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The Effects of Service-Learning on Middle School Students' Personal Growth, Social Growth, and Citizenship

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The Effects of Service-Learning on Middle School Students' Personal Growth,

Social Growth, and Civic Engagement

A Dissertation by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

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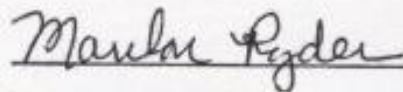
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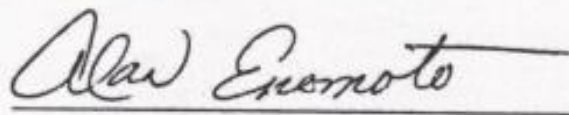
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Cheng Kouei, the strongest, kindest, and most generous woman in my life. You are the biggest reason I am finished with this dissertation journey. It took an additional year and I wasn't sure I could do it, didn't know if I wanted to push forward anymore, but your confidence did not allow me to give up. You believed that I would finish, you kept telling me that it was only a matter of time. I didn't want to disappoint you so I kept going, sometimes at snail pace, but it worked. I can't thank you enough for the many times you took the kids so I could work on my paper, or 'do homework' as you would say, or catch up on sleep. I admire your selflessness and modesty. I appreciate the many tireless things that you do for me and everyone around you. I love you, mom!!!

ABSTRACT

The Effects of Service-Learning on Middle School Students' Personal Growth,

Social Growth, and Civic Engagement

by Kae Saelee-Hiraoka

Purpose: The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to describe and explain middle school administrators', teachers', and coordinators' observations and knowledge of the effect of service-learning on students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement.

Methodology: This phenomenological qualitative study based its findings on in-depth interviews, transcripts, and participant artifacts. Six middle school administrators and eight teachers, and coordinators located in Tulare County, California utilizing service-learning in the 2017-2018 school year, or prior, were interviewed. An interview script, which was developed using the research questions, was used to elicit administrators', teachers', and coordinators' observations and knowledge pertaining to the benefits and drawbacks of service-learning. The participants were digitally recorded and provided with a transcript of the interview to review for accuracy and to add to their responses, should they want to. Triangulation strengthened this study by providing valuable insight through data from interviews, transcripts, and artifacts.

Findings: Major findings indicate that service-learning positively affects the personal growth, social growth, academic improvement, and civic engagement and responsibility in middle school students.

Conclusions: Several conclusions were drawn based on the major findings, from which a list of implications for actions were created. One implication for action is for all

elementary schools to incorporate service-learning into their curriculum, districts can

begin using service-learning with younger students for maximum benefits!

Recommendations: Recommendations for further research are described in Chapter V,

including replicating this study with different populations and perspectives to gain further

insight and perceptions to the effects of service-learning.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand.

-Chinese Proverb

The goal of public schools is to educate all students who enter their classrooms each and every week. In addition to teaching core subjects such as reading, writing, math, science, social studies, and physical education, "public schools are taking on the task of educating the whole child" (Berger, 2005, p. 1). The driving purpose of education is ever changing: from the beginning, when Colonial America used education as a moral guide for children and adults in order to lead them away from the evils in the world, to the 1800s when immigrants were being socialized and acculturated, to the post-Sputnick era where America strived to lead the way by preparing its youth for global and space ingenuity (Berger, 2005; Hopfer, 2002). As George Counts stated in 1934, "We apply schooling as a remedy for every social phenomenon which we do not like" (as cited in Hopfer, 2002, p. 1).

Public schools today face many challenges. Some of the problems encountered by public schools include working with students who are not engaged, motivated, or committed (Bridgeland, Balfanz, Moore & Friant, 2010; Laporte, 2014). Schools also are challenged to educate all students which encompasses those who have differences that need to be taken into account: (a) students with language barriers, (b) cultural barriers, (c) attention deficit disorder, (d) learning disabilities, and (e) those who have gaps in their education.

In addition, there are many societal problems which children face; some of these problems include (a) family concerns, (b) poverty, (c) drug abuse, (d) school and gang

violence, and (e) others (Garcia-Obregon, Trevino, Uribe-Moreno, & Zuniga, 2000).

Many of these problems often become magnified in older students, resulting in decisions

that are detrimental to a child's education. Unfortunately, dropping out of school

oftentimes seems the only reasonable choice to a troubled student. As cited by the

National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) (2015), 16 and 17 year-olds had

dropout rates of 2.2% and 3.5%.

The transition to adolescence has typically been described as a "tumultuous time

for youth" (Chung & McBride, 2015, p. 1). There are many difficulties as students enter

middle school. Many have difficulty adapting to the schedule of middle school which is

very different from elementary school - going from one teacher to six or seven teachers

along with moving from classroom to classroom when the bell rings can be daunting,

especially for the sensitive and shy student (Kleekamp, 2002). These challenges have put

increased pressure on students' social and organizational skills (Hughes, Im, Kwok,

Cham, & West, 2015). Although teachers are aware of this issue, many are unable to

provide the support necessary for thorough student transitions into the middle school

setting due to the large number of students they are serving as well as the limited time

they have with each class (Schumacher, 2000). These transitional demands lead to

greater middle school student anxiety and stress, resulting in higher deficiency in student

academic performance.

There are many issues which middle school students must overcome. Middle

school students face a number of changes: (a) social, (b) emotional, (c) hormonal, and (d)

physical (Chung & McBride, 2015; Laporte, 2014; Richards et al., 2013). Additionally,

they have a strong desire and need to discover who they are and to prove themselves.

Serbin, Stack, and Kingdon (2013) found that adolescents transitioning from elementary school to middle school were at risk for higher rates of disengagement, lower levels of academic performance, fewer personal connection with teachers, and less parental communication. Students at this age also rarely ask for help when it is needed. Many experts now contend that during this sensitive adolescent time, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students often face daunting issues such as bullying, isolation, and dropping out, which can result in depression and a disengagement from both academics and the community, all of which can become life-altering concerns (Chung & McBride, 2015; Goldenring & Rosen, 2004).

Some schools are offering after-school programs and outreach programs as a way to remedy these issues. Other outlets such as community service is now a requirement in many high schools and colleges, and even a number of middle schools, throughout the country (Campus Compact, 2012; Montgomery County Public Schools, 2014). What once began as a community service partnership with college universities, has now turned into community service and service- learning goals that have trickled down to the realms of grade school (Scott & Graham, 2015). Educators and administrators are beginning to realize how valuable the benefits of community service and, specifically, service-learning are to students.

Background

A middle school student falls in the 11 to 14 age range and is typically enrolled in grades sixth through eighth. The literature on middle grade education abounds with examples reporting that middle school students encounter many issues and dilemmas as they make the transition from elementary school (Gordon, Jacobs, & Wright, 2016;

Moore McBride, Chung, & Robertson, 2016; Serbin, Stack, & Kingdon, 2013). As they

enter this new stage in their lives, middle school students must adapt to a new school

culture; come to terms with their new changing and evolving states which consists of

emotional, hormonal, social, and physical; as well as learn to communicate and

collaborate with a group of adolescents who are new to them (Coelho, Marchante,

Jimerson, 2017; Serbin et al., 2013). This is a challenging task for anyone to undertake.

It takes a lot of willpower, adaptability, faith, and a strong support system to foster a

successful transition.

As students enter their middle school campuses, they are greeted by a

conglomerate of students and a large unfamiliar campus with more buildings than they

are used to seeing. Elias (2001) reports that getting lost is one of the transitioning

students' greatest fears, followed by struggles in finding and opening lockers, as well as

not bringing the right materials to the right class. Other middle school student fears

include (a) walking longer distances to class, (b) traveling farther to get to school, (c)

eating in a larger cafeteria with more groups of students, and (d) being around a higher

number of students who can exert peer pressure (Kleekamp, 2002; Williford et al., 2016).

In fact, merely walking around a new school increases a student's vulnerability to

concerns such as being bullied, being harassed, or falling victim to theft; all of which are

detrimental to an adolescent who is trying to discover his/ her identity (Elias, 2001;

Williford et al., 2016).

An adolescent's changing and evolving emotional, hormonal, social, and physical

state can wreak havoc on a middle school student's life. Research on this period of

adolescence indicates that there is a declining interest in school (Chung & McBride,

2015). Difficulties in any or all of these areas can lead to the risk of depression and disengagement in school as well as low self-esteem (Holas & Huston, 2012; Rudolph, Lambert, Clark, & Kurlakowsky, 2001; Williford et al., 2016).

Another issue a middle schooler might face is discovering and bonding with peer groups. This endeavor is often made more difficult by having to make friends from a larger geographic area and emerging feelings of the opposite sex (Elias, 2001). Friendships function as a necessary social support system in troubled times when adolescents encounter demanding and difficult life events. Coping skills are critical to meeting these social needs. Students who have difficulties in establishing positive peer connections may also have difficulties resisting the pressure to smoke, drink alcohol, or use drugs.

Various avenues have been explored in response to the need of addressing middle school population concerns. Several schools use programs that promote empathy or social skills. One such program is the Positive Transition program which seeks to foster school adjustment in the transition to middle school; it found success in reducing 5th grade retention and absenteeism while offsetting the decrease in self-esteem (Coelho et al., 2017).

Another program which has proven benefits is social and emotional learning (SEL). The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is the world's leading organization in advancing and promoting an important topic in education: the practice of integrating academic, social, and emotional learning for all children, preschool through high school. As stated on CASEL's (n.d.) website, SEL is defined as "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply

the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions" (What is SEL? section). In the classroom, SEL helps to create a supportive climate with how teachers build relationships with their students, how students build relationships with one another, and how discipline and conflict are attended to (CASEL, n.d.). Some examples of SEL topics and lessons include:

- self-awareness – utilizing small groups to discuss how and why emotions influence behaviors;

- self-management – teach self-management techniques (belly breathing, counting to ten, and self-talk for managing stressful or anxious moments);

- social awareness – define and discuss the word 'empathy' and discuss being aware of environmental cues;

- relationship skills – teach a lesson on listening and speaking skills (preparing one's message, introduce oneself, know if others are listening, speak clearly/ loudly so listener can hear);

- responsible decision-making – outline steps for good decision-making and model it often (stop, calm down, identify problem, consider options, make a choice, try it out, evaluate) (CASEL, 2017).

One program that uses the SEL framework is the Wyman's Teen Outreach Program (TOP) – a positive development program that teaches emotional and social skills using curriculum and service-learning (as cited in Moor McBride et al., 2016). There are also after-school programs that strive to meet the needs of adolescents such as a program

that incorporates activities for boys who are not engaged with school and are in danger of dropping out of school; these programs were influenced by the Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TPSR) model and are associated with SEL (Gordon et al., 2016). In addition, there are summer programs with goals of increasing student achievement as well as enhancing their social development (Somers, Welbeck, Grossman, Gooden, & MDRC, 2015). Other interventions include counseling sessions with the school or county counselor, social worker, or school psychologist; peer mediations; and usage of the student leadership team (Nolan, 2003; Serbin et al., 2013; Schumacher, 2000). However, one proactive intervention which has grown in popularity and implementation is service-learning which takes the concept of community service to a different level in order to engage students in personal and social growth as well as civic duty.

Service-Learning

Service-learning is an educational approach which utilizes community service to support students in mastering academic content (S. H. Billig, 2011). Service-learning gives students the opportunity to engage in the learning process by providing meaningful service to others, connecting these experiences to academic content, and reflecting on the process in some manner (J. Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996).

As cited in a report from the National Commission on Service-Learning, Don Hill, the director of Service-Learning for Youth Service California, stated in 2000:

> Service-learning is one resource to enhance student motivation. Kids are all too easily disconnected from school, but if they get connected in one place, it spreads over to other areas. Then parents start seeing new potential in their son or

daughter. Teachers hear about a kid that they thought was a lost cause playing a

leading role. It changes the lens and opens up possibilities. (p. 13)

Service-learning is a powerful instrument that can be used to incorporate an authentic

hands-on experience with the core curriculum lessons.

There are various service-learning programs across the country that are in use in

many school districts (Afterschool & MetLife, 2011; Montgomery County Public

Schools, 2014). Although most of the components are the same, each program carries

out service-learning in its own way. S. H. Billig (2011), a prominent service-learning

researcher and author, identified six components of service-learning which are believed

to be crucial to success: (a) investigation, (b) planning, (c) action, (d) reflection, (e)

demonstration, and (f) celebration. For optimum benefits, S. H. Billig suggests that these

activities be accomplished in small groups versus individually or whole group, as

confirmed by Hattie (2000), who further states that materials and teachings should be

diverse and assorted, in addition to being developmentally challenging for maximum

group effectiveness.

Personal Growth

Personal growth can be defined in many ways. It might be defined as the

"subjective experience of change, in behaviors, thoughts, and feelings which are, in turn,

experienced as adaptive" (Geise, 2008, p. 2). According to Ryff, personal growth reflects

directed engagement in progressing development, an open attitude regarding new people

and events, and a push towards growth and improvement - all this in hopes of advancing

in the direction of one's potential (as cited in Geise, 2008). In sum, personal growth is

the measure or result of personal development. One does not generally pinpoint the exact

moment that personal growth occurs, as it is developed over the course of a period of time, typically as a result of some personal development event, planned or not.

Personal growth can take form in a number of ways; it might appear as someone mastering her everyday environment, or becoming stronger and more resilient to challenges, or one overcoming a traumatic or life-changing experience and emerging changed. Personal growth might also be developed through practice, such as one taking piano lessons or participating in athletics training in order to improve.

Studies show that, as a result of participating in service-learning, there are indirect effects on reducing anxiety and depression or emotional suffering in adolescents (Moore McBride et al., 2016). Furthermore, service-learning creates an important bridge, connecting school and community, in order to foster empathic growth (Terry & Bohnenberger, 2003).

The National Commission on Service-Learning state that participation in service-learning has been shown to develop the motivation to learn and is often linked to an increase in attendance and a reduction in dropout rates (Fiske, 2002). S. H. Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005) discovered that participants of service-learning experience benefits such as having greater academic engagement and performance outcomes. This supports Vogelgesang and Alexander's (2000) findings which indicate that students who participate in service-learning experience consistently greater positive academic outcomes in their critical thinking, writing, and grade point average than those who do not participate.

Social Growth

Wikipedia (2018) defines, "a social skill is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others…" (Social Skills section). Social rules and relationships are formed, communicated, and modified in ways that are verbal and nonverbal. Interpersonal skills are vital to humans being able to relate to one another. Gresham and Elliot (1984) defined social skills as:

> Those behaviors which, within a given situation, predict important social outcomes such as (a) peer acceptance and popularity, (b) significant others' judgments of behavior, or (c) others' social behaviors" which align with peer acceptance or with the judgments of significant others. (as cited in Nolan, 2003, p. 6)

Deborah Plummer (2008) notes the difficulty in compiling a definitive list of social skills that are necessary for effective interactions and communications. Fortunately, she shares some recognizable core abilities which help to define social behavior such as: (a) self-awareness and control, (b) effective listening and observation, (c) understanding of verbal and nonverbal cues, and (d) tolerance and respect of differences. Within these frameworks, Plummer includes a list of behaviors which demonstrate these abilities: (a) initiating and ending an interaction, (b) asking/answering questions, (c) taking turns in a conversation, (d) encouraging and reinforcing others, and (e) keeping an interaction going/staying on topic.

Plummer (2008) asserts that children who do not succeed at developing proper social skills will most likely continue to face difficulty later in life. She continues to state that children can establish a happy medium, toggling between the creation of healthy

relationships and personal autonomy if they are guided in building social skills. Adults can encourage and supplement a child's development through providing interactions which are reassuring paired with the teaching of key skills; this can lead a child towards building the capacity for self-control, self-regulation, and connections to others. Therefore, it is never too late to work with a student on developing social skills.

Undeniably, social relationships are crucial to children, and their importance continues to increase into early adolescence and beyond. Service-learning programs often provides adolescents with opportunities in an alternative arena, other than interest-based clubs or extracurricular activities such as sports, to exercise their leadership skills, connect with peers, and to excel (Flanagan, 2004). In a non-competitive environment, adolescents feel safe which allows them to be creative and thrive. More recent evidence suggests that participation in service-learning reduced negative adolescent behaviors such as violent behavior, school dropout, drug and alcohol use, sexual risk-taking (K. Farber, 2016; Moore McBride et al., 2016; Schmidt, Shumow, & Kackar, 2006).

Civic Engagement

The term 'citizenship' is often used interchangeably with civic duty, civic participation, civic responsibility, and civic engagement. According to the American Psychological Association (2018), the terms civic engagement or participation are the "…individual and collective actions…" (Definition of Civic Engagement section) which are designed to identify as well as address topics that are troubling for the public (Delli, n.d.). It is, essentially, working or doing for the common good.

In 1997, The National Commission on Civic Renewal warned that America was susceptible to becoming "a nation of spectators" (Barry, Lowe & Twill, 2017). There is a

powerful academic and public perception on youth political disengagement and apathy, as well as the presumption that young people are uninformed, uneducated, incompetent, and irresponsible so they cannot be active citizens; thus, some form of 'education' should be provided to them (Ribeiro, Caetano & Menezes, 2016). If students do not have the background or knowledge to be responsible citizens of their communities and their country, then it is the job of the schools and communities to teach them.

Students often discover civic responsibility through service-learning opportunities which require them to become active members of their community (Byoung, 2010). Several studies show that children and adolescents benefit from service-learning; growth is seen in academics and civic engagement (S. H. Billig, 2000; Brandenberger, 2013). S. H. Billig (2000), and Johnson and Notah (1999) found that students who participate in service-learning were more responsible in their civic duties compared to peers who have not participated in service activities. Furthermore, students who have been involved in service-learning activities and programs often display an increase in their ability to sense their community's needs; these individuals personally believe in their own capabilities, realizing that they have the power to make crucial and necessary changes within their community (S. H. Billig, 2000). Citizenship can take many forms and being able to offer students some insight into that will help them become more responsible members of society.

In sum, students face many obstacles and challenges as they transition to the middle school setting. Their basic social, emotional, and physical beings are being tested. During a time of tumultuous change when extra guidance, support, and understanding are most needed, it is often what is lacking. As adolescents come into

their own in terms of personal growth, social growth, and civic responsibility, service-learning has become one option that has been employed to offer guidance and support.

Statement of the Research Problem

Schools have been charged with the task of educating children from preschool age through their senior year in high school. However, educators have the daunting responsibility of educating the whole child in more than just the core subjects of reading and writing, mathematics, history, and science; educators are charged with preparing all children to be kind, caring, courageous, and responsible citizens of the future who will act upon judgements of right and wrong for the good of the whole (Delli, n.d.; Ponder, Veldt, & Lewis-Ferrell, 2011).

Due to various challenges, a number of schools, especially those in high-poverty districts, are often performing in a crisis operation manner (Ashley, 2016). The students in those settings often exhibit frustration, hurt, and anger in ways that may be perceived as 'disrespectful' or 'defiant' to educators. Many students, especially middle school students, come to school with complex histories of trauma, family issues, drug use/ exposure, atrocious poverty, poverty related issues such as homelessness, and psychiatric vulnerabilities (Ashley, 2016; Garcia-Obregon et al., 2000). Students are often disengaged, unmotivated, and suffer from a poor view of themselves, lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem (Bridgeland et al., 2010; Laporte, 2014). To assist students in coping with some of these concerns, educators should practice strategies which can help to prevent crisis while teaching students new coping skills for sorting out exhausting feelings such as self-awareness and active listening skills (Ashley, 2016).

Although service-learning is being embraced more widely in education, there are still gaps in the research. Scott and Graham (2015) reveal that the current research involving service-learning is not complete in its coverage pertaining to pre-adolescent children as research has tended to focus on the older adolescent. Previous work on service-learning has concluded however that service-learning is helpful for high school and college students due to its long-term results; some benefits experienced include increased levels of empathy and sympathy, a reduction in delinquency, and an increase in instances of community engagement and civic responsibility (Fiske, 2002). Although benefits of service-learning have been studied and its value documented, some educators still object against service-learning; they are concerned about the time that is required to complete service related activities and how it trivializes the classic and standard pedagogical methods (Scott & Graham, 2015). Adding to the conversation, S. H. Billig, Hofschire, Meyer, and Yamauchi (2006) state that, unless students participate in 40 hours or more of service, its effectiveness may not be evident and participants will not experience benefits.

Service-learning in schools provides adolescents the opportunity to practice their leadership skills, especially for those who are not particularly athletically or academically gifted (Flanagan, 2004). Service-learning can have an impact on connection to school, academic success, social behaviors, and feelings about self (Richards et al., 2013). Other benefits of service-learning experienced by students include: (a) talking to their parents more often, (b) feeling successful at assisting others, (c) exhibiting more interest for others' well-being, and (d) showing an increase in academic determination (Scales, Blyth, Berkas, & Kielsmeier, 2000). Since adolescence is an age of social, civic, and career

exploration, this remarkable developmental stage is a great fit for service programs (Richards et al., 2013).

