resulted in negligible

benefits. The importance of reflection as a component of community service was highlighted (van Goethem et al., 2014).

Moreover, Henderson, Pancer, and Brown (2013) evaluated how high school community service programs specifically affected student volunteers' subsequent civic engagement. Data from 1,293 respondents, who participated in a community service program implemented by the Ontario provincial government in 1999, showed students becoming more positive about community service requirements. The findings led to the conclusion that public policy can lead to the civic engagement of young volunteers (Henderson et al., 2013).

In addition, McNeil and Helwig (2015) evaluated the perceptions of young students in high schools with regard to mandatory community service programs. Many jurisdictions in North America have implemented mandatory community service programs in their schools, but few studies evaluated how students feel about them or the reason why they should be subjected to the requirement. McNeil and Helwig looked at how youth reasoned about community service programs and when participating in the programs, and how they balanced their personal autonomy with the prosocial goals that the programs were designed to help students achieve. McNeil and Helwig obtained data from 72 students ranging from 10 to 18 years old. They were also given hypothetical, mandatory programs to evaluate. The findings were positive. Young students showed that they have the capacity to balance and coordinate considerations of autonomy and community in their judgments and reasoning with regard to mandatory community service (McNeil & Helwig, 2015).

However, van Goethem et al. (2014) in a meta analysis revealed adolescents' intentions to volunteer can be affected by the quality of the community service programs. Data from 361 students were obtained to determine whether volunteering intentions could increase by

participating in programs with high quality instructive and educational activities within the community service program. Reflective practices were included in the program. The adolescents were divided into three groups: those who practiced a reflection intervention, those who did not have a reflective intervention in their community service, and those who did not perform community service. A half year after finishing community service, results revealed that those who participated in the community service, either with or without reflection, had higher volunteering intentions if they performed high quality service activities. However, for students who participated in the community service without the reflective intervention, volunteering intentions were only high if they performed high quality service activities. Van Goethem and colleagues identified that volunteering intentions declined for students performing only low quality service activities.

Nevertheless, Roberts (2013) evaluated how a SL program affected adolescents' alcohol abuse behaviors. Because adolescent alcohol abuse has become a pertinent problem in society, there is a need to evaluate if other strategies apart from existing ones will effectively reduce adolescent alcohol abuse. Roberts specifically looked at whether students who are tasked to engage in community service or SL will drink less. Data collected from 3975 males and 4158 females, ages 14 to 18 using the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance questionnaire, indicated that SL could reduce alcohol abuse behaviors of adolescents. After controlling for demographic variables, the results indicated a relationship between SL and lower instances of alcohol use. For instance, an hour of community service per month can make students less likely to engage in alcohol use behaviors (Roberts, 2013).

Likewise Durlak et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 213 school-based interventions affecting social and emotional learning (SEL) of students in Grades K-12. Durlak

et al. discussed positive benefits associated with SEL. Additionally, Durlak et al. communicated the opportunities for educational institutions to contribute to the overall mental health of children by employing evidenced-based practices supporting SEL in their curriculums.

The drawback of minimal research involving SL in K-12 learning environments however, is magnified due to the sense of urgency placed on early interventions. In particular, Durlak et al. (2011) asserted that many young students lack social-emotional competencies when they start grade school. These insufficiencies worsened as students progress towards Grades 6-12. In addition, a growing body of literature shows that mental health disorders in adolescence have potential “long term negative effects on adult mental health” (Cornaglia, Crivellaro, & McNally 2015, p. 1). Early intervention is essential, and research conducted to understand the benefits associated with SL experiences would best be conducted in younger grades (Durlak et al., 2011).

K-12 Service Learning Standards for Quality Practice

The NYLC (2009) put forward standards and indicators of quality SL for K-12 students. In making the lists, the NYLC vetted and screened standards and indicators through a series of reactor panels across the nation. The panels consisted of stakeholders from K-12 SL, including young people, teachers, school and district administrators, community members, and staff from community-based organizations (NYLC, 2009). Also included were policy makers and others interested in seeing SL thrive at the K-12 level. Below are the major components of a quality K-12, SL program, according to the NYLC.

Meaningful service. According to the NYLC (2009), SL must actively engage the students to carry out meaningful services for the community that they are helping. In order to be meaningful, the services must be relevant not only to the community, but also to the students. According to NYLC there are specific indicators that demonstrate meaningfulness in SL for K-

12 students. First, students' SL experiences must be appropriate to their ages and their development capacities. In addition, SL should give students the opportunity to participate in interesting and engaging activities for the communities they are serving. More importantly, the activities must give the students a deeper sense of understanding of the societal issues they are addressing. For SL to be considered meaningful, the NYLC said that activities should also lead to attainable and visible outcomes that benefit the community. Similarly, in the hopes of advancing how learners become more aware of their own assumptions, Gliszinski (2015) discusses, in a literal way and figurative way, how memories guide future thought and action. An emphasis is made on the relevancy of the experience to the learner.

Link to curriculum. The NYLC (2009) also provided that SL is of quality if it is linked to the curriculum. SL should be intentionally integrated into the classroom by the teachers as a form of an instructional strategy to meet the course's learning goals and content standards. Indicators of whether SL is linked to the curriculum are the presence of clearly articulated learning goals and SL alignment with the academic curriculum of the students. Another indicator of SL being linked to the curriculum is if there is a transfer of knowledge and skills from the class to the community and vice versa. SL must also be formally recognized by the school board, as evidenced by the school's policies and students' records.

Reflection. The NYLC (2009) also stated that SL must have a reflection component. This means that students are tasked to complete several challenging and ongoing reflection activities as part of their community service. These reflection activities must include the opportunity for students to engage in deep and critical thinking about their own goals and their roles within the society. The reflection activities should be designed to allow students to think of their contribution to the society even at their tender age and in the future. The NYLC provided

the indicators of quality reflection activities as well. First, the reflection activities must be encompassing of various verbal, written, artistic, and nonverbal activities that can reveal the depth of participants' understanding of the community and the problems it is experiencing. The activities should also reveal the extent of changes in participants' knowledge, skills, and attitudes after they have participated in community service. In addition, the reflection activities must take place throughout the SL. The activities must be substantial to the whole service process, prompting the participants to think deeply and critically about complicated community problems and to generate alternative solutions. The reflection activities should allow the students to reconsider their preconceived notions and assumptions about the community and as a result, re-examine and re-explore their roles and responsibilities as citizens, even if they are still young. Young students, through their reflection activities, should also become more aware of the various social and civic issues within the community.

Diversity. Diversity is also a quality standard (NYLC, 2009). The SL project should make the students aware of how diverse people are and at the same time, instill in them the importance of being respectful of everyone. The NYLC (2009) stated that there are several indicators of whether a K-12 SL program has this quality standard. First, the SL experience to the K-12 students should help them recognize and comprehend different points of view. The experience should also equip them with the interpersonal skills to resolve conflict and make group decisions without getting into fights with others. The experience should also help the students try to actively understand the value of cultural sensitivity and respect for diversity. Overall, SL should encourage the students to understand stereotypes and preconceived notions they may have of those different to them.

Youth voice. According to the NYLC (2009), SL should give the young students the chance to voice their opinions and ideas during the planning, implementing, and evaluating stages of their SL experiences, under the guidance of the adults such as their teachers, the school board, and their parents. Indicators of youth empowered in the K-12 serving model are (a) being engaged throughout, (b) being allowed to take part in decision-making, (c) forming an environment of trust, (d) openly expressing their ideas without fear, and (e) acquiring improved leadership and decision-making skills. The youth participants are also given the chance to evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the SL program themselves (NYLC, 2009).

Partnerships. Partnerships are formed between the community and the service program (NYLC, 2009). Partnerships between the school program and the community must be collaborative, mutually beneficial, and responsive to the needs of the community. Indicators of whether a program has such partnerships can be evidenced through the program's involvement of various partners, such as the youth participants, the teachers, the families, and then the community members and leaders. One important indication is if there is constant and consistent communication among all these stakeholders in order to keep everyone well-informed of the progress and the activities to be carried out. The reason for partners to collaborate regularly is to achieve a shared vision and to set common goals (NYLC, 2009).

Progress monitoring. For a SL program to be considered high quality, there must be constant monitoring of whether the program is already achieving its goals. There must also be continuous improvement by building on past progress. Indicators of whether SL programs are achieving this standard include the regular collection of evidence of meeting particular milestones, achievement of learning outcomes from various sources through the SL program, and constant communication between stakeholders of progress towards the achievement of goals

within the larger community. Constant communication can ensure that the high-quality practices which result in effective outcomes are sustained (NYLC, 2009).

Duration and intensity. The last quality standard that the NYLC (2009) identified is for programs to be sustainable and intense. The program must be long enough to adequately meet the needs of the community. Indicators of this quality standard include having a comprehensive process to investigate and identify community needs, to prepare for the services needed, to reflect on the effects, and to demonstrate that learning has taken place. Additionally, it is necessary that the SL experience has enough time for mutual benefits to take place, for instance, that students achieve their learning goals and communities resolve their problems (NYLC, 2009).

Whole Child Approach

WSCC aims to unite education and health through the collaboration of schools, community members and health agencies (ASCD, 2015). Consequently, WSCC provides an avenue for educators to connect learning to health, and thus fosters a sense of emotional wellness in the classroom.

The CSH is a design that has been used for assimilating health practices into school curriculum and responsible for contributing to educational policies throughout the country (CDC, 2015). The WSCC model was formed by combining the two initiatives of CSH and WC (ASCD, 2015; Lewallen, et al., 2015). This merger was instituted in an effort to join learning and health (ASCD, 2015).

The WSCC views community engagement to be as important to the growth of the child as classroom instruction (ASCD, 2015; Rooney et al., 2015). Similarly, a lack of community engagement experiences was viewed as a hindrance to the development of the whole child and consequently helped to initiate the formation of the WSCC model (ASCD, 2015). This model

supported the idea for parents, educators, stakeholders and community members to transfer attention to the development of the whole child instead of isolated elements of education for the purpose of ensuring student success. The WSCC model calls for a better alignment between the health of a child and a child's education in order to support the student physically, socially, and emotionally. Five elements of the model encompass the whole child by ensuring that children are healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, thus helping to link learning and health (ASCD, 2015).

Researchers have provided insight into some of the benefits associated with SL practices, though primarily limited to undergraduate students (Celio et al., 2011; Lewallen et al., 2015). The health benefits associated with SL experiences in light of the WSCC model have not been found.

Summary

Many significant benefits are associated with SL, community service experiences, and civic engagement practices (Bent, 2014; Durlak et al., 2011; Helm-Stevens et al., 2014; Henderson et al., 2013; Mc Menamin et al., 2014; Newman et al., 2015; Richards et al., 2013; Roberts, 2013; Scott & Graham, 2015; van Goethem et al., 2014). However, community service practices are present predominantly in colleges and universities and lacking in elementary, middle and high schools. (Durlak et al., 2011; Ludden, 2011). Benefits such as academic achievement (Bent, 2014), increased motivation and engagement, (Henderson et al., 2013; van Goethem et al., 2014), improved classroom behavior (van Goethem et al., 2014), a sense of community (Generator School Network, n.d.), and improved mental health (Newman et al., 2015) are examples of some benefits that have been noted.

This greater sense of community and a sense of responsibility is evidenced as stemming from the relationships that are formed through partnerships and mentoring opportunities as a result of SL practices (Diambra et al., 2009; McLoughlin, 2010; Petrov, 2013). Productivity and a change in thinking also surface as a perceived impact of engaging community service (Davis, 2015; Mitchell, 2015; Schwartz & Suyemoto, 2013). Additionally, an investment in social capital was found (Beck et al., 2015; Darby et al., 2013; Gallant et. al, 2010; Geller et al., 2014) and benefits such as positive self-attitudes, improved attitudes toward learning, and improved social awareness (van Goethem et al., 2014).

Some challenges were presented in the literature, for example, the lack of relationships formed and the lack of civic engagement experiences showed a negative effect (Hurd et al., 2009; Natale & Doran, 2011; Umberson & Montez, 2010; van Goethem et al., 2014; Weare, 2002). Student whose attitudes were adversely impacted, for example, were less inclined to be engaged with various tasks, and as a result consequences surfaced (Hurd et al., 2009). Other examples include, substance abuse, a lack of engagement, poor attitudes, and decreased student achievement were among a few negative outcomes when there was a lack of civic engagement experiences (Hurd et al., 2009). Challenges related to SL such as time management and cost were also examined (Schoenherr, 2015). Finally, educational institutions were considered for their role in contributing to the welfare of students, through the lens of the WSCC model.

Although SL has contributed significantly to the understanding of its educational impact, specifically in higher education, its impact in earlier education experiences has been limited. In addition, in light of the newly formed model for combining learning and health, the WSCC model has not been viewed in conjunction with SL practices. Consequently, this qualitative

single instrumental case study contributes to the literature on the development of individuals where missions of civic mindedness and mental health are present.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative single instrumental case study was to explore and analyze how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. The theoretical framework for this study was Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning theory. Data collection came from seven students in Grades 6-12, their teachers, their administrators, their parents, and three community members who were affiliated with the students' SL experiences, using preliminary questionnaires, student reflection of SL, semi-structured interviews, student and adult focus groups, observations, and document analysis. Data analysis consisted of a description of the case and an analysis of the emerging themes. In this chapter, a discussion ensues of the methods, design, and approach chosen to conduct the study. Also discussed in this chapter are the interview questions, site, participants, procedures, the researcher's role, and data analysis.

Design

The design of this study was a qualitative, single instrumental case study to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. Qualitative research is appropriate when the researcher wants to understand the settings in which participants in a study address "a problem or issue" (Creswell, 2007, p. 40; Patton, 2015). In addition, the researcher is the central instrument in the data collection process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). This design was appropriate for my study because I conducted an empirical study investigating the contemporary phenomenon of participant perceptions of transformational learning experiences through the practice of SL.

“A case study seeks to investigate participants’ experiences in a particular bounded context” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 151). Additionally, case study design, according to Yin (2014) is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon ‘the case’ in depth and within its real-world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident” (p. 16). Furthermore, a single instrumental case study enables the researcher to focus on “an issue or concern and selects one bounded case to illustrate this issue” (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). Thus, this single instrumental case study consisted of seven students in Grades 6-12, their teachers, their administrators, their parents, and three community members who with the students’ SL experiences. The purpose of my study involving the potential benefits of SL in Grades 6-12 school settings has strong implications impacting curricula and learning.

Research Questions

RQ1: How, if at all, are student participants in Grades 6 -12 transformed according to Mezirow’s (2000) theory of TL?

RQ2: How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience and in light of the WSCC initiative?

RQ3: How do study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12?

Setting

This single instrumental case study was conducted at a charter school in NC where students participate in at least four scheduled SL experiences each year. Students in Grades 6-12, routinely interact with the community in order to meet needs that may be present. Typical experiences included but were not limited to students filling, packing and mailing boxes for

“Stop Hunger Now”, landscaping the school yard, reading to younger children, walking to nearby shelters and community centers and volunteering their time, picking up trash around the school and down town, visiting the nursing homes, buying toys for tots and making and mailing cards for soldiers. In case study research, the setting is a vital component to understanding the experiences of the participants (Stake, 1995). Therefore, with this varied background of SL experiences, participants at Chase Charter School (CCS) were selected from Grades 6-12 where these practices are planned, implemented and valued as part of their core existence. CCS is located in a rural community. There are approximately 700 students, including 325 boys and 375 girls in the school. In addition, 68% of the students are Caucasian, and 26% are Black. Fewer than 5% are Hispanic students, or biracial; Asian students make up about 1% of the school population. Chase Charter School (CCS), an “Honor of Excellence” school, is one of the top 10 charter schools in the state of North Carolina and ranks in the top 3% academically across the state (National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, 2015). CCS also currently experiences a 100% graduation rate. In addition, parents and students of CCS are committed to volunteering in the community. My rationale for selecting this site is that North Carolina’s goal places a high emphasis on SL as an important instructional strategy for engaging the community and supporting learning. While CCS specifically and routinely participates in SL experiences known as community days their core values and practices also align with the WSCC model for learning.

Participants

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2016), case study research provides an “in-depth picture of the unit of study” (p. 46) where the researcher studies a bounded system. For this reason, the participants of this single instrumental case study consisted of multiple participants who were directly and indirectly associated with the SL experiences. For instance, seven

students in Grades 6-12, five teachers, three administrators, six parents, and three community members who had been affiliated with the identified student or the identified student's SL experiences provided at this one charter school were selected to participate.

Participants were chosen based on criterion sampling methods. For example, for a criterion sampling, all participants must meet at least one or more criteria that the researcher has selected to participate (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Hence, students who had identified themselves as having experienced a transformation as a result of their experience and consented to participate were selected. The other criterion used for the population was the choice of school. It was important to select participants where SL was a routine practice. The routine practice of SL aligned with the school's aim to support the student's mental well-being through the WC model concept and where learning and health are viewed as a shared component. Therefore, participants were selected from one charter school where SL was a routine practice and considered a potential support for continued success and mental wellness. This practice of giving back to the community aligned with the WSCC model for learning. Consequently, having a school that already participated in SL practices allowed for conducting research within the context of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2012). Finally, the sample consisted of seven students in Grades 6-12, five teachers, three administrators, six parents, and three community members affiliated with the students' SL experiences.

Procedures

Approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Liberty University was obtained (see Appendix A). A recruitment letter was presented to the executive director of CCS (see Appendix B) and teacher/administrator and stakeholder consent forms (see Appendix C) were obtained before proceeding with data collection. The executive director introduced me to the SL

coordinator who, at the request of the director, sent out the student reflection of SL (see Appendix D) via google forms to all students in Grades 6 -12. Their responses were used to initiate the formation of this case study. Students used this form to self-identify as having experienced change as a result of their SL experience. Individual and group interviews were scheduled with identified students. Additional teachers associated with the identified student participant completed the initial questionnaire to further develop and recruit potential participants (see Appendix C). During this initial data collection, the SL coordinator introduced me to teachers and administrators associated with the identified students. Phone calls were made to parents and potential community members. Interviews were scheduled with parents and community participants. Individual and group interviews were scheduled with teachers and administrators. Names of potential community members surfaced during teacher interviews. Individual interviews with each of 21 identified participants (seven students in Grades 6-12, five teachers, three administrators, six parents, and three community members who were affiliated with the students' SL experiences) were conducted. I used the collected data to further understand how SL opportunities were perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences, as they relate to Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformational learning. I obtained consent from parents and community members prior to conducting their interviews. Two focus groups, one for students and one for adults, were formed in order to gain a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions of transformational learning experiences as they related to SL experiences. Each focus group met once. Adult participants were given a copy and overview of the K-12 SL Standards for Quality Practice prior to asking specific questions aligned to the standards. Additionally, observations were scheduled of student participation of SL experiences. During teacher and administrator interviews, documents pertaining to SL

surfaced and kept for review. All individual and group interviews were transcribed. All transcriptions and documents were reviewed, analyzed and coded, and then grouped into themes.

Interviews were transcribed and coded, carefully looking to identify themes in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation. Finally, data were described, and interpreted by portraying an in-depth depiction of the case through narrative and visual descriptions.