Despite this knowledge about the benefits of service-learning in the educational setting, the concept is not widely known about nor shared and the practice is not implemented in many school districts around the country. Many elements of service-learning was based on John Dewey's pragmatic philosophy of education; however, many believe that practitioners of service-learning have imperfectly assimilated Dewey's pragmatic philosophy into their own schema, so it may not be as effective as it could be (Maddux & Donnett, 2015). Other concerns with service-learning include practitioners who are not knowledgeable about the process of service-learning and, therefore, take on a community service-like project instead which may not be as effective for students. The concept of service-learning is growing in popularity in schools around the country; unfortunately, more support is needed in that area to help spread the word to those seeking another form of proactive intervention for students.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators.

Research Questions

This study was guided by one primary research question and three sub-questions that were developed to examine the focus on the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement.

Central Research Question

What are the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

Research Sub-Questions

1. How does participation in service-learning affect the personal growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

2. How does participation in service-learning affect the social growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

3. How does participation in service-learning affect the civic engagement of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

Significance of the Problem

The significance of this study focuses on its contribution to the literature on service-learning for middle school students. Adolescents face many challenges such as not being engaged, motivated, or committed to their education as well as other concerns such as family concerns, poverty, drug abuse, school and gang violence, and many others (Bridgeland et al., 2010; Garcia-Oregon et al., 2000; Laporte, 2014). Sadly, the U.S. Department of Education reports that 16 and 17 year-olds had dropout rates of 2.2% and 3.5% (as cited in NCES, 2015).

Middle school students endure a "tumultuous time" (Chung & McBride, 2015, p. 1) as they transition to adolescence. They face social, emotional, hormonal, and physical changes which can lead to higher rates of disengagement, fewer personal connection with teachers, and less parental communication (Chung & McBride, 2015; Eccles et al., 1993; Laporte, 2014; Richards et al., 2013). In this sensitive stage, middle schoolers often face daunting issues such as bullying, isolation, and dropping out which can lead to some life-altering concerns that include low self-esteem, depression, and disengagement from both academics and the community (Chung & McBride, 2015; Goldenring & Rosen, 2004; Holas & Huston, 2012).

Schools around the country are seeking solutions to these devastating problems. Some interventions include the Positive Transition program, the SEL, after-school activity-based programs based on the TPSR model, and summer programs (Coelho et al., 2017; Gordon et al., 2016; Moor McBride et al., 2016; Somers et al., 2015). Furthermore, counseling interventions are utilized which encompass counseling sessions with the school or county counselor, social worker, or school psychologist; peer mediations; and usage of the student leadership team (Nolan, 2003; Schumacher, 2000; Serbin et al., 2013). Strategies to address adolescent concerns have been varied and many. However, one proactive intervention, service-learning, has grown in popularity and implementation. Service-learning takes the concept of community service to a different level in order to engage students in personal and social growth as well as civic duty. In a meta-analysis from Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011), the researchers highlight the significance of service-learning as a viable teaching technique for elementary school through college level. Students who participated in service-learning

exhibited growth in their ability to perceive the needs of their community and personally believed that they were capable of making a difference; they showed more civic engagement and responsibility in comparison to their peers who did not participate in service-learning and were stronger in their academic engagement and performance (S. H. Billig, 2000; S. H. Billig et al., 2005; Soslau & Yost, 2007).

Former president Obama, in addition to a number of our country's previous leaders, have spoken time and time again of the urgency to motivate all citizens, including our very youngest, to be actively involved within our local communities and more (Ponder et al., 2011). Kaye (2010) describes service-learning:

> as a research-based teaching method where guided or classroom learning is applied through action that addresses an authentic community need in a process that allows for youth initiative and provides structured time for reflection on the service experience and demonstration of acquired skills and knowledge. (p. 9)

In simpler terms, the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse (2013) presents service-learning as a viable tool for teaching and learning. Its strength lies within incorporating and combining relevant community service, good instruction, and insightful reflections in order to enhance the learning experience. Researchers have found that service-learning encouraged the acquisition of gains in personal and interpersonal development areas, understanding and applying knowledge, curiosity, engagement, reflective practice, perspective transformation, critical thinking, and citizenship (Carney, 2013; J. Eyler & Giles, 1999; Medina & Gordon, 2014). Bettencourt (2015) concluded that service-learning supports postsecondary programs through expanding opportunities for student learning in ways which are not effectively achieved

within the confines of a classroom; which begs for more research in other grade and age levels for common benefits.

The study will provide greater depth into the personal and social growth areas as well as the civic engagement and responsibility of middle school students when they participate in service-learning. The findings from this study will add to the bank of knowledge currently available to service-learning implementation with middle school students. The benefits, concerns, and further implications will guide future interests and implementation practices of service-learning, not just in middle schools, but in elementary and high schools, as well as any other school or organizational setting.

Definitions

The following are the operational and technical terms used in this study:

Citizenship. Citizenship is showing social responsibility and commitment to your community or country. It is described as "*both* a set of practices (cultural, symbolic and economic) and a bundle of rights and duties (civil, political and social)" (Isin & Wood, 1994, p. 4) which associates a person with a specified community; it is a relationship between one's social and legal identity (Isin & Wood, 1999).

Civic Engagement. "Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes" (Ehrlich, 2000, p. vi). It is the individual and collective actions that take place in order to pinpoint and examine any concerns that the public has (American Psychological Association, 2018).

Civic Responsibility. Civic responsibility includes behaviors and perspectives which relate to democratic governance and social participation. Civic responsibility may include participation in the government, church, as well as volunteerism and memberships in voluntary associations and organizations (Self, n.d.).

Community Service. Community service programs are generally designed to engage students in activities which are created to meet the needs of the community; they typically do not include a reflection piece and have no academic connection (Jacoby & Howard, 2015). Community service can be done as a one-time event or a regularly recurring event which occurs daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly. Community service often has a negative connotation as it can refer to a court- or school-mandated consequence (Jacoby & Howard, 2015).

Middle School Administrator. A middle school administrator is the principal, assistant principal, or any other adult authority figure on the campus of any middle school. Middle schools are an intermediate level between elementary school and high school, which generally includes grades six to eight or seven to eight.

Middle School Counselor, Coordinator, or Director. A middle school counselor, coordinator, or director is someone who works with students, guiding them in academics or personal concerns; this individual may also lead programs that support students in attaining academic, personal, and/or social success.

Middle School Teacher. A middle school teacher is someone who works with students in a classroom or equivalent setting, using a set of curriculum. Their goal is to support student learning and growth in academics as well as personal and social development.

Personal Growth. According to Ryff, personal growth is a reflection of directed engagement in progressing situations, having an open attitude towards new people and events, and putting forth effort into improvement, all this in hopes of advancing closer to one's potential (as cited in Geise, 2008). In sum, personal growth is the measure or result of personal development. One does not generally pinpoint the exact moment that personal growth occurs, as it is developed over the course of a period of time, typically as a result of some personal development event.

Reflection. Determined a vital component in learning by many, reflection is "an active process of exploration and discovery which often leads to very unexpected outcomes" (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 2005, p. 7). It can also be referred to as "thoughtful self-examination" (Ball & Schilling, 2006, p. 279). Guided student reflections, with tutelage from an instructor, assists students in bridging academic content and service-learning experiences, providing them the opportunity to learn and grow from their lived experiences. Reflection activities can take place before, during, and after each service-learning project (Meek, 2004).

Service-Learning. Service-Learning is "a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (Fiske, 2002, p. 3). It is more involved than community service due to its required elements such as reflections as well as an academic component, plus character building elements which are typically present. Service-Learning programs encompass between four to seven stages (S. H. Billig, 2011).

Social Growth. Social growth is an individual's growth and improvement in his/her interpersonal and social skills. A social skill refers to any skill that facilitates

interaction and communication between individuals and groups. Social expectations and relationships are formed, communicated, and modified in ways that are verbal and nonverbal. Interpersonal skills are vital to a human being's ability to relate to one another.

Delimitations

The study was delimited to public middle schools in Tulare County that have implemented service-learning in the 2017-2018 or prior school years. The administrators, and teachers or coordinators interviewed for the study must meet certain criteria. The criteria for participants consists of the following:

1. Participants must have been employed at the middle school site in the 2017-2018 school year, or prior, for at least one year.

2. Participants must have participated in recent staff development related to the topic of service-learning or discussed/ disseminated information to others about it.

3. Participants must be working at a middle school with service learning components that had one of the following:

    - One classroom-integrated Service-Learning project +25 individual service hours

    - Two classroom-integrated Service-Learning projects +15 individual service hours

    - Three classroom-integrated Service-Learning projects

Organization of Study

Chapter I is an overview of the study, presenting background information and identifying the problem which leads to further research on the topic. The rest of this study is organized in four chapters, a reference list, and appendixes. Chapter II provides a literature review of what is known about service- learning in the educational system, touching upon its relevance in the middle school arena. It also highlights the personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement of adolescent students. Chapter III outlines the research design and methodology of this study. It describes the population, procedures for collecting the sample and data, and the procedures used for analyzing the data collected. Chapter IV presents and analyzes the findings of this study, closing with a discussion. Finally, Chapter V presents the summary, findings, conclusions, and recommendations for actions and further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean.

-Ryunosuke Satoro

This chapter will look in-depth at service-learning: the history, theorists who helped to shape it, various definitions of service-learning, its associated challenges, and raised concerns and issues. This chapter will also touch upon the areas of growth for adolescents/middle school students pertaining to personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement and responsibility. Chapter II will outline how service-learning may enhance personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement and responsibility in adolescents. A literature matrix (Appendix A) was created to organize information from the literature review. The literature matrix helped to synthesize and highlight topics and issues related to service-learning.

Service-Learning History

Service-learning is not a new idea by any means. Its roots date back to the early 19th and late 20th centuries (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). The term "service-learning" resulted from the work of Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey at the Southern Region Education Board in 1967 (as cited in Giles & J. Eyler, 1994). Service-learning is an educational method which utilizes community service to assist students in mastering academic content (S. H. Billig, 2011). Historically, the concept of service-learning, by way of community service, began as a partnership which college universities formed with communities (Scott & Graham, 2015).

The concept of service-learning has been present for a long time yet, its incorporation into the educational arena did not gain momentum until the early 1970s, and it was not until the last few decades that noticeable reform efforts have surfaced (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). A tremendous push in this area comes from various government legislature which has encouraged and promoted community service and service-learning opportunities (Skinner & Chapman, 1999).

President George Bush signed into law the National Community Service Act on November 16, 1990, which dedicated about 62 million dollars to encouraging young people to lend their time and effort in service to nearby communities and schools (Lewis, 1995). This amount continues to increase as it gains exposure and popularity. Due to this Act, schools across the country have set up service experiences for students; many high school students are satisfying a requirement for graduation as they complete their service hours (Lewis, 1995). The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 brought forth programs such as Learn and Serve America and AmeriCorps which provided opportunities for service-learning activities for elementary through college level students to offer service to their local communities (Skinner & Chapman, 1999).

Community service is now a requirement in many high schools and colleges, and even a number of middle schools, throughout the country (Campus Compact, 2012; Montgomery County Public Schools, 2014). Educators, administrators, and other school personnel are beginning to realize how valuable the benefits of community service and, specifically, service-learning are to students.

<center>**Theorists**</center>

Theorists such as John Dewey, Maria Montessori, and Jean Piaget were proponents of the progressive movement; "these early theorists all agreed that children learn from doing and that education should involve real-life material and experiences and should encourage experimentation and independent thinking" (Mooney, 2013, pp. 15-16). This thinking helped to lay the foundation for service-learning.

John Dewey (1859 – 1952)

John Dewey "was an American psychologist, philosopher, educator, social critic, and political activist" (pragmatism.org, n.d., John Dewey, American Pragmatist section). Some say he is one of the most influential thinkers and philosophers of education (pragmatism.org, n.d.). He was a university professor at a number of colleges, including: University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, University of Chicago, and University of Columbia. Dewey supported several causes including women's suffrage, the Humanistic movement, world peace, educator's rights, and progressive education (pragmatism.org, n.d.). He was also a published writer, with over 1,000 works to his name, on topics surrounding sociology, psychology, philosophy, and education (pragmatism.org, n.d.). Of all his interests, Dewey's influences in education is what has had the most lasting effects.

Dewey is likely most remembered due to his role in progressive education. Progressive education dictates that learning should be student-centered and experienced rather than through rote memorization and textbooks (Jordan, 2016). Dewey's pragmatic theories in education state that human beings learn through a 'hands-on' approach. He

believed that "students must interact with their environment in order to adapt and learn" (Jordan, 2016, p. 1).

John Dewey was an early advocate for service-learning (K. Farber, 2011). Dewey "believed that students would learn more effectively and become better citizens if they engaged in service to the community and had this service incorporated into their academic curriculum" (as cited in Skinner & Chapman, 1999, p. 2). As further evidence of his support in this area, Dewey states that, "education is a social process; education is growth; education is not a preparation for life, but is life itself" (as cited by Noyes, Darby, & Leupold, 2015, p. 20). These revelations point to Dewey's belief that learning should be interactive, experience is crucial, and that we learn best by doing.

Dewey's writings lend five ideas which has helped to shape service-learning: "linking education to experience, democratic community, social service, reflective inquiry, and education for social transformation" (Saltmarsh, 1996, p. 1). Reflective thinking, one of Dewey's learning elements, proves to be an invaluable component of service-learning (Giles & J. Eyler, 1994). Modern-day service-learning is an integration of community-based service and curriculum contents (Rosing, Reed, Ferrari, & Bothne, 2010).

Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952)

Maria Montessori was an Italian physician and educator who created a learning system known as the Montessori Method in the 1900s. Montessori was a strong individual who did not let stereotypes of the time-period stop her from achieving her dreams; she became a doctor at a time when doctors were predominantly male (Holfester,

2013). She continued to challenge the status quo by contradicting and challenging traditional views about learning and education.

Although Montessori's initial teaching practices were geared towards learning-disabled students, her methods have transcended to several other student groups and countries, proving successful with at-risk students as well as the general student population (Holfester, 2013). This sensory-based practice focuses on individual learning; the term used for this is progressive learning (Holfester, 2013). Compared to students in the traditional educational setting, studies have shown Montessori students to have greater learning and growth achievements (Holfester, 2013; Lillard, 2005).

Montessori's educational goals lie in finding activities which are "so intrinsically meaningful that we want to throw ourselves into them" (M. Montessori, 1967, p. 14). Integral to Montessori teaching are motion and learning; Montessori believed that motion, or movement, and thinking went hand in hand (Lillard, 2005). This resonates with Jean Piaget's theory that proclaims action leads to intelligence in infants (Lillard, 2005). Freedom of choice is another big idea in Montessori's learning theory which is in direct contrast with the traditional educational notions of the time (Lillard, 2005; M. Montessori, 2008). Montessori believed in a self-directed individualized approach to learning where students developed critical thinking skills by making choices in their academic environment (M. Montessori, 2008; Pickering, 2004). These interactive, autonomous educational experiences foster students who become responsible and inquisitive learners (Holfester, 2013).

The role of the Montessori teacher is that of observer and facilitator who guides students as needed and creates a learning environment that is organized, supportive,

warm, and welcoming (Holfester, 2013; M. Montessori, 2008). These teachers are trained to teach lessons which are interconnected. Mixed age groups and mixed lesson subjects are important in the Montessori learning environment; experiences and interests are more relevant than skills or abilities when creating groups (Pickering, 2004). As students grow, they hone in on their problem-solving skills, social skills, creativity, and cultural awareness to become integral parts of their community and world, they transform into problem-solving individuals who seek understanding and justice from the world around them (Edwards, 2002).

Jean Piaget (1896 – 1980)

Jean Piaget was a biologist, scientologist, and child psychologist who was proclaimed a child prodigy by many, writing a research paper that went on to be published when he was only 11 years old, and was deemed a genius in his time (Kohler, 2008). Piaget was a tireless worker who was focused on his work and who eventually came to define himself by his achievements.

J. Piaget (1976) developed a theory of development that includes three processes which assists in an individual's adaptation to the world which can simply be described as: (a) the adaptation of the organism to the environment, (b) the adaptation of intelligence, and (c) the establishment of cognitive relations. Piaget states that people must act on and transform objects to know them; according to Piaget, this includes (a) displacing, (b) connecting, (c) combining, (d) taking apart, and (e) reassembling things to gain knowledge and understanding. Piaget asserts that there is a relationship between the subject (people/ children) and the object (environment) that is more than merely a passive relationship; in this relationship, the subject must interact with the object to learn about it.

Piaget has published over 50 books and more than 500 research papers in the fields of biology and psychology; however, one of his most well-known contribution is his creation of the four cognitive stages of child development (Kohler, 2008; Smith, n.d.). Based on his observations of children, Piaget discovered that children think and process information differently than adults do. In order to create knowledge, understanding, and intelligence, Piaget explains that an active process is required (J. Piaget & Inhelder, 2000).

Jean Piaget's four stages of cognitive development include:

1. Sensorimotor stage (0-2 years)

2. Pre-operational stage (2–7 years)

3. Concrete operational stage (7–11 years)

4. Formal operational stage (11+ years)

The first stage, Sensorimotor (0–2 years), is a stage of dramatic growth. As babies and toddlers interact with their environment, they learn and discover how the world around them works (J. Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). This stage is broken down further into six sub-stages:

1. Reflexes (0-1 month): Basic reflexes such as crying and sucking.

2. Habits and primary circular reactions (1-4 months): New schemas formed, ability to engage in behavior for satisfaction (sucking thumb).

3. Secondary circular reactions (4-8 months): Awareness of action and environment relationship (grasping for objects).

4. Coordination of reactions (8-12 months): Purposeful actions cause wanted results (cause/effect and hand eye coordination).

5. Tertiary circular reactions (12-18 months): Discovery, experiments, and new behavior (experimentation to achieve goals).

6. Internalization (18-24 months): Insight and creativity (object representations) (J. Piaget & Inhelder, 2000).

In the Pre-operational stage (2-7 years), children learn to use words and symbols to represent things, experience pretend play, and are egotistical in the sense that they can only perceive things from their personal viewpoints (J. Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). They strive to understand the world around them by asking 'why' questions. The greatest development at this stage is the appearance of language. The third stage, Concrete Operational (4-11 years), is where children begin to develop their logical thinking and become more aware of the thoughts and feelings of others and thus, are able to sympathize with others (J. Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). The fourth and final stage of cognitive development is the Formal Operational Stage (12 years and up). In this final stage, children, adolescents, and adults are able to ponder concerns which are ethical, moral, social, or philosophical (J. Piaget & Inhelder, 2000). Abstract thought surfaces and trial and error is used for problem-solving.

Lev Vygotsky (1896 – 1934)

Lev Vygotsky was a Russian psychologist who died at the age of 37, leaving many unfinished work behind; and although his theories on development are essentially incomplete, his work is being referenced all over the world (Esteban-Guitart, 2018). He is well-known for his work in creating the Zone of Proximal Development and the term 'scaffolding,' which is referenced often in the field of education (S. A. McLeod, 2014). The Zone of Proximal Development refers to what a child can achieve independently

versus what that same child can achieve with guidance and support from a more knowledgeable partner, or as Vygotsky has termed: the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) which includes individuals such as a teacher/ mentor/coach, a peer/tutor, a guide, etc. (S. A. McLeod, 2014).

Vygotsky is credited with developing the idea of Social Cognition, or Social Development Theory of Learning, which suggests that cognitive development is influenced by social interaction and culture; cognitive processes such as thought, language, and reason, are supported through social interaction (Esteban-Guitart, 2018; Obukhova, 2012). He felt that the community was integral in the process of making meaning for individuals and, therefore, social learning precedes development (S. A. McLeod, 2014).

Vygotsky's theories differ from Piaget's in several ways. Vygotsky believed that an adult or MKO shares knowledge which the learner internalizes and uses to develop new knowledge and skills, and the environment and culture which the learner grows up in guides their learning and growth (S. A. McLeod, 2014, Obukhova, 2012). Piaget believed that peer interactions were important because they promoted social perspectives and individuals learn from their own independent explorations of the world around them (S. A. McLeod, 2014). Although Piaget affirmed the significance of the environment to a development of the individual, he did not emphasize the role of the environment's influence on an individual's development like Vygotsky did (S. A. McLeod, 2014). Vygotsky believed that there is a relationship between the environment and the individual which changes with the age and experience of the individual (Obukhova, 2012).

David Kolb (1939 – present)

David Kolb is an American psychologist and educational theorist who is known for his work on experiential learning (Cherry, 2017). Kolb's work is influenced by his predecessors: John Dewey, Carl Jung, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget who laid the foundations for his experiential learning theory (D. Kolb, 1984; Pepin, 2013).