The Researcher's Role

I have had no prior experience with CCS, and have only recently become aware of its existence. I am a new member to my community and have been introduced only a short time ago to the various people and families making up my community. I have no previous relationship with any participant in the study.

Within qualitative research there is a belief that rich data can be understood through the interaction of researcher and participant where the researcher portrays the meaning of the research through the voice of the participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). With this assumption, my role was that of a human instrument. I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis of data. Thus, some biases may have been present. For instance, my experience with SL and my stance on moral and ethical standards incorporates a burden of advocacy for children in schools. This reveals a potential bias of which I was aware. Throughout the study, I maintained an awareness of my personal beliefs and kept a journal to bracket out my own thoughts in order to focus on the phenomenon being studied. By doing so, according to Yin (2014), I gained a greater insight into the participants' perceptions. Similarly, unlike the role of a participant observer where the researcher participates in the setting of the participants, I was a non-participant observer and was not immersed in the setting (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2016). Consequently, my role as a non-participant observer, and a new member to the community, having no previous relationship with the participants, helped in avoiding “issues of positionality” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 155) where concerns of the researcher’s relationship may seemingly interfere with the research.

Finally, I am a first-generation college graduate. My early childhood posed significant educational barriers. My initial decision to enroll in, and my experiences with, college came later in life after being exposed to new environments. This would account for my personal assumption that SL could be an avenue for student engagement and personal growth. A personal journal was kept to protect against personal bias which, according to Tufford and Newman (2012), could blemish the process. It was my aim, as the primary instrument of research to be honest with the participants’ views and to hold an open mind. Thus, keeping this reflective journal helped to bracket against personal bias and thus was used to help further protect the integrity of this study.

Data Collection

The methods used to collect data in order to support a strong case and to support and explore SL in-depth included (a) a student reflection of SL, (b) teacher and administrator, parent and community member questionnaires, (c) individual student and adult interviews, (d) student and adult focus groups, (e) student observations, and (f) document analysis. A student reflection of SL helped to identify potential participants for the study by giving students at CCS an opportunity to reflect on their experiences and consequently self identifying. Teachers associated with the student participants were also given a questionnaire to help further develop this case study research. Once the teacher and student participants were known, community members and parents were determined. Interviews were scheduled and student and adult focus

groups formed. Observations and document analysis helped to further support the process of collecting rich data.

Student Reflection of SL

Students were given an opportunity to self-identify by reflecting on their SL experiences (see Appendix D). Their responses were utilized to initiate the formation of this case study. The student's self-identification of having experienced a change as a result of their SL experience served as the basis for participation, although participation was contingent on signed and returned consent forms.

Questionnaire

Stake (1995) offered some flexibility where case study is concerned. For example, he reminded his readers that with case study research there are some unknowns and therefore it's not always plausible to be prepared fully for where the study may lead. For this reason, three questionnaire forms were utilized to help guide the study (see Appendices C, E, and F). This questionnaire was utilized in order to elicit an overview of the experiences potential participants had with SL and served as a method for collecting demographic information and data that was unanticipated. Additionally, adult participants were identified in connection with the initial teacher and administrator questionnaire. Thus, I asked potential teacher participants and their administrators, the potential parents of identified students, and three community members who have a shared in the experience of SL to complete an initial questionnaire to further define this single instrumental case study.

Individual Interviews

Interviews were semi-structured and I was looking for specific examples, detailed information, and avoiding questions that usually result in yes or a no answers (Rubin & Rubin,

2012). Rubin and Rubin (2012) provided examples of three characteristics of in-depth interviewing; looking for detail, using open ended questions, and the researcher having flexibility with questions being asked. The flexibility in this style of interview provides participants a freedom to express their thoughts outside of the prescribed questions prepared (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2014). For this reason, a semi-structured interview format was utilized for this study.

I selected seven students and their teachers, based on a criterion sampling, to participate in a semi-structured, face-to-face, individual interview. Additionally, I also asked questions of the student's parents, administrators, and three community members associated with the SL experience. Descriptive, rich, data was collected using verbatim quotes from the participants as they provided details of their SL opportunities to impact transformational learning experiences. I audio-recorded interviews that did not exceed 45 minutes and transcribed them into a word document.

Individual interviews allowed me an avenue by which I was learning what was "in and on someone else's mind" (Patton, 1990, p. 278). I utilized semi-structured interviews to gain a rich description of experiences and to have an opportunity to ask more probing questions (Creswell, 2007). Being a good researcher and asking good questions is vital (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Stake, 1995). For instance, good research involves "knowing what leads to significant understanding, recognizing good sources of data, and consciously and unconsciously testing out the veracity of their eyes and robustness of their interpretations. It requires sensitivity and skepticism" (Stake, 1995, p. 50).

The first set of interview questions was asked to each student participant in order to understand how they perceive SL experiences to impact transformational learning experiences. Qualitative researchers look for opportunities while structuring their interview question to not

merely explain what might be going on, but also to provide a strong written description, in their writeup that makes what they are studying real to their readers (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The teacher interview questions were asked to each identified teacher participant to understand how they perceived SL experiences to impact transformational learning experiences for their students.

Standardized Open-Ended Interview Questions

Student Individual Interview Questions

1. Can you share with me your name, how old you are, and what grade you are in?
2. What kinds of community days have you participated in at your school?
3. About how much time have you spent doing activities like this? At school? Outside of school?
4. How did you get along with other kids before this experience?
5. How do you get along with other kids now?
6. Has this experience changed how you get along with other people?
7. How did you feel about coming to school before you participated in these types of activities?
8. What has changed about you since this experience?
9. How were your grades before? How are they now?
10. Do you think you will want to participate in activities like this again?
11. Would you like to do things like this in the future?
12. How, if at all, are you a better person now than before?
13. How have these experiences changed you as a person?
14. Do you have a religious preference?

Questions two through eleven helped to build understanding of any transformations specifically relating to the participant's mindset, their outlook on life, and their personality (Mezirow, 2000). Producing students who are socially and intellectually capable is a primary aspect of Mezirow's TL (2000).

Teacher Individual Interview Questions

1. What types of SL experiences have you integrated into the curriculum? (In order to understand the varied experiences and potential benefits under each tenet.)
2. How have SL experiences, if at all, contributed to students "acquiring" knowledge? (Tenet of Health)
3. How have SL experiences, if at all, contributed to students acquiring the attitudes and skills needed for making healthy decisions? (Tenet of Health)
4. How, if at all, did the SL experience offer a sense of students feeling respected? (Physically and Emotionally Safe)
5. During the SL experience did you sense that students made a connection to the community? (If yes, how so?) (Engaged and connected)
6. How have SL experiences, if at all, contributed to students' ongoing participation in the community?
7. How have SL experiences, if at all, prepared students for college?
8. How have SL experiences, if at all, prepared students for employment in the future?
9. What was the student like before SL experiences?
10. What was his/her relationship like with their peers before SL experiences?
11. What was their general demeanor like before the SL experiences?
12. What was their outlook on life like before the SL experiences?

13. How was their behavior in the classroom before the SL experiences?
14. How was their attitude toward school, or others before the SL experiences?
15. What was student like after the SL experiences?
16. What was their relationship like with their peers after the SL experience?
17. What was their general demeanor like after the SL experiences?
18. What was their outlook on life like after the SL experiences?
19. How was their behavior in the classroom after the SL experiences?
20. How was their attitude toward school, or other people after the SL experiences?

Questions 1-3 aligned with the WC model, and specifically addressed the health tenet (ASCD, 2014; Lewallen et al., 2015). Question 4 helped to bring understanding to the alignment of safety as described in the WC model (ASCD, 2014). Engagement and a sense of well-being connected to the community are also expressed in the WC model, and thus questions 5 and 6 helped to shed light on the relationship between SL and community connections, which is another benefit associated with the WC model (ASCD 2014; CDC, 2015). Additionally, questions 6-20 helped to build understanding of any transformations specifically relating to the participant's mindset, their outlook on life, and their personality (Mezirow, 2000). Finally, questions 9-20 helped to understand the transformation that potentially has taken place. Producing students who are socially and intellectually capable is a primary aspect of Mezirow's (2000) TL. Specifically the answers to these questions helped to ascertain the student's outlook on life, their mindset, and their personality.

Administrator Individual Interview Questions

1. What is your relationship with the students who participated in SL?

2. How have SL experiences, if at all, contributed to the students' ongoing participation in the community?
3. How have SL experiences, if at all, contributed to students acquiring the attitudes and skills needed for making healthy decisions?
4. How, if at all, have SL experiences changed the student?
5. Did you notice any particular part of the community service that made an impression on you?
6. Prior to the community service experience, describe a typical student's outlook on life.
7. After the community service experience, did you notice any change with the student's behavior or interaction with others while serving in the community?

Student and Adult Focus Groups

I arranged focus groups via email, or through follow up phone calls (see appendix B). Participants were selected to participate in a focus group based on their previous interviews. A set of interview questions was used to facilitate two different focus groups, a student focus group based on the identified students in the case study, and a selected group of administrators, teachers, and community members associated with the student engaged in the SL experience (see Appendix I). This data collection method was utilized to understand how SL opportunities were perceived to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. Participants were asked: How do you describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience? How, if at all, have the SL experiences changed student engagement and participation? How, if at all, have attitudes improved as a result of SL experiences? Responses

helped to answer my first research question: How, if at all, are student participants in Grades 6 - 12 transformed according to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL?

The discussion prompts for the selected group of students were: What part of the SL experience was most meaningful to you? How, if at all, have you changed as a result of the SL experience? Feelings of self-examination help to identify what aspect of TL is most applicable (Mezirow, 2000). Consequently, these questions helped to reveal TL experiences for students in Grades 6-12. The following questions were used to facilitate understanding of TL according to Mezirow's (200) theory of TL.

Student Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What are your thoughts about people helping each other?
2. What are your beliefs about you being able to help others?
3. How do you feel it's your responsibility to help people? (self perceptions)
4. How have you helped someone this week? (Changes in lifestyle)
5. Please describe your experience with _____. (Refer to the SL experiences for that situation.)
6. Please describe how you felt after completing the program.
7. How, if at all, would you want to participate again in similar activities?
8. How, if at all, do these experiences help you as a student?
9. Was there a time during the SL experience that you felt respected?
10. Did you feel connected to the community? If so, how?
11. Did you feel prepared to help out in the community activity? If so how did you feel prepared? If not, why not?
12. Describe what you learned during this _____ experience.

Questions 1-7, and questions 11, 15, and 16 specifically helped to measure the perceived transformation of students and focus on Mezirow's (2000) changes in life style, belief system, and one's own self-perception. Learning is believed to happen through the use of prior knowledge to construe a new interpretation of experience (Mezirow, 1996). Questions 10-17 helped to identify the physical, mental, social, and emotional dimensions of health, as they relate to the first tenet of the WC model. Questions 7 and 8 helped to clarify how benefits align with the WC model (CDC, 2015). Question 9 identifies how SL contributes to the safety tenant associated with the WC model. Questions 10-13 aided in the evaluation of a student feeling supported as defined in the WC model. Each of the questions, in conjunction with supporting the WC model, also helped to answer the research questions. Additionally, questions 3-8 are open-ended questions which aid in gaining a more rich and substantive feedback (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Patton, 2015).

Observations

Observations, according to Bloomberg and Volpe (2008), help to "explain complex interactions in natural social settings" (p. 155). Therefore, student interactions were observed with student participants while they were engaged with the SL opportunity, "Stop Hunger Now". I was a non-participant observer watching the participants remaining neutral and avoiding an active role in what was happening (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Creswell, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I planned and scheduled five student observations with the SL coordinator. Participants engagement in real life context is essential to understanding subjective meanings which is critical to understanding the participants' perceptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Therefore, I gathered observation notes as open ended to "discover recurring patterns of behavior,

interactions, and relationships” through descriptive and reflective fieldnotes and documented on the Observation Protocol (see Appendix J).

Document Analysis

“Analysis of documents is potentially rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants in the setting” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p.157), and therefore helps to develop a better understanding of the complexities involved in research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Pictures relating to the SL experience were examined. In addition, a personal journal was kept memoing my encounters with participants and my thoughts of the participants’ dialogues in order to help organize, identify, and analyze the emerging themes associated with each code. Consequently, I examined three newspaper articles directly associated with the SL experience, a personal journal, and documentation of the seven student participants’ experiences (See Appendix K).

Data Analysis

This qualitative single instrumental case study was initiated, explored, and described through the continued and repetitive review of data collected. Coding procedures were kept flexible in order to change what was not working. Keeping myself open during the initial data collection enabled me to determine the most appropriate method for coding and helped yield a more practical analysis (Saldaña, 2013). Thus, exploratory coding enables the researcher more flexibility to choose the coding method that may work best for their unique setting and can additionally help bring into focus a richer perspective of the participants experiences (Saldaña, 2013). Descriptive coding ascribes short word descriptions to the data in order to summarize the content (Saldaña, 2013). The emerging patterns and themes were coded and grouped into categories. A description of the case and an interpretation of data followed using synthesis as

an ongoing process to understanding “the essence of the phenomenon and expressing it so that it fits into a larger picture” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 244). A thorough analysis through exploratory and descriptive coding is an appropriate method for all qualitative studies (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Saldaña, 2013).

Documents were analyzed, relating to SL experiences and were reviewed and re-read to find meaning. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for keywords and grouped into themes. I viewed data in light of the research questions and theoretical framework. Each new piece of information was scrutinized to further sort into meaningful categories within the case. By looking at emerging themes, procedures such as interviews, observations, and document analysis were better understood (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

The study of data is “the process of making sense out of the data, which involves consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read – it is the process of making meaning” (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). Therefore, in order to make meaning of this single instrumental case study, data analysis consisted of exploratory and descriptive coding, sorting, and looking for emerging themes (Creswell, 2007). Furthermore, Yin (2014) asserted that “a helpful strategy is to play with your data . . . searching for patterns, insights or concepts that seem promising” (p. 135). Data “can more or less speak for itself” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 191) and therefore, an inductive strategy was employed and consequently yielded a deeper meaning of content (Yin, 2014).

Furthermore, Yin (2014) affirmed that transcriptions offer a widespread account of the case and therefore, support a greater description and understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, the collective use of semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis helped to reveal a consistency in the analysis (Yin, 2014). This practice of using

multiple sources of data to synthesise findings across multiple sets of data is referred to as triangulation of data, and is a validated, critical strategy in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

Trustworthiness

Four standards used to evaluate trustworthiness in qualitative research include credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Furthermore, Creswell (2007) and Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) asserted using measures to increase the four identified criteria. To increase methods of trustworthiness, the results of this study were reviewed with a teacher participant included in this study and later presented to the staff at CCS. Through this type of member checking, documenting the interpretation of the feedback in the researcher's journal helped to further support the integrity of this study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Finally, data will be used across multiple sources of data in order to synthesise the results as indicated by both Bloomberg and Volpe and Creswell.

Credibility

Credibility is the believability of the data and the methods by which it is collected (Yin, 2014) and is an accurate representation of the participant's views (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Creswell (2007) recommended using more than one method for collecting data in order to maintain credibility. A journal was kept to monitor personal biases. Transcripts from individual interviews and focus groups yielded a substantial number of pages, thus providing a comprehensive data set. Consequently, the rich contextual data of information strengthened the case (Yin, 2014). Debriefing is a process where the "the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2007, p. 208). Thus, a

collaborator was asked to assess the researcher's field notes and to help consider other perspectives when interpreting the data.

To enhance the validity of the methods used for this study, triangulation of data was utilized. For instance, Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) suggested that when collecting data from multiple sources using various methods, the phenomenon under investigation reveals a more rich and vivid portrait. In addition to utilizing multiple sources of data collection, and journal entries detailing how interpretations of data were made, I looked for discrepancies in understanding the phenomenon. By understanding my own expectations, and finding instances that might challenge my own expectations, credibility was achieved (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Dependability and Confirmability

The dependability of data is supported through the ability of the findings to be replicated (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The findings of this study should be consistent with the data collected, therefore, the documentation of my procedures and exploratory and descriptive coding schemes will be thoroughly described. I kept an audit trail by keeping and maintaining a personal journal for each type of data collection in order to document the interpretations and thought processes during the research. With a detailed record of procedures, outcomes are more easily duplicated and therefore, dependability may be achieved (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

The idea of confirmability conveys the notion of impartiality and essentially signifies that what is reported in the research is an accurate representation of the research (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Thus, my field notes and transcripts will enable the reader to evaluate the results of the study. Moreover, according to Creswell (2012), giving participants an opportunity to respond to the results and soliciting their feedback is vital to ensuring that the results of the research and not the bias of the researcher. It was my aim, as the primary instrument of research

to be honest with the participants' views and to hold an open mind. Therefore I will be kept a reflective journal to guard against personal bias or my personal attachment to the study and thus helped in protecting the integrity of this research. Additionally, I invited the participants to review the results found in this study and requested their feedback to ensure the results from this study were not biased.

Transferability

Multiple sources of data were used. The transferability of the data, and thus the generalizability of the findings, was assured by collecting a detailed description of the participants and by reporting the context of the study as accurately as possible in terms of the various data sources used (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Transferability is necessary when the sample population is restricted to a localized area and/or the study is confined to a population sharing particular characteristics (Creswell, 2007).

Ethical Considerations

According to Creswell (2012), it was necessary to protect the names of the participants, and to have informed consent. For minors participating in this study, approval was obtained from their parents, or guardians. IRB approval was obtained prior to any such solicitation. Real names are not be used; pseudonyms are employed in order to maintain confidentiality. In addition, the purpose of the study was explained to each of the participants in order to give ethical considerations to the participants.

This research was submitted for approval to the IRB, a governing body who will act on the behalf of the participants to maintain confidentiality. IRB guidelines were strictly followed. For example, participants were well informed of the study and thus consent and assent will be documented. Additionally, all data has been kept on a computer which is password protected.

Physical data will be stored securely in a locked file cabinet. Physical and electronic data will be destroyed three years after the completion of this study. Analysis has been reported with honesty and integrity.

Summary

For this qualitative, single instrumental case study, I interviewed 21 participants to understand how SL opportunities impacted learning experiences for Grades 6-12 school students. Participants included seven students in Grades 6-12, five teachers, three administrators, six parents, and three community members who were affiliated with the students' SL experiences. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify emerging themes. Trustworthiness was demonstrated in this study and ethical standards adhered to as evidenced in the procedures noted.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative single instrumental case study was to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. Chapter Four documents the data collection procedures and the results of the data. Specifically, student participants and the study participants associated with the identified student participant such as the teacher, administrator(s), community member(s), and the parent(s) are also described. Seven student reflections, five teacher questionnaires, and their individual interviews, three administrative questionnaire interviews, six parent interviews, a student and adult focus group, five student observations, and document analysis were used as gathered data and are analyzed through QSR NVIVO software. Pattern coding supported the developed themes through the repetition of comments and behavior (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Three emerging themes surfaced: a sense of family, increased engagement, and, increased awareness (See Appendix L). Finally, students' data and the themes are paralleled to the three research questions outlining the study.

Participants

A total of 21 participants contributed to the results in this section, including seven student reflections of SL, seven individual student interviews from Grades 6-12, and five student observations, as well as data collected from a student and adult focus group, eight teacher and administrator initial questionnaires, and individual interviews. Finally, data collected and analyzed included three community member questionnaires, six parent interviews, and four documents relating to the SL experience.

Three participants served with two titles. For instance, two teachers were also two parents of identified students and one community member was also a parent of an identified student. Therefore, a total of 21 participants were included in this study with a total of 24 interviews conducted. Identification of student and adult participants in this purposive sample was initiated through a student reflection of SL (see Appendix D). The student's self-identification of having experienced a change as a result of their SL experience served as the basis for participation, although participation was contingent on signed and returned consent forms. Students were interviewed twice, once individually, and once during a student focus group. Teachers associated with the identified students were given an initial questionnaire to help identify other potential participants and to help further aid in the development of this case study. Identified teachers participated in individual interviews and an adult focus group. Community members, parents, and administrators were also interviewed once individually. An interview with teachers, administrators, parents, and community members occurred a second time during an adult focus group. Student participants were observed once interacting with their peers and teachers during their regularly scheduled school day. Pictures of documented SL experiences and news articles were examined through social media and as shared by participants. A thorough description of the participants maintains confidentiality with the use of pseudonyms that do not in any way reflect actual names. However, the details of each participant were truthful. To prevent inferential disclosure, significant details were utilized throughout the document.

Grades 6-12 Student Participants

The primary consideration was the protection of the student participants. Therefore, I used pseudonyms for all participants and thus selected random names to correspond with each

actual participant. A total of seven students participated in this study. Two students came from sixth-grade classrooms, two students from eighth, one student from ninth grade, one student from 10th grade and one student from 11th Grade.

The goal of this study was to find at least 10-12 students who had reported experiencing a transformational change as a result of the provided SL experiences and to understand how these experiences provided transformational change. However, only seven student participants were available to participate in this study. Students self-identified through a student reflection of SL, (see Appendix D) and consent forms were sent home as a result. A little more than 50% of the who responded reported change as a result of SL, but only 21 met the criteria for this study. Therefore, 21 permission forms were sent home with those students, but only seven students returned consent forms. Six students were female, and one student participant was male. The two sixth-grade students appeared to be shy, were less inclined to discuss their experiences, and shared less information than their older peers. Nonetheless, both sixth-grade students contributed to the research through their shared experiences. Two students, in particular, Jaycee and Emma, talked a lot during the interview and seemed far more excited and passionate about their experiences. Additionally, those students in middle school have had less SL experiences through the community care days than their older peers due to the process of how they achieve community service. At the beginning of sixth grade, students are scheduled to complete four experiences for the year. Thus, an eleventh-grader may have four-to-five times as many experiences as the newcomer who was in sixth grade. Consequently, older students in higher grades provided more data as did the two students who were more inclined to talk about their experiences. Two of the seven students regularly participated in and sought out opportunities to help the community outside of school hours as evidenced by their responses. Thus, their

individual interviews were more in-depth than the others who had not shared in the SL experiences. Consequently, these hours are representative of the number of hours student participants are engaged in SL while in school and do not reflect the number of hours outside of their school day.

Molly. Molly was in sixth grade and a friendly, cheerful, and petite girl. Though a little quiet, she was attentive and engaged during the interviews and shared her experiences with enthusiasm. Her mother, a parent participant, was also a teacher at CCS, and consequently, a teacher participant due to her association with identified students.

Mary. Mary was a sixth-grade student. She was a bit shy and reluctant to share very much about her experience, although several of her responses were revealing to the nature of this study.

Emma. Emma was an eighth-grade student and one of two energetic and passionate students who contributed to the understanding of this study through her detailed responses and examples given. Emma's personality is contagious. Her passion for telling the stories was evident, as she did not hesitate to respond and elaborated far more than the others. Additionally, her quick-wittedness seemed to elicit responses from her peers during the focus group interviews. She was very reflective in her conversation and consequently offered a substantial amount of data.

Jaycee. Jaycee was in ninth grade. She was one of the first students to turn in the consent form and insisted that her mom sign it because it was so important to her to be a part of the study. Her eagerness to answer and elaborate on questions was apparent by her lengthy responses to the original and follow-up questions as a result of her shared experiences. Thus, Jaycee's detailed responses helped to build understanding surrounding learning experiences

through SL opportunities for middle and high school students. When Jaycee was younger, she lost her home to a house fire. This trauma may have contributed to her sensitivity when referring to the needs of her community.

Jenna. Jenna was a 10th-grade student. She was a quiet and somewhat shy girl. Perhaps that is why her mother prodded her to participate in the study. The amount of data collected from Jenna is less than the other student participants and possibly reflective of her shy tendencies; however, her comments during our interview added to the overall understanding of this case study.

Sarah. Sarah was in eighth grade. She was tall and slender and had a sweet, friendly disposition. She quickly responded to the questions. Sarah was involved with the “Dance for Change” program at the school that provided an opportunity for students to create their own dances and then perform them outside of school as an initiative for raising funds where needed.

Jack. Jack was in 11th grade and very well-mannered. He didn’t hesitate to participate in the study after learning about the research involving students who had benefited as a result of the community days at the school. As a result of Jack being in 11th grade, he had more SL experience documented as did the other student participants.

Table 1

Student Participants

Participant Pseudonym	Grade	Race	Gender	# of SL Experiences
Molly	6	Caucasian	Female	3
Mary	6	African-American	Female	3
Emma	8	Caucasian	Female	11
Sarah	8	Caucasian	Female	11
Jaycee	9	Bi-racial	Female	17
Jenna	10	Caucasian	Female	18
Jack	11	Caucasian	Male	22

Grades 6-12 Teachers

Becky. Ms. Becky was an English teacher and the SL coordinator at CCS with 12 years of experience. She held a master's degree in rhetoric and composition and once recognized as "A teacher of the year." Her room was part of an old cotton mill. This spacious building echoed the memories of the historic past with its wooden beams lining the upper ceiling and long hallways. Ms. Becky's room was upstairs on the second floor. Posters with literacy adorned almost every part of wall space. Becky was one of the first persons to meet with me in preparation for this study eagerly. She spent an extensive amount of time at the school during off hours. Often, this extra time was spent helping other students after school or assisting with other needs in her school. Her enthusiasm for this research spread throughout the school and helped to create a great support for the process of collecting data.

Thelma. Thelma was a sixth-grade math teacher. Upon entering the historic elongated building, situated in the middle of downtown, students were whizzing by to get to their next class, as Thelma had just released her group of students and awaited me during her planning time. You could sense the responsibility she felt as she barely took time to breathe before meeting me during this time of invitation. She hurriedly picked up a couple of things and made her way toward her desk pointing us to the designated area for our discussion. Thelma held a teaching degree in elementary education with a specialization in middle school math. Thelma had 14 years of teaching experience. She collaborated with the other sixth-grade teachers to plan for the four community days each year planned for the students.

Elizabeth. Elizabeth was a sixth-grade English teacher. Entering the main entrance of this remarkable brick building of the past, a set of double transparent glass doors, edging out from the brick walls awaited my entrance. Students who saw me coming stepped aside to make

way. The noise from this 3:00 release hour of over 700 students was dominant and permeated the atmosphere. Being situated on the first floor to the left of the school entrance, I made my way through the crowd and noise of students, down a long hall of small classrooms. Hers was just near the end. She awaited me along with her daughter just released along with the others. We began to talk just shortly after her daughter hurried along for dance class. Along with her English endorsement, Elizabeth had a degree in Psychology as well as a master's degree in mental disabilities. She taught in the community for 15 years. Additionally, Elizabeth had her National Board Certification in teaching and resided in the community where she teaches. Her kindness and warm welcome to her classroom is representative of the school culture that I witnessed. Elizabeth was a teacher participant, and also served as a parent participant.

Margaret. Margaret was the “exceptional children’s teacher” for grades 6-12. Walking to her room just upstairs from the first floor, she greeted me with a smile from a distance as she waited at her door and saw me approaching. I walked down the long hallway toward her room near the end of this old renovated cotton mill factory. The wooden floors creaked as I walked closer dodging the tall wooden beams that lined the center of the aisle. I noticed classrooms along both sides of me, during the release of students for the day. Margaret held a Bachelor of Science (BS) degree in special education and consequently taught students’ academic and life skills. Margaret has been with CCS for seven years. Her mannerisms mimicked those of a person graciously waiting to serve others. Margaret participated in two ways for this study. While she was a teacher participant, she also served as a parent participant.

Mellissa. Mellissa was a local, lifetime resident of the school community and served as the dance instructor for the school and the community. Mellissa’s association with SL experiences with most students, in general, was extensive as a result of her “Dance for Change”

initiative. She held a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Psychology and a minor in dance. She previously taught special education classes and consequently had 19 years of teaching experience. Her room was on the second floor situated down the long narrow hallway. About midway on the left, a view of the large glass panel double doors came into view with an entrance showcasing the wooden dance floor. About 6-8 students were choreographing a song as their peers sat at their tables while some were working on homework assignments and still others waited for the end of class. Soon, Mellissa and I had time to talk just before her lunch break. She, like most busy teachers, preferred to meet during the day or just right after school. Mellissa was by far the most talkative. Perhaps it was because of the intimate role she played in the school's known culture for being engaged in the community through dance. She had a lot to say. The routine practice of creating choreographed dances for either local community members or orphanages in Honduras was titled, "Dance for Change." Its purpose was to bring support to communities close by or globally while giving the students an opportunity to display their talents. Although displaying student talent was not the only thing at work. Students were responsible for using their problem-solving skills to decide which organization they would dance for, and for implementing and carrying out the event by selecting the music and costumes along with scheduling the rehearsals. Mellissa's "Dance for Change," although a community service, was separate from the school's mandatory community days, and thus students participating did so on their own time and outside of class time. Nonetheless, Mellissa associated with an identified student participant in both the school's mandatory community days and "Dance for Change."

Table 2

Teacher Participants

Name	Gender	Race	Education	Years Teaching
Becky	Female	Caucasian	MA	12
Margaret	Female	Caucasian	BS	7
Elizabeth	Female	Caucasian	MA	15
Thelma	Female	Caucasian	BA	14
Mellissa	Female	Caucasian	BA	19

Grades 6-12 Administrators

Mr. Coffee. Mr. Coffee was the high school principal at CCS and has a BS degree in mathematics. He associated with each of the identified student participants in this study. His office, along with the other support staff and administration, was immediately recognized upon entering the building. Directly to the back of the restored building, and in front of the school's entrance, an oval counter enclosed the stay of each principal and other support staff. His interview was happenstance. Although he and the others were invited to participate, I had not yet heard from Mr. Coffee. However, after exiting from one scheduled teacher interview, I encountered this tall, well-dressed man appearing to be in his 40's. I introduced myself, and he quickly identified me. After talking for just a couple of minutes, he invited me to sit with him to talk further. This invitation led to a recorded interview. Mr. Coffee had over 14 years of experience and recognized as "Principal of the Year" in 2012. His contribution to this study was very insightful as his genuineness to serve the students and the community became obvious.

Ms. Opal. Ms. Opal was the front desk office manager for CCS and held a bachelor's degree in business administration. She had extensive experience in her field. Ms. Opal was well

aware of the SL activities provided with most of the students. She was the office manager and knew most everyone well. Ms. Opal was married and worked for more than 35 years. She was very kind and welcoming. It was always obvious that she loved her job and loved the kids whom she served. Her second role in the school was apparent, and that of a “momma” of sort. Although the school enrolled over 700 students, Ms. Opal referred to all of them as “her children.”

Ms. Patsy. Ms. Patsy was the director of development for CCS. Her role primarily was to get “information out there” as the communication director. Patsy did not associate with any of the identified student participants. However, she was fully aware of and associated extensively with the SL experiences through the publications handled under her supervision. The second floor of the massive brick building led the way to a small door on the right opening to a room with large cameras and TV screens situated along the side space heading to her small cubby-like area found just a few steps deeper back. Her other services included teaching one class of journalism and grant writing. Her journalism class was known for joining the other groups of students who were participating in the community days to capture the transpiring events and publish them in the school and local paper. Although not directly associated with the identified student participants, her role was crucial because of her involvement in detailing the accounts of those SL experiences through various social media that the identified participants recounted during this study. Additionally, she had been at the school for a number of years, and thus her knowledge of the SL experiences in the community with the overall students had been extensive.

Table 3

Administrator Participants

Name	Gender	Race	Education	Years Associated
Mr. Cofffee	Male	Caucasian	BA	7
Ms. Opal	Female	African-American	BA	3
Ms. Patsy	Female	Caucasian	BA, MA	3

Community Members

Lisa. Lisa was serving on the board for CCS and additionally was the health director at the local health department in the county of the school. The county health department has partnered with CCS in serving as a site for their SL experiences. Lisa was very detailed in sharing about those experiences and mentioned that she had a daughter who attended the school and who might be interested in the study. However, Lisa's daughter was not available to participate. Lisa contributed to the focus group questions and was very articulate with her responses.

Carol. Carol was a very practical individual who has served her community for more than 30 years. She knows the families in the community exceptionally well because of her longstanding. Her experience with education was impressive as well. She taught school at a local middle school for 25 years. During that time, Carol received certification with Ruby Payne, a well-known author, and advocate for those living in poverty. Additionally, she was trained and certified in brain theory and in technology. This extensive training led her to speak to teachers throughout the state. Her contribution to this study was compelling and insightful.

Tommy. Tommy was a local resident and a part time school electrician. I met Tommy after leaving CCS for the day and finding the need for assistance after realizing I had a depleted

car battery. Upon re-entry to the school building, he overheard a conversation I had with another teacher and quickly offered to assist. After restoring my car battery, we began to talk about his role at the school, and he quickly became a person of interest. With my consent forms within reach, Tommy agreed to talk with me. Tommy had a son enrolled in the school but otherwise was not associated with any of the identified participants. However, with his position and close partnership with CCS, and his knowledge of the various SL opportunities, his insight was helpful to the overall understanding of his collaboration between community and school. Ironically, during our conversation, he began to elaborate on the changes he noted especially with his son. Coincidentally, I gained his and later the son's consent to include him into this study. His comments revealed his belief that these experiences bring change to the students and specifically to his son.

Table 4

Community Member Participants

Name	Race	Current Job Title	Number of years associated with CCS
Carol	Caucasian	Director of Non-profit	3
Lisa	Caucasian	Director of Health Department	3
Tommy	Caucasian	Electrician	26

Parent Participants

Elizabeth. Elizabeth was Molly's mother. Elizabeth was an energetic sixth-grade English teacher at CCS who appeared to be in her late thirties. She was married and had two children. She had been very involved with her daughter's activities and thus was able to contribute significantly to the understanding of this case study research. Elizabeth was so

excited to talk about those experiences that she informed other parents about the study going on at her school and with her daughter. Her enthusiasm was evidenced in her warm welcome and accommodating arrangements. Elizabeth offered the use of her room anytime for interviews. It was in her room where the student focus group took place.

Theresa. Theresa was Jaycee's mother. Theresa, who appears to be in her early to mid-thirties, had a full schedule and worked two jobs. In addition to working two jobs, Theresa had a side business at home making jewelry. However, her involvement with Jaycee was evident as she elaborated on Jaycee's experiences without hesitation and with great enthusiasm. Theresa additionally contributed to the focus group questions by offering a response to each question.

Patricia. Patricia was Emma's mother. Patricia was a single mom and worked from home. She also had an older son living with her. Patricia was very inviting of my questions and attentive to the process. Her involvement with Emma was evident as she carefully described Emma's experiences with the community. Patricia also participated in the adult focus group and added to the conversation at length.

Frances. Frances was Mary's mother. Frances was married and had two children at home. She worked full-time outside of the home, and although she was very inviting of her daughter to participate, she was somewhat distracted during our initial conversation and interview. The amount of feedback from Frances' interview was very limited and did not yield a significant amount of data at all. However, her responses to the focus group questions generated somewhat more data.

Margaret. Margaret was Jenna's mother. Margaret was also a classroom teacher at CCS and a teacher participant for this study. Margaret appeared to be in her early fifties, was married, and has one other child at home. Although she was not fully aware of her daughter's experiences

due to having to be with other students during their community days, she was very supportive of her daughter talking with me about those experiences.

Tommy. Tommy was Jack’s dad. Tommy was the part-time electrician at CCS. His only son Jack was in 11th grade. Tommy was also a community participant, though not originally identified with any particular student, he served as a potential participant due to his close association and partnership with the school. Tommy initiated Jack’s involvement once learning about this case study research by alluding to his son during our interview, however, under the title of “community participant.” During this time, Tommy expressed the changes he witnessed as a result of Jack’s continued exposure to community experiences. Tommy’s contribution to this study was especially helpful, since his son, a male student, had consented to offer a perspective to this otherwise all-female student-participant body.

Table 5

Parent Participants

Name	Race	Employed
Elizabeth	Caucasian	Yes
Theresa	Caucasian	Yes
Patricia	Caucasian	Yes
Frances	African-American	Yes
Margaret	African-American	Yes
Tommy	Caucasian	Yes

Middle and High School Teachers and Administrator Participants

Teachers and administrators of CCS were inviting of and showed enthusiasm for the case study through their continued remarks of affirmation, and with some, eagerness to participate and to offer support where needed. Moreover, other support staff members at CCS were aware of the study and shared in the excitement and willingness to contribute. Some teachers, who already had a full schedule, did not hesitate to provide in-depth perceptions of transformational learning experiences through the aid of SL. However, not all teachers at CCS were participants. Only the teachers and administrators associated with the identified students were selected to participate, but not all consented. Consequently, teachers and administrators, though aware of the SL experiences provided, were not necessarily closely associated with the identified student. Three teachers directly associated with an identified student who participated in the study. Two of the teacher-participants also served as parent-participants of the same identified student with whom they associated. Therefore, not all teachers and administrators could comment directly regarding to a specific student's experience as desired from this study; however, teachers were able to specifically describe the process and the benefits to the overall student body at large.

Not all Grades 6-12 teachers and administrators at CCS participated in the initial teacher questionnaire. The executive director suggested that I start with the student reflection to identify potential student participants and follow up with the teachers and administrators as a result of the proposed student reflection of SL experiences and begin from there. Consequently, five teachers and two administrators associated with the identified student participants or the SL experiences provided agreed to participate. Each of the five teacher participants and two administrators was associated with at least one of the five student participants or at least had some knowledge of the student and greater knowledge with the SL experiences provided for the students in general.

One teacher, in particular, became a close collaborator and served as a peer reviewer for my study. Becky, the SL coordinator, became involved after receiving an invitation from the executive director, Dr. Conner, who initially introduced us. Her immediate support led to the initiation of the case study. Her involvement helped to initiate the formation of this case study successfully. Other participants continued to surface as a result of her support and the support of other staff as evidenced in the recommendation of names for community members who were known for their partnership at CCS.

Each of the five teachers had a BS degree in education, and two of the five also held a master's degree, and one held National Board certification. Additionally, two of the five had a special education endorsement. Their experience ranged from six to 15 years of teaching experience in the classroom. The two administrators had over 45 years of experience working with students.