D. Kolb (1984) defines learning through the lens of experiential learning:

Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. This definition emphasizes several critical aspects of the learning process as viewed from the experiential perspective. First is the emphasis on the process of adaptation and learning as opposed to content or outcomes. Second is that knowledge is a transformation process, being continuously created and recreated, not an independent entity to be acquired or transmitted. Third, learning transforms experience in both its objective and subjective forms. Finally, to understand learning, we must understand the nature of knowledge, and vice versa. (p. 38)

D. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning expands on his definition of learning; the model presents four stages of learning as well as four styles of learning. Dewey's (1938) six-step process of education influenced Kolb's model of learning, which he reduces from six steps to four. Dewey's six-step educational process follows:

1. Encountering a problem.

2. Formulating the problem as a question to be answered.

3. Gathering information to answer the posed question.

4. Developing a hypothesis.

5. Testing the hypothesis.

6. Making warranted assertions (as cited in Science Education Resource Center, 2016, Philosophical Roots of Experiential Learning and Service-Learning section).

D. Kolb's (1984) model of learning is described as a "four-stage cycle involving four adaptive learning modes - concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation" (p. 40). Kolb's model of experiential learning is described below:

1. Stage one: Concrete experience (feeling) – a new situation or experience occurs, possibly a reinterpretation of a previous experience.

2. Stage two: Reflective observation (watching) – observation of the new experience where inconsistencies between the experience and understanding are noted.

3. Stage three: Abstract conceptualization (thinking) – reflection leads to new ideas or modifications of existing abstract concepts (an analysis of the situation is determined and conclusions are made).

4. Stage four: Active experimentation (doing) – the learner transfers the new ideas to their immediate world to see what the outcomes are, testing his/ her hypothesis in future situations which results in new experiences (as cited in S. A. McLeod, 2017).

D. Kolb (1984) believed that a person must go through all of the learning stages in order for learning to be effective. Kolb's four styles of learning stem from and work in conjunction with his four-stage learning cycle. Kolb's four styles of learning are:

1. Diverging

2. Assimilating

3. Converging

4. Accommodating (D. Kolb, 1984).

A service-learning project would provide its participants with the opportunity to experience D. Kolb's (1984) four stages of experiential learning (see Figure 1).
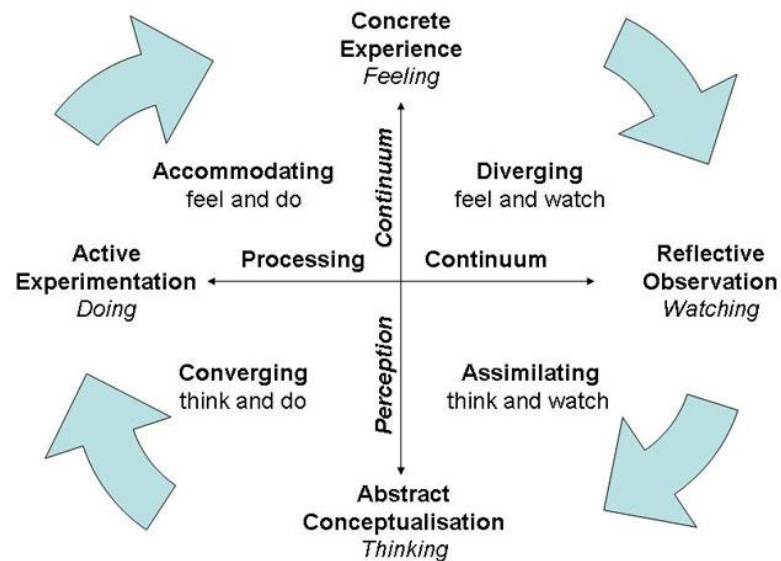
Figure 1. Kolb's model of experiential learning. Adapted from "Simply Psychology," by S. A. McLeod, 2017, The Experiential Learning Cycle section. Retrieved from https://www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html

Service-Learning Defined

The term "service-learning" was coined in the late 1960s and, since then, there has been a push towards creating commonality in the principles of good practice and definition (Giles & J. Eyler, 1994; Saltmarsh, 1996). In fact, in reviewing the literature, 147 terms and definitions related to service-learning were discovered (as cited in Giles & J. Eyler, 1994, p. 3). Thus, service-learning has been defined in numerous ways by

numerous people. Service-learning definitions range from shallow and skimming the surface to detailed and in-depth. According to the University of Colorado (1998), "Definitions of service-learning vary considerably among those who embrace it" (as cited by Skinner & Chapman, 1999, p. 2).

Amidst the multitude of definitions, Flecky (2011) shares that "the essence of service-learning rests on a philosophy of service and learning that occurs in experiences, reflection, and civic engagement within a collaborative relationship involving community partners" (p. 1). According to Flecky (2011), the hyphen between the word *service* and *learning* is intentional and purposeful as it indicates a balance between the *service* activity and the *learning* that takes place within the partnership experience. Some researchers insist that service-learning should be a joint effort between students and the community, where authentic and explicit objectives for learning are evident, responding to genuine needs within the community, promoting decision-making in our youth, and using analytic reflection to explore the impact of service on the individual and community (Fiske, 2002; Leeman, Rabin, & Roman-Mendoza, 2011).

K. Farber (2011) states that many people often confuse service-learning with community service. When asked what service-learning is, people might point to the food drive at their child's school, participating in a clean-up event at a park, picking up litter at a specified location, making nursing-home visits, or helping out at a local library (K. Farber, 2011). K. Farber (2011) describes community service as an activity which typically "benefits a local community, non-profit organization, or group in need" (p. 5); and it is performed by people to "fulfill school, business, or extracurricular requirements; or, at times, as a punishment" (p. 5). Furthermore, community service activities are not

structured in such a way where it includes specific learning objectives, organized

reflections, nor extension opportunities to help participants further develop and grow (K.

Farber, 2011). S. H. Billig (2011) confirms that community service and service-learning

share just one component, which is 'action'.

To assist in developing clear lines of distinction between service-learning and

community service, Skinner and Chapman (1999) note that they worked with the

Corporation for National Service to create specific definitions for community service and

service-learning to assist in differentiating between the two concepts for their study. The

guidelines used for their study include a definition of community service, these types of

activities are not based on curriculum and are usually arranged through school. Skinner

and Chapman (1999) believed that:

> Community service: (a) may be mandatory or voluntary, (b) generally does not
>
> include explicit learning objectives or organized reflection or critical analysis
>
> activities, and (c) may include activities that take place off of school grounds or
>
> may happen primarily within the school. (p. 3)

Skinner and Chapman (1999) contend that service-learning activities are:

curriculum-based community service that integrates classroom instruction with

community service activities. The service must:

- be organized in relation to an academic course or curriculum;

- have clearly stated learning objectives;

- address real community needs in a sustained manner over a period of time;
  and

- assist students in drawing lessons from the service through regularly

scheduled, organized reflection or critical analysis activities, such as

classroom discussions, presentations, or directed writing (pp. 2-3).

J. Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996) assert that service-learning offers students

the option of engaging in the learning process through providing significant and

satisfying service to others, connecting that experience to academics, and reflecting on

the process in various ways. K. Farber (2011) agrees by stating that service-learning is a

process that is driven by students; they become aware of and learn about specific issues,

problems, or places, then research to discover positive ways to help, and, finally, take

action. Service-learning takes time to be successful and, more importantly, requires a

reflection piece, throughout and at the end, which makes it different from community

service (K. Farber, 2011). A service-learning project generally ends with a celebration of

some sort of things accomplished and ideas generated for further research and/ or service

commitments (K. Farber, 2011).

Lewis (1995), an award-winning author, teacher, and proponent of service

projects, has won eight national awards through implementing service projects with her

students. She has compiled a list of 10 steps in which she has used to carry out

successful service projects with her students. The 10 steps to successful service projects

are as follows:

1. Research your project

2. Form a team

3. Find a sponsor

4. Make a plan

5. Consider the recipient

6. Decide where you will perform your service

7. Get any permissions you need to proceed

8. Advertise

9. Fundraise

10. When your project has ended, evaluate it. (Lewis, 1995, pp. 8-11)

S. H. Billig (2011), vice president of RMC Research Corporation and researcher, evaluator, and technical assistance provider in the field of service-learning and educational reform, states that "service-learning typically is comprised of six components: investigation, planning, action, reflection, demonstration, and celebration" (p. 1). S. H. Billig stresses that "reflection is a key component of service-learning" and "should be woven throughout the service-learning experience" (p. 1), being utilized before, during, and after the experience, rather than be a component which is visited only once or twice during a service-learning project. Reflection should take on many forms: it could be verbal, nonverbal, written, or creatively artistic in nature (S. H. Billig, 2011). Reflection is a vital component of service-learning; however, J. Eyler (2002) discovered that certain things were crucial to the amount of benefits that is acquired, such as the kind of reflection used by participants and the amount of time spent on reflection activities. To increase benefits of service-learning, reflection activities should be intentional and directly tied to course objectives and other content (J. Eyler, 2002; Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004).

Service-learning is generally coordinated over a focused block of time which spans over a term of many weeks or months. It should have learning objectives that are

explicitly outlined which, when aligned with identifying the academic content standards for students, shows an increase in academic outcomes (Hattie, 2009).

S. H. Billig (2011) states that meaningful service is experienced through age and developmentally appropriate experiences and activities that address issues which are personally relevant to the participants. Researchers explain that maintaining quality service-learning experiences will create purposeful challenges, opportunities to deal with diversity and social issues, and lead to meaningful experiences for participants (S. H. Billig, 2011; J. Eyler & Giles, 1999). S. H. Billig (2011) believes that this service-learning experience should engage youth in "generating ideas during the planning, implementation, and evaluation processes" (p. 4) by "creating an environment that supports trust and open expression of ideas" (p. 4) between the youth and adults involved. Successfully completing such endeavors includes a partnership of valued resources such as: families, youth mentors and educators, members of the community, community-oriented organizations, and businesses who need to come together and collaborate with frequent and regular communications (S. H. Billig, 2011).

Although the specifics of the definitions vary from researcher to researcher, the overall structure of service-learning is quite similar. Some essential elements of service-learning can be found across definitions: researching, planning, action, reflection, and celebration (S. H. Billig, 2011; K. Farber, 2011; Lewis, 1995, Skinner & Chapman, 1999).

Examples of Service-Learning

There are many variations of the definition for service-learning, some with more components than others, making it difficult to determine what a service-learning project would look like. The following are a few examples of actual service-learning projects:

- The Kaleidoscope Project came out of a high school civics class entitled Creating Sustainable Communities. Students learned about the power and privilege within society. They researched discrimination stories from history, such as the Holocaust and others, and then wrote their own discrimination stories that they shared in class. After discussions, the students wanted to share their knowledge, so they selected four stories from the class and shared it with the graphic design students on their campus who created posters which were posted around campus. The class surveyed students on campus before and a month after the posters were posted to see what the effects were; school-wide data was collected such as discipline referrals. The class was surprised to see that the posters positively changed the climate of the school.

- We the People program introduces students to the methods and procedures used in the political process. In this program, students must decide on a problem to address within their community. This seventh grade social studies class voted on working to clean up the wooded area between their middle school and the neighboring elementary school. By cleaning up this area, it would eliminate a place where students frequent to drink, smoke, and do drugs. The students constructed a disc-golf area and involved the police to ensure a safer place for everyone. This project had a connection to their

politics and government unit in social studies class. On a field trip to the State

Bar of Wisconsin, this group of students had the opportunity to present their

portfolios in a simulated legislative hearing, demonstrating their knowledge

and understanding of how public policy is developed.

- The Vermont Stories of Modern America project involved high school U.S.

  History students who were studying modern American History. These

  students spent time researching and learning the stories from World War II,

  the Korean War, Vietnam, The Red Scare, Civil Rights Movement, and

  others. Students inquired about the effects of these events in shaping their

  nation in Vermont, thus the project was born. Students collected oral history,

  gathered evidence and artifacts from historical societies, individuals, and other

  places and made a video. The students were in charge of all aspects of video-

  making from collecting artifacts, to selecting video clips and music, to editing.

  Students organized a video premier and sent copies of the video to a local

  historical society, the Vermont Historical Society, and the Library of Congress

  (K. Farber, 2011).

Benefits

There are many benefits that result from participating in service-learning.

Research reveals that students who are involved in service-learning show invaluable

growth in their personal and social development as well as in their commitment to

community and national concerns (S. H. Billig, 2011; S. H. Billig et al., 2006; J. Eyler &

Giles, 1999; K. Farber, 2011). K. Farber (2011) points out that service-learning turns

students into problem solvers, critical thinkers, and experimenters; they are more than

just mere receptacles for our knowledge. K. Farber stresses further that an outcome of

service-learning is that students learn that they matter in the world; they realize that "they

can cause change, ask questions, solve problems, get help, and work together to make a

difference in their school, community, and the world" (p. 1). Other benefits to utilizing

service-learning include: (a) raising standardized test scores, (b) improving attendance,

(c) developing a sense of civic responsibility, (d) improving GPA, (e) developing critical

thinking skills, (f) improving student behavior and positive attitudes, (g) promoting

strong school and community connection, and (h) allowing for innovative and creative

learning to take place (S. H. Billig, 2011; S. H. Billig et al., 2006; K. Farber, 2011).

     According to Fiske (2002) a great benefit of service-learning is that "youth have

simultaneously learned to serve and served to learn" (p. 4) and thus, "are becoming both

better students and better citizens" (p. 4). Service-learning is fundamental in so many

ways, in part because it encompasses community service and character education, which

supports the cultivation of a well-rounded, wholesome student (Fiske, 2002). The

National commission on Service-Learning report that service-learning is beneficial for

older students (high school/college) due to the lasting lifestyle improvements that result,

including an increase in awareness of empathy and sympathy, an increase in community

engagement and civic responsibility later in life, and a decrease in levels of delinquency

(Fiske, 2002). Academic benefits at the elementary school level have also been verified

by researchers (Celio et al., 2011; Richards et al., 2013). It is reported that service-

learning benefits more than just students, educators/ faculty, schools, and the community

benefit as well (Science Education Resource Center, 2016).

Bettencourt (2015) notes that, when service-learning objectives are aligned with course objectives and are explicitly defined, a variety of tasks are provided to obtain knowledge and skill, and an opportunity to demonstrate learning in observable ways is given, "SL [service-learning] supports postsecondary programs and extends students' learning opportunities in ways that cannot be accomplished within the classroom" (p. 15) and "by connecting institutions of higher education with local communities in meaningful and mutually beneficial collaborations, SL can provide a rich environment for learning as well as personal and professional development" (p. 15).

For students who will one day be a contributor in society, cultivating soft skills is crucial. Soft skills help to determine how you relate to others, and they are valued because they enable people to function and thrive in teams (WikiJob, 2018). There are several soft skills that are reported to be desirable in students, including:

- creativity

- problem solving

- critical thinking

- leadership

- communication

- collaboration

- information management

- adaptability

- self-confidence

- positive attitude (S. H. Billig, 2011; S. H. Billig et al., 2006; Skinner & Chapman, 1999; Watanabe-Crockett, 2016).

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Many of these overlap with skills which are considered to be key soft skills in the job market. Ten highly desired soft skills in the workplace include:

- communication

- self-motivation

- leadership

- responsibility

- teamwork

- problem solving

- decisiveness

- ability to work under pressure and time management

- flexibility

- negotiation and conflict resolution (WikiJob, 2018).

Coles (1989) writes that "students need more opportunity for moral and social reflection on the problems that they have seen firsthand… students need the chance to directly connect books to experience, ideas and introspection to continuing activity" (as cited in Saltmarsh, 1996, p. 2). Service-learning experiences will allow students the opportunities that they may not normally obtain in a regular academic school setting. Participating in a service-learning project provides students opportunities to engage in service to something larger than themselves, possibly outside the realm of their normal day-to-day world.

Challenges

While there are certainly benefits for educators, students, and community partners with utilizing service-learning, there are also challenges (K. Farber, 2011; Science

Education Resource Center, 2016). Nevertheless, being aware of the challenges

surrounding service-learning and options to overcome those challenges will lead to

satisfying service-learning experiences for its participants (K. Farber, 2011; Science

Education Resource Center, 2016).

Some challenges to implementing service-learning in schools are that it takes too

much time and effort. Teachers may be concerned that they are unable to build service-

learning into their curriculum or fit it into their busy schedule (K. Farber, 2011; Science

Education Resource Center, 2016). However, research has shown that every teacher can

make service-learning work in any grade level, content area, and curriculum (S. H. Billig,

2011; K. Farber, 2011). Furthermore, in many schools, community service is already

taking place; so with some training and planning, service-learning could be implemented,

resulting in more positive benefits for students and the community (S. H. Billig et al.,

2006; K. Farber, 2011). Many researchers believe that learning could be extended in

ways that are rich and meaningful when service-learning projects are utilized in schools

(S. H. Billig, 2011; K. Farber, 2011; Fiske, 2002; Noyes, Darby, & Leupold, 2015).

A big challenge to implementing service-learning is the lack of funding. K.

Farber (2011) lists several sources of funding to support service-learning such as: (a)

school-based funding where the cost of materials and resources are built into a teacher's

budget at the beginning of the school year; (b) raising the funds through soliciting parent

donations; (c) holding fundraisers such as bake sales or car washes; (d) looking into

environmental fundraisers for schools by using various existing programs; (e) reaching

out to local businesses, banks, and local rotary or Kiwanis clubs; and (f) applying for

community-based grants. Another idea that is suggested is to "make do with what we

have" (K. Farber, 2011, p. 67), meaning use the resources available to you at school and in the community by being creative and broadcasting your needs so your school and community knows what your needs are and can offer what they have.

Service-learning can often be challenging to both faculty and students. It can be uncomfortable for faculty to lose control over student learning and, sometimes, students are not satisfied with their service activities (Science Education Resource Center, 2016). Fortunately, by planning carefully and keeping communications open between students, faculty, and partners within the community, the challenges of service-learning can be overcome (Science Education Resource Center, 2016).

Concerns

The benefits of using service-learning are evident; however, some researchers question the influence of short-term programs, expressing their concern that students might not reap the most benefits from service-learning unless they are engaged for 40 hours or more of service (Scott & Graham, 2015). While short-term service-learning programs may not offer the same full benefit effects as long-term programs, researchers stress how important such opportunities are for older students and reiterate the fact that the benefits which individuals attain from participating in these programs cannot be denied (Scott & Graham, 2015).

There are a number of concerns when it comes to students of any age for many reasons. Students are young and growing and the adults in their lives, their parents and teachers, want to do what is best for them so they work at their potential. In order for current students to become successful members of society one day, they must show

adequate personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement. It is important that students not merely survive, but that they thrive.

Middle School Students

For decades, educators have struggled to determine where elementary school ends and where high school begins (Marshall & Neuman, 2012). What they discovered was that early adolescents have some unique needs; "they have outgrown the need for the nurturing that they received from their elementary school teachers, but they are not quite ready for the academic demands or the social challenges of high school" (Marshall & Newman, 2012, p. 3). According to Marshall and Newman (2012), this "rapid period of maturation and growth" is unparalleled except by the incredible period of growth between birth and kindergarten (p. 6).

An adolescent is a boy or girl between the ages of 11-14. A middle school student is an adolescent enrolled in grades sixth or seventh and eighth. Researchers agree that middle school students face many issues and dilemmas as they transition from elementary school (Gordon et al., 2016; McBride, Chung, & Robertson, 2016: Servin, Stack, & Kingdon, 2013). Middle school students encounter a number of changes that are social, emotional, hormonal, and physical (Chung & McBride, 2015; Laporte, 2014; Marshall & Neuman, 2012; Richards et al., 2013). Some even compare this time to a crazy roller-coaster ride (Hovanec, 1999). Most adolescents are not equipped with the tools and strategies necessary for a successful transition and thus, are unable to successfully adapt to middle school life within the first few months. It is no wonder that adolescents feel "helpless, out of control, and scared" (Marshall & Neuman, 2012, p. 7).

In addition, these adolescents have a strong desire and need to discover who they are and to prove themselves. According to Serbin et al. (2013), adolescents transitioning to middle school were at risk for higher rates of disengagement, lower levels of academic performance, fewer personal connection with teachers, and less communication with parents. To support this claim, Bridgeland et al. (2010) and Laporte (2014) report that transitioning adolescents are often unengaged, unmotivated, and uncommitted. Moreover, researchers contend that middle school adolescents typically face daunting issues such as bullying, isolation, and dropping out, leading to depression and disengagement from academics and the community (Chung & McBride, 2015; Goldenring & Rosen, 2004). Other issues faced by adolescents include family issues, poverty, drug use, school and gang violence, and others (Garcia-Obregon et al., 2000). As presented by researchers, this struggle can lead to anxiety, depression, academic problems, and unhappiness.

One of the challenges that adolescents face is keeping that bond with their parents as they begin experiencing changes and a big piece of that is maintaining strong lines of communication (Serbin et al., 2013). In fact, parents are often shocked to discover that 12 and 13 year olds are sexually active, drugs can be obtained at school, and girls use foul language (Marshall & Neuman, 2012).