Although SL is a required component of the school's program, not all of the teachers are fully aware of all the experiences provided at every grade level. For instance, grade levels collaborate on the services they provide for the students and thus were more aware of their own grade level and the participation experiences for those students in their respective grade levels. Most, however, were aware of the services performed outside of their grade level. Additionally, all of the teacher-participants helped to coordinate the SL experiences for their students and were present during the time of the SL experiences. However, one teacher also served as the SL coordinator and her involvement was more extensive. Consequently, the association between the student and the teacher was linked by the SL experience as well as the classroom experience, although the student may not have been a current student but rather a previous one who attended their class in the past. The amount of time that each teacher spent with the students during the

SL experiences was limited. For instance, classroom lecture or large groups of students inhibited relationship building between the teacher and the individual student. Consequently, knowledge of the student prior to the experience in most cases was limited, and knowledge of student transformation was minimal due to the dynamics of the school day thereby limiting opportunities to get to know each other more fully. Therefore, in most cases, the classroom teacher and the administrator associated with the student were not able to share an in-depth portrait of the changes in individual student participants but did share an in-depth portrait of SL experiences and the benefits shared overall among the students at CCS. However, teachers who were also parents shared an in-depth portrait of the identified student, their individual SL experience, and the overall benefits individually as well as collectively. Finally, all teacher and administrator participants shared some overall changes with students in general, as it related to their SL experiences. One administrator also shared specific details of change pertaining to students' experiences with community service.

Community Members

Each of the three community members was eager to share their thoughts about the SL experience provided by the students in their community, and their involvement with students in general, but could not necessarily identify specific changes to the identified student. However, the community member did share with me the types of SL experiences they associated with, their relationship with the overall student at CCS, and the teachers, and how they believed the experience benefited the student and the community at large. Two interviews were lengthy and very insightful due to the ongoing remarks and feedback given from each interview question. The third interview although shorter was a distinct perspective that the other two didn't necessarily have. Both female participant community members described the overall demeanor

of students as they observed the student actively participating in meeting a community need. Finally, although each community participant has extensive experience with the community, and many of its members, the number of years associated with the school, may not be entirely reflective of their association with those working in the school. However, one community member previously worked with the current teachers at CCS a number of years when employed with the public school system. Thus her association with some of the teachers and administrators may exceed twenty-five years.

Parents

The parents consisted of six mothers. Each mother had one student participant. Although both parents had an invitation to participate, only the mothers provided consent. Overall, each parent was interested in the project and eager to talk with me. Four of the six parents, however, contributed the majority of the information provided. One parent was less inclined to elaborate, and the other was so busy that I obtained only a little information. Five of the six parents associated with the specific SL experience related to their child. One parent did not associate with the direct activity pertaining to her child but associated with some other experiences involved with the CCS. Two of the mothers were also teachers at the school and thus served a dual role in the data collection process. In addition to offering a parental perspective, they also offered a teacher perspective, and participated in the individual teacher interviews and focus group.

Results

The results in this section are based on a total of 21 participants, which included seven student reflections of SL and seven individual student interviews from Grades 6-12 and five student observations. Additionally, data were collected from a student and adult focus group,

eight teacher and administrator questionnaires and their individual interviews. Finally, three community member questionnaires, six parent interviews, and four documents (see Appendix K) relating to the SL experience were collected and analyzed. Three participants served with two titles. For instance, two teachers were also two parents of two identified students and one community member was also a parent. Therefore although a total of 21 participants were included in this study, 24 individual interviews were conducted.

Individual and focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed to identify emerging themes. Each teacher participant was asked the same set of questions, and each administrator, community member, student and parent additionally had their own set of questions. However, due to the semi-structured format, and the three participants serving in two various roles, some questions varied based on the responses and positions of each participant in order to avoid duplicate questions and a better flow of wording. As a result some questions and responses prompted different responses. Finally, the communications director and the SL coordinator for CCS, also teacher participants, pictures and news articles during their individual interview helping to further illustrate their shared experience with SL and the other identified participants.

The qualitative analytic software, QSR NVIVO, was used to organize, transcribe and analyze data. However, a second method for organizing and analyzing data were also utilized. For example, following transcription using the QSR NVIVO software, data were analyzed using Tesch's (1990) eight-step model. Both QSR NVIVO and Tesch's model were used in conjunction during the process of analysis. Three themes emerged in the examination of the case study: a sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness. Each of these three

themes continually occurred during interviews with students, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members (See Appendix L).

Student participants did feel overall that SL a) helped them to become more aware of the people and situations and around them, b) made them feel better as a person, c) motivated them to help others, e) gave them a better sense of belonging and connectedness to others, f) felt more appreciated and valued by others, g) had an increased confidence and h) a desire to do similar activities again, and i) had feelings of happiness when serving the community. Each of these codes was grouped into the three identified themes: increased awareness, increased engagement and a sense of family (See Appendix M).

Adult participants did feel overall that the SL experiences created various learning opportunities and was supportive of many aspects of the learning process such as a) generating excitement, b) building awareness, c) creating opportunities for engagement, d) fostering responsibility, e) maintaining expectations, and f) having a sense of belonging or connectedness g) problem solving. Other benefits surfaced as well, such as increased self-esteem, and sensitivity to others. Each of these codes was grouped into the identified themes.

Each of the three newspaper articles referenced (see Appendix K) were directly linked to a student participant who in their stories also shared in the telling of the celebration relating to the publicized community event. A second source was reviewed in support of the number of hours each student participant took part in during the SL experiences over the course of the last three years. Consequently, news articles and office documentation of the SL event and the number of hours the student participated in the event were made available for review during the course of participant interviews. The three newspaper articles were reviewed and coded. Finally, a journal of my research was kept in which I recorded my encounters with participants

and my assumptions, thoughts and activities. I referenced this journal as data were being reviewed and analyzed in order to revisit what I was thinking at the time of the interview. The five student observations were directly related to the SL experiences and used for analysis. Thus document analysis of three newspaper articles, seven student records of SL experiences, five student observations and my personal journal was performed and the data was coded for themes.

The codes identified through this document analysis included shared excitement, engaged, supported, and feelings of being proud and feeling valued. Consequently, these codes were analyzed and grouped into the three identified themes: A sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness.

Theme One: Increased Awareness

The theme of awareness was first recognized in the numerous codes being identified during the initial reading of all the data and then the reread during each individual transcript. Increased awareness was a component articulated by virtually all of the study participants and overwhelming conveyed through each of their words. Consequently, experiences that actively engage people who are becoming aware of the needs of their community have been shown to be a benefit both to the recipient of the service and the one doing the serving (Celio et al., 2011; Geller et al., 2014; Groh et al., 2011; Soria & Weiner, 2013). The theme of awareness was predominant in many of the individual interviews. The codes for this theme included the topics of becoming aware, having a new perspective, a new outlook, and a sensitivity to others.

Regarding the first research question, students overall felt that SL changed them as a person. However, none of them reported changes that could be identified as transformations relating to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL. For example, although students became increasingly aware of their assumptions due to their new experiences through the SL practices provided, and

even had a desire to participate in continued experiences, not all of the 10 phases of TL were attained, which are necessary according to Mezirow (2000) and Cranton (2002), to be considered transformative. Nonetheless, one of the students experienced the first phase of Mezirow's (2000) TL theory as evidenced in her shared experience regarding what she originally thought to be true about the police officers in her community and what she now thinks about the police officers in her community. Emma's disorienting dilemma of having an encounter with what she believed to be true and what she experienced to be true supports the necessary component of discrepancy in the first phase stage of TL. Cranton (2002) describes this disorienting dilemma as "an activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard or read" (p. 66). Thus, Emma's experience revealed her own assumptions and as a result changed her views and had a whole new respect for law enforcement agencies and having a feeling of being happy, having a renewed sense of confidence, and a desire to give to others.

Consequently, changes reported by students included being more aware of and connected to the community and the needs of the community. Additionally, the students shared the benefits of having an awareness of community service opportunities, the amount of people involved in serving, and what can be accomplished when people serve the community. The students developed an understanding that giving back to the community is a way of appreciating where they live, as well.

Molly reported having experienced change as a result of participating in SL activities. The change she conveyed included feeling more respected by others, being more aware of the community and connected within it. The types of SL activities that Molly participated in included: cleaning the neighborhood with her peers by walking to pick up trash in her low

socioeconomic school neighborhood and downtown streets, packing food boxes helping to raise money through an online mission project by packing food boxes to “Stop Hunger Now”, participating in “Dance for Change” (an avenue through performance that money can be raised in support of meeting a need), and adopting a troop from overseas. Molly identified herself as a Christian. Molly shared her SL experiences with me and communicated how those opportunities created a greater awareness for her.

Mary similarly discussed having experienced change as a result of participating in SL activities. The changes she conveyed included becoming more aware of the community and its needs, an increased motivation to help others, and a desire to do similar activities in the future. The types of activities Mary participated in, included raking leaves for a nearby neighbor, reading to kindergartners at a local community school, and picking up litter that had canvassed the low socioeconomic community on the school grounds, adjacent neighborhoods and streets downtown. Mary identified herself as a Christian. Mary shared her SL experiences with me and communicated how those opportunities created a greater awareness for her. The following exchange between Mary and me identified the theme of awareness.

Researcher: How do you feel about serving in the community?

Mary: Well it makes me like more aware of it like some people they like it's just the way of helping...ya.

Similarly, Emma discussed having experienced change as a result of participating in SL activities. The changes she conveyed included becoming more aware of the community and its needs, appreciating the collaborative effort between the school and the community, having a new respect for law enforcement agencies, a motivation to help others, a renewed sense of confidence, and a desire to do similar activities in the future. The types of activities that Emma

participated in included picking up litter in her school's neighborhood, visiting the animal shelter to clean out dog pens, providing food and water for the animals, participating in a fundraiser to help support the animal shelter, and making blankets for the animals. Emma spent time with her peers making and distributing goody bags for the local police and fire departments and EMTs in her community, as well. She, along with her teachers and the other students, walked to the fire department and delivered the goody bags on the day of their scheduled tour of the facility where the students learned about these community helpers. Emma identified herself as a Christian. A student shared her story of how SL allowed her to identify with law enforcement as a result of her experience within the community. She expressed that SL transformed how she views people, contributed to an increased awareness, and resulted in her feeling better about herself. The following is an exchange between Emma and me regarding her SL experiences in the community.

Researcher: Well ok I see, so really you've done a number of things ...well how did these experiences that you're talking about it...how if at all did these experiences change how you thought about serving in the community?

Emma: Well really getting out when we go and do something for other people it makes me realize that not everybody like the littlest thing that you do can change like how other people see the community and like if you see somebody do good and you say hey that's nice and you say maybe I can do that I think it makes the whole community start to work together and I just think it's great or better

Emma continued to share her story of how SL had increased her awareness and additionally increased her ongoing thinking about the experiences. For example, she shared some previous experiences that she had relating to her church and made a comparison. While

she had participated in similar activities outside of school, she maintained that it was a one-time activity and never really thought of again. However, from her perspective, the experiences provided at school caused her to think about the people and community often, and as result, she described how she and her mother are involved in ongoing projects similar to the ones Emma participated in at school.

Likewise, Jenna, identified herself as a person who experienced change as a result of SL experiences. The changes she conveyed included an awareness of opportunities in the community to serve, the amount of people involved in serving, and what can accomplished when people serve the community. She also expressed an understanding that giving back to the community is a way of appreciating where she lives. The types of experiences Jenna participated in included making and distributing goodie bags for the local police and fire departments, making bracelets in support of a local animal shelter, and participating in packing boxes for “Stop Hunger Now”. Jenna conveyed that these experiences built her awareness of the community. Her quiet demeanor seemed to inhibit her verbal responses. Jenna did not specify a religious preference. Jenna shared her SL experiences with me and communicated how those opportunities created a greater awareness for her. The following exchange took place between me and Jenna during an interview:

Researcher: Ok..how do you feel connected?

Student: Um cause like like you're helping people and you're more aware of the situations around you and ...ya that's all.

Comparably, Sarah reported having experienced a change as a result of the various SL experiences. The changes she conveyed included having an increased awareness of the community, its needs, and her ability to help out with those needs. The types of community

service Sarah participated in included picking up trash in her neighborhood and along the streets of her low socioeconomic town, cleaning the classrooms at her school, creating and distributing goody bags in support of the local police and fire departments, and collecting canned goods in order to meet various local needs. Sarah indicated that these experiences motivated her desire to participate in the future. Sarah identified herself as a Christian. Sarah shared her SL experiences with me and communicated how those opportunities created a greater awareness for her. The following was an exchange between Sarah and me:

Researcher: Can you think about these other experiences like when you went and um you created goody bags and you visited the police and fire department if you will think about these different types of experiences um ...I want you to can you let me know whether or not you feel like these have made a difference in who you as a person?

Sarah: I think it does and it open your eyes and like be able to help out the community and other people they are in need.

Lastly, Jack discussed having experienced change as a result of participating in SL activities. Jack's participation in writing and mailing letters to soldiers and shopping for kids at Christmastime seemed to have the most impact on him. Jack conveyed that these experiences motivated him to do more activities like this in the future. Jack has identified himself as a Christian. The changes he reported experiencing as a result of SL included an increased awareness of people in the community and the needs they have, a desire to help, an understanding of how to help, and a feeling of being happy. Consequently, Jack shared his SL experiences with me and communicated how those opportunities created a greater awareness for him.

The following exchange between Jack and me revealed his shared experience involving the theme of awareness:

Researcher: Can you share with me the different community experiences you've been involved in over the last several years?

Jack: Um some of the things we've wrote letters to soldiers and had those delivered to them and um the most recent community day we actually went shopping for kids for Christmas and that was with my homeroom um it just provided a good opportunity for the community

Researcher: Do you feel like that having had that experience and other experienced do you think it has changed you at all as a person

Jack: Ah yes it has.

Researcher: Yes it has

Jack: Ah it just opens your eyes a little bit and lets you know that not everything is given to you and that there are other people out there that need a whole lot more than you do.

Although student participants repeatedly shared and affirmed how their experiences built awareness of their community and their thoughts about themselves and toward others, none of those changes were reflective of Mezirow's (2000) definition of TL, and only one student participant was identified of having a disorienting dilemma. Although Emma had encountered the first phase of Mezirow's TL theory, the data did not reveal that Emma had moved into phase two of Mezirow's 10 stages that must be experienced in order for TL to occur. For example, although Emma had shown some reflective thought about her experiences and very clearly articulated the disorienting dilemma, she did not voice any self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame.

Only two adult participants could recall types of changes specific to the identified student participant. This was mainly due to the lack of prior knowledge of the associated student. The two teachers who identified change in two associated students were also the mothers of the students with whom they were identified. Additionally, none of those reported changes reflected Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL.

In addition to students' stories and shared experiences, administrators, community members, and parents repeatedly articulated the word or referred to the meaning of "awareness" during their interviews when conveying their understanding of the SL experience and the impact of those experiences. For example, I listened to the retelling of a story of a young man who, as a result of one of the community days at their school, changed how he thought about his future. He no longer wrestled with what he wanted to do in life because after having an opportunity to meet the firefighters in the community and learning about their roles, he was intrigued. His interest increased enough to inquire about how to move in that direction as indicated in the following exchange between an administrator and me:

Researcher: Wow...that's really neat well you have been helpful to me...you mentioned one little fellow to me who wanted to become a fire fighter or who did become a fire fighter what was the story with that?

Admin: ...Well what he said to me he had hum they had did something with the fire department and he said "Ms. _____" I have even looked into becoming a junior fire fighter ... you said you have to be 16 to become one but he had the book to study the questions in order to when he turned 16 he can apply to becoming a junior fire fighter. He wanted to be able to go to a the fires and rescues you know and you know he loves animals and cars and stuff he wanted to be able to do that

Researcher: And you believe that was the result of him having gone to the fire department?

Admin: Oh ya..being exposed to it when they are exposed to something different I think they learning to this maybe something I want to do in my life in my career or something

In addition to this administrator's perspective of how SL provides opportunities for awareness, other participants chime in as they too share similar stories. Questions were asked during this time regarding how SL experiences were helpful and how those experiences contributed to students acquisition of the skills needed to make healthy decisions as reflected in my adult focus group questions. Lisa, the first community member, shared how she believes that students, as a result of volunteering, develop a greater awareness of who their community is and how partnerships within the community relate. Additionally, a teacher and a parent also elaborated on the increased awareness that students have as a result of participating in various SL activities. They shared how these experiences position the students to learn about their communities. One particular student was so immersed in the experience that, after the task was completed, her thoughts lingered about the elderly lady who she had helped. As conveyed by this one teacher, this student and several others repeatedly asked about the welfare of the community members they had met and learned of their declining health. The following exchange reflected some of those shared stories during the focus group session:

Lisa: Um I think for the student it increases their knowledge or their awareness as to um-volunteer opportunities because they have helped with the Christian help center and some different organizations such as that. As well as services that are available or what they're local governments or entities what they do behind the scenes to make sure we are safe or services that we offer that they might not be aware of just increase that general awareness that is in their community and what their community is about. And as for the um agencies

or the churches or schools that they go to um I think it gives those younger children you know a different interaction not just with the teacher or the TA or a parent volunteer it gives them a different experience is not the word I'm looking for..um maybe a different outlook someone else coming in and sharing with them reading or this is the way we read this and a different interaction that they might not otherwise have.

Carol: Um I think for the student it increases their knowledge or their awareness as to um volunteer opportunities because they have helped with the Christian help center and some different organizations such as that. As well as services that are available or what they're local governments or entities what they do behind the scenes to make sure we are safe or services that we offer that they might not be aware of just increase that general awareness that is in their community and what their community is about. And as for the um agencies or the churches or schools that they go to um I think it gives those younger children you know a different interaction not just with the teacher or the TA or a parent volunteer it gives them a different experience is not the word I'm looking for..um maybe a different outlook someone else coming in

Parent 1: Um I think they're helpful by allowing the kids to really see what's going on in the community. It may not always be on the news or in the news paper or even word of mouth that you hear about things but there are things that are going on in the community and I think it teaches them a little bit more on their surrounding. Researcher: Right...In what ways do you believe SL is meaningful to the student?

Teacher 1: I think it gives them a sense of community that they go to school in. Once we met the elderly lady that we raked the leaves for they worked harder because they wanted to please her and when they found out that the lady up the street was in the hospital they

(kids) said "did you check on her is she out" you know so it's different kids I go with every time so it's amazing to me that some of them would even remember ...and would say to me hey " hey do you remember so and so? how are they doing"...

Other similar stories and interpretations of SL experiences revealing the theme of awareness continued to surface. For example, Becky is a teacher and is associated with most all of the students at CCS as the director of SL experiences known as “Community Care Days”. She is not associated with a specific, identified student participant, but is closely and extensively associated with the SL experiences being provided as the coordinator for the CCS care days. Becky believed that the SL opportunities, although not formally addressed as SL, but rather simply community days, had positive results contrary to what she had expected. For example, she conveyed that overall, these experiences provided opportunities for students to learn how to interact with others, how to deal with diverse people, how to problem solve, and how to make a difference in the world. Further, Becky felt like these experiences allowed students opportunities to deepen their relationships with their peers. She also expressed that the activities seemed to help hold the students accountable for service while giving them the opportunity to give to their community. Additionally, she perceived that the SL gave the students a sense of ownership and feeling of empowerment, increased their engagement and motivation to participate, and heightened their senses of awareness for the community and its needs.

Another teacher, Thelma, who is specifically associated with Mary, a 6th grade identified student participant shared similar stories. Although Thelma had an association with Mary as one of her classroom teachers, Thelma did not know Mary prior to their SL experiences and therefore could not report any changes. However, Thelma did convey that students did gain valuable benefits through the SL experiences such as a sense of connectedness, an increased sensitivity to

others, social skills, an understanding of diversity, and consideration of their future careers. Finally, Thelma expressed that the SL component for quality standards that was likely most influential in transforming the identified student, though not according to Mezirow's TL theory, was seen through two elements: meaningful service and tied to the curriculum.

Elizabeth is specifically associated with Molly, a 6th grade identified student participant. In addition to being associated with Molly as her teacher, Elizabeth is also her mother. Elizabeth reported that Molly had evidenced a change, although not according to Mezirow's theory of TL. The change associated in Molly, and conveyed by Elizabeth included increased excitement for work, increased appreciation of her belongings, and initiative for community projects at home. In addition, Elizabeth expressed that overall, students benefited from SL opportunities as a result of their increased awareness of the community, feeling more connected, having closer friendships, understanding their role in society through participation, having an opportunity to gain an appreciation for what they have, and having an ongoing desire to participate in similar activities. Finally, Elizabeth believed that the SL component for quality standards that was likely most influential in transforming the identified student, though not according to Mezirow's TL theory, was seen through the meaningful service that was provided.

Margaret is specifically associated with Jenna, a 10th grade identified student participant. In addition to being associated with Jenna as her teacher, Margaret is also her mother. Margaret did not report any change to Jenna as a result of SL experiences but did identify potential benefits with students in general. Increased diversity, a greater awareness of community members, and an increased opportunity for future employment were the three areas that Margaret conveyed as being beneficial to the students. In addition, Margaret felt that the element of SL

which was perhaps most significant to the student's experience was "durations and intensity" (NYLC, 2009).

Mellissa as the dance instructor for the school and community is specifically associated with four identified student participants for this study: Molly, a 6th grade identified student participant, Emma, an 8th grade student participant, Jaycee, a 9th grade student participant, and Jack, an 11th grade student. Although Mellissa had an association with these four students as their teacher, Mellissa did not know Molly, Emma, Jaycee or Jack prior to their SL experiences and therefore could not report any changes.

Consequently, after all transcriptions of interviews were completed, the combined data from all participants in this case study analysis revealed 27 emerging codes which were grouped into three themes through the use of QSR NVIVO and Tesch's (1990) eight-step model.

Theme Two: Increased Engagement

Increased engagement was a theme that surfaced from all of the study participants. Consequently, disengagement among students has been noted as an international crisis according to Wimberely (2016). Nonetheless, the theme of engagement was first recognized in the numerous codes identified during the initial reading of all the data and then grouped after the additional multiple rereadings of each individual transcript and recognized through codes identified as: excitement, problem solving, motivated, ongoing participation, taking initiative, and self governing.

One specific account of ongoing participation and taking initiative was recounted by Ms. Opal, who shared stories of two students taking initiative to help neighboring flood victims by donating water. She recounted how students were so moved by the tragedy of that recent flood, that these two students on their own initiative set out to do something about it. She recalled the

sensitivity of those students wanting to help meet the urgent need for supplies and credits their participation in SL experiences at school as a means by which the students responded. During this focus group interview, she shared her understanding of students who, as a result of learning how to give back to the community through the routine practice of community days, later took an initiative to help out another community.

Researcher: Oh...wow..and so do you see kids taking an initiation and helping out without being asked

Ms. Opal: Ya even just this year we had hum some of the kids in journalism I think it was the flood of 20...happened down east they had one couple students they wanted to donate water so they took it upon themselves to write letters and got them approved so different companies donated water so they could take down to the flood victims.

Researcher: What do you think was behind them wanting to do that?

Ms. Opal: Me, I think it was they saw that it was a need for those kids in that elementary school and that particular area and they wanted to help them they knew they didn't have what they needed to function properly in school I guess that's what I'm saying and they wanted to help them and wanted them not to suffer and not to be without...

Similarly, Mellissa, the dance instructor at CCS did convey that students overall, and in general, were excited, motivated, engaged, encouraged, felt valued, and learned how to be kind to others during times of community service. Other observations were shared of students overall by Mellissa. She also conveyed that during these opportunities students were engaged and laughing as they worked to solve problems together. Mellissa also expressed that the students seemed to feel more valued, had more confidence, and seemed to be more likely to participate in community service again.

During a student focus group, Jenna shared her feelings of wanting to help others more often and reported wanting to do similar activities again:

Jenna: I think it's really special to get to help out and how we see things kinda wants us to do more of those services

Researcher: It's beneficial how we can see things?

Jenna: Oh ya because I don't know how to explain it because you can kinda get out there and do more things

Similarly, the adult focus group helped to shed light on increased awareness as well. For example, the group was discussing how SL experiences helped students, and Ms. Opal added that she had noticed that students were learning responsibility, and taking initiative with projects outside of the school day. Additionally, she shared about students who were having conversations about what they wanted to do in the future. She elaborated on the sheer excitement of the students when they were helping to meet a need in the community.

For example, part of her interview yielded the following exchange:

Ms. Opal: Oh wow.. um I have noticed it has taught responsibility un they're excited about it they have learned how to develop other projects to assist other people they have uh got involved in keeping other projects that are not even in their school like 4 H they get involved more with that um we have one little fellow um he is actually only 15 but because of community service he wants to become a firefighter and so he's working on that you know he want to be a junior fire fighter you know to help people

Researcher: Wow...well what..

Ms. Opal: And they do some community service gives them a place of being um it its gives them a chance to see what they wouldn't normally see or normally wouldn't be involved in

Researcher: Mm hu

Ms. Opal: Um knowing you are helping someone half across the world or across you know the other end of the state knowing that you're helping someone like that you can tell that excitement that they get I mean they're are working on these projects.. um have you ever been here for one of our community service days?

Researcher: No I haven't I would like too

Ms. Opal: You should you should come these kids I mean they get all into I think last year they did um packed food to send to a different country. They processed it they had to bag the rice and all of that and it was awesome and the kids were so excited it was like an assembly line they was in the dining hall it was just awesome and the people came up to pick up the packages even when they go out to work at the um shelter you know they have to be responsible enough to get their permission forms signed and make sure everything is in place for when they go up there

A second administrator capitalized on this same notion as seen in our conversation during an individual interview and specifically mentioned the lack of discipline issues in the school which houses about 770 students. He spent a lot of the time discussing school climate and his thoughts regarding the lack of discipline problems. However this administrator also shared how he felt that other factors contributed to the overall climate of the school. He mad an emphasis on the culture of the school and the expectations that have been in place since the opening of the school. While he believed several factors may contribute to the fact that no discipline problems

existed, he believed that it was primarily due to the culture of the school community. He additionally shared the fact that even though SL is mandatory, students are always finding other ways to help out at the school or in the community. He relayed that most kids did not even report their community service because they had already exceeded the 20 hour requirement. The following reveals some of that exchange:

Researcher: Do you believe that their experience with SL initiates an ongoing involvement with those kinds of practices?

Admin 1: Ya I would think so again we do have like the minimum requirementyou have some that are interested in just reaching the min (requirement) but we you wouldn't find that to be the case with both...they don't even document it something that could be considered community service they won't even document it because they know they are going to get their 8 hours.

Researcher: Ok I see...how do you think that experience contributes to them having skills needed to make healthy decisions in life?

Admin 1: Um that I don't know, I haven't even really thought about that. Just the responsibility piece of it comes to mind you know um like even with their dress I don't know if you recognize we have a dress code as well.

Researcher: Yes

Admin: I think all of that I don't think you can attribute success to one thing I think you it's all interconnected so I think each piece of what we do kinda attributes to our success cause even with like discipline um I worked for traditional middle schools as well as this is my first charter I've worked for but I've been here now going on 3rd year this is my 3rd year I'm on going on now and by way of discipline even when you compare it to a

elementary school typically at a middle school and high school you deal with discipline a lot.... I don't. It's a very small percentage of my day...they uh basically know what our expectations by in large they rise to it

Students also have a lot to say about their experiences with SL and whether or not they would do similar activities again. Emma showed so much excitement during her responses. She quickly shared how she has already taken initiative to meet community needs and how she recruited her family members to join the fun. An excerpt of this dialogue is as follows:

Researcher: Wow...good..I think I know the answer, but would you choose to meet a community need again like on your own?

Emma: Yes! I would and actually me and my mom done a few things at the animal shelter ourselves so ya I would go out outside of school any day...I love it..

Parents shared similar illustrations. Margaret, Jenna's mother, shared how she believed that her daughter's experience and the experience of her students was meaningful. Margaret described the day that she had participated a Veterans Day-related SL with her students. Margaret recalled that there were many male students in the class, and mentioned several illustrations of how much thought the boys put forth in creating cards for the veterans. The fervor of the students, as well as the multiple questions they asked, surprised her. Margaret shared the following during a focus group interview:

Researcher: In what ways are these types of experiences meaningful to the student?

Margaret: I do (think these experiences are meaningful) I'm going to say this because all students are just people so we are all different people and we are all going to feel different about it for example the class for example the class I helped out they were doing things for the veterans..they made wreaths to go on the soldier's graves and the

students were so interested in. . . that asked him questions and they loved it and um . . .but they put so much effort into the cards and made them beautiful.

Document analysis conveyed the theme of increased engagement. For instance, the document showing an English class shopping for children reveals a number of students engaged with that shopping experience. Specifically, a picture of Jack is shown in the article, and his expression shows excitement as he showcases a smile while standing next to the recently purchased items.

Student observations likewise conveyed the theme of engagement. As the representative of “Stop Hunger Now” began to speak about the project, and what they would be doing, students in general were attentative. When the focus shifted to packing rice, beans, and dried vegetables, the students organized themselves into groups and began to fill the bags. Each one of them took on a role and became a team player as evidenced in their steady participation in filling bags, weighing them for a precise amount, and then packaging them. Music was playing, and the students were dancing and singing to the tune as they completed the task. No one was off task, and everyone readily participated.

Finally, students felt that SL motivated them to help others, gave them confidence and a desire to do similar activities again, and provided feelings of happiness when serving the community. Students saw SL as a very positive aspect of their school experience and a personal benefit to their overall outlook on life. Similarly, adult participants felt overall that the SL experiences increased student engagement as evidenced by their excitement and problem solving practices during these experiences which allowed for varied learning opportunities for students.

Consequently, teachers, administrators, and community members agreed that SL experiences created situations whereby students were more engaged as evidenced by their efforts

to solve problems and ask questions during those experiences. The increase in engagement was further exemplified in the students' ongoing participation in similar activities that were initiated outside of class directives.

Artifacts from the participants helped to emphasize the theme of awareness. For instance, the three news articles relating to three SL experiences specifically shared by Emma, Jack (both student participants) and Mellissa, a teacher participant, and my personal journal were read and reread to find meaning. Emma had referred to her pet contest and how she had won first place. Her account of this experience helped to identify her shared excitement and feelings of being proud. Emma enthusiastically responded with a smile on her face and an happy tone in her voice as she recounted the fact that her dog had won. The following statement was made by Emma:

Emma: Ok the beds were getting out of shape and we raised money to do a cute pet contest and actually my dog won first place and we used that money to give to them to help them to buy more food and more beds and blankets, but that's what we did to give to them and help them out and money.

Additionally, Jack shared that his most memorable experience with SL was the time he bought toys for young children. The news article supports Jack's account of the experience, and highlights the collaboration between the students in the school and the community needs.

These accounts reveal the habit of increased engagement through the ongoing participation of students in meeting community needs through the act of serving.

Theme Three: A Sense of Family

A sense of family was a theme that surfaced from all of the study participants. The theme of family was first recognized in the numerous codes first identified during the initial reading of

all the data, and then through the rereading of each individual transcript. The codes for this theme included a feeling of being connected or belonging, having a shared responsibility, feeling respected, taking pride and having ownership, learning life skills, having a desire to give, a desire to help, a sensitivity of others, a sense of belonging and learning to be responsible and knowing expectations.

All of the participants' responses revealed a strong sense of family and continued to appear in the data compiled during the adult and student focus groups. Other codes helping to identify a sense of family emerged. Feelings of pride and ownership, feelings of connectedness, or feelings of belonging repeatedly surfaced in the focus group interviews, individual adult interviews, the teacher questionnaire, and the data analysis. For example, an administrator began to share how the SL experiences impacted the students. She conveyed how relationships among the students were formed, how accountability was recognized through the expectations of service, and how the workload was shared. With an energizing smile and an attentive look, this administrator recounted the following:

Ms. Opal: It in that um they be become more responsible they become more aware of other people situations uh they become more caring you know uh and I mean it just..... uh they even did a project in the back one of our things they did a project in the back where they put picnic tables in the back where kids good go and sit and do work and just enjoy being outside and nature and uh just communicate with each other you know a project on working together how to socialize with others how to work with others you know it didn't matter which project we watched them on the camera one day didn't matter which project they were doing they took turns shoveling the a mulch they took turns placing the bricks where they needed to that one person did it all by him self and took turns it was like a

togetherness they became they knew each other those who were shy in the beginning they were actually you know afraid to work with others without being intimidated

As we continued our conversation, the same administrator later began to recapture the same theme of family as evidenced in the skills acquired through SL. Ms. Opal shared a story involving one shy student who, prior to having SL experiences, was so quiet that she rarely interacted with anyone. Ms. Opal's enthusiasm in retelling the story of how this young student gradually learned social skills and went on to win a spelling bee at her school at the state level. Ms. Opal expressed that this would likely not have happened if not for the community days at the school, which fostered the student's social and emotional learning, eventually giving her the confidence to stand before hundreds of people during a state spelling bee contest.

Researcher: Well have you noticed any particular change as a result of her participating in that type of climate at your school where SL...

Ms. Opal: Oh Lord ya when before she got here real quiet didn't interact with the kids or people just shy now she's talking I guess out of her shell you know and matter of fact she participated in a spelling bee here at school and won the spelling bee and was able to go on to a state level...

Researcher: Oh...wow..so do you think that has something to do with the community days or is it just something else?

Ms. Opal: Well I'm thinking when you have community days you get to interact with a bunch of kids that are not in your classroom you know what I'm saying I think that had a lot to do with it because she got to meet a lot of people and she was able to relate to those and this forum right here you know

Ms. Opal is not the only one who reported various skills associated with the theme of family. Patsy, a second administrator and teacher, along with other teachers, parents, and community members, began to share how she felt students learned various life skills as a result of their SL experiences. Ms. Patsy spent a lot of time focusing on the benefits associated with the interaction between the student and the community members and how this relationship helped to further develop students socially. Ms. Patsy shared with me how the students in her communication class were gaining a sense of pride as a result of their roles in capturing the SL events and preparing the stories for publication in the school newsletter. Her high school students followed the other middle school students along while they handed out the gift bags in appreciation for the law enforcement. The following exchange occurred between Ms. Patsy and me.

Ms. Patsy: They take away a sense of pride from it and like recently a group went to to various law enforcement agencies and thanked them and took them valentines and gift bags with candy and things in it and....my kids who were covering that just the comments they made it (pause) it's like the kids it increases their self esteem and that sounds so corny but I think it does it makes them feel like they're stronger and capable.

Researcher: How does it help them acquire the skills needed life skills that they need?

Ms. Patsy: Honestly, I think it's the best opportunities for them to learn life skills because they have to go out and interact with the community they have to a lot of times plan budget and collect and you know there's math skills involved there's social skills involved there's reading you know it it just ties everything together I think but I think the best absolute best thing about it is them interacting with other people in the community people not their age a lot of times they go out to the various elementary schools and read with the kids or tutor

with the kids you know do projects with the kids so they're are dealing with younger people in that aspect and actually teaching and then when they go to places like the Christian Help Center Tourism development you know different agencies in town then they are learning to deal with older people

Parents also affirmed that a benefit of SL opportunities is their provision of a platform for learning social skills. In talking with Patricia, Emma's mother, she shared how SL experiences were helpful to her daughter and provided an example of Emma coming home from school excitedly talking about helping in the community by reading to younger students. Her daughter recounted this experience and, according to the mother, helped to build Emma's self-esteem and social skills. This parent elaborated on how these experiences created opportunities for her daughter to interact with others ultimately allowing for social development. The following was an exchange between Patricia and me:

Researcher: Do you feel like these experiences are helpful?

Patricia: I feel like that they are helpful to do some...for what Emma has told me coming home from school she says well we did this today I'd like I for her going to the school and reading to the younger kids she liked that the most because she likes kids so I think that doing something other than just regular school work it gave her a chance to do something she likes...I think that helps her with her self esteem it helps her um with her social skills cause she's having to interact with kids she's never met before by getting them to sit and listen to her stories the books she's reading so I think it helps her and I think it helps the kids she goes to read to because it was something new to them (?) learning to adapt to change you know different that from their day to day school day so I think it's a good thing..

In addition to Emma gaining social skills, her mother felt confident that she had built relationships, shown sensitivity to community members, and developed a desire to help people. She recounted a story of Emma assisting an elder with groceries, and shared how Emma had been more responsible with chores at home. Specifically, Patricia shared how Emma had chosen a career path as a result of having these repeated opportunities to read to kindergartners. The following exchange between Patricia and me revealed part of her story:

Researcher: Ok... Did you notice any change in Emma as a result of doing those types of activities?

Patricia: Yes I think she's she um kinda wants to be a teacher now..

Emma: Really?

Patricia: Yes, it's kinda changed her career goals ...

Researcher: Uh uh...do you think that that had something do with her reading to the younger kids?

Patricia: Yes I do.

Researcher: What makes you think so?

Patricia: Well being in the classroom and um you know she said she felt like she was a teacher when she was doing that and she likes that so I'm kinda and know she's leaning that way.

Other parents elaborated on areas coded for a sense of family. For instance, Tommy, Jack's dad, and Elizabeth, Molly's mother, and finally Theresa, Jaycee's mother, each shared very specific stories and illustrations of how their children benefited from SL. For example, Tommy elaborates on the opportunity for his son to develop communication skills through the

avenue of social interaction that is provided through the SL experiences as evidenced in the following exchange.

Researcher: Um mm ...What makes you think that that wouldn't t of happened if he hadn't had experiences like that

Tommy: Well I think it's your attitude of to keep them away form being out socially um that that development to speak in public they going to shy away from and stuff I think it just helps them to communicate better uh you know I'm one that I I believe in cell phones and all that stuff you know you got to change (laughter) because the world changes but I do think the social uh uh I think it's a great idea..

Similarly, Elizabeth, Molly's mother, shares how Molly was able to build more meaningful relationships with her peers in spite of initially being nervous about having to participate in the SL experiences. Elizabeth expressed that the bonding that took place between Molly and another student during the SL activities was a benefit to her daughter. She communicated that she believed these opportunities helped to support Molly socially and emotionally. The following was an exchange between Elizabeth and me:

Researcher: Did you notice a difference in her relationship with her peers?