Personal Growth

Personal growth is defined by Geise (2008) as the "subjective experience of change, in behaviors, thoughts, and feelings which are ... experienced as adaptive" (p. 2) by an individual. Ryff states that personal growth reflects directed engagement in progressing development, keeping an open attitude towards novel people and events, and

employing effort toward expansion and improvement, all in hopes of moving closer to one's potential (as cited in Geise, 2008). In sum, personal growth is the measure or result of personal development. Generally, the exact moment that personal growth occurs cannot be pinpointed; rather, it is typically a result of some personal development event which takes place.

Personal development, or self-development, is described by Webb and Grimwood-Jones (2003) as a "complex subject" (p. 1). Webb and Grimwood-Jones define personal development as:

a constant process in which the individual seeks to enhance his or her knowledge, abilities and skills, and/ or develop new ones; a process of continuous self-building and realization of his or her full potential. It takes place by linking abilities with preferences to achieve personal goals, and applies to all aspects of the individual's life. (p. 3)

Personal development encompasses motivation, attitudes, personal qualities, and job-related skills. Researchers argue that personal development needs to be worked at in order for its full potential to be realized; it is not easy, but when it is achieved, the individual will feel personal satisfaction (Webb & Grimwood-Jones, 2003).

Service-learning has many benefits to the individual student; these benefits include personal growth and related issues. Personal growth can manifest in different ways; it might look like an individual mastering his/her environment, becoming stronger and more resilient to challenges, or overcoming a traumatic or life-changing experience and emerging changed. Researchers report that adolescents who participate in service-learning show a decrease in anxiety and depression, or emotional distress (Moore

McBride et al., 2016). Hegarty and Angelidis (2015) remark that helping others will always impact the feelings of an individual, whether through short-term or long-term projects.

Results of a study suggest that service-learning environments foster greater emotional experiences than traditional classroom environments (Noyes, Darby, & Leupold, 2015). Overall, students experienced positive emotions, such as hope, pride, comfort, and relaxation, more often than negative emotions, such as sadness, stress, shock, and feeling upset (Noyes et al., 2015). Students also reported feelings of hopelessness more frequently and boredom less frequently at service sites (Noyes et al., 2015). Researchers have found that participation in service-learning has increased compassion, altruism, commitment, and responsibility in students (Fiske, 2002; Terry & Bohnenberger, 2003). These findings support the importance of structured reflection to help students navigate challenging situations (J. Eyler, 2002).

A significant piece of personal growth is engagement. Student engagement is multidimensional; there are six different forms including (a) cognitive, (b) academic, (c) social, (d) behavioral, (e) affective, and (f) emotional which are tied to self-determination, self-efficacy, and motivation (Prouty, 2014). Marzano and Brown (2009) insist that when students are actively engaged, they achieve higher levels of understanding as well as achievement in the classroom. They present five factors which increase student engagement: (a) high energy, (b) finding missing information, (c) topics which are interesting and valuable to students, (d) some pressure in activities such as trivia-type games and competitions, and (e) mild controversy and competition including tournaments, debates, and other team-based activities (Marzano & Brown, 2009).

Research shows that student-led discussions, as well as activities, increase student engagement (Danielson, 2013). Since service-learning promotes students being involved at various steps throughout the process, it often becomes a student-led activity. Research has found that there is a strong correlation between student engagement, generally described as paying attention, exhibiting active participation in learning which includes the amount of time on task, and student achievement (Dyer, 2015).

The National Commission on Service-Learning emphasize that service-learning enhances the motivation to learn, which increases attendance while reducing dropout rates (Fiske, 2002). A number of studies have determined encouraging adjustments in student motivation, confidence, and cognitive and critical thinking skills due to service-learning (as cited in Bettencourt, 2015; Ponder et al., 2011; Soslau & Yost, 2007).

Vogelgesang and Alexander's (2000) study finds that students who are involved in service-learning tend to produce positive academic writing, be critical thinkers, and earn a higher overall grade point average. This statement is corroborated by S. H. Billig et al. (2005) as well as Soslau and Yost (2007) who found that greater academic engagement and performance results are outcomes of service-learning.

Social Growth

Wikipedia (2018) defines social skills as any skill which promotes and fosters communication and interaction with others. Social rules and relationships are formed, communicated, and altered in ways that are verbal and nonverbal.

Plummer (2008) notes how difficult it is to compile a definitive list of social skills as each of our social interactions is unique and comprised of many factors. However, she

feels there are certain recognizable core abilities which help to define social behavior such as:

- Self-awareness - a child's ability to be aware of her feelings, thoughts, and behavior and also of her own needs in social interactions.

- Self-control - her belief that she has control over her emotions and thoughts as well as the ways in how she expresses them; the capacity to manage impulsivity and to show emotions appropriately.

- Effective listening - her capability to truly discern what others are expressing and to thoughtfully consider what she hears. This involves attention control and is an important prerequisite for being able to negotiate and cooperate.

- Effective observation - her ability to observe and reflect on nonverbal aspects of interactions such as changes in facial expression and body posture

- The ability to understand and use verbal and/ or non-verbal forms of communication with others.

- A knowledge and understanding of a range of different emotions and how to cope with other people's emotions. For example, noticing when someone is upset and offering to help.

- Imagination - an important element of empathy: her ability to perceive things from another person's viewpoint and to be aware of other people's needs.

- Tolerance and respect of differences and knowing how to convey this

- The ability to understand the 'mutuality' involved in cooperation and negotiation.

- The ability to apply appropriate problem-solving strategies. (Plummer, 2008, p. 16)

Within these frameworks, Plummer (2008) has compiled a list of behaviors that demonstrate these abilities:

- starting and finishing interactions

- asking/ answering questions

- making appeals/ asking for things

- waiting in turns during conversations

- sharing personal information

- clarifying/ providing instructions

- encouraging and reinforcing others

- giving and receiving specific praise

- continuing/ maintaining an interaction / staying on the subject

- flexibility in communication style

- behaving appropriately and being timely during interactions

- being aware of acceptable personal space (proximity to others). (pp. 16-17)

Plummer (2008) claims that children who do not form acceptable social skills will likely experience problems later in life. She elaborates by saying that children can find a balance between forming healthy relationships and personal independence if they are guided in building social skills. Encouraging interactions and cultivating the understanding and practice of these vital skills will strengthen a child's capacity for self-control, regulation, and how they relate to others (Plummer, 2008). Plummer declares that it is never too late to work with a student on developing social skills.

Moore McBride et al. (2016) report that there are skills which are fundamental to basic living which include: "recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically" (p. 2). These skills assist children in calming themselves when they are angry or upset, making and keeping friends, respectfully settling disagreements, and making secure and moral choices (Moore McBride et al., 2016).

Teaching and modeling social and emotional skills to children have resulted in positive behaviors and qualities (Moore McBride et al., 2016). Students who have completed an experiential social and emotional learning program may have benefited with reduced levels of anxiety, depression, and emotional despair; decreased incidences of misconduct such as drug use; and improved performance in school (as cited in Moore McBride et al., 2016).

Social relationships become ever more crucial in early adolescence and continue into adolescence. Siu and Shek (2010) contend that in everyday life, interpersonal relationship skills are utilized to maintain bonding with family or friends, to work cooperatively with colleagues, and to handle conflicts and differences with others. Several studies have noted encouraging improvements in the leadership skills and social responsibilities of students (as cited in Bettencourt, 2015). These examples point to the importance of social skills.

Researchers have concluded that involvement in service-learning has increased social competence in students (Fiske, 2002). Flanagan (2004) and Bettencourt (2015) support this conclusion, reporting that service-learning provides opportunities for

adolescents to connect with peers, to excel, and to practice using their leadership skills. Adolescent students are able to do all this in a safe environment, allowing them to thrive. Students who are involved in service-learning benefit from a reduced risk in negative behaviors such as violence, drug and alcohol use, sexual activity, and school dropout (K. Farber, 2016; Moore McBride et al., 2016; Schmidt et al., 2006).

Empathy, a vital component of social behavior, counters and regulates negative personality characteristics; it decreases antisocial behavior, anger, delinquent attitudes, and both physical and verbal violence (Eisenberg, Hofer, Sulik, & Liew, 2013). Service-learning helps to create an important bridge between schools and communities which supports growth in empathy and understanding (Terry & Bohnenberger, 2013). In a study with elementary school children, Scott and Graham (2015) found that, overall, service-learning has a positive effect, resulting in participants showing an increase in empathy after being involved in a service-learning program.

Civic Engagement

The term 'citizenship' is often used interchangeably with civic duty, civic participation, civic responsibility, and civic engagement. Citizenship is defined as showing social responsibility and commitment to your community – the practices and rights/ duties which connects an individual to a specified community (Isin & Wood, 1999). Civic responsibility includes behaviors and perspectives related to democratic governance and social participation, such as being involved in church, the government, or other organizations. According to the American Psychological Association (2018), civic engagement or participation is the actions of individuals or groups that identify and

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mitigate problems which concern the public. Essentially, it is the act of working or doing for the common good.

Westheimer and Kahne (2004) separate citizenship into three categories: (a) personally responsible, (b) participatory, and (c) justice-oriented. Personally responsible citizenship is when individuals behave in responsible ways within their community; examples of this category include: (a) obeying laws, (b) working, (c) paying taxes, (d) recycling, and (e) volunteering (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Participatory citizenship focuses on organizing community outreach for people in the community who need it. These individuals are involved participants of their community organizations who labor tirelessly to bring about positive change for their community (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The heart of justice-oriented citizenship looks at analytically evaluating the political, economic, and social circumstances of superficial conditions (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). The individuals in this category seek to ratify justice in the world around them.

Adolescence is a period which is known for social, civic, and career exploration; thus, this remarkable developmental stage is well-suited for service programs (Richards et al., 2013). Ponder, Vander Veldt, and Lewis-Ferrell (2011) explain how ideal it is to link service-learning and civic education for students as it creates opportunities for solving problems and forming meaningful relationships within a real-world context. Some assert that incorporating service-learning in the curriculum will prepare students for the world by becoming more civic-minded, as well as thinkers who are imaginative, analytic and evaluative, and global (Ponder et al., 2011). In an interview, a fifth grade student participant of service-learning shared, "Our responsibility is the same as adults.

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We have a voice and we can make a change in our environment and our community too… kids have a voice and they can make a difference in this world" (Ponder et al., 2011, p. 63). As evident in this quote, even the youngest of participants can benefit from service-learning projects.

Among older adults, research reveals that there is a strong connection between a person's current and future volunteering of their time (Choi & Choi, 2010). In a study with higher education students, Nicholls (2012) determined that service-learning is a future driver of volunteering. Ponder et al. (2011) reinforces this thought by sharing that service-learning students are more likely to vote in the future. In a study with elementary school children, Scott and Graham (2015) found that, overall, service-learning has a favorable impact, resulting in participants showing an increase in empathy and community engagement after participating in a service-learning program.

Summary

Chapter II explored the history and background of service-learning. It identified some of the early theorists who laid the foundations for the concept of service-learning throughout the progressive movement era including Dewey, Montessori, Piaget, Vygotsky, and more recently, Kolb. They believed that, essentially, individuals learn through actions and experience.

Service-learning has many documented benefits for students in high school and higher education pertaining to personal and social skills, sense of civic responsibility through engagement, and academics; however, although the results have also been positive for younger students, research for students in elementary through middle school is more limited. While the benefits of service-learning are undeniable, educators are still

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hesitant about using service-learning in the classroom due it its challenges; they are concerned about whether service-learning can fit into their schedule and curriculum, how much time and effort it might actually take for successful implementation, funding for projects, and the loss of control over students as they move forward with projects as service-learning relies heavily on student engagement and leadership.

This chapter also analyzed the challenges that middle school students face and how they are a unique group of students with the many personal, social, hormonal, and physical changes that they endure during this time of tremendous growth. It also looked at the personal and social development of middle school-aged adolescents and what it means to them. Civic engagement and responsibilities were also touched upon in this chapter, talking to the relevance of this topic for this age-group and how their natural curiosity allows for maximum benefits.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators. A qualitative design approach was utilized to gather more detailed information from middle school administrators to better understand the experiences of middle school students involved with service-learning.

Chapter III presents a thorough description of the methodology and research design which was used to guide this study. As Roberts (2010) indicates in her book, *The Dissertation Journey*, the chapter on methodology "describes in detail how the study was conducted" (p. 25). This chapter addresses the purpose statement, research questions, research design, population, sample, instrumentation, validity and reliability of instruments used, ethical considerations, data collection, data analysis, limitations, and summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators.

Research Questions

This study was guided by one primary research question and three sub-questions that were developed to examine the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement.

Central Research Question

What are the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

Research Sub-Questions

1. How does participation in service-learning affect the personal growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

2. How does participation in service-learning affect the social growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

3. How does participation in service-learning affect the civic engagement of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

Research Design

This study was qualitative in nature; it utilized individual interviews and artifacts provided to the researcher. J. W. Creswell (2014) describes qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups" (p. 4). S. B. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) assert that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 6). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) and Patton (2015) add that qualitative research indicates an in-depth study which utilizes face-to-face or observational strategies in order to obtain data from people in their

natural settings. They list nine key elements of a qualitative study in varying degrees; the

nine key elements, according to McMillan and Schumacher (2010), are: "natural settings,

context sensitivity, direct data collection, rich narrative description, process orientation,

inductive data analysis, participant perspectives, emergent design, and complexity of

understanding and explanation" (p. 321). For the context of this study, several of these

characteristics were significant and include: (a) context sensitivity, (b) rich narrative

description, (c) participant perspectives, and (d) complexity of understanding and

explanation. In order to present and highlight the benefits and concerns related to

service-learning with middle school students, qualitative elements such as themed

findings as a result of interviews and the evaluation of artifacts were necessary. Thus,

choosing a qualitative method of study was important.

The specific method selected for this study was phenomenology. Phenomenon

can be described as an incident, an observed or observable situation, or something that is

stunning, awe-inspiring, or remarkable. Phenomenology was first applied by the German

philosopher Edmund Husserl to a study where he observed how people described things

and experienced them through their senses (Patton, 2015). The aim of phenomenological

research is to "transform lived experiences into a description of its 'essence,' allowing for

reflection and analysis" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 24). In other words,

phenomenology gives meaning to a lived experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; S.

B. Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Understanding comes from the sensory experience of a

phenomenon, but that experience must be described, analyzed, and interpreted (Patton,

2015). This study described, analyzed, and interpreted middle school students'

experiences in service-learning based on their administrator's and teacher's or

coordinator's reflections. The reflections were obtained through interviews geared towards understanding administrators' and teacher's or coordinator's attitudes and interpretations of their lived experiences with the phenomenon, which may offer great insights and lead to powerful discoveries for the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; S. B. Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Patten, 2012).

Population

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe population as a "group of elements or cases, whether individuals, objects, or events, that conform to specific criteria and to which we intend to generalize the results of the research" (p. 129). Populations can be large or small (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012). For example, including all social workers in the United States is large compared to just including all social workers employed by a specific hospital, which would be a much smaller number (Patten, 2012). The population for this study was all middle schools in California implementing service learning. Middle schools serve students in grades six to eight or seven to eight. According to California Department of Education (CDE) (2017), there are approximately 1,348 public middle schools in California, servicing over 1.5 million students. The researcher contacted the CDE directly and several representatives associated with service learning and reported that the state no longer maintains updated information on service learning and in fact shared to the best of their knowledge the state has never been able to account for the number of middle schools implementing service learning. The State Department then advised the researcher to call all the counties in California directly. Upon this advice, the researcher then contacted two representative counties both reporting a similar lack of data; they do not have this information in their

respective data bases. These county office representatives associated with service

learning informed the researcher that the only way to gain this information would be to

contact each middle school directly. Given the magnitude of the data collection for a

project of this nature, the researcher made an estimate using statistics from the NCES, a

part of the U.S. Department of Education. This agency conducted a survey (National

Student Service-Learning and Community Service Survey) which found that 32% of all

public schools, and nearly half of all high schools, utilized service-learning in some

fashion (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). Additionally, according to the U.S. Department of

Education, NCES, a 1999 National Household Education Survey found that 5,573

thousand middle school students participated in community service; and of that number,

62% participated in service-learning (Kleiner & Chapman, 1999). Using this data as a

reference point, the researcher projected that approximately 50% of California middle

schools participate in some type of service learning throughout their school programs or

internal curriculum designs.

A target population for a study is the entire set of individuals chosen from the

overall population for which the study data are to be used to make inferences. The target

population defines the population to which the findings are meant to be generalized. It is

important that target populations are clearly identified for the purposes of research study

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is typically not feasible, due to time or cost

constraints, to study large groups; therefore, the researcher chose population *samples*

from within a larger group. The target population was identified as public middle schools

in Tulare County, California that have implemented service-learning. There are currently

23 public middle schools in Tulare County. Given the above statistics (population)

indicating that approximately 50% of middle schools in California the target population would comprise approximately 12 Tulare County middle schools.

Sample

Sample is defined by McMillan and Schumacher (2010) as a "group of subjects or participants from whom the data are collected" (p. 129) and is "the group in which researchers are ultimately interested" (Patten, 2012, p. 45). Pan (2016) reveals that "qualitative researchers emphasize the collection of in-depth information obtained from small samples without regard to generalizability to a population" (p. 33). The logic behind the sample size is determined by the purpose, research problem, method for collecting data, and number of cases that are substantial in information; "thus, qualitative samples can range from 1 to 40 or more" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 328). This information is often obtained through thorough one-on-one interviews. The sample population, which is a smaller group taken from the target population to increase feasibility of the study, was six administrators and eight teachers or coordinators in public middle schools that have implemented service-learning in Tulare County, California.

The sampling strategy used to select the middle schools used for the study was purposeful random sampling, which is a widely used, often preferred, sampling method by qualitative researchers (Pan, 2016; Patten, 2012). Purposeful random sampling, sometimes called purposive sampling (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010),

> Adds credibility to a qualitative study when those who will use the findings have a strong preference for random selection, even for small samples; it can be perceived to reduce bias; purposeful random sampling is especially appropriate

when the potential number of cases within a purposeful category is more than

what can be studied with the available time and resources. (Patton, 2015, p. 268)

In purposive, or purposeful sampling, participants are selected based on the

researcher's purpose of the study and knowledge of the population (Pan, 2016). For this

study, the Tulare County Office of Education was contacted to request the names of all

middle schools known to be implementing service learning. These schools were then

contacted by the researcher to determine if they had an administrator, or other adult

authority figures, who met the following criteria: (a) serving as an administrator, teacher,

counselor, or coordinator for one or more years at a middle school in the 2017-2018, or

prior, school year, (b) participating in recent staff development related to the topic of

service learning or discussed/ disseminated information to others about it, and (c)

working in a middle school with service learning components that had one of the

following:

- One classroom-integrated Service Learning project + 25 individual service
  hours.

- Two classroom-integrated Service Learning projects + 15 individual service
  hours.

- Three classroom-integrated Service Learning projects.

In addition to purposeful sampling, criterion sampling was also utilized in the

selection of middle schools. "The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all

cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, thereby explicitly (or

implicitly) comparing the criterion cases with those that do not manifest the criterion"

(Patton, 2015, p. 281). Pan (2016) asserts that the sampling technique called purposive

criterion sampling is best utilized when "there are a number of criteria to be applied" (p. 149).

Instrumentation

Experts contend that the researcher is the main instrument (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) describes an interview as an interaction where a connection or bond is formed in the process between the interviewer and the interviewee. He further states that interviewer's expertise and experience can influence the merit of responses. Patton (2015) lists general interview skills which are important for an interviewer to possess such as "asking open-ended questions, listening carefully to ask follow-up questions, effective and sensitive probing, distinguishing different kinds of questions, and pacing the interview" (p. 493). During the interview, it is also important for the interviewer to observe the interviewee, be both empathetic and neutral, be ready for unanticipated situations/ responses, and to be present during the entire interview (Patton, 2015).

Interviews have several strengths or advantages as well as weaknesses or disadvantages. Some strengths of the interview technique are that it is flexible, adaptable, can be used with many different types of people, responses can be probed and clarified, and nonverbal behavior can be included; some weaknesses include its potential for subjectivity and bias, the lack of anonymity, and tendencies to be costly and time-consuming (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

The instrumentation used in this study were semi-structured interviews which are the most heavily utilized tool of measure for collecting data for qualitative research (Patten, 2012). The term semi-structured "refers to the fact that the interviewer does not

need to ask only the predetermined questions" (Patten, 2012, p. 153). This means that

probing questions may be utilized to further clarify or examine participant responses

(McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The semi-structured interviews consisted of using pre-

determined, open-ended research questions which, as Patton (2015) states, add depth,

detail, and meaning at a very personal level of experience. Furthermore, open-ended

questions invite participants to provide individual, personal responses in their own words,

permitting the interviewer to capture a stronger realization of the participants'

perspectives and experiences (J. W. Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010;

Patton, 2015).