Elizabeth: Yes well..the one class that she was worried about having to do she knew she would have to have two hours and no one to talked too but I think she bonded during that time because they didn't normally have talk but now you know..they formed relationships through that experience

Patsy shared with me several pictures and news articles which documented the SL experiences. She reminded me that her students took the pictures and tagged along with the other ones as they served the community. The sense of pride that Patsy had was obvious. She

smiled, and pointed to various students and elaborated on their involvement, noting how each of her students worked well one another and learned various life skills.

Mr. Coffee shared a similar pride when talking about students' participation in the scheduled community days. He shared with me how these SL experiences morphed into a unique partnership and commitment between the school members and the community members. This collaboration of supporting one another is evidenced throughout the data and identified as a sense of family.

Researcher: Do you think that there is a connection being made to the community?

Mr. Coffee: I sincerely hope so...um I do know that we have we have one former board member whose very active in the uptown development and beautifying (_____) you know and very community minded he quite often ask for volunteers from here. We've had United Way and several different agencies uptown development um Chamber of Commerce Tourism they call us and ask for kids to help out with things and I can only assume from getting them out there in the community they know we do that...

Student participants also conveyed, through individual and group interviews, a sense of family through their descriptions of feeling a greater sense of being connected to the community by their shared partnership. During one of the interview focus group questions, students shared about the various SL activities and how they felt when helping a community member. They each felt more connected through their involvement and more inspired to give back to the community. They reported feeling better about themselves and experiencing a greater sense of belonging. Specifically, in the illustrations that follow, Molly expressed a sense of accomplishment and an increased connection to the community. Jaycee illustrated her sense of belonging to the community by being involved with it. Finally, Jack and Emma expressed that SL experiences

motivated them to want to give more, in addition to making them each feel good about themselves as a result of meeting a need in the community. Here are a few of their specific responses:

Researcher: How do you feel when you help out in the community?

Molly: Like it like you're connected to the community um just like being respectful to others you know like your doing more to help them

Researcher: Ok ...

Jaycee: Ya because you feel a lot more involved in the community and a part of things and you feel a more of a part of it than you did before

Jack: Hummm I'm ...uh it makes you want to it makes you .. makes you help it gives you a good feeling and a good sense of uh ways to help and ways to help and to help benefit your community..

Researcher: How do you think you're a better person now than before ?

Emma: That um how much I've I think that I feel like a better person because helping other people makes me feel like if they see me again they'll like remember me and gives me more confidence because I helped them or whatever and like I don't know it just makes me feel better about myself

Researcher: You were telling me that probably the experiences at school motivated you to want to do more activities is that what you think?

Emma: Yes mam...

Researcher: Ok that's neat. So, do you think, in terms of how you think about things do you think any different about things, people or the community now that you have had an opportunity to do things like this?

Emma: Yes it has actually made me want to give help to people who are in like homeless places or in a nursing home it makes me want to go help them out more.

Becky, the SL coordinator, also shared how the collaboration between community and school impacted students and community members. Her illustrations gave way to a sense of family. For example, Becky described how SL was meaningful to the students and the community from a question posed on the teacher questionnaire. She made a point that CCS had over 770 students who were spread out among 50 classes which canvassed the community looking for needs to be met. Thousands of dollars were raised, playgrounds were repaired, fences were mended, yards were landscaped, boxes for the hungry were packed and delivered, and clothes were donated and sorted for distribution among many other things. With the sheer amount of individuals participating, Becky elaborated on the benefits of students serving their community. The benefits for the community included donations being made as a result of the canned food drives supported by students, thousands of dollars donated as a result “Dance for Change”, and other mission projects. Becky capitalized on the fact that although most of these services provided were not linked to the curriculum they may have done far more than the service itself. She suggested that these services are an investment into the lives of future citizens. Becky shared the following during the adult focus group interview:

Researcher: If you will take a look at that section (meaningful) and I'm wondering in what ways the service was meaningful to the student and to the community perhaps. Of all the experiences that the kids here have participated in how would you say that the service was meaningful or was it?

Becky: So um so people are actively seeing us out now to help so I think that's been a huge kinda boost for the community ...um so ya I think it has been very very meaningful

and beneficial for the community and um I think anytime you teach a student that there is a chance that they can make a difference in the world by doing something small you're informing a future citizen and I think that's probably the most immeasurable part and you know we can't measure it now but it's going to have a huge impact so ya..

Observations of students during their SL experience also revealed a sense of family. They were laughing and smiling and moving to the sound of music almost in unison as they worked together for the common good of less fortunate people. They showed sensitivity to others by taking turns and offering suggestions to one another while they worked.

Hence, students, teachers, parents, administrators and community members overall agreed that the SL experiences created various learning opportunities, fostered responsibility and accountability to one another through service, in addition to offering a sense of connectedness. Students, specifically, felt that SL made them feel better as a person, gave them a better sense of belonging and connectedness to others, held them accountable to do their fair share, taught them life skills, helped them to build relationships, gave them thoughts about their future and enabled them to feel more appreciated and valued by others.

Two students were also available to observe in preparation of their "Dance for Change" performance. Three other students were observed as they participated in one of their community days. Three newspaper articles were examined and one in particular detailing the "Dance for Change" event was analyzed and coded for themes. The descriptive and reflective notes from student observations helped to reveal and confirm the themes of family. The codes that emerged during student observations and document analysis which were later grouped into themes included: being engaged, problem solving, being excited, communicating with peers, and celebrating.

Thus, adult and student interviews, the three documents pertaining to the community experiences that were recorded in the school newspaper, and student observations and interviews repeatedly revealed codes belonging to the theme of family.

Research Question One

The first research question “How, if at all, are student participants in Grades 6 -12 transformed according to Mezirow’s (2000) theory of TL?” was created to understand if SL experiences of students in Grades 6-12 contribute to TL as defined by Mezirow (2000). While all of the participants saw SL as a positive aspect at their school and were supportive of the notion of some type of TL, no evidence was found to support all 10 phases of Mezirow’s TL and thus my findings do not support the experiences of these participants to be transformative learning according to Mezirow (2000). A careful understanding of the participants’ experiences as they relate to the theory of TL was considered. There was a distinct difference in Mezirow’s interpretation of transformation and the participant’s own understanding of transformation. For example, Mezirow’s TL theory consisting of 10 phases that are necessary in order for the experience to be considered transformative was only slightly identified for one student. However, the identification was limited to phase 1 of Mezirow’s TL theory and did not progress to phase 2. Thus, TL according to Mezirow did not occur.

Although transformational learning did not occur according to Mezirow’s (2000) theory of TL, three themes did occur. These three themes including a sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness were grouped together based on specific codes helping to eventually identify these groups of themes. Such codes identified through the participants included, but were not limited to the following topics: awareness through participation, respect for others, learning responsibility, problem solving, excitement, feeling appreciated, feeling

connected, having ownership, building friendships, acquiring life skills, having a vision for the future, taking initiative, becoming more motivated, engaged in service, increased confidence, having a desire to help, gaining a new perspective, showing sensitivity to others, understanding and maintaining expectations, and a desire to give back to the community.

Each of the community members, teachers, and parents shared stories of students who became more aware of their surroundings and as a result were asking many questions. Specifically, Carol, a community member shared the story of when a group of students came to her building and were learning about the resources offered in her building. The students were invited to participate in an activity that required them to fill medicine bottles with M & M's representing prescription medicines that are often filled for needy community members. During this activity, the students asked a lot of questions which reflected the engagement that was taking place during that activity. The following depicts Carol's thoughts during one of our conversations:

Carol: Um the groups that we have had that I've interacted with and the time that I was there and the feedback I received from my staff um they were very engaged and very respectful they asked questions bc some have not been exposed to public health at all um and then so they had more questions they asked they actually asked a lot of questions which was good because it showed that they were thinking about what they were being told and what they were doing

Similarly, through the observations of students, where they were 100 percent on task and engaged, as evidenced in the packing of 10,000 boxes of food, students repeatedly showed signs of happiness, togetherness, teamwork, problem solving and excitement. They each participated and were responsible for a specific task. It was necessary for them to organize themselves for

the three stations presented. Sensitivity to others working at their station was observed as well as the students carefully positioned themselves in contributing to the larger task so that everyone had a part to play. This problem solving opportunity gave way to increased engagement.

Consequently, each of these codes was grouped into the three themes.

Finally, the document analysis supported the three themes as evidenced in the reading of student's engagement, their feelings of excitement, participation and new awareness.

Research Question Two

The second research question "How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience and in light of the WSCC initiative?" I supposed would help to merge the call to action (U.S. Department of Education, 2012a) and the WSCC initiative (ASCD, 2015) by looking at community engagement opportunities as potential transformational learning experiences. Furthermore, the goal for WSCC is to consider the development of the "whole child" and not just the isolated elements of academics (ASCD, 2015). Additionally, community participation has been shown to be as important to the growth of the child as classroom instruction (ASCD, 2015; Rooney et al., 2015), and consequently these SL experiences, I reasoned, having the potential to impact a child's well being, should be considered. Thus the questions in this study relating to the SL experiences and the WSCC initiative were geared toward the community members by asking specific questions to members outside of the school who may have a distinct view of learning through the school partnerships. Additionally, the WSCC model, which addresses the component of collaboration, could be distinctly viewed by those participants. Consequently this model retorts to the appeal for better alignment integrations, and partnership between health and education in order to improve every child's cognitive, emotional, and social development (ASCD, 2015) Thus the community

members were asked questions to help understand this alignment. Overall community members played a significant role in the lives of the students as they had an ongoing practice of working with the students at CCS. Their involvement included providing learning opportunities through both the non profit and for profit organizations with which they were affiliated.

Community members, while overwhelmingly in agreement with the positive impacts of SL, could not ascertain to what type of change or impact the SL experience may have had on an individual student. In all cases, the community member did not know the student before the SL experience and therefore could not report any change. Consequently, since community members could not describe changes in students as a result of their SL experience, understanding those changes in light of the WSCC initiative was not determined. Although community members could not describe any changes in the identified students, the findings of this study have shown that students develop a desire to do more as a result of their awareness of communities needs, and have a greater sense of belonging to the community.

The WSCC similiarly addresses five components of improving learning and health(Healthy, safe, challenged supported, engaged). These five components were coded through individual interviews to help identify the responses of the community participants and then later grouped into themes. Community members did describe the changes in general associated with students overall as being supported, engaged, and challenged.

For example, Tommy, Jack's dad, described the potential changes in students as having opportunity to develop social skills through the SL experiences. Lisa elaborated a little more and shared an illustration of how she had a previous student who had spent time serving in her local non profit community organization. She enthusiastically reported that a couple of years later

after having graduated, the student was now coming to make a contribution by donating a bag of clothes. The following excerpts share some of that conversation I had:

Researcher: I see..do you think those kids you're referring too do you think they have changed any as a result of that?

Tommy: Ya overall I would think that it would have to help them to be more social and to see um what they're doing is a good thing you know..hopefully at their young adult age that will benefit them from doing community service work.

Lisa: Oh ya... I've been around long enough to see kids grow into young adults and they say um I remember you and I go ya I remember you too and they'll be donating their clothes or doing something like that and they picked up the idea back when they were in middle school...and if you study Brain theory use it or lose it works ...if you don't keep kids focusing on what is right and good then that's what will go away and thats part of our problem as a kids don't have enough refocusing from bad ideas to good ideas and when you embed in kids you know they say raise them up in the way and they won't go far from that and um that really does work kids will whether they go to church or not and really Christian help center I have that kinda of allegory in speaking but kids really will pick up and embed they'll think about it and as they grow older they may build on it

Consequently, the ongoing participation of students continued to reflect their increased awareness of community need, their engagement, and overall sense of family through their understanding of personal and shared responsibility.

Research Question Three

This third study question is different than the first two research questions in that emphasis is made on the combined understandings of each group of study participants as opposed to a

specified group and does not specify an additional consideration. This allowed for a greater opportunity for themes to emerge “on their own”. This third question asked “How do study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12?” and was crafted to add depth to the researcher’s understanding by looking carefully into the experiences of each of those who may be closely associated with the identified student. Thus, the circle of people who shared in the experience with the student may have been able to add a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. Additionally, these teachers, administrators, parents and community members, may have been aware of the student’s previous behavior, mindset, or outlook on life prior to, during, and after the SL experience. However, this question became unclear when trying to decide if study participants were referring to the identified student participant or students in general. In almost all cases, interview participants referred to students in general and thus provided responses helping to answer how study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for (all) students in Grades 6-12.

Students felt overall that SL helped them to become more aware of the people and situations and around them, and to become more motivated to help others. Adult participants, similarly, conveyed that SL opportunities enabled students to learn about their communities becoming aware of different types of people and needs that exist in the community. An example of students feeling like these experiences built a greater awareness came from the following exchange:

Researcher: So prior to doing this you thought a little different about things?

Emma: Yes, I used to think police department like we did here recently, I always thought they were fine and that people showed respect for them but going out there and hearing

what they said to us and how some times just because they do this people look down because of that but then when we go help them we actually get to know the real them and really see how they are and being realized that they are appreciated by some people and I think it makes them do this people look down because of that but then when we go help them we actually get to know the real them and really see how they are and being realized that they are appreciated by some people and I think it makes them feel good when they see that

Researcher: Um uh... so how does that change you?

Emma: It makes me it changes me because when I was younger ah ya they're good and they just do this and that whatever but then as I got older and we started doing community service stuff I realize how important they are in our life and how safe they always keep us and just helping them changed me and like made me realize hey this is he is nice he helps us keeps us safe he does like everything that helps us so why don't we help him. We should...they help us so they need help too

Researcher: That's pretty awesome... and I think you've answered this, but do you believe this experience has changed you as a person?

Emma: Yes. I really do. I do it changed how I view people and how I think like when I see somebody that needs help or whatever I realize that ya if I do this it will really help them a lot and it will make them feel better about themselves.

Parents also reported changes they noticed with their child, but none of those changes equated into transformations according to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL. The changes specific to the parents responses included being more apt to interact with others, taking initiative to help those in need, caring more for those less fortunate, becoming more aware of situations around

them, having a better self esteem, and showing excitement and a desire to give back to the community. However, one parent did not report any change specifically with her child, and did not contribute fully to the focus group interview.

Additionally, teachers and administrators overall agreed that the SL experiences created various learning opportunities including an increased awareness as a result of those experiences provided and a sensitivity to others as a result of the new awareness. Thus, the teachers overwhelmingly shared a belief that the SL experiences were beneficial to the overall student body as evidenced in the student's increased awareness as a result of their serving in the community.

The document analysis portraying the pet contest, shopping for children, and the performance of the routine charity holiday program put on by students all showed evidence of the overall benefits to students. Codes such as excitement, problem solving, taking initiative, celebratory, and feelings of being proud are a few examples generated from this analysis.

Although none of the participants could not determine if TL had occurred, all of the participants believed that the SL experience created learning opportunities for middle and high school students as evidenced in the three emerging themes: sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness

Summary

The results in this section are based on a total of 21 participants, which included seven student reflections of SL and seven individual student interviews from Grades 6-12 and five student observations. Additionally, data were collected from a student and adult focus group, eight teacher and administrator initial questionnaires and their individual interviews. Finally, three community member questionnaires, six parent interviews, and four

documents (see Appendix K) relating to the SL experience were collected and analyzed.

Three participants served with two titles. For instance, two teachers were also two parents of two identified students and one community member was also a parent of one identified student. Therefore although a total of 21 participants were included in this study a total of 24 individual interviews were conducted.

The student and adult participants in the study were overall excited to participate and willing to share their stories. Some shared pictures of news articles to further illustrate their involvement. All of the students felt they had experienced a transformation as a result of having had an opportunity to participate in meeting a community need. Although the change they refer to was not determined based on Mezirow's (2000) TL theory but rather on their own acknowledgment. Additionally, teachers, parents, administrators, and community members in most cases did not know the student prior to the student being in their class therefore could not determine which students had experienced change. The two parents who did believe that their child had experienced change as a result of SL did not reveal, through their individual interviews, that those experiences had supported the basis of Mezirow's TL theory. However, all of the participants believed that the SL experience created learning opportunities for middle and high school students as evidenced in the three emerging themes: sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this single instrumental case study was to explore how service learning (SL) opportunities were perceived by participants to impact transformational learning (TL) experiences for students in Grades 6-12. This chapter integrates a summary of the outcomes and topics that appeared through examination of the data with their inferences. The results of this research study are compared with the Chapter Two literature review including Mezirow's (2000) theoretical framework of transformational learning. A discussion of these findings and the implications in light of the relevant literature is considered. The research also notes the study delimitations and limitations. Lastly, a recommendation for future research is noted.

Summary of Findings

Twenty-one individual interviews, two focus group interviews, five student observations, and three news articles were analyzed, coded and grouped into themes. Three themes emerged during the analysis of this case study. A sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness was noted through out the data. The student focus groups consisted of five female students. The adult focus group included four student parents, three teachers, one administrator and two community members who were associated with the student SL experience. In addition, the identified student participant completed a student reflection of their SL experiences. Consequently, these three emerging themes grew through interviews and observations of data, which answered the research questions framing the study.

RQ1: How, if at all, are student participants in Grades 6 -12 transformed according to Mezirow's (2000) theory of TL?

This first research question was framed around transformation according to Mezirow's (2000) theory, and therefore a careful understanding of the participants' experiences as they relate to the theory of TL was intentional. There was a distinct difference between Mezirow's theory of TL and the participants' interpretation of transformation. For instance, all of the student participants articulated a change as a result of having experienced SL opportunities. Those changes reported firsthand by the students included becoming more aware of and connected to the community and the needs therein, being motivated to help others with their work, feeling compassion for others, having a desire to participate in similar experiences again, appreciating the partnership between school and community, having a whole new respect for law enforcement agencies, experiencing feelings of happiness, having a renewed sense of confidence, and a desire to give to others. However, while these were changes experienced by the student participants, and may be reflective of a type of "transformation", the changes experienced by the student participants did not reflect the same interpretation of Mezirow's TL theory. Thus in considering Emma's experience, she had encountered the first phase of Mezirow's TL when she clearly articulated her experience with the law enforcement agency and shared her experience regarding what she originally thought to be true about police officers and what she now thinks to be true about the police officers serving in her community. Emma's disorienting dilemma of having an encounter with what she believed to be true and what she experienced to be true supports the necessary element of discrepancy in the first phase of TL. Cranton (2002) describes this disorienting dilemma as "an activating event that typically exposes a discrepancy between what a person has always assumed to be true and what has just been experienced, heard or read" (p. 66). Thus Emma's experience revealed her own assumptions and as a result changed her views and as result encountered the first phase of Mezirow's TL theory. The data did not reveal

that Emma had moved into phase two of Mezirow's 10 stages that must be experienced in order for TL to occur. However, Emma had shown some reflective thought about her experiences, and very clearly articulated the disorienting dilemma. Nonetheless she did not voice any self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame and thus did not meet the criteria of Mezirow's TL model. Consequently, the influence conveyed by the study participants as transforming was not in the same light of Mezirow's theory but rather their own interpretation of a type of transformational learning.

The participant interview questions and the adult focus group questions specifically were centered on the quality standards of practice, so I analyzed the combined responses by creating a node for each of the quality standards of practice. Based on those indicators, common themes were identified.