The researcher developed the interview protocol based on the themes that

emerged from the literature as well as aligning interview questions with the proposed

research questions. In addition, Patten (2012) suggests an interview protocol be put in

place, which are a set of written directions and set of questions for conducting the

interview. Moreover, Patton (2015) adds that the standardized open-ended interview

approach requires that the researcher carefully word and arrange the set of questions to be

used "with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking

each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (p. 439). This step

will assist in minimizing the variation in the questions posed to interviewees. Other

benefits of using standardized open-ended interviews include: interviews that are

centered on the topic so the interviewee's time is used productively, analysis that is

supported by making feedback simple to locate/compare, and the specific instrument

utilized in the study is accessible should anyone seek it for inspection (Patton, 2015).

J. W. Creswell (2014) lists four types of qualitative data collection approaches: interviews, observations, documents, and audio-visual materials. Three instruments used in this study are interviews, artifacts, and audio material. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) describe artifacts as "tangible manifestations that describe people's experience, knowledge, actions, and values" (p. 361). They go on to state that artifact collection strategies are typically noninteractive, the researcher does not become a participant in any form; however, this strategy may require imaginative fieldwork to locate the most relevant data as they may be elusive (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Artifacts collected include researcher reflection notes of the participant in interviews (their facial expressions, tone of voice and mannerisms while speaking on service-learning), and documents such as teacher and student reflections, service-learning mission/goal statements, reports, newsletters, parent communications, and photographs of service-learning in action. J. W. Creswell (2014) contends that researchers should use more than just one kind of data collection, they should include more than the usual methods of observing and interviewing. "These unusual forms create reader interest in a proposal and can capture useful information that observations and interviews may miss" (J. W. Creswell, 2014, p. 181). Various artifacts will be collected to add to the information gained from interview data such as reports and reflections, awards, newsletters, and recognitions.

Since the researcher is the main instrument (Maxwell, 2013; Patton, 2015), it is important that the researcher/ interviewer be unbiased (Patten, 2012). To mitigate potential bias, a good approach which may be used to increase the accuracy of interviews is to allow the respondent an opportunity to check the interviewer's perceptions through

written responses; corrections or additions from the respondent can be made for clarification (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Adding to the discussion, Patten (2012) maintains that "an interviewer can achieve an unbiased attitude through the process of self-disclosure" (p. 153). This pertains to examining the research problem in reference to the interviewer's background, experience, and perceptions prior to administering the interviews.

One such disclosure is that the researcher works at a middle school and her job duties include working with and assisting students who are not succeeding academically. The researcher also monitors students in the accountability center; these students have been assigned to this location as a consequence of their misbehaviors. These factors may inadvertently cause the researcher to be biased in favor of service-learning becoming a successful outlet for students as it would foster academic and social success and growth, both of which the researcher is a proponent. With an awareness of this bias in mind, the researcher strived to remain impartial and report only findings and results obtained from interviews.

Validity

Validity calls attention to the level at which a measurement tool, such as interview questions, measures what it is supposed to (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pan, 2016). Patten (2012) compares validity to trustworthiness. J. W. Creswell and Miller (2000) state that validity is a notable strength of qualitative research; it relies on establishing precision and authenticity from the perceptions of the researcher, the participants, or the readers/ observers. Experts contend that there are several quality control methods which may be applied to quantify the validity of measures, a few common techniques are:

- outside expert (using an outside expert to review research process)

- peer review (using an outside researcher review research process)

- member checking (using the participants in the study to evaluate the researcher's interpretations for accuracy)

- triangulation (inspecting evidence from various data sources to build a reasonable rationale for themes)

- rich, thick descriptions to convey findings (providing detailed descriptions of the setting or procedures

- clarify biases that the researcher brings to the study (utilizing self-reflection produces open and sincere accounts which readers will be able to relate to)

- mechanically recorded data (using audio/ visual recorders) (J. W. Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pan, 2016; Patten, 2012).

For this study, five experts were used to establish the content validity of the interview questions to determine whether they aligned with the purpose of the study. The first three experts used in this study are doctoral professors with Brandman University who are also committee members for this doctoral dissertation. After they reviewed the interview questions, the interview script, which included the questions, was field tested with one administrator and one teacher.

Field testing of interview questions. The researcher conducted a field test of the eleven interview questions with a participant who could meet the study sample criteria but was not part of the final sample. An expert in conducting qualitative research interviews also served as an observer during the field test. The field test participant and the observer provided feedback on the interview process and the eleven questions

immediately following the interview. The observer also provided feedback on procedures, including consent paperwork and researcher body language that could cause researcher bias.

Along with the interview script, a field test guide to cross-check the interview script and questions with was included in the email (Appendix B). Roberts (2010) insists that newly created instruments must be field tested to maintain validity. Field test subjects should not be the same individuals involved in the study but should have similar characteristics (Roberts, 2010).

Using experts to review the research process helped to promote an objective and unbiased lens as the researcher moved forward with the study. Using rich, thick descriptions of the setting and procedures, applying reflective strategies to researcher biases, as well as utilizing mechanical/ electronic devices to record data were also employed to increase validity. Finally, data triangulation was used (interview data including interview response notes, audio recordings, interview observations; photographs; reports; reflections) to build a logically sound rationale that strengthened the justification for themes.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency or dependability of results, the level of consistency in which outcomes are produced by an assessment instrument each time it is administered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pan, 2016; Patten, 2012). An instrument is considered reliable if it has little error and considered unreliable if there is a great deal of error (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) address some sources of measurement error such as changes in time limits or directions,

interrupted session, and ambiguity in wording which would lead to differences in reactions to specific items as well as a change in mood and attitudes.

Although it is nearly impossible to control all variables, it is important to control as much as possible to reduce error (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Gibbs suggests several reliability procedures to offset error, which include: (a) checking transcripts to ensure accuracy, (b) safeguarding against a divergence from the definition of codes, and (c) using intercoder agreement which is using another person who can cross-check codes (as cited in J. W. Creswell, 2014). To increase reliability for this study, the researcher will check transcripts to ensure accuracy, monitor codes to establish focus, and use intercoder agreement as another set of eyes to cross-check codes.

Internal reliability of data. Internal reliability of the data was safeguarded through triangulation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). The researcher triangulated the data in this study by analyzing interview transcripts and artifacts. Utilizing triangulation increased the credibility of the findings that were derived from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

Intercoder reliability of data. Intercoder reliability falls under the External Reliability category. External reliability is the degree in which a measure might vary from one application to the next (S. A. McLeod, 2007). Intercoder reliability of the data is "established by determining the extent to which two or more persons agree about what they have seen, heard, or rated" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 182). Roberts (2010) describes intercoder reliability as "a check on the consistency between raters, or between a rater and an expert" (p. 152). This is especially critical with subjective interpretations of open-ended questions (Roberts, 2010). This means, if two or more

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observers or raters observe or rate something independently but end up with similar results, then there is some consistency in the measurement (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

For this study, the researcher enlisted the support of an expert member, who holds a doctorate in the field of education, to assist in reviewing of the data coding process. Having another person to cross-check codes will maintain accuracy in the coding process as well as reduce researcher bias (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This helped to strengthen the codes and themes that were eventually agreed upon and used.

Data Collection

Before field research began, the researcher successfully completed all required coursework and obtained the National Institute of Health Clearance (NIH) certificate, gaining authorization to work with human subjects (Appendix C). Upon receiving approval from the Brandman University Institutional Review Board (BUIRB) to collect data, the researcher emailed middle schools in Tulare County to determine which sites implemented service-learning. An email was sent to each of the selected middle school administrators inviting them to participate in the study, if they met certain criteria (see Appendix D). In this email, their role and expectations as a participant for this study was also outlined. Since this study utilized purposeful criterion sampling, it was important that the participants met the following criteria:

1. Participants must have been employed at the middle school site in the 2017-2018 school year, or prior, for at least one year.

2. Participants must have participated in recent staff development related to the topic of service-learning or discussed/ disseminated information to others about it.

3. Participants must be working at a middle school with service-learning components that had one of the following:

- One classroom-integrated Service-Learning project +25 individual service hours.

- Two classroom-integrated Service-Learning projects +15 individual service hours.

- Three classroom-integrated Service-Learning projects.

The first six email responders were selected for the study. After selection, emails were sent to administrator participants to schedule an appointment for the interview, and also to obtain the names of the teachers or coordinators who were involved in the service-learning projects at their site. The email included the interview questions for participant preview as well as relevant interview information: possible times and locations for the interview with a general time-stamp of 30 to 45 minutes.

Interviews

This study utilized a semi-structured interview format which followed a predetermined interview guide. Using this method helps to ensure that all main focus points are addressed and there is a flow to the conversation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). All participants were given the same 11 questions during the interview (Appendix E), additional questions were used for clarification and further exploration into information given by participant. Patten (2012) states that

interviews are typically face-to-face and often recorded. For this study, interviews

occurred in person, face-to-face, as well as over the phone, taking into account the best

interest of the participant and researcher. All interviews were a one-time occurrence with

each participant. With signed consent from participants, all interviews were audio

recorded using the researcher's iPhone (Appendix F). An advantage of recording the

interviews is that the recordings can be carefully reviewed and analyzed at a later date

(Patten, 2012). After each interview, the researcher recorded observations and reflections

pertaining to the interview. All recordings were dated and kept in a safe place. The

recordings of each interview were inspected and evaluated by the researcher and then

transcribed to be used as a written record of the interview. The transcriptions were then

checked for accuracy and analyzed for themes.

Collecting Artifacts

In addition to the interviews, the researcher collected artifacts related to service-

learning from participants. The artifacts included but were not restricted to:

- service-learning mission and goal statements

- teacher and student reflections, observational notes, and journal entries

  photographs of service-learning in action

- results of participant interviews

- any resources used for service-learning

Patton (2015) considers artifacts to be valuable tools in qualitative inquiry.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) contest that artifacts offer "tangible

manifestations that describe people's experience, knowledge, actions, and values" (p.

361). Analyzing artifacts allowed the researcher to gain insight into the service-learning

world not just through the lens of an administrator, teacher, or coordinator, but through various tangible items and multiple sources, offering new angles and perspectives.

Protecting Participants

In any study, it is vital that participants are protected. Not only is it ethical and considerate to protect the rights of human participants, but it is the right thing to do (J. W. Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). Before collecting data, the researcher received the NIH certificate which cleared the researcher to work with human subjects; the researcher followed the protocol, as outlined by the BUIRB, for conducting research. The BUIRB is responsible for evaluating and approving this study to maintain the safety of its participants. Brandman University is dedicated to protecting the rights and well-being of all individuals who are involved in research conducted by Brandman students and faculty. Precautions required by BUIRB include full disclosure, consent agreements, and assurance of confidentiality and anonymity for all participants.

For this study, written documentation was provided by ensuring that each participant sign a consent form (Appendix G) and was given a Research Participant's Bill of Rights (Appendix H) acknowledging their role in this study, their right to withdraw at any time, the purpose of the study, the minimal risks involved, the value their participation would have on the existing literature, and their right to anonymity. Participants were assured that their name and school site was not linked to their interview responses in any way or form; the researcher will be the only individual privy to that information (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Data Analysis

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) affirm that qualitative researchers gather data first and then synthesize inductively to generate generalizations. They explain that the "emphasis is on inductive reasoning, a theory that is developed from the ground up, or bottom up… rather than from the top down" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 323) and this approach is particularly important in order to support the researcher's drive to be open to new ways of understanding (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). J. W. Creswell (2014) states that:

> the process of data analysis involves making sense out of text and image data. It involves preparing the data for analysis, conducting different analysis, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data (…peeling back the layers of onion), representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of data. (p. 183)

In sum, qualitative researchers create a picture from the pieces of information obtained, transforming data into findings (Patton, 2015).

Coding

Coding is the technique of organizing data into groups or sections (J. W. Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Experts suggest some steps for coding:

1. Organize and assemble the data for review (via transcribed interviews and field notes).

2. Read and review all the data (to gain a broad understanding of the material and its overall meaning).

3. Begin explicit evaluations using a coding process (by taking collected data, chunking them into categories, and identifying them with labels).

4. Use coding process to generate descriptions of the environment or people, the categories, or the themes for examination (Descriptions are in-depth renderings).

5. Determine how descriptions and themes will be presented in the qualitative essay.

6. The final step is forming an explanation, coming up with meaning for the data – looking at lessons learned and asking: *What are the lessons learned?*" (J. W. Creswell, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010)

For this study, the researcher initially planned on utilizing NVivo software as a way to sort, analyze the data, and to group information into codes and themes in order to find patterns. J. W. Creswell (2014) confirms that using software such as NVivo "may be faster and more efficient than hand coding" (p. 188). However, reading through the transcripts helped bring codes to surface; therefore, the researcher felt it was more meaningful to code by hand even if it meant a more time-consuming task. In the end, the researcher was able to internalize more of the codes processed by hand than if they had been processed using a computer software.

Themes

"Categories, or themes, are entities comprised of grouped codes… categories represent major ideas that are used to describe the meaning of similarly coded data" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 376). Not all categories have the same level of importance; for example, categories most closely related to the study's purpose would be

coded as "primary" or "major" while others are coded as "secondary," "minor," or "outlier" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Constant comparison occurs when the researcher is involved in creating categories, where the researcher is constantly seeking evidence that is supportive as well as contradictory in regards to the meaning of each category (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Some codes fit into more than one category or theme.

Patterns

The ultimate goal of qualitative research, as proposed by experts, is "to make general statements about relationships among categories by discovering patterns in the data" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 378). According to Patton (2015), the term pattern indicates a descriptive discovery while a theme suggests more in the direction of a categorical form. For example, Patton (2015) explains that, "Almost all participants reported feeling fear when they rappelled down the cliff" (p. 541) is a pattern while "FEAR" is a theme. McMillan and Schumacher (2010) define pattern as relationships among categories. As some codes fit into more than category or theme, some categories or themes fit into more than one pattern. "This elasticity of code and category meanings allows patterns of meanings to emerge" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 378). For this study, the researcher used deductive analysis by "examining the data for illumination of predetermined sensitizing concepts or theoretical relationships" (Patton, 2015, p. 551). The three concepts the researcher is looking for pertaining to the purpose and research question of the study are: (a) personal growth, (b) social growth, and (c) civic engagement and responsibility.

Intercoder reliability of the data is "established by determining the extent to which two or more persons agree about what they have seen, heard, or rated" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 182). Intercoder reliability is described by Roberts (2010) as "a check on the consistency between raters, or between a rater and an expert" (p. 152). This is important when looking at subjective interpretations of open-ended questions (Roberts, 2010). The benefit is that there is strength in the results, due to consistency in measurement, if two or more observers or raters observe or rate something independently and end up with similar results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

For this study, the researcher enlisted the support of an expert member, who holds a doctorate in the field of education, to assist in reviewing of the data coding process. Using another person to cross-check codes will maintain accuracy in the coding process, which also reduces researcher bias (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). This helped to strengthen the codes and themes that were eventually agreed upon and used.

Data Triangulation

Triangulation is used by researchers "to find regularities in the data, the researcher compares different sources, situations, and methods to see whether the same pattern keeps recurring" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 379). Triangulation of data sources means "comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived… from interviews, observations, and documents" (Patton, 2015, p. 662). For this study, triangulation of data was used by analyzing interview transcripts and artifacts. This provided consistency, which helped to strengthen the justification for the selected themes and validate findings, offering a comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Examples of artifacts include lesson reflections and goals, photographs,

observation notes, site letters and correspondence, reports, newsletters, professional

development, and other documents (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patten, 2012;

Patton, 2015).

Ethical Considerations

"Qualitative research is more likely to be personally intrusive than quantitative

research. Thus, ethical guidelines include policies regarding informed consent,

deception, confidentiality, anonymity privacy, and caring" (McMillan & Schumacher,

2010, p. 338). These guidelines, created to protect the human subjects or participants in a

study, must be adhered to by researchers or they risk complications with the law.

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) state that "researchers have a dual responsibility: to

protect the individuals' confidences from other persons in the setting and to protect the

informants from the general reading public" (p. 339). For the purposes of this study, the

participants' responses were not associated with their identity or the school site they were

referring to. The researcher was upfront about the purpose of the study, giving full

disclosure, and all participants signed a form of consent willingly. All forms and

research material were kept in a safe location by the researcher.

Another safeguard in protecting participants is the Institutional Review Board

(IRB), a committee designed to protect human subjects in research studies. The board

will deny approval to protocols in instances where research participants are misled in

regards to the purpose of the study or are unaware that they are being observed or studied

(Patton, 2015). Patton (2015) goes on to say that "protection of human subjects'

procedures is now an affirmation of our commitment to treat all people with respect" (p.

341). Data collection for this study could not have begun until BUIRB was satisfied with

the proposed safety of its human participants. The researcher received approval from the BUIRB committee to move forward with the study.

Limitations

Limitations are present in every research design, in every study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The potential bias a researcher brings to the study is a limitation, something which the researcher must be cognizant of when conducting interviews and analyzing data (J. W. Creswell, 2014, Patten, 2012). The second limitation is the location of the study as the researcher's focus was on Tulare County. The third limitation is the smaller sample size of 16 participants used in this study; the smaller sample size may not be generalizable to the larger population (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pan, 2016; Patten, 2012; Patton, 2015). The fourth limitation is the focus on just middle schools that have implemented service-learning, which excludes elementary and high schools as well as higher education. Finally, the last limitation is assuming that all participants responded truthfully and accurately during the interviews; as human subjects are being used for the study, there is no way to validate the honesty of their responses.

Summary

Chapter III discussed the methodology used to determine the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement. It began with a basis for this qualitative study and moved into more detail explaining the various components of methodology: purpose statement, research questions and design, population, sample, instrumentation, data collection, ethical considerations, data analysis, and limitations. Chapter IV presents the data collected, the

findings, and the analysis procedures used, while chapter five presents the major and

unexpected findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations for further

research.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

This chapter provides an analysis of the data collected from the study through interviews and artifacts which examined how participation in service-learning affected middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators. Chapter IV reviews the purpose of this study, research questions, methodology, population, and sample. This chapter concludes with the presentation of data, organized according to the research questions with a summary of findings.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators.

Research Questions

This study was guided by one primary research question and three sub-questions that were developed to examine the focus on the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement.

Central Research Question

What are the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

Research Sub-Questions

1. How does participation in service-learning affect the personal growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

2. How does participation in service-learning affect the social growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

3. How does participation in service-learning affect the civic engagement of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?

Methodology

This qualitative phenomenological study sought to understand and determine how a middle school student's personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement was affected through their participation in service-learning as perceived by their administrators, teachers, or coordinators. According to J. W. Creswell (2014), qualitative research is "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning of individuals or groups" (p. 4). Qualitative research indicates an in-depth study which employs face-to-face or observational strategies in order to obtain data from others (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015). The specific method selected for this study was phenomenology, which is relevant to the study because it gives meaning to a lived experience (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, S. B. Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The aim of phenomenological research is to "transform lived experiences into a description of its 'essence', allowing for reflection and analysis" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 24).

This study described, reflected on, and analyzed data collected through interviews and artifacts to determine areas of personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement that resulted from service-learning.

The researcher took care to align interview questions with the research questions of the study. The interview protocol included 11 in-depth, semi-structured interview questions which sought the observations and perceptions of middle school administrators, teachers, and coordinators in relation to how service-learning affected their students. The interview questions were developed to be open-ended and meaningful to the participants. Biased and leading language was avoided. The purpose of the interview questions was three-fold: (a) they aimed to elicit background information on middle school students, (b) then moved onto understanding the effects of service-learning on the personal, social, and civic engagement growth, and (c) ended with gaining participant thoughts and recommendations on the future of service-learning in middle schools. Participants were prepared for the interviews through email; participants were emailed a copy of the interview script which included (a) the interview questions, (b) a consent form to participate, (c) an audio recording permission form, and (d) a participant bill of rights. A date/time and location was schedule for the interview that was convenient for the participant where the interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Participants were given the opportunity to review their transcript and add to their statements. Following participant approval of the transcripts, they were analyzed and coded by the researcher.

The researcher took measures to maintain the reliability and credibility of the study. Reliability refers to the consistency of dependability of results, it is the level of

consistency in which the outcomes are produced by an assessment instrument each time it is administered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Pan, 2016; Patten, 2012). An instrument is deemed reliable if it has little error and deemed unreliable if there is a great deal of error; it is impossible to control all variables, but it is important to control as much as possible to reduce error (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Measures which the researcher took included conducting a field test of the interview script and questions for strength and cohesiveness, employing triangulation of the data to check for consistency in findings, and using intercoder reliability to cross reference codes and themes of data for appropriate theme ratings.

The researcher conducted a field test of the 11 interview questions with a participant who met the study sample criteria but was not part of the final sample. An expert in conducting qualitative research interviews served as an observer during the field test. The field test participant and observer provided feedback on the interview process and the 11 interview questions immediately following the interview. Roberts (2010) maintains that newly created instruments must be field tested to maintain validity. Using experts to review the research process helped to promote an objective and unbiased lens as the researcher moved forward with the study.

Another step the researcher took to maintain reliability and credibility of the study was to incorporate triangulation. Triangulation data in the form of interview data, photographs, observational notes, and journal entries supported a logically sound rationale that strengthened the justification for themes. Incorporating triangulation increases the credibility of the findings that were derived from the data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Patton, 2015).

For this study, the researcher enlisted the support of an expert member with a doctorate in the field of education, to assist in reviewing of the data coding process. Intercoder reliability of the data is established through determining the degree to which "two or more persons agree about what they have seen, heard, or rated" (McMillan & Shumacher, 2010, p. 182). This component is especially critical with subjective interpretations with open-ended questions (Roberts, 2010). Intercoder reliability is described by Roberts (2010) as "a check on the consistency between raters, or between a rater and an expert" (p. 152).

Population and Sample

The population for this study was all public middle school educators including administrators, teachers, and coordinators. Middle schools serve students in grades six to eight or seven to eight. According to CDE (2017), there are approximately 1,348 public middle schools in California, servicing over 1.5 million students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, NCES, a 1999 National Household Education Survey found that 5,573 thousand middle school students participated in community service; and of that number, 62% participated in service-learning (Kleiner & Chapman, 1999). Using this data as a reference point, the researcher projected that approximately 50% of California middle schools participate in some type of service-learning throughout their school programs. The target population for this study was public middle school educators in Tulare County, California.

Purposeful criterion sampling was the method used to select participants who met the criteria requirements of this study. The criteria included: (a) served as an administrator, teacher, or coordinator for one or more years at a middle school in the

2017-18 school year and prior, (b) participated in recent staff development related to the topic of service-learning or discussed/ disseminated information to others about it, and (c) worked in a middle school with service-learning components which included classroom integrated service-learning projects and service hours. Purposeful criterion sampling is best utilized when "there are a number of criteria to be applied" (Pan, 2016, p. 149).

The researcher visited the Tulare County Office of Education website to obtain the contact information for public middle schools in Tulare County. Using obtained contact information, the researcher emailed middle school principals to determine which sites implemented service-learning. If initial emails did not result in a response from the administrators, a subsequent email was sent using the researcher's school district email; furthermore, a phone call was made to the principal if further prompting was necessary to elicit a response. In the emails, the administrators were invited to participate in this study if their school utilized service-learning in any capacity in the 2017-18 school year. The administrators were asked to refer a teacher or coordinator who was involved with service-learning to also participate in the study. Originally, 16 participants were sought after for this study; however, due to difficulty in eliciting willing participants, the total number of participants was 14; thus, the sample population for this study was 14 – six administrators and eight teachers and coordinators. One middle school administrator referred two of his teachers to participate in the study as they each coordinated different clubs/ programs on site and another middle school had only a teacher participate in the study as their administrator was unavailable. In an effort to protect participant rights, all participants remained anonymous for this study. The researcher maintained confidentiality of all identifying information pertaining to participants; such that names,

employers, school sites, and other personal information have been omitted in the

presentation of findings, sharing only school districts and positions at school sites (see

Table 1 for participant demographics).

Table 1

Participants

Participant	District	Position/ Role
Participant 1	Visalia	Learning Director
Participant 2	Visalia	Coordinator
Participant 3	Visalia	Principal
Participant 4	Visalia	Teacher/ Coordinator
Participant 5	Visalia	Teacher
Participant 6	Visalia	Principal
Participant 7	Visalia	Teacher/ Coordinator
Participant 8	Tulare	Teacher/ Coordinator
Participant 9	Visalia	Teacher/ Coordinator
Participant 10	Visalia	Assistant Principal
Participant 11	Tulare	Principal
Participant 12	Earlimart	Teacher
Participant 13	Earlimart	Assistant Principal
Participant 14	Porterville	Teacher

<center>**Presentation of Data**</center>

Research Sub-Question 1

The first sub-question of this study sought to answer: *How does participation in service-learning affect the personal growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* Twelve themes were identified among the 14 participants in the area of Personal Growth, ranging from a frequency of 4 to 17, and are listed in Table 2. The five most mentioned themes are discussed in further detail.

Pride. In this study, the most frequent theme that resulted in personal growth as a result of participation in service-learning was pride. Six participants observed pride in students after working with service-learning projects. Triangulation was present as this theme was referenced 10 times in six interviews and seven times in six artifacts for a total frequency of 17. Participant 7 shared, "I've heard kids talking when they donated books, they brag about what they donated or how they donated… they kind of brag about it to each other." This participant goes on to express that, "…they feel good about themselves, that they are truly helping a person in need…" (Participant 7). Participants 8, 10, and 12 echo this sentiment with, "It feels good. I think they do it because it feels good to help someone instead of having to ask someone for help for themselves…" (Participant 8); "…student felt part of the community, and felt proud to help those less fortunate" (Participant 10); and "He felt good about himself" (Participant 12). Triangulation was evident in artifacts as observed in Journal Entry 1, "He was so excited, he could hardly contain himself. Conclusively, this was the most interest and pride I had ever seen exhibited by him" (Participant 12). Another artifact, a photograph of students

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holding their wrapped packages for families who lost their homes in fires, shows students smiling broadly with pride as they pose for a picture. These responses and artifacts indicate that pride is one of the main results of participation in service-learning; students feel good about themselves when they know they were able to assist others.

Confidence. Another theme in the area of personal growth was confidence. Triangulation was evident as this theme had a frequency count of nine in seven interviews and seven in five artifacts, for a total frequency count of 16. Participant 13 shared, "They are more outgoing… They're more confident and happy because they did something good." Participant 1 voiced, "When we went to the assisted living facility, they were very shy at first, but after multiple visits, they warmed up." Participant 5 related,

> … they really blossom. They learn communication skills, they do community
>
> service, they do a lot of different activities… I can tell the difference between the
>
> ones in 7th and 8th grade, they're more positive, they can get up and speak in
>
> front of the class, so it helps them.

Participant 8 observed, "They're more confident, they're more willing to get up and speak to people. They go from classroom to classroom when we had the book drive… they're the ones who presented to the classrooms, not me." Participant 8 continues with, "I've seen the shyest kid get up and speak in front of others." Participant 12 talked about a troubled student of hers who became more confident and positive after a service-learning event, "I was really surprised. So, that's what I saw as a result of participating in those projects… you wouldn't think doing those activities would do that for them, but it did." Participant 12 concluded with, "It was about looking at things from

a totally new and different perspective." Journal Entry 1 supports this statement, "…the student returned to class beaming and wanted to share his experience with the class" (Participant 12).

Hard work/ perseverance. A theme that was referenced by five participants was hard work and perseverance. This theme had triangulation as it was touched upon 11 times in five interviews and five times in six artifacts, for a total frequency count of 16. Participant 2 shares how much work her students did,

The students wrote letters to the companies to get donations, they made fliers,

they made the posters that we put up on campus; and when we got things donated,

they were responsible for organizing and keeping track of what we were getting…

It was all led by them, we were just facilitating. Once we got the idea, they were

responsible for everything.

Participant 4 corroborated with,

Our first project was a huge literature outreach. So, they (the students) decided

that, during the holidays, they were going to use fundraising money to purchase

the one-dollar Scholastic books and then to give one book to every single first

grader in all of our feeder schools… And so, they delivered the books - they

wrapped each book individually, separated it, organized it, boxed it to make sure

there was zero work for the teachers who were receiving it and having to pass it

out to the students.

Journal Entry 2 stated that

Our leadership team decided to host a penny drive (for the student with cancer)

during lunch, so for the following month, our students sat at a table out in the

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courtyard collecting spare change from their peers… we raised over $1,000.00 for the family. (Participant 2)

A photograph artifact confirms the hard work that students put into service-learning projects as they collect materials and goods from their peers for families who have lost their homes in fires that fill up the tables in their cafeteria.

Empathy. The development of empathy was another result of participation in service-learning. Empathy had a frequency count of eight in six interviews and six in six artifacts, for a total triangulated frequency of 14. Participant 3 stated that, through service-learning projects, "We see a growth in empathy, empathy has to be taught." Participant 11 shares that, "They've learned about the Holocaust museum… they make connections with other people and things, they develop empathy for others." Participant 8 reiterates this notion, stating, "…they're more caring, they're more sensitive to the needs of other people." Participant 14 continues with, "Students also feel connected with the people and students they serve and this created empathy and compassion within the student." Observational Note 1 reinforces this idea by stating, "I believe that they have learned over the years that caring about their community as well as others is vital" (Participant 8). Journal Entry 2 shows us how powerful empathy can be,

> To present the family with our donation, we had a small reception with cake and punch… While the presentation was taking place, one of my leadership students started to cry. Myself and our school social worker pulled him aside to see what was the matter. He simply stated he felt good to help this family and see how happy it made them. (Participant 2)

Positive attitude. The theme of positive attitude was another strongly referenced theme. Triangulation was clear as positive attitude was noted eight times in three interviews and six times in four artifacts, for a total frequency count of 14. In sharing what students say to one another in regards to service-learning projects, Participant 5 voiced, "… they tend to gravitate toward each other. Their conversations are positive." Participant 9 shares her observations in reference to her leadership students, "… they created a climate of school spirit and positive student social relationships." Participant 12 confirms as she spoke about one of her troubled students, "It's just social growth and other things… whereas, he was a negative leader, now he's a positive leader." Journal Entry 1 corroborates with, "This student became a positive leader, encouraging other students to act responsibly… he had a more positive attitude. He also showed more respect for staff and his peers" (Participant 12). This positive attitude is evident in the photograph artifacts where you can see students smiling as they participate in their service-learning projects.

Table 2 identifies the themes listed for Personal Growth along with frequency and reference counts.

Table 2

Personal Growth

Theme	Frequency	Referenced
Pride	17	6
Confidence	16	7
Hard Word/Perseverance	16	5
Empathy	14	6
Positive Attitude	13	4
Problem Solving	10	3
Courage to Step out of Comfort Zone	10	4
Self-Responsibility/Independence	9	3
Maturity	9	6
Academic Motivation/Drive	8	5
Improved Behavior	7	2
Sense of Belonging	4	3

Research Sub-Question 2

The second sub-question of this study sought to answer: *How does participation in service-learning affect the social growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* Eight themes were identified among the 14 participants in the area of Social Growth, ranging from a frequency of 5 to 18. The eight themes are listed in Table 3; however, only the top five most noted themes are discussed in further detail.

Connection to the world/others. This theme had the highest frequency count at 18. Triangulation was evident as it was mentioned 11 times in six interviews and seven times in three artifacts. Participant 1 shared,

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… students who are involved in these groups, they kind of have a little bit of a

sense of belonging, so they've found their group of friends or they've found their

group that they fit into with a common purpose. I feel like that gives them a sense

of something they connect to.

Participant 4 discussed how students make connections with the real world and

stressed how significant are the connections they make,

… kids are able to have a task or purpose that's greater than themselves…

They're able to connect to the real world, and they realize that the things they are

doing are not just for basic recall or to check a box, it's for something that's

greater than themselves… It's not really a choice, you have to be civic-minded

and aware because we affect each other so much. We are no longer individuals

who work and think in isolation, there are ripple effects to the things that we say

and do, so they're very aware of that.

Participant 11 confirmed with, "Making connections is important for these

students." Participant 6 eluded to how his school uses projects to connect troubled youth

at his campus,

When we have students who have a difficult time connecting to school,

community support or community service has been a component of (our Student

Services Section), because it's easier for them to work in a system that sometimes

is not school-related…

Journal Entry 1 shows how participation in the service-learning projects can have

successful outcomes resulting from making connections to others in the classroom,

… he became more active in the classroom in a positive way. He formed a group… to prepare for the Unit Test. Up to this point, he had not made green on any test for "Met Standard." The group was determined to meet the standard on that particular test. Therefore, they worked diligently quizzing each other and studying the concepts that had been taught… studied harder than I had ever seen any of them do… the payoff was huge, with the majority of the group Meeting Standard and some Exceeding Standard. (Participant 12)

Leadership skills. This theme was the second most mentioned theme in the social growth category. Triangulation was present as it was referred to 10 times in six interviews and five times in four artifacts, for a total frequency count of 15. Participant 4 shared in which area her students have grown, "Definitely the executive function, where they feel as if they can direct, lead, or take charge in something." Participant 9 agreed with, "I find that they do show growth and change. The student becomes a leader, and in my organization, it was a lot of hard work, and that's one of the values they embraced…" Participant 2 felt that her students developed and strengthened their leadership skills as they worked through their service projects throughout the year, "…it was all led by them… stronger leadership skills, and now they are a little more open to helping out… we're building up our youth… it just helps them be stronger leaders."

Helpfulness/ compassion. The theme of helpfulness and compassion had a frequency of 15. Triangulation was apparent as it was discussed seven times in five interviews and eight times in six artifacts. Participant 7 noted that,

it was interesting how they came together for our book drive… they wanted to donate their favorite book and pass it along to someone else… that showed a lot because I have my own books at home that I don't want to give up.

Participant 8 concurs with, "…these kids just give, and give, and give… we give because it's the right thing to do." Participant 8 continues with, "…it feels good to help someone instead of having to ask someone for help for themselves…" Participant 10 relates, "Students learn so much about themselves when they give back." Observational Note 1 corroborates these sentiments with, "My scholars have learned the importance of reaching out to others knowing that there is always someone in greater need than themselves. I am so very proud of our scholars!" (Participant 8).

Teamwork/ collaboration. This theme had a frequency count of 14. Triangulation was clear as this theme was remarked seven times in five interviews and seven times in six artifacts. Participant 1 shares her observations regarding teamwork and collaboration,

Once they get to know each other, the group collaboration helps them form those new relationships… so they had to create posters, they had to come up with those ideas on creating flyers, a survey… they had to come up with those ideas together and work together to get those ideas out.

Participant 2 shares how powerful teamwork was for her group of students, "It helps them to just talk to each other more, to work together… So, it was nice to see that our group with different kids learn to work together." Participant 13 acknowledges with, "…they learn to work with one another, problem solve." The photograph artifacts show that this is true, with groups of students standing side-by-side as they work on various

service-projects, whether it be collecting donations for needy families, wrapping gifts for those who have lost their homes in fires, or putting together a collection of books for the Community Free Library.

Positive social interactions/ relationships. This theme also had a frequency count of 14. Triangulation was observed as this theme was pointed to 10 times in nine interviews and four times in three artifacts. Participant 1 shared, "Once they get to know each other, then the group collaboration helps them form those new relationships with people they didn't know." Participant 2 said, "It was neat to see that our group with different kids learn to work together, they can't say, 'Oh, that's not my friend, I can't work with them,' they just learn to work better with each other." Participant 4 concurs with,

> … the leader who put together that reading project… came to me and she said, '… I want to make sure that we're not in our cliques… can you figure out a way that we can group people so we're mixed up?' 'Sure,' I said, 'Why don't we number them up?' So, she set it all up, she put the people together with random numbering. So, it allowed people to interact with one another outside of their social circle.

Participant 8 noted that, "We develop very close relationships…" Participant 10 stated, "I noticed students bond with one another." Journal Entry 1 shared, "Truly, being chosen for the service project made a difference in how he felt about himself and others and it was evident in his behavior" (Participant 12).

Table 3 identifies the themes for Social Growth as well as frequency and reference counts.

Table 3

Social Growth

Theme	Frequency	Referenced
Connections to the World/ Others	18	6
Leadership Skills	15	6
Helpfulness/ Compassion	15	5
Teamwork/ Collaboration	14	5
Positive Social Interactions/ Relationships	14	9
Communication Skills	10	5
Acceptance/ Understanding of Others	8	3
New Relationships/ Group of Friends	5	3

Research Sub-Question 3

The third sub-question of this study sought to answer: *How does participation in service-learning affect the civic engagement of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* Four themes were identified among the 14 participants in the area of Civic Engagement, ranging from a frequency of 11 to 29.

Awareness of community and other's needs. This theme was most mentioned with a frequency count of 29. Triangulation was evident as it was observed 22 times in nine interviews and seven times in seven artifacts. Participant 12 observed,

Whereas, before, he didn't think at all about rules or care about following the rules, he wouldn't care about what the classroom looked like, he would litter. But

after, he was more aware, he would tell other kids not to litter. So, it made him more aware. It gave him a sense of responsibility.

Participant 2 shares her thoughts,

I think it's more a sense of awareness for them, to think of others besides themselves. I think it causes them to be a little more caring and just to feel good that they're helping somebody out… Kids are just more aware now, like their awareness of the community and the needs of the community… it's the awareness of seeing and acting for those in need. So, just being a little more mindful of what's going on.

Participant 5 concurs, "… it gives them a little glimpse into the outside world after high school, so they could see what it could look like." Participant 7 agrees, sharing the big growth she's observed in her students and hope that they learn life-long lessons,

I think it just makes them feel good about themselves and helps them to understand that everyone has their own situation that they're overcoming or dealing with and I think that, hopefully, it's made them more accepting and understanding of one another… they learn from outside themselves. They learn that there's more to life than what's right in front of them and they learn that there are others who are worse off than themselves and to be thankful for what you do have. With what little you do have, you can always give, in a sense, in donating your time or an item, or whatever it is to help others in need.

Participant 14 related, "Students usually learn that no matter how little they have or think they have; there is someone that has even less and appreciates the little things that others take for granted." Observational Note 2 stated, "Service learning helps

students understand that there are those less fortunate than us and it is important to help one another" (Participant 7).

     Greater sense of purpose (outside of themselves). This theme had the second highest frequency at 25. Triangulation was undeniable as it was seen 16 times in seven interviews and nine times in eight artifacts. Participant 2 discusses global connections, "…it's not all just about us, the world doesn't work that way. Everybody has a hand in whatever it is that we do." Participant 3 suggested,

> Some students are self-absorbed and we help them see beyond themselves, help them grow. All students will benefit from the experience of helping others. Kids get self-absorbed with their social circle and cliques. These opportunities let them be a part of something bigger than themselves.

Participant 6 recognizes the same behaviors in his students, he says that:

> …students at this age struggle from that, they are still at a very selfish mode, so in all the activities we do on campus, we try to promote that community so that we can work towards that understanding that we are here to make our place a better place for everyone, not just themselves… Opportunities for them to just experience life in different ways, and to foster that idea that we're all here to make the world a better place.

Participant 4 relates,

> …kids are able to have a task or purpose that's greater than themselves. They're able to understand that, it gives their work purpose… They're able to connect to the real world… When you are service oriented, you are doing for more than yourself.

Participant 7 echo these sentiments, "…they learn from outside themselves. They learn that there's more to life than what's right in front of them…" Observational Note 1 adds to the discussion,

I believe that they have learned over the years that caring about their community as well as others is vital. My scholars have learned the importance of reaching out to others knowing that there is always someone in greater need than themselves. (Participant 8).

Desire to make a difference. The theme of exhibiting the desire to make a difference had a frequency count of 22. Triangulation was clear as it was referred to 12 times in seven interviews and ten times in eight artifacts. Participant 2 shares her experience with her students,

For me, as a coach, it was very self-rewarding to see them really caring. Although, it's something that they'll never see happen, like they'll never see the police officer hand a little kid that teddy bear, or maybe they will- I don't know their circumstances, but just for them to see that need and say, yeah, that's a good project. I was proud of them, that they stuck with it and saw it through. They wanted to help. So, whatever we can do to make our youth better leaders is important because they're going to be in the community one day, you know, so… what kind of leaders are we going to have out there someday?

Participant 8 expressed, "Oh, they love! They want to be involved! ... It's like, the more they do, the more they want to do. It doesn't make sense, does it? But, it's true! Once they get a little bit involved… I hear them talking amongst themselves, "Oh, we need to do this!" Participant 4 shared about the success of one of her students,

One of our members received a scholarship award from the CJSF Regional

Conference because of the work that she did, with the planning and organizing

and executing it. So, her focus now is totally different, when she's talking about

making a difference, we can say that, but she's actually done it, so that's what she

thrives on now and that's changed her whole trajectory of what she's able to do as

an individual.

Participant 14 was impressed by the impact that service-learning had with her

students, she observed,

As a result of service-learning students are empowered to ask for changes or

suggest changes in response to community needs. Previously, they were aware

and desired to make a difference but did not know how to go about it. The

service-learning project taught them how to advocate for themselves and their

community in a positive and productive way.

Journal Entry 2 declared, "Needless to say I couldn't have been more prouder of

this group of kids for giving up their lunch period to do for others. It was a great start to

our leadership team and they are continuing to reach out to the community to find ways

to help" (Participant 2). There were many examples of students making differences

within their school and community, and it seems that the more they do, the more they

want to continue to do.

Community involvement. The final theme in the category of civic engagement

and responsibility was community involvement. Triangulation was clear here as it was

mentioned six times in four interviews and five times in five artifacts, for a total

frequency count of 11. Participant 1 reflects,

Students involved with their community are serving others either outside of the school setting or within the school setting… At our school, we do have a PULSE after school program that utilizes multiple community partners to bring in various activities for the students. For example, they've visited a retirement center, they've visited local food kitchens to get themselves out of the school community to see reality outside of their home or their school. In addition, we have a STEP-UP program with our students who are involved in creating awareness in whatever area, whether it's creating awareness with water conservation or creating awareness with mental health, and they're asked to go out into the community to get resources, to collect resources to educate their peers.