I chose keywords from the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for quality practice and combed through the data to accurately identify which aspects of the experience were mentioned by the participants looking for keywords. For example, SL is meaningful to the participants according to the NYLC if the experiences are appropriate, engaging, attainable, and understood by those doing the serving. Thus, looking for instances where student participants were engaged in service that was appropriate or relevant for their age and instances where they were engaged in service that they deemed valuable were instances for coding for this theme. I looked for other themes as well for each stated element to protect against bias. Additionally, other aspects found in the collected voice of the participant's data and, not belonging to the quality standards of practice were also coded and grouped into themes. Thus three predominant topics surfaced: a sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness.

RQ2: How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience and in light of the WSCC initiative?

WSCC calls for a greater alignment and relationship between education and health in order to improve each child's physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development. With this in mind, interviews were transcribed and coded based on the elements within the model. The community members could not ascertain any specific changes to individual, identified student participants because they did not know the students previously. However, they did describe the overall changes in students as witnessed during their shared experiences of SL through the collaboration of the school and their affiliation.

Community participants who participated in providing those SL experiences reported that kids during that time were asking "a lot of questions" and some were engaged. The collaboration between the community and education was evident. The students walked to many of the businesses so physical activity was an element met, and bonding happened as a result of students having this time where otherwise, according to teachers, the classtime of students would have been limited to 50 minutes. During this routine of walking to the SL event, study participants shared how students had time to interact and talk with one another leading to closer friendships. Additionally, participants repeatedly shared how students felt so much better about themselves as a result of helping out and serving their community.

These meaningful experiences provided various opportunities to support the student's emotional health. Emotional health was recognized in this study as being established by the relationships formed with others and having the potential to support mental health and academic learning for students in various learning environments (Hart, 2014; Lewallen et al., 2015; Umberson & Montez, 2010; Weare 2002)

RQ3: How do study participants perceive SL opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12

Overall study participants perceived SL opportunities to impact transformational learning opportunities through the following topics, which surfaced during the initial coding of this data.

Feedback from teachers and administrators specifically identified the following eleven topics which were later grouped into themes: generating excitement, building awareness, creating opportunities for engagement, fostering responsibility, maintaining expectations, having a sense of belonging or connectedness, having opportunity to problem solve, having an increased self esteem, and a sensitivity to others.

Students specifically identified nine topics associated with SL and later grouped into themes: awareness of people and situations, a motivation to help, a sense of belonging, feelings of being valued by others, an increased confidence, a renewed respect for law enforcement, a desire to give back, feelings of happiness, and a positive outlook on the future.

Parents specifically identified seven topics associated with SL and later grouped into themes. These topics identified through coding included, being more apt to interact with others, taking initiative to help those in need, caring more for those less fortunate, becoming more aware of situations around them, having a better self esteem, showing excitement, and a desire to give back to the community.

Discussion

Previous Research Corroborated

As mentioned in literature review, van Goethem et al. (2014) communicated that there were sizeable conceptual and practical overlaps between the connotation of community service, SL, and volunteering. My research validates this. SL was defined as an approach to teaching,

whereby students were engaged with their school and their community through meaningful community service that combines learning objectives with the act of service (National Youth Leadership Council [NYLC], 2009). However, there was a discussion at the onset of this research with the SL coordinator, pertaining to the essence of SL, and community service that challenged the meaning of this term. There was an agreement between the SL coordinator and me that SL typically implies that service is linked to curriculum. However, the SL experiences provided at this school did not necessarily have a specific learning goal. For instance, in two of the experiences with student participants a learning objective was tied to the curriculum and communicated to the students, but overall the SL experiences did not associate a learning objective to the service being provided. Rather, the objective for serving in the community was to meet a community need for the community in an effort to give back to them. Additionally, the SL objective for the school stems from their mission statement.

Consequently, CCS referred to their SL experiences as “community days” and is reflected throughout the data collection. Therefore, during the conversations with teachers and administrators, SL was used interchangeably with the term community days. Thus this pattern of referring to the same student experiences as either SL or volunteering or community service affirmed the large overlaps and gaps between each as previously discussed. (Goethem et al. 2014)

Furthermore, findings from this study indicated that students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members recognized the value of collaboration and having distinct opportunities for students in Grades 6-12 to become healthier individuals. These experiences shared by the study participants helped to shed light on the mission surrounding the WSCC initiative which aims to better align a child’s health and well-being to their learning experiences.

For instance, the WSCC model aims for students to be healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. The opportunities provided at this one charter school in NC with over 700 students gave way to multiple activities and scenarios whereby students participated in meeting community needs through the support of a school and the engagement of a community. As a result, multiple benefits surfaced. Overall, participants shared their feelings of increased happiness, and well-being through their repetitive references of “feeling good” of “having a good feeling” when helping someone in need. Consequently, my study corroborates previous research by affirming how SL practices provides a forum for teachers and students to link learning and health.

My study also corroborates previous research which identifies engagement and awareness as continued benefits for students who participate in similar activities (Bringle et al., 2010; Celio et al., 2011; Hart, 2014, van Goethem et al., 2014, Mitchell, 2015).

Repeatedly in previous studies involving SL and civic engagement, the benefit of increased engagement has surfaced (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, and Schellinger, 2011). Increased engagement became a theme in this study as evidenced in the identifying codes including: engaged/involved with, fascination with, immersed, thinking and problem solving, participating, planning, motivated to help, and excitement. This was exciting to see because disengagement among students has been noted as a global crisis (Wimberely, 2016; Wong, 2012). Consequently, students who are shown to be engaged and motivated tend to learn more (Wimberely, 2016).

This increased engagement noted through the participants’ shared experiences was exciting to see. The students, parents, teachers, administrators, and community members were all very excited to share with me their stories of individuals who had done various task with such

care and thought. Their expressions of excitement intrigued me. Quite honestly, I have never seen any thing like this during a school day before. Yet, why not, I asked? It was quite beautiful to see through the eyes of the participants how these SL experience brought a type of transformational change to their overall understanding of others and their outlook on life as a result.

Increased awareness additionally through SL has been identified as an effective model for deepening a student's civic awareness and creating the greater potential for becoming an active citizen in their community (Soria & Weiner, 2013; Von Salisch et al., 2013; Warren, 2012). Additionally these experiences often resulted in affirmative changes for students who once held stereotypical beliefs (Warren, 2012). Similarly in this study, participants either voiced or illustrated the change of increased awareness as evidenced in their stories. With such an array of data pointing to the benefits of awareness, I have questioned why our schools are not implementing this strategy at a much early age. I have witnessed students during scheduled observations and heard reports from the participants of this study reflecting how students followed the lead of their teacher, peers, or SL coordinator in obedience to the task at hand. SL provided an avenue for their learning which was evidenced in their acquired awareness. In addition, their acts of service became a learned behavior and were not necessarily intuitive. Consequently, careful attention should be given to this learned behavior of serving others which supported a keen awareness of people and the needs around them..

Current Research Extended

My study extends the previous research to include younger participants and in settings outside of higher education. For example, the majority of studies conducted involving SL and community service experiences has been overwhelmingly researched in colleges and

universities, as indicated in my literature review (Celio et al., 2011; Hennes et al., 2013; Jovanovic et al., 2011). Consequently, the benefits associated with these types of opportunities have been extended to include participants in other educational settings.

Additionally, my study extends the previous research, by noting a new theme, sense of family, that otherwise was not found in similar studies. For example, in this family of students, teachers, administrators, parents and community members, who have committed themselves to one another's care, as evidenced in each of their shared stories, students experienced opportunities for learning, giving, sharing, caring, leading, and doing. These opportunities led to feelings of connectedness, love, happiness and for many the acquisition of life skills. Through the continued practice of serving, students additionally learned the value of hard work, and took personal responsibility for their fair share and when they didn't someone called them out. Thus accountability was noted. One particular incident a teacher participant shared was in regard to a community day where students were spreading mulch around the ground of the school property. The peer pressure on a couple of students not carrying their full load was enough for them to increase their activity to the level of the other students.

This picture of family created an atmosphere of safety, structure, discipline, encouragement, leadership and a togetherness where responsibility was learned and shared. In support of this idea, Ludden (2011) conveyed that this type of stability was something that is vital to the over all well being of youth and expressed how these types of SL experiences created avenues to build greater connections to the community. Von Salisch et al. (2013) also supported the benefits of having a greater connection to the community as a result of serving and found that those interactions helped to foster a sense of responsibility. These studies are examples of many others which reference similar benefits. None that I have found referenced a theme relating to

family. While many studies share similar themes, my study extends the research by grouping these similar benefits into this theme of family helping to make sense of the complexities involved in partnerships and various roles of individuals.

There seems to be no clear definition on family. However, several situational definitions are offered to help define the essence of family through the sharing of its situational meaning. For instance, Marci Hanson and Eleanor Lynch ("Definition of Family - Situational Definitions - Child, Situations, Example, and Children - JRank Articles," n.d.), when referring to their research with teachers they support the notion that family includes any group of people who have made a commitment to share their lives together. Additionally, Sally Bould ("Definition of Family - Situational Definitions - Child, Situations, Example, and Children - JRank Articles," n.d.), helping to further illustrate the essence of family, interprets the notion of family as being persons who are able to find care for themselves in time of need and who otherwise could not take care of their own needs. Finally, a third example of family is given through an illustration of a group of people other than parents caring for children. The caretakers of this Israeli Kibbutz group had become the parent alternate and thus viewed as parent figures ("Definition of Family - Situational Definitions - Child, Situations, Example, and Children - JRank Articles," n.d.). Consequently, the merging of these three ideas of family help to view its meaning to include, a group of people who are committed to the welfare and well-being of one another for an indefinite amount of time. Understandably then, my study having identified a number of codes relating to a group of people sharing in the experience of caring for one another through SL opportunities revealed this concept of family and thus helps to extend previous research involving groups of people working together.

Divergent from Previous Research

A unique feature of this study was the deviation from a specific learning objective when participating in SL activities and the lifted requirement of having a reflection component. In most studies, reflection is a necessary component for SL practice to be beneficial according to Domegan and Bringle, (2010) and van Goethem et al. (2014) Specifically, for example, the NYLC (2009) deems SL to be a quality practice if it is linked to the curriculum. The suggestion from these standards indicate that SL should be deliberately integrated into the classroom by the teachers as a method of an instructional strategy in order to meet the established learning goals.

Although, learning objectives were not necessarily linked to the service being provided nor was reflection of SL a practice at CCS, great learning opportunities surfaced. Rather, the emphasis at this high performing charter school was to meet community needs. The service itself became the learning experience which was linked to unspecified learning objectives. In this case, learning opportunities were explored beyond the associated objective of school curriculum or the necessary component of reflection, which in many instances is necessary as discussed in the literature review.

Implications

The purpose of this qualitative single instrumental case study was to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12. Several inferences were made as a result of engaging in this study.

Learning to Care

The inference of learning to care and the potential impact could be staggering for stakeholders. The findings show that those students who participate in SL practices are happier, and often are involved with problem solving opportunities through the various SL projects

provided by the school. From a practical standpoint, if students have something to do, something to contribute to, they seem to find purpose and feel like their lives matter. Their service seems to provide a platform for their thinking as expressed in their stories. Their faces lit up as I listened to each one of them recount their experiences and relate what it meant to them to meet new people and to meet a need in their community. They felt like “they belonged”. Even their teachers recalled stories of students asking about community members they had previously met as a result of helping to meet a need. There is something very different with these students who do far more than just participate in the community service, they belong to it. They have become a part of it. They have come to know the community members and understand some of the prevalent needs that were otherwise hidden from their view.

Through these unique experiences of giving to the community with no strings attached, students have been given an opportunity to learn, to live, to share, to explore, to give and to love.. This allowed the students to acquire a deeper awareness of the community in which they served. They became increasingly engaged when serving and a gained a greater sense of family as evidenced in their stories of feeling proud, feeling connected to others, and learning responsibility as as result of their giving. Even as evidenced through the multiple arrays of participants, the learning of kindness, and giving, and sharing, has been by far the most prized learning opportunities for these participants. Over 770 students have canvased this one community with their gift of service. I was privileged to see the beautiful benefits with a sample of individuals who shared with me their stories, and although students did not experience each phase of Mezirow’s TL, they experienced a type of transformation. I think that this study shows that SL opportunities create possibilities for learning even if it is learning to give, to be kind, and to recognize the needs of those around you which in turn, supports the giver. Therefore, a

specific recommendation for policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and other invested members of the community is to seek out ways to collaborate through partnerships in support of student learning and their learning to care.

Increasing Productivity

The inference of increased productivity and the potential impact on families, schools, communities and employers could be phenomenal. The findings of this study have shown that students develop a desire to do more as a result of their awareness of communities needs. Their awareness created opportunities for them to take initiative outside of school.

These findings show that students who participated in SL experiences in conjunction with their school day had more of a desire to be involved with similar activities. Additionally, many student participants either initiated their own project to meet a need or witnessed a student participant who initiated a project as a result of having been exposed to the various types of needs in the community through the SL initiative at their school. Thus, students learning to serve at a younger age are potentially more likely to increase their ongoing civic engagement. Their increased awareness and engagement leading to ongoing participation could imply a greater number of citizens actively supporting their communities and consequently a greater impact on the giver and the community. Findings of this study suggested that families at CCS were impacted as a result of these ongoing SL experiences. This implies that the greater community has the potential to be better supported by those living in it. The implications for students to become responsible citizens and to increase productivity through serving would imply the potential for productivity in other areas.

Finally, motivation and engagement are two factors needed in order for learning to occur and with this combination of intrinsic motivation, the teachers' and administrators' jobs are easier

(Christensen, Horn, & Johnson, 2008). With that in mind, one would conclude that community service can serve as a platform creating opportunities for kids to become responsible, productive problem solvers and contributors to society. Therefore a specific recommendation for policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and other invested members of the community is to seek out ways to collaborate through partnerships in support of student learning and in support of their continued productivity.

Supporting Mental Wellness

The inference of mental wellness and the potential impact of healthy individuals as evidenced through the increased act of engagement could be revolutionary and is a sign of mental health as discussed in the literature section (Beauchemin, 2014; Lewallen et al., 2015; Meany-Walen et al., 2016) and was defined by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2015) as anything affecting one's "emotional, psychological, and social well-being" (para. 1). With this in mind, a number of outcomes could be implied. If we have healthier students who do not isolate themselves but have learned how to relate to others, then ultimately that student can make better decisions across the board (Department of Health and Human Services, 2015).

Coincidentally, interaction through SL opportunities could potentially affect how the students perform in school according to the report reviewed in the literature. For example, Durlak et al. (2011) indicate that "relationships and emotional processes" affect "how and what we learn in school" (p. 405). As evidenced in this study, students who had opportunities to participate in meeting a community need with other students were not able to completely isolate themselves. As a result, their awareness was awakened and they took on new understandings, built new relationships and had opportunity to "belong". This type of transformation could

potentially serve as a barrier against high risk factors effecting school outcomes. For instance, Durlak et al. noted that some students isolate themselves from others and that this lack of emotional competency prevents advancement in school. Consequently, these findings imply that SL opportunities for middle and high school students could prevent failure in school.

Furthermore, there has been a number of school shootings, and specifically shootings where the offender was known to be an isolated individual. These types of occurrences involving a lack of emotional health have been significant factors contributing to some of the alarming tragedies that have struck numerous communities. For instance, the US has experienced deadly violence in schools across the nation. One such example involved a shooter who had a record of mental illness. While substantial evidence revealed a history of poor mental health, no record of policy was found in place that potentially could have served as a deterrent to the growing mental instability of this shooter as evidenced in his practice of isolation, disturbing drawings, and troubling writing assignments. The end result was that this young man tragically took the lives of 32 people. (Virginia Tech Review Panel, 2007)

Perhaps stakeholders should heed the call for offering more opportunities to combat such tragedies and thus support the mental well being of students. When schools and communities join together like CCS, a bridge can be built linking a child's learning to his or her health as viewed through the varied experiences of giving. This fitting together of what a child feels, experiences, learns, and perceives enables the "whole child" to be braced rather than his academics alone. Therefore a specific recommendation for policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and other invested members of the community is to seek out ways to collaborate through partnerships in support of student learning and overall well-being.

Embracing Change

The inference of embracing change and the potential impact on countless individuals as a result of changed policy could be life altering for so many. Educational researchers contend that education needs a major revolution yet despite the research necessitating the need for change, and the need to engage civic activities, these experiences are not commonly found in course curricula (Jovanovic et al., 2011). This notion is affirmed in a discussion regarding the role of teaching and learning and the diverse needs of students. Thus, the problem of education becomes evident when educational institutions acknowledge the need for change yet continue to employ the same systems of instruction and assessments in order to support the standardized innovations rather than the technology which could support the change necessary. It is an act of trying to achieve an altered result yet repeatedly employing the same input.

Thus, a major revolution can only be achieved with a major innovation. However there is a hurdle that educators must jump. This hurdle is guarded by the tradition of habit and should perhaps be confronted with the old saying, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you will always have what you’ve always had” (anonymous). Similarly, the lack of making application of solid and well researched studies may be the result of human habit, and perhaps is the reason the apostle James, a writer in the new testament, warns against being a hearer only, and not a person who rather puts into practice the things they have heard (James 1:22). So, how long will educational institutions continue and repeatedly read about best research practices yet lack the initiative and courage to implement change?

One of the hurdles to jump, I believe, is the hurdle of prescribed and mandated learning objectives coming from outsiders. There were no intentional learning outcomes overall for these experiences. As a result, students seemed to have more freedom and joy in their participation.

They asked lots of questions of their teachers, peers, and those in the community. This kind of engagement gives way to problem solving opportunities which is the very discussion of many employers who are baffled over the lack of skills and the lack of engagement of some employees while on the job. Teachers are concerned about the overwhelming problem of disengagement. Educators possibly fear that not adhering to specific curricula results in a loss of time. However, as mentioned in this study, research shows that students who are socially and emotionally well, have a greater tendency to do well academically. As with any change, there is an effort to protect the tradition of the past. Remembering the words written by Maurice Maeterlinck, a Belgian Nobel Laureate in literature, which powerfully communicate the opposition to be encountered by anyone desiring change: “At every crossway on the road that leads to the future each progressive spirit is opposed by a thousand men appointed to guard the past” (Johnson, Horn, & Christensen, 2010, p. 112). Thus a specific recommendation for policy makers, administrators, teachers, parents, and other invested members of the community is to seek out ways to collaborate through partnerships in support of student learning and in support of embracing change.

Delimitations and Limitations

This case study was initiated at one charter school with over 700 students where students have a routine practice of serving the community through various tasks, but not limited to such as packing boxes for the hungry, mending fences for the neighbors, and picking litter along the streets in the school neighborhood. This school was selected specifically due to their SL practices, and thus did not choose a school where these practice did not occur. Consequently the boundary was defined within the community of the school where SL has been an ongoing practice .

The limitations included conducting research as a charter school and not a regular public school. There were no public schools within a three hour drive where SL experiences were a routine practice. This can be seen as a potential weakness due to the complex nature and distinct difference between the two types of schools. This may have made a difference in the outcome of the results due to the structure of how a charter school operates compared to the public school.