Participant 6 affirmed, "There's a greater world out there… Once students start becoming involved with community service, they really, really enjoy it. They always get a really good response from whoever it is they're helping." Journal Entry 2 asserted, "It was a great start to our leadership team and they are continuing to reach out to the community to find ways to help" (Participant 2). Photograph artifacts show students involved within their community: at the shelter, next to their Community Free Library, and collecting and sorting donations as well as preparing them for distribution among families who have lost their homes in fires.

All four themes that were mentioned in the interviews are listed in Table 4 along with frequency and reference counts.

Table 4

Civic Engagement

Theme	Frequency	Referenced
Awareness of Community/ Others' Needs	29	9
Greater Sense of Purpose (outside of themselves)	25	7
Desire to Make a Difference	22	7
Community Involvement	11	4

Most Frequent Codes

In this study, all three of the most frequently referenced themes were related to Research Sub-Question 3: *How does participation in service-learning affect the civic engagement of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* The theme Awareness of Community and Others' Needs was highly referenced, with a frequency count of 29. Participation in service-learning projects allowed students to be exposed to and aware of what others are going through, so students are looking outward instead of always inward at themselves. The second highly referenced them, a Greater Sense of Purpose, had a frequency count of 25. Students learned and felt that there was more to life than the day to day problems that they face in school or at home. The third highly referenced theme, the Desire to Make a Difference, had a frequency count of 22. The more students did to help others, the more they were interested in doing because it felt good to help those in need.

Table 5 reviews the top three most frequent codes that emerged from the study. The table contains the theme, frequency code, and correlated research questions.

Table 5

Three Most Frequent Codes

Theme	Frequency	Research Question
Awareness of Community & Others' Needs	29	Research Sub-Question 3
Greater Sense of Purpose	25	Research Sub-Question 3
Desire to Make a Difference	22	Research Sub-Question 3

Artifacts

The artifacts used in this study included nine photographs, two observational notes, and two journal entries (see Appendix I, J, K). The photographs depict collected letters and notes of appreciation from recipients, awards and recognition for service, and students in action. These photographs support all three research sub-questions. The observational notes were short recounts of a participant's thoughts and reflections on service-learning. Observational Note 1 supported all three research questions while Observational Note 2 only supported Research Question 3. The journal entries, written by participants, were more in-depth recounts of a participant's thoughts and reflections on service-learning, focusing on a specific incident or event. Both Journal Entry 1 and 2 supported all research sub-questions in the study.

Table 6 reviews the artifacts collected in this study and the research sub-question that each artifact pertained to.

Table 6

Artifacts

Artifact Item	Research Sub-Question 1	Research Sub-Question2	Research Sub-Question 3
Photographs	X	X	X
Observational Note 1	X	X	X
Observational Note 2			X
Journal Entry 1	X	X	X
Journal Entry 2	X	X	X

Summary

This chapter presented the data and findings of this qualitative phenomenological study. The study sought to examine the personal, social, and civic engagement growth in middle school students as perceived by their administrators, teachers, and coordinators. The population consisted of public middle school administrators, teachers, and coordinators in California. A total of 14 administrators, teachers, and coordinators from four school districts (Earlimart, Porterville, Tulare, and Visalia) participated in this study.

The primary research question that guided this study asked: *What are the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* Three sub-questions assisted in delving deeper into the perspectives of administrators, teachers and coordinators as they shared their observations and thoughts on how participation in service-learning affected their middle school students in specific areas. An interview protocol was developed with 11 questions that were related to the sub-research questions, some were to gain background knowledge and some sought

perspectives from the interviewees which directly correlated to the primary research question. Each participant engaged in an in-depth in-person or phone interview which was recorded, with their permission, and transcribed. All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and participants were offered the opportunity to review for accuracy. Once the interviews were deemed satisfactory, the data was coded. In addition, artifacts were collected in support of this study; they, too, were coded. The transcripts and artifacts were coded for common themes. To increase reliability of this study, the researcher used intercoder reliability by obtaining support in the form of an intercoder to assist in reviewing the data and searching for themes. Both the researcher and peer researcher, who is an educator with a doctoral degree, collaborated and examined the data for common themes.

Findings of this study indicate several emerging themes in the areas of a middle schoolers' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by their administrators, teachers, and coordinators. The highest referenced themes in the area of personal growth were the pride that students felt in assisting those in need, the confidence they felt after doing good deeds, and the hard work and perseverance that they showed in the process. Students also developed or grew in empathy after participating in projects and their positive attitude strengthened. In the areas of social growth, the most highly referenced themes were the students' ability to make connections with other students or other people within their community, growth in leadership skills, growth in helpfulness, and more positive teamwork and collaboration opportunities. In the area of civic engagement and responsibility, the highest referenced themes include students' awareness of the needs of others, whether it be within their school or within their

community; a greater sense of purpose (outside of themselves); and the growth in their desire to make a difference.

Artifacts in this study included observational notes, journal entries, and photographs (students in action, recognition, and appreciation documents from recipients).

Chapter V of this study will present conclusions and implications based on these findings. Furthermore, Chapter V will offer recommendations for further research on this topic.

CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative phenomenological study examined the effects that participation in service-learning had on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement through the perceptions of their administrators and teachers or coordinators. This study was guided by the following central question: *What are the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* Three research sub-questions were developed to further investigate service-learning effects on the personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement of middle school students.

This study used a qualitative methodology to examine the perceptions of administrators, teachers, and coordinators who work with middle school students. Through in-depth, semi-structured interviews their observations were drawn. Artifacts were included for triangulation of the data. The target population was Tulare County middle school administrators, teachers, and coordinators who have worked with students in the area of service-learning. Fourteen of those administrators, teachers, and coordinators served as the sample population for this study. The major findings, conclusions arrived at, implications for action, and recommendations for future research are included in this chapter.

Major Findings

The major findings of this qualitative research study are listed in order of Research Sub-Questions 1, 2, and 3.

Research Sub-Question 1

Research Sub-Question 1 examined: *How does participation in service-learning affect the personal growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* The top five emerging themes from this research question included pride (6 out of 14 interviews), confidence (7 out of 14), hard work/perseverance (5 out of 14), empathy (6 out of 14), and positive attitude (4 out of 14). These themes had the highest frequency counts and, therefore, the most notable in relation to this research question.

Research Sub-Question 2

Research Sub-Question 2 examined: *How does participation in service-learning affect the social growth of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* The top five emerging themes from this research question included connections to others/ the world (6 out of 14 interviews), leadership skills (6 out of 14), helpfulness/ compassion (5 out of 14), teamwork/ collaboration (5 out of 14), and positive social interactions/ relationships (9 out of 14). These themes had the highest frequency counts and, therefore, the most pertinent in relation to this research question.

Research Sub-Question 3

Research Sub-Question 3 examined: *How does participation in service-learning affect the civic engagement of middle school students as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators?* The top four emerging themes from this research question included awareness of others'/community needs (9 out of 14 interviews), greater sense of purpose (outside of themselves) (7 out of 14), desire to make

a difference (7 out of 14), and community involvement (4 out of 14). These themes had

the highest frequency counts and, therefore, the most relevant in relation to this research

question.

Finding 1 (Research Sub-Question 1): Students felt pride after participating

in service-learning projects. The administrators, teachers, and coordinators in

this study observed that students felt a sense of pride after participating in a service-

learning project. The feeling that students exhibited after being able to help others in

need included pride, happiness and joy, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment.

This was especially evident in students who normally were not used to assisting others

and in those who were often considered the misfits of the school. This aligns with

literature findings that state students experienced positive emotions including hope, pride,

and comfort in service-learning environments (Noyes et al., 2015).

Finding 2 (Research Sub-Question 1): Students felt more confident after

helping others. Participants observed that students grew in confidence after

participation in service-learning activities. Students who come into these programs shy

and meek become more vocal and sure of themselves by the end of the school year, this is

evident in their ability to easily get up in front of their peers, sometimes in different

classrooms, to present about various projects throughout the school year as well as

communicate with community partners. The confidence that is built in these students

will cross boundaries into their school and home life and enable them to be stronger

individuals. Students often suffer from a lack of self-confidence and self-esteem

(Bridgeland et al., 2010; Laporte, 2014); fortunately, studies indicate that participants of

service-learning showed an increase in their motivation and confidence (as cited in Bettencourt, 2015; Ponder et al., 2011; Soslau & Yost, 2007).

Finding 3 (Research Sub-Question 1): Students exhibit hard work and perseverance as they meet the service-learning goals. In order to accomplish the service-learning goals set forth by their teachers or coordinators, students often had to work extra hard and put in time and energy to meet those goals. Projects have deadlines and time constraints, so students sometimes worked in overdrive to ensure tasks get accomplished. Since the recipients are real people in need, whether within their school boundaries or in the community, students realize that failure is not an option, and typically push themselves harder to finish these projects than they do for a regular class assignment. Research shares that it is important for students to be able to work under pressure and time management (WikiJob, 2018).

Finding 4 (Research Sub-Question 1): Students who have participated in service-learning develop empathy. One participant felt that empathy had to be taught because some students did not have home environments that were conducive to that and several other participants felt that empathy had to be further developed intentionally. Participants felt that service-learning was a good tool for this purpose. Several participants felt that developing empathy in students was a win-win situation because, not only did it create more thoughtful students, but will produce caring citizens who will run our community one day. Several studies point to the increase in empathy after students participated in service-learning (Eisenberg et al., 2013; Fiske, 2002; Scott & Graham, 2015).

Finding 5 (Research Sub-Question 1): Participation in service-learning creates positive attitudes in students. Participants observed that students who participated in service-learning often exhibited more positive attitudes. Some participants noted that students who previously had difficult in school or had a more negative attitude at the beginning of the service-learning activities typically ended with better behavior and a happier disposition. This change in attitude is related to students feeling good about being able to support others. Research substantiates this finding, student behavior and attitudes improved with service-learning involvement (S. H. Billig, 2011; S. H. Billig et al., 2006).

Finding 6 (Research Sub-Question 2): Service-learning enabled students to build connections with others within their school community as well as with the outside community. The participants stress the importance of students making connections, whether it be in school or in the community. When connections are made, students feel a sense of belonging, they feel that they fit in. When they feel a connection within the community they live in, they are more apt to participate and be involved with helping to create a better environment. Research adds that service-learning programs allows students to connect with their peers (Flanagan, 2004). Service-learning helps to create an important bridge between schools and communities which support growth in empathy and understanding (Terry & Bohnenberger, 2013).

Finding 7 (Research Sub-Question 2): Students developed their leadership skills with service-learning. The participants felt that leadership skills are vital for students to have and this is something that can be developed with service-learning. One participant referred to this as the "executive function" because it was such a

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significant piece. Strong leadership skills can benefit a student in the classroom as well as in their future jobs; strong leadership skills also create strong leaders. Bettencourt (2015) note that improvements in leadership skills and social responsibilities were observed. Flanagan (2004) asserted that service-learning in schools provided adolescents the opportunity to practice their leadership skills.

Finding 8 (Research Sub-Question 2): Students became more helpful through service-learning. Through service-learning activities, students often become more helpful and compassionate. Hegarty and Argelidis (2015) remark that helping others will always impact the feelings of an individual. Participants observed several instances where students sacrificed a little bit in order to give to others, such as the students who donated their favorite book so those in need get to read a great book or students who decided not to buy that candy bar or soda so their money can go to support those at the homeless shelter. The administrators, teachers, and coordinators in this study were impressed at the level of helpfulness their students portrayed.

Finding 9 (Research Sub-Question 2): Service-learning promotes teamwork and collaboration in students. The participants in this study acknowledged that the students involved in service-learning activities often come from very different backgrounds and have different life experiences, but because service-learning promotes teamwork and collaboration, students were often seen collaborating with students outside of their regular group of friends. Teachers and coordinators in the study appreciated the fact that students can come together, work together, and become friends through the bond of a common purpose or goal. Research supports this finding as it confirms that service-learning can provide a rich learning environment that supports personal development

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where students can work together to make a difference (Bettencourt, 2015; K. Farber, 2011).

Finding 10 (Research Sub-Question 2): Students form and are involved in positive social relationships and interactions in service-learning. Students get the opportunity to form positive social relationships with others in their school and community through service-learning. As they form and build on these relationships, they create positive connections; therefore, improving a student's overall behavior and perspective. This positive change will assist students both in the classroom and on school grounds as they face various situations; it will also support them in their home life. Scott and Graham (2015) found that service-learning had a positive effect on students; they exhibited an increase in empathy which allows them to get along better with others. Flanagan (2004) and Bettencourt (2015) reported that service-learning provides opportunities for adolescents to connect with their peers, to excel, and to practice their leadership skills.

Finding 11 (Research Sub-Question 3): Students who participate in service-learning activities develop an awareness of the needs of the community and others. The participants of this study shared that the most significant result of participation in service-learning activities is the awareness that students develop for others. As students become more aware, they grow in their understanding and acceptance of others. Students realize that people go through different situations, there may be others going through a situation that may be similar to or worse than their own. This finding is upheld with research which state that there is an increase in awareness of empathy and sympathy (Fiske, 2002). Participants agreed that middle school students are

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notorious for being selfish and self-centered; therefore, any type of activity which cultivates an awareness of others is vital and necessary.

Finding 12 (Research Sub-Question 3): Students develop a greater sense of purpose when they participate in Service-learning activities. The participants in this study relate that when students realize that they are part of something bigger than themselves, they perform harder and better. Students may easily let themselves down by giving up but they find that more difficult to do when it is for a bigger cause, such as working on a project for the school or collecting goods for families who have lost everything in a fire. Students see the significance of what they do when they are part of a larger cause. This finding is supported by research which assert that students "can cause change… and work together to make a difference in their school, community, and the world" (K. Farber, 2011, p. 1).

Finding 13 (Research Sub-Question 3): Students' desire to make a difference is heightened after participating in service-learning activities. Participants observed that students who participate in service-learning typically yearn to do more. Once they have had a taste of how it feels to help someone and make a difference in the lives of others, they are eager to continue. Studies have confirmed that participants of service-learning are convinced they are capable of making a difference (S. H. Billig, 2000; S. H. Billig et al., 2005; Soslau & Yost, 2007). Administrators, teachers, and coordinators have all noticed the excitement that helping and giving brings to their students, and they are pleased to hear students asking "what else" they can do to help or suggesting ideas for future projects.

Finding 14 (Research Sub-Question 3): Community involvement of students increased as a result of participating in service-learning. Students who have participated in service-learning activities in the community, tend to continue; this is true for participation in activities within their school community as well. The participants of this study mentioned that students often felt nervous or unsure with their first activity or project, but eventually become comfortable. These students are observed to continue with service-learning activities in subsequent years. Research has shown that there was an increase in instances of community engagement and civic responsibility after participation in service-learning activities (Fiske, 2002).

Unexpected Findings

Unexpected findings were discovered in this study that were not specifically sought out. One unexpected finding was that students who have participated in service-learning feel a sense of belonging. They feel a connection and bond with the students that they were with when the service-learning project occurred. In some instances, this translated to a feeling of acceptance within their classroom environments so students felt more accepted and satisfied. Thus, these students felt a sense of belonging with the groups they were involved in at school.

Another unexpected finding was that a few of the participants felt that participation in the service-learning projects felt more like an obligation than an opportunity. One participant stated that these types of projects lacked authenticity and were often project goals which were forced onto students to fulfill. So, since these activities were not authentic and students, at times, did not have a choice in whether they could decline participation, the study participants did not believe that any long-term

benefits that resulted from these contrived situations would be sincere or lasting. However, despite uncertainty with future growth and benefits, all study participants unequivocally voiced that all public middle schools, and some even went as far as stating all kindergarten through 12th grade schools, should incorporate service-learning in some capacity into their curriculum.

Conclusions

This research study was conceived to understand and explain the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement through the perceptions of middle school administrators, teachers, and coordinators. As a qualitative phenomenological study, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to discover the emergent themes and reveal the stories of administrators', teachers', and coordinators' experiences with the phenomenon of service-learning projects. The artifacts, which included observational notes, journal entries, and photographs, were used to confirm and validate findings through triangulation. The following conclusions are based on the findings of this research study.

Conclusion 1: Service-Learning Develops Personal Growth

Based on the findings in this study and supported by literature, the researcher has concluded that participation in service-learning develops the personal growth of middle school students. The study discovered that middle school students who participated in service-learning activities developed a sense of pride in who they are and what they do; as a result, their confidence and self-esteem increased. These students were now more responsible, independent, and mature – students who are able to empathize in various situations. They have a stronger and better sense of who they are because they have

stretched themselves to experience something new which they may not have experienced had they not participated in service-learning; thus, they are now stepping out of their comfort zone, more willing to face new challenges and risk failure. Several studies have determined that participation in service-learning activities increases student motivation, confidence, and critical thinking skills (as cited in Bettencourt, 2015; Ponder et al., 2011; Soslau & Yost, 2007). Being a part of a service-learning project is meaningful to many students and it has become a phenomenal turning point event in many lives. For many middle school students, participation in service-learning has shaped them into strong, positive, empathetic leaders with honorable work ethics.

Conclusion 2: Service-Learning Develops Social Skills

Based on the findings in this study and supported by literature, the researcher has concluded that participation in service-learning develops social skills in middle school students. There are social skills that are crucial to building successful relationships in the real world which are oftentimes referred to as the 4 C's of Education or the 4 C's of 21st century skills: (a) critical thinking, (b) creativity, (c) collaboration, and (d) communication. The 4 C's are also embedded in a list of soft skills which are highly valued in the job market as they enable people to function and thrive in teams (WikiJob, 2018). Several participants pointed to service-learning as the catalyst for developing these 4 C's in their students: they are able to think clearly and problem solve, they are creative in finding solutions to problems and obstacles they encounter, they must use teamwork and collaboration to successfully accomplish tasks, and they learn to communicate with their peers as well as adults in different capacities to get their messages across. Furthermore, service-learning builds leadership skills and a desire to

willingly help others as necessary. These students are able to build connections to the

world around them and form positive social relationships. Other studies have confirmed

these same traits to be observable in students who have participated in service-learning

activities (S. H. Billig, 2011; S. H. Billig et al., 2006; Skinner & Chapman, 1999;

Watanabe-Crockett, 2016).

Conclusion 3: Service-Learning Encourages Civic Engagement and Responsibility

Based on the findings in this study and supported by literature, the researcher has

concluded that participating in service-learning encourages civic engagement and

responsibility in middle school students. S. H. Billig (2000) and Brandenberger (2013)

note that growth is reported in academics and civic engagement. More than half of the

participants observed that students were more aware of community needs as a result of

their participation in service-learning activities. Middle school students tend to be self-

absorbed during this stage in their lives; thus, they do not typically seek out community

opportunities or spend time dwelling on community issues. In addition, students have

this realization that there is a greater world beyond their friends, daily concerns, and

school as they begin to see their part in this big puzzle; consequently, with the guidance

of their administrator, teacher, or coordinator, students take steps to help make the world

a better place for all. Realizing that there is a greater purpose outside of themselves,

students are able to overcome their own daily personal issues. Through service-learning

activities, students often discover that they have the desire and passion for making a

difference, to help those in need. Through these various opportunities, students see the

rewards and benefits of being involved in the community and they often continue after

the school year ends. Literature supports these conclusions as researchers find that

students who participated in service-learning improved in their perception abilities of community needs and personally believed that they were capable of making a difference in the lives of others (S. H. Billig, 2000; S. H. Billig et al., 2005; Soslau & Yost, 2007).

Conclusion 4: Service-Learning Supports Academic Success

Based on the findings in this study and supported by literature, the researcher has concluded that participation in service-learning activities supports academic improvement and success for middle school students. The study found that the overall academic motivation and drive of middle school students improved or increased after participating in service-learning activities. Scales et al. (2000) found that students exhibited an increase in academic determination. The hard work and perseverance that students learn from completing tasks related to service-learning activities carry over to the classroom so they are able to work at completing assignments and projects for their classes. Service-learning also fosters problem-solving and critical thinking, which are vital skills to increasing higher level thinking. In addition, students develop a more positive attitude and improve their overall behavior and perspective after working through such activities; these traits support a more pleasant classroom experience and nurtures healthy relationships with teachers and peers. Literature supports these conclusions as it reports that students showed an increase in these crucial areas: (a) problem solving, (b) critical thinking, and (c) positive attitude (S. H. Billig, 2011; S. H. Billig et al., 2006; Skinner & Chapman, 1999; Watanabe-Crockett, 2016). Furthermore, Vogelgesang and Alexander's (2000) study found that students involved in service-learning produced positive academic writing, were critical thinkers, and earned a higher overall grade point average than those who were not involved.