Recommendations for Future Research

A significant number of studies have shown numerous benefits for students, communities and schools as a result of civic engagement experiences such as improved social capital, mental health, increased engagement, increased learning, improved social skills and a renewed sense of community (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Durlak et al., 2011; Jovanovic et al., 2011; van Goethem et al., 2014). However, studies involving a younger population have been greatly lacking (Celio et al., 2011; Henness et al., 2013; Jovanovic et al., 2011). More studies are needed for continued understanding of the benefits associated with SL experiences in younger populations. Specifically, research shows a compelling need for similar studies to be conducted for all students in grades K -12.

Consequently, continued research could involve studies that target other school settings. For instance, this case study was performed at a charter school where participants are in a very different culture than a regular public school. Creating a study where students are learning under a more traditional classroom approach may yield a different result or refute the findings of this study.

Additionally, a comparative study could be initiated in order to see the differences between students engaged in SL experiences at a charter school compared to students who are in traditional public schools. Although a total of 21 participants were identified in this study, only

six parents were identified to participate. There was only one male parent who participated in this study. Perhaps the results of this study would have revealed something different about the experiences provided if more male participants had participated. Finally, this case study looked at multiple people associated with multiple students. Perhaps a prolonged case study involving one or more identified student participants over time may reveal different results.

Summary

This qualitative single instrumental case study contributes to the literature on the development of students in younger grades and specifically in Grades 6 -12 through the exploration of SL opportunities as perceived by participants to create TL experiences. The experiences of middle and high school students enrolled at one charter school where SL opportunities, known as community days, have been a routine practice have been described and analyzed. 21 participants shared their stories and interpretations of their experiences involving SL resulting in three emerging themes: a sense of family, increased engagement, and increased awareness. I have answered three research questions involving the identified changes in students as a result of their SL experiences and in light of the WSCC initiative. I have also described SL experiences associated with Mezirow's (2000) TL theory. Finally I have explored how SL opportunities impact TL experiences for children in Grades 6-12. The significance of these SL opportunities is becoming a renewed interest and as evidenced in this study has the potential to redirect a student's focus, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors in school. The students reported a greater sense of belonging, a motivation to give, and a renewed awareness of their community. Their SL practices have been shown to create open-ended learning opportunities. Other research affirms that community involvement has been shown to improve student motivation and engagement, and has been shown to link the values and attitudes of students with their behavior.

While, most SL opportunities remain in higher education, the findings of this case study may contribute to a renewed desire to implement similar practices where younger populations exist, and in other educational settings in support of student learning and development of the whole child.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

January 11, 2017

Sherry Ballew

IRB Approval 2735.011117: How SL Opportunities Impact Learning Experiences for Grades 6- 12 Students: A Case Study

Dear Sherry Ballew,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project. Sincerely,



G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix B: Recruitment Scripts

January 5, 2017

[REDACTED]
Director
[REDACTED] School
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED],

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research to better understand what part of the service learning experience students, parents, teachers, community members and administrators perceive as most beneficial to the student. Specifically, I would like to know how community members and participants describe the changes in students as a result of the student's service learning experience, and how they believe service learning creates change for students in Grades 6-12.

With your permission, I am writing to invite you, your staff, and your students to participate in my study. Students who have participated in service learning experiences, their teachers, administrators, parents and community members who are affiliated with that student's experience and who are willing to participate will be given an opportunity to do so.

Teachers and administrators will be asked to complete an initial questionnaire to help identify student participants who may be good candidates for the study. This questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes. Identified students, their teachers, administrator(s) and community members associated with the student participant will be given an opportunity to participate as well. Based on the initial questionnaire and the level of interest, classroom teachers, will be contacted to arrange a time for their students to complete a classroom writing assignment. This assignment should take about 20 minutes. Once all participants have been identified, they will be asked to take part in an individual interview and a focus group. The interviews and focus groups should not exceed 45 minutes. Participants will also be given an opportunity to share photos or other items relating to the experience. Prior to the conclusion of the study, teachers will be asked to schedule a time for the researcher to observe students during a planned classroom activity. The observations should take no more than 20 minutes.

Participants will be presented with informed consent information prior to participating. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on official letterhead indicating your approval.

Sincerely,
Sherry Ballew
Graduate Student, Liberty University

Email Script 1: (Follow up email to initial questionnaire collection from point 4 on IRB app.)

Dear Ms. or Mr. _____,

It was a pleasure meeting you. Thank you for completing the questionnaire helping to aid in my understanding of the potential transformations that may take place as a result of the service learning experiences that your school provides for the students.

As you may recall from our recent introduction during the arranged meeting with the staff administrators, I am hopeful to understand how service-learning experiences may bring change to how a student may think about their involvement with the school and the community. Your interest in sharing with me your perceptions is very much appreciated. In order to understand more fully your interpretation of these experiences, I am hopeful to arrange a time when I could interview you. I am available at your convenience. Can you share with me some times you may be available? If you would like to be interviewed, please reply by email or call me at the number listed below.

You may find the introductory letter a help to you and a reminder of this study. However, should you have any questions about this study or the privacy of your identify, or any other questions pertaining to the study, feel free to respond to this email or call me personally, [REDACTED].

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Sherry Ballew
Graduate student LU
[REDACTED]
Sballew2@liberty.edu

Email Script 2: (Follow up email to teacher regarding student writing prompt from point 6)

Dear _____,

Thank you for giving the students in your classroom an opportunity to reflect on their experience with serving the community. I have enjoyed reading their responses. I would be interested in learning more about some of the selected responses by scheduling a time to meet

with you, the selected student (s), and the student's parent(s) in order to share with them the purpose of this research and to gain their consent for further study. Would you be able to assist me with scheduling a conference with the identified student, the student's parents, and myself? During this time, we will schedule an interview with each of the participants and a potential date for a focus group interview. Additionally, we will also discuss other potential participants such as community members who may be familiar with the student's service learning experience. This should take less than 20 minutes. Please email me or call at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Sherry Ballew
Graduate student LU

Phone Call Script 1: (Follow up with potential community members who are associated with the identified student participant from point 7 in IRB app)

Hello,

My name is Sherry Ballew, and I'm a graduate student at LU. I'm working with students affiliated with [REDACTED] to understand how community service may change how a student thinks and interacts with the community. I'm talking with someone you may know as a result of their experience with _____, recently.

A student I'm currently talking to actually shared your name with me, and indicated you may be a person who can help shed some light on how these experiences help bring change to a student.

Do you have a few minutes to allow me to interview you?

Wonderful. I just have a few questions that would be helpful to have you answer at your convenience.

When would be a good time to ask those questions?

Appendix C: Teacher, Administrator, and Stakeholder Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a research study pertaining to service learning (SL) integration into class curriculum. The researcher, Sherry Ballew, a doctoral student at Liberty University (LU), is inviting teachers, administrators, or stakeholders who integrate SL experiences into their curriculum, or witness the transformation of a student's mindset, their outlook on life and their personality as a result of SL experiences to be in the study. This letter will help serve you in understanding this study before deciding whether to take part.

Background Information:

The purpose of this single instrumental case study was to explore how SL opportunities are perceived by participants to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12.

Procedures:

After an initial questionnaire helps to identify potential teacher participants, an email will be sent to teachers who have identified a student having experienced a perceived transformation based on Mezirow's Transformational Learning theory (TL). The email will initiate a brief time to meet. During this time, the use of a writing prompt will be discussed in order to give students an opportunity to self identify their own perceived transformations per Mezirow's theory of TL Theory. Additionally, a day will be scheduled for students to respond to a writing prompt given by their teacher (provided by the researcher) which will further help identify potential student participants for this single instrumental case study). Individual interviews will be scheduled a) Administration b) teachers C) Students and their parents c) Community members who witnessed the transformation per Mezirow's TL theory. A student focus group will be formed by the researcher based on identified student participants and will consist of 6-8 students. A prearranged date will be scheduled with teachers during individual interviews for planning a student focus group. Student focus groups will meet once to discuss perceived transformation. A set of interview questions will be used as a guide for that discussion. Additionally, participants will be asked to be inviting of the researcher to observe student interactions with peers during a normal school day and school functions such as PTA meetings and other related functions. The researcher will ask administration for documents helpful in understanding the transformation such as number of academic referrals, number of visits to guidance counselor, and number of bus report incidents. Other documents such as student grades will be sought. Documents pertaining to the SL experience such as photographs, journal reflections and other curricula documents that might be further supportive in understanding the potential benefits of SL will be sought during the scheduled participant interviews. The research questions outlined in my study are as follows: a) b) How do community members describe the changes in students as a result of the SL experience; and c) How do study participants perceive SL opportunities to impact transformational learning experiences for students in Grades 6-12?

Volunteer Study:

You may volunteer to be a part of this study. There is no consequence for not participating in the study. You are welcome to join the study now, if you are deciding to volunteer. If you choose not to volunteer now, you still have an option to participate later. You may stop at any time.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

Being in this type of study involves some risk of the minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as additional time demands to allow for interviews,. Being in this study would not pose risk to your safety or wellbeing.

The potential benefits from this study can lead to an understanding of the transformations and other benefits associated with SL experiences, and should help curriculum writers and teachers when integrating such practices into the curriculum.

Payment:

There will be no compensation or payment for participating in this study. However letter of appreciation and acknowledgement will be sent to each of the participants involved.

Privacy:

The researcher will keep your information confidential and will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this study. In addition, the researcher will not use your name on any reports, but will use a pseudonym in order to protect your identity. Data will be protected and kept secure by the researcher and stored on a passcode, protected computer.

Additional Questions or Information:

Questions may be asked now or if you have questions that arise later, you may contact the researcher through email or phone.

You may have a copy of this form for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I consent to the terms outlined above and understand my role as a participant in the study.

Name Participant _____

Date of consent _____

Participant's Signature _____

Researcher's Signature _____

Appendix D: Reflection of SL

Please describe your experience of SL and helping in the community.

How did you help meet a need in the community?

How did this experience, if at all, change how you thought about serving in the community?

Do you think any differently about things, people, or the community now that you've had the opportunity to help meet a need in the community?

Would you choose to meet a need in the community again?

Do you believe this experience changed you as a person?

Appendix E: Parent/Guardian Consent and Child Assent Form

How SL Opportunities impact transformational learning experiences for Grades 6-12 Students:

A Case Study
Sherry Boyd Ballew
Liberty University
School of Education

Your child/student is invited to be in a research study describing community service experience and the potential benefits that may result. He or she was selected as a possible participant because a teacher witnessed positive changes as a result of his or her community SL experience. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to allow him or her to be in the study.

Sherry Ballew, a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to understand how community service experiences linked to the classroom may help support or benefit students. I hope to find out how participants describe the changes that may take place as a result of these various community experiences. In addition, I'm hoping to learn what part of the community service experience seems to specifically bring the most change. Finally, I'm interested in finding out what influence the community service experience has on a child's mindset and behavior.

Procedures:

If you agree to allow your child/student to be in this study, I would ask him or her to do the following things:

- 1.) Write about the experience and how he or she may have been changed as a result.
- 2.) Participate in an interview accompanied by a parent. Interviews will take about 20 minutes and will be recorded.
- 3.) Participate in a student focus group to discuss the shared experience of community service. The student focus groups may take about 45 minutes and will be recorded. During this time, students will have an opportunity to expound on the experience with their peers to further help shed light on the changes that may have taken place as a result of the community service experience.
- 4) While engaged with peers or teacher/administrator or the community during an assignment, student will agree to an observation by the researcher. Observation will take no longer than 20 minutes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

The risks involved in this study are no more than the participant would encounter in everyday life.

There are no direct benefits, but the potential paybacks from this study may lead to an understanding of how students experience positive change as a result of community service and

school linked experiences that may help curriculum writers and teachers when integrating such practices into the curriculum. Consequently, society may benefit.

Compensation:

There will be no compensation or payment for participating in this study. However, a sincere, letter of appreciation and acknowledgement will be sent to each of the participants involved.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records. Data will be downloaded and stored on my password-protected computer in an electronic folder using an assigned pseudonym for each participant. Data will be retained for three years upon completion of the study per federal regulations

Data collected, such as notes, photographs, and audio recordings, will be stored in a locked office and secured cabinet. In addition, the researcher will keep a passcode-protected computer. Only the researcher will have access to the data, and it will only be used for educational purposes. All data will be destroyed after 3 years. While the researcher will maintain confidentiality, I cannot assure that the student participants in the focus group will maintain the confidentiality and privacy of other participants.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your child/student to participate will not affect his or her current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to allow your child/student to participate, he or she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If your child/student chooses to withdraw from the study, you or he/she should contact the researcher at the email address/phone number (sballew2@liberty.edu) included in the next paragraph. Should your child/student choose to withdraw, data collected from him or her, apart from focus group data, will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study. Focus group data will not be destroyed, but his or her contributions to the focus group will not be included in the study if he or she chooses to withdraw.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Sherry B. Ballew. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at sballew2@liberty.edu or [REDACTED]. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Dr. Leldon Nichols, at lwnichols@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall Suite 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to allow my child/student to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO ALLOW YOUR CHILD/STUDENT TO PARTICIPATE
UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN
ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my child/student as part of his or her participation in this study.

Signature of minor: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent or guardian: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F: Teacher and Administrator Initial Questionnaire

Please consider any recent Service Learning (SL) experience your student has been involved with. An example is when your students were engaged with the community by helping to meet a community need. Please think about the various students and experiences you have been associated with and answer the following questions. (Questions 5-7 should only be answered if a student was identified from question 1.)

1. Is there a student whom you can identify who currently or in the past has engaged in SL practices and who, as a result of serving in the community, has shown some form of transformational change?
2. What types of SL experiences have your students participated in? How often have you participated in those experiences with your students?
3. How many hours did the student participate in this SL experience?
4. In what ways do you believe the SL experience was meaningful to the student?
5. How would you describe the student's outlook on life before participating in these SL experiences?
6. How would you describe the changes specifically to the student's mindset, outlook on life, or behavior after the student participated in the SL experiences?
7. What aspect of the SL experience do you believe created the change? You may refer to the "observations for quality standards of practice" for SL.

Appendix G: Parent Questionnaire

Please consider any recent Service Learning (SL) experience your child has been involved with. An example is when your child was engaged with the community by helping to meet a community need in conjunction with school activities. Please think about those experiences and answer the following questions:

1. What kind of community service experience did your child participate in during the school year?
2. Do you think these experiences are helpful? If so, in what ways are these experiences helpful?
3. Did you notice any change in your child as a result of the community service?
4. Prior to the community service experience, describe your child's outlook on life.
5. After the community service experience, describe the change you noticed.
6. Prior to the community service experience, describe your child's behavior.
7. After the community service experience, describe your child's behavior and note any change you noticed.

Appendix H: Community Member Questionnaire

Please consider any recent Service Learning (SL) experience a student you may know has been involved with. An example is when students were engaged with helping in the community in order to meet a community need. What was that experience? Please think about the various students and those experiences you have been associated with and answer the following questions:

1. How would you describe your level of involvement with the community service provided?
2. How would you describe the identified student who was engaged in this community service experience?
3. What types of experiences did the students have as a result of this program?
4. Do you think these community experiences were helpful? If so, in what ways were these experiences helpful?
5. How long have you worked with the students? Describe your relationship with the school and the teachers.
6. In what ways has the community service benefited the community? In what ways has the community service benefited the identified student?
7. How would you describe the identified student's behavior and demeanor during the time of the service learning experience?

Appendix I: Adult Focus Group Interview

Please consider the Service Learning (SL) experience and the identified student you have been associated with in order to answer the following questions. Additionally, consider the quality standards of practice for service learning when answering. These standards are shown in the parenthesis after each question and can be referred to as needed.

Observation for Quality Standards of Practice

1. In what ways was the service meaningful to the student and the community (Meaningful service)?
2. In what ways was the SL experience linked to the curriculum (Linked to the curriculum)?
3. Was there an opportunity for students to reflect on their service? (Reflection) If so, how and in what ways?
4. In what ways do students have an opportunity to show respect to others in regard to diversity? (Diversity)
5. How much decision power was given to the student over what would be accomplished during the SL experience? (Youth Voice)
6. Describe the communication between the school and the community. How often and in what ways do the teachers, administrators, or other staff members communicate with community members or business affiliates? (Partnership)
7. What was the goal of the SL experience, and how was this goal communicated to the students and to the broader community such as other educational leaders or policy makers? In what ways was this goal accomplished? (Progress monitoring)
8. Describe the need in the community that prompted the creation of this SL experience? In what ways did the student investigate the community need? Describe the time frame involved with this SL experience. (Duration and intensity)

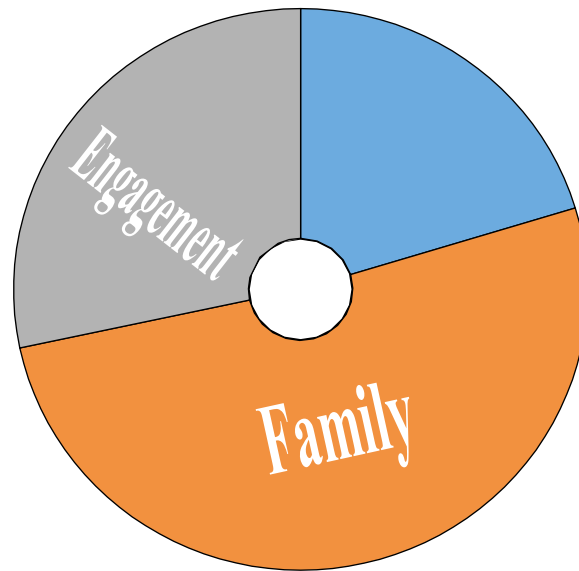
Appendix K: Document Analysis

Documents Selected	Data Analyzed
Source: Article from Community News Paper: “English class shops for Toys for Tots”	U.S. Sgt. _____ went shopping with an 11th grade student participant during the scheduled Community Day during their “Toys for Tots” Student participant is pictured
Source: Article from Community News Paper “Cutest pets raise money for county animal shelter”	“CCS” held the “Cutest Pet Contest” and raised nearly \$350 for the local County Animal shelter. The first place winner was a student participant (One of the student participants is pictured in the article
Source: Article from Community Newspaper “CCS” performs Holiday Program	This event corresponds with information collected during participant interviews regarding “Dance for Change”
Source: Office of “CCS” Record of SL	Number of hours documented and Types of SL experiences
Source: Researcher’s Journal	Notes of process and reflective discourse

Appendix L: Emerging Theme Image

Emerging Themes:

generated by Nvivo Software



Appendix M: Grouping of Codes and Themes

Family:

Accountability

Acquiring life skills

Building communication skills

Celebratory

Confidence

Family

Feeling connected

Feeling good about yourself

Friendships

Feelings of happiness

Health

Gratitude

Knowing expectations

Learning to be responsible and other learning

Ownership

Partnership

Pride

Relational

Safety

Self worth

Shared Responsibility

Showing Respect

Engagement:

A desire to help/give

Doing

engaged

Excitement

Having a vision to do more

Motivation

Ongoing participation

Participation

Problem solving

Taking initiative

Vision for the future

Awareness:

Aware

Compassion

New perspective

Realized

Sensitivity to others