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Implications for Action

Implications for action were aligned with the conclusions drawn from the major findings of this study. The following actions need to be considered by administrators, teachers, coordinators, school boards, county offices of education, and state legislatures to promote overall personal, social, and civic growth and well-being for all students.

Implication 1: Offer After-School Programs at All Schools Which Partake in Service-Learning

Policy and decision-makers of districts and schools need to incorporate service-learning into after-school programs. After-school programs are a great way to introduce service-learning to a school site as it occurs after regular school hours and does not take away from the regular subject curriculum. These programs have more flexibility as to the type of activities in which their students are permitted to participate, the time to contribute to such activities, and special funding that will support service-learning activities and projects.

Implication 2: Offer a Service-Learning Class on Campus during School Hours

Policy and decision makers of districts and schools, as well as teachers and coordinators, need to include service-learning activities and projects within their curriculum. These activities and projects need not be extravagant, teachers and coordinators may begin on a small scale, perhaps with one class of students or the first 25 students to sign-up to work on one project a year. Once the teacher or coordinator becomes familiar with the expectations of service-learning activities and projects, s/he will be able to offer more service-learning opportunities to a larger number of students.

Implication 3: Incorporate Service-Learning Projects with Accountability Centers

School administrators should incorporate service-learning activities and projects with accountability centers. Students who have exhibited inappropriate conduct on school grounds typically receive assigned days to the accountability center in order to correct that behavior and is run much like an all-day detention class. These students will benefit from participation in service-learning activities as the findings indicate that students show an increase in academic motivation, improved behavior, and positive attitude.

Implication 4: Start Service-Learning at the Primary Grade Level

Policy makers at the state and district level need to start service-learning programs at the primary grade level for maximum benefits. Imagine, creating a school district filled with caring, thoughtful, motivated, and hard-working leaders! If offer the benefits of service-learning with students beginning in kindergarten, they will be so much more community- and task-oriented by the time they reach middle school. This might diminish some of the personal and social issues that middle schoolers face.

Implication 5: Sharing Findings

Researcher will share findings of this study with her principal and school board. The researcher will also get the word out about the many benefits of service-learning by writing articles for publishing in newsletters, hosting informational webinars, as well as by speaking at ACSA events. These are some ways the researcher can share the many benefits discovered in this study.

Recommendations for Further Research

The following recommendations were made for further research based on the findings and conclusions of this study.

Recommendation 1: Students' Perspective

It is recommended that this study be replicated from the students' perspective. Students are the main subjects in service-learning activities as they are the ones who can give and benefit the most. It would be exciting and very enlightening to gain the students' perspective pertaining to how service-learning affects their personal, social, and civic engagement growth.

Recommendation 2: Parents' Perspective

It is suggested that this study be replicated from the parents' perspective. Parents have a unique perspective as they have the opportunity to observe their students outside of school. Parents are able to speak to their students at great lengths and in greater depth than educators can, gaining knowledge and insight into all aspects of their students' lives; thus, giving parents access to assess whether their students are benefiting from service-learning on a deeper level than educators can.

Recommendation 3: Elementary Students

It is advised that this study be replicated with elementary students, from kindergarten through sixth grade. The information obtained from these younger groups of students can help to determine the type of service-learning activities that may be necessary in middle school and high school in order to support these students. We may find that elementary students benefit from service-learning activities just as much as

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middle school students do, in which case, school authorities should incorporate service learning activities in elementary schools.

Recommendation 4: Continuation Schools

It is recommended that this study be replicated with continuation schools. Continuation schools are generally comprised of at-risk students. The findings of this study reveal that benefits of service-learning include personal and social growth; therefore, this group of students may have the most to gain from service-learning activities and, consequently, make the most growth. The results of a study such as this one can be remarkable.

Recommendation 5: Boys vs. Girls

It is suggested that this study be replicated comparing the data from boys and girls. Will one group benefit more than the other? Will one group give more or put forth more effort? Does one group stand out in a certain area? It will be interesting to see the kind of data that are obtained through such a study. If we poll students to get a sense of the types of service-learning activities they are interested in before activities begin and repoll those same students after participation in several activities, we could get a sense of the types of activities students thought they would enjoy versus the type of activities that were most meaningful for them. There are many factors with this boy vs. girl scenario that can take root.

Recommendation 6: GATE, Leadership, Honor Roll, Athlete

It is proposed that this study be replicated with the top students in a middle or high school site. The top students academically and socially are the GATE students, the leadership students, honor roll students, and athletes. These students are the leaders

within a school setting and we want them to lead with compassion, strength, good ethics, and by example. It is evident, as we step onto school campuses, that not all of our top students have the kind of honorable characters which we expect in our student leaders. This is where service-learning surfaces to cultivate these student leaders, molding them into the kind of leaders that all can be proud of.

Recommendation 7: Focus Solely on Students' Personal Growth

It is advised that this study be replicated with the focus solely on obtaining data on students' personal growth. With a more concise focus, the researcher will be able to expand on this topic and may be able to gather more information as the topic of personal growth and service-learning is explored.

Recommendation 8: Focus Solely on Students' Social Growth

It is suggested that this study be replicated with the focus solely on obtaining data on students' social growth. With a more specific focus, the researcher will be able to expand on this topic and may be able to gather more information as the topic of social growth and service-learning is researched.

Recommendation 9: Focus Solely on Students' Civic Engagement

It is recommended that this study be replicated with the focus solely on obtaining data on students' civic engagement. With a more narrowed focus, the researcher will be able to expand on this topic and may be able to gather more information as the topic of civic engagement and service-learning is examined.

<div align="center">**Concluding Remarks and Reflections**</div>

As a middle school teacher, I have seen some of the challenges, struggles, and changes that middle school students go through on a daily basis. Previously an

elementary school teacher, I admit that it was a shock to me my first year in middle school to see and hear some of the things middle schoolers exhibited. Once a middle schooler myself, I have experienced some of the turmoil that puberty and transitioning into a middle school campus brings. This study was especially relevant to me because, as a mother of four children, with my oldest getting ready to enter middle school in the fall, I seek opportunities for growth academically and socially; I want my son to grow to be a well-rounded individual who is ready to tackle any challenges the world has for him and be able to make the most of any opportunities that present themselves.

I was amazed with some of the observations and insights that were shared with me in regards to service-learning – to hear of the impressive growth that were gained by students is quite astonishing. If the act of helping others can transform a life so readily, why do we not do this more often? It seems obvious that all schools should incorporate service-learning in some form on their campus, and this should start at the earliest level, with kindergarteners and continuing throughout their education. School systems tend to operate in isolation, but we are connected to the community around us; thus, it would benefit society and students to get them involved at an early age.

At the start of this study, I thought I had a fairly good understanding of what service-learning entailed; however, my understanding has continued on a fun rollercoaster ride of a semi-understanding of service-learning, to not fully understanding what service-learning entailed, then thought I understood it again, but maybe not all of it - and this cycle continued a few more rounds. Literature abounds with an incredible 147 terms and definitions related to service-learning so it is expected that service-learning tends to be ambiguous. Participants who I interviewed all had their own variations on

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what service-learning meant to them; I even found that definitions at the same school sites were slightly different. My point is, schools need not be fearful or hesitant to implement a service-learning program at their school; site administrators, teachers, and coordinators can make it work for their students in whichever way that feels comfortable for them. The best way to do something is to start, so starting small is better than not doing anything for fear of failure; teachers can build on that each year as their comfort level and experience with service-learning increases. Tony Robbins, best-selling author and seminar leader in personal development said, "The only impossible journey is the one you never begin."

It is exciting to discover that there is another avenue which students can take to learn, improve, and grow – all while doing good for others. Our children go through so much in their journey to adulthood, we can support them by offering a gentler pathway to their destination. My hope is that students do more than just excel academically, but that they are well-rounded and emotionally and socially healthy individuals who will contribute to making our society a better place.

My journey to earn my doctoral degree took me four years, with several unexpected bumps along the road, but I persevered and achieved my goal. It took determination and hard work, sacrifice and some tears along the way, but I am so proud of and grateful for the journey as I gained new insight and perspective about myself and what I am capable of. I sit here with mixed emotions as I type these last few words – my heart is full. I am relieved, too tired to cry, and am elated as I am certain I can see the light near the end of the tunnel. As Lao Tzu reveals, "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." As difficult as this road was, I am so glad that I took it.

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/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzExNjM4NV9fQU41?sid=a20e37fd-6109-4181-8ec4-
7e9ad613c8ec@sessionmgr4010&vid=1&format=EB&rid=1

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Social_skills

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Synthesis Matrix

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Garcia-Obregon, Z., Trevino, J., Uribe-Moreno, S., Zuniga, S., & Texas A and M Univ., C. C. (2000). The effectiveness of a school based service-learning program "Community Connection" at a South Texas middle school. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED449338.pdf	dissertation	x	x			x					
Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. American Educational Research Journal, 41(2), 237–269.	journal article					x					
"John Dewey on Education". (2018). Retrieved from https://study.com/academy/lesson/john-dewey-on-education-impact-theory.html	website	x					x	x			
"John Dewey, American Pragmatist". (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.dewey.pragmatism.org/	website						x	x			
"Service learning and experiential education". (2016). Retrieved from https://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/service/experiential.html	website	x				x	x	x		x	

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges
Bettencourt, M. (2015). Supporting student learning outcomes through service learning. *Foreign Language Annals, 48(3)* 473-490.	article	x		x		x				
Billig, S. H. (2000). Research on K-12 school-based service-learning: The evidence builds. Phi Delta Kappan, 81, 658-664.	journal article									
Billig, S. H. (2011). Making the most of your time: implementing the K-12 service-learning standards for quality practice. *The Prevention Researcher*, (1). 8.	report	x						x		
Billig, S. H., Hofschire, L., Meyer, S., & Yamauchi, L.A. (2006). Student outcomes associated with service-learning in a culturally relevant high school program. Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community, 32, 149-164. doi: 10.1300/J005V32n01_10	journal article	x					x			
Billig, S. H. Root, S., & Jesse, D. (2005). The relationship between quality indicators of service-learning and student outcomes: Testing the professional wisdom. In S. Root, J. Callham, & S.H. Billig (Eds.), Advances in Service-Learning Research: Vol. 5. Improving service-learning practice: Research on models that enhance impacts (pp.97-115). Greenwich, CT: Information	book	x					x			

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Afterschool, A., & MetLife, F. (2011). Service-Learning in Afterschool: Helping Students Grow and Communities Prosper. MetLife Foundation Afterschool Alert. Issue Brief No. 52. Afterschool Alliance.	report	x				x					
American Psychological Association. (2018). Definition of civic engagement. Retrieved from http://www.apa.org/education/undergrad/civic-engagement.aspx	website					x					x
Ashley, D. M. (2016). It's about Relationships: Creating Positive School Climates. *American Educator, 39*(4), 13-16.	journal article		x								
Barry, M. m., Lowe, L. l., & Twill, S. s. (2017). Academic Librarians' Attitudes about Civic-Mindedness and Service Learning. Library Quarterly, 87(1), 1-16.	journal article					x					
Berger, B. M. B. (2005). A comparison of character education programs and their effects on academic achievement, *behavior, and attendance (Order No. 3179494). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305366403).	dissertation			x	x		x				

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Brandenberger, J. W. (2013). Investigating personal development outcomes in service-learning: Theory and research. In P.H. Clayton, R.G. Bringle, & J.A. Hatcher (Eds.), Research and service-learning: Conceptual Frameworks and Assessment (pp.133-156) (1st ed.). Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.	book	x					x	x			
Bridgeland, J., Balfanz, R., Moore, L., & Friant, R. (2010). Raising their Voices: Engaging students, teachers, and parents to help end high school dropout epidemic. Washington, DC: Civic Enterprises.	book						x				
Byoung Sug, K. (2010). Integration of service-learning into elementary science teaching methods courses. International Journal of Learning, 17(8), 321-330. Retrieved from http://eric.ed.gov	journal article	x					x				
California Department of Education. (2017). Retrieved from https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/sd/cb/ceffingertipfacts.asp	website		x								x

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Celio, C. c., Durlak, J. j., & Dymnicki, A. a. (2011). A Meta-analysis of the impact of service-learning on students. Journal of Experiential Education, 34(2), 164-181.	journal article	x									
Cherry, K. (2017). David Kolb Psychologist Biography. Retrieved from https://www.verywellmind.com /david-kolb-biography-2795505	online article	x						x			
Choi, N., & Choi, J. (2010). Time and money volunteering among older adults: the relationship between past and current volunteering and correlates of change and stability. Ageing and Society, 30(4), 559-581.	article	x				x					
Christenson, S. L., Reschly, A. L., Appleton, J. J., Berman, S., Spanjers, D., & Varro, P. (2008). Best practices in fostering student engagement. In A. Thomas, & J. Grimes (Eds.), Best practices in school psychology V (pp. 1099-1120). Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.	book			x		x	x				

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/Responsibility/Citizenship/Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/Concerns	Challenges	Other/Misc.
Coelho, V. v., Marchante, M., & Jimerson, S. (2017). Promoting a positive middle school transition: A randomized-controlled treatment study examining self concept and self-esteem. Journal of Youth & Adolescence, 46(3), 558-569.	journal article		x	x	x						
Creswell, J. W. (2014). Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.	book										x
Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. Theory into Practice, 39(3), 124-130.	journal article										x
Danielson, C. (2013). The framework for teaching: Evaluation instrument. Princeton, NJ: Danielson Group.	book						x	x			
Dewey, J. (1938). Experience and Education. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.	book						x	x			
Downs, D. (2012). Civic Education versus Civic Engagement. Academic Questions, 25(3), 343-347. doi:10.1007/s12129-012-9302-y	academic journal					x	x				

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/Responsibility/Citizenship/Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/Concerns	Challenges	Other/Misc.
Dyer, K. (2015). Research proof points - better student engagement improves student learning. [blog]. Retrieved from https://www.nwea.org/blog/2015/research-proof-points-better-student-engagement-improves-student-learning/	educational blog						x				
Eccles, J., Midgley, C., Wigfield, A., Buchanan, C.M., Rueman, D., Flanagan, C., & Iver, D.M. (1993). Development during adolescence. The impact of stage-environment fit on young adolescents' experiences in schools and in families. American Psychology, 48(2), 90-101.	journal article	x	x	x	x						
Ehrlich, T. (2000). Civic responsibility and higher education. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc.	book					x					
Eisenberg, N., Hofer, C, Sulik, M., & Liew, J. (2013). The development of prosocial moral reasoning and a prosocial orientation in young adulthood: Concurrent and longitudinal correlates. Developmental Psychology, 50, 58-70. Doi: 10.1037/a0032990	journal article			x	x						

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Eyler, J. & Giles, D. E., (1999). Where's the learning in service-learning? San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.	book	x				x					
Eyler, J., Giles, D. E., & Schmiede, A. (1996). A practitioner's guide to reflection in service-learning. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University	book	x									
Farber, K. (2011). *Change the world with service learning: How to organize, lead and assess service learning projects.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Education.	book	x	x			x					
Farber, K. (2016). The doing revolution: Service learning, early adolescents, and personal growth (Order No. 10094587). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1780296360). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/docview/1780296360?accountid=10051	dissertation	x	x	x	x						
Fiske, E. (2002) Learning in deed: the power of service-learning for American schools. *National Commission on Service-Learning.* Retrieved from: http://ed253jcu.pbworks.com/f/LearningDeedServiceLearning_American+Schools.PDF	[report]	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Flecky, K. (2011). Foundations of service-learning. In K. Flecky & L. Gitlow (Eds.), Service-learning in occupational therapy education: Philosophy and practice (pp. 1-12). London, UK: Jones Bartlett.	chapter in a book	x						x			
Geise, A. C. (2008). Personal growth and personality development: Well-being and ego development (Order No. 1471420). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (304532398). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/docview/304532398?accountid=1051	dissertation			x							
Giles, D. & Eyler, J. (1994). The theoretical roots of service-learning in John Dewey: Toward a theory of service-learning. Michigan Journal of Community service Learning, 77-85.	article	x					x	x			
Goldenring, J. M., & Rosen, D. S. (2004). Getting into adolescent heads: an essential update. Contemporary Pediatrics, 21(1), 64-92.	journal article		x	x	x						

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Guillaume, C. c., Jagers, R., & Rivas-Drake, D. (2015). Middle School as a Developmental Niche for Civic Engagement. American Journal Of Community Psychology, 56(3/4), 321-331.	article		x			x					
Hatcher, J. A., Bringle, R. G., & Muthiah, R. (2004). Designing effective reflection: What matters to service-learning? Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, 11(1), 38-46.	article	x									
Hattie, J. (2009). Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analysis relating to achievement. New York, NY: Routledge Publishers.	book						x				
Hegarty, N., & Angelidis, J. (2015). The impact of academic service learning as a teaching method and its effect on emotional intelligence. Journal Of Academic Ethics, 13(4), 363-374.	journal article			x		x					
Hill, D. NCES: National Center for Educational Statistics (2015). Trends in High School Dropout and Completion Rates in the United States: 1972-2012. Retrieved from: https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2015/2 015015.pdf	report						x				

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Holas, I., & Huston, A. C. (2012). Are middle schools harmful? The role of transition timing, classroom quality and school characteristics. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 41, 333–345. doi: 10.1007/s10964-011-9732-9.	journal article		x	x	x						
Holland, B. A., Billig, S., & Bowdon, M. (2008). Scholarship for Sustaining Service-learning and Civic Engagement. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing.	ebook	x		x	x	x		x	x	x	
Hopfer, L. J. (2002). In pursuit of purpose: An exploration of the purpose of education (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No. 3075547)	dissertation						x				
Hovanec, E. (1999). Get involved!: A girl's guide to volunteering. New York, NY: The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.	book	x	x	x	x	x					
Hughes, J. N., Im, M., Kwok, O., Cham, H., & West, S. G. (2015). Latino students' transition to middle school: Role of bilingual education and school ethnic context. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 25(3), 443-458. doi:10.1111/jora.12142	journal article		x								

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Jordan, A. (2016). John Dewey on education: impact & theory. [video lesson/ lecture] Retrieved from http://study.com/academy/lesson/john-dewey-on-education-impact-theory.html	website	x		x				x			
Kaye, C. B. (2010). The complete guide to service learning: Proven, practical ways to engage students in civic responsibility, academic curriculum, & social action. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, Inc.	book	x			x	x	x				
Kleekamp, M. J. (2002). Elementary school to middle school: Exploring transitional challenges for fifth- and sixth-grade students (Doctoral dissertation). Available from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (UMI No 3062291)	dissertation		x		x		x				
Kolb, D. (1984). Experiential Learning: experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.	book	x		x	x						

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/Responsibility/Citizenship/Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/Concerns	Challenges	Other/Misc.
Maxwell, J. A. (2013). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.	book										x
McLeod, S. A. (2017). Kolb - learning styles [article]. Retrieved from www.simplypsychology.org/learning-kolb.html	online article	x				x		x			
McMillan, J. H. & Schumacher, S. (2010). Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry. (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.	book										x
Medina, A., & Gordon, L. (2014). Service-learning, phonetic perception, and learning motivation: A qualitative study. Foreign Language Annals, 47, 357-371.	article	x					x				
Meek, D. P. (2004). Service-learning in elementary schools: The key to developing student citizens (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses database. (Order No. 3123128)	dissertation	x			x	x			x	x	
Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.	book										x

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Montgomery County Public Schools. (2014). Student Service Learning (SSL): Give a little time…make a big difference. 2014-2015 guide for students and parents. Montgomery County Public Schools.	informational	x				x					
Mooney, C.G. (2013). *Theories of childhood, second edition: An introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget, and Vygotsky.* St. Paul, MN: Redleaf Press.	book	x					x	x			
Moore McBride, A., Chung, S. s., & Robertson, A. (2016). Preventing academic disengagement through a middle school–based social and emotional learning program. *Journal Of Experiential Education, 39*(4), 370-385.	article			x				x			
National Service-Learning Clearinghouse. (2013). What is service? Retrieved from http://www.nicsl.coled.umm.edu/	report	x		x	x	x	x				
Nelson, J. A., & Sneller, S. (2011). Ensuring Quality Service-Learning Experiences for At-Risk Adolescents. Prevention Researcher, 18(1), 14-17.	academic journal	x	x	x	x						

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Nolan, A. E. (2003). The reinforcement and impact of social skills education in secondary school and elementary school students (Order No. 1416400). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (305223127). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/docview/305223127?accountid=10051	Master's thesis		x		x				x	x	
Noyes, E., Darby, A., & Leupold, C. (2015). Students' emotions in academic service-learning. *Journal Of Higher Education Outreach And Engagement, 19(4)*, 63-84.	journal article, report	x		x			x				
Pan, M. L. (2016). Preparing literature reviews: Qualitative and quantitative approaches. (5th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.	book										x
Patten, M. L. (2012). Understanding Research Methods: An overview of the essentials. (8th ed.). Glendale, CA: Pyrczak Publishing.	book										x
Patton, M. Q. (2015). Qualitative research and evaluation methods (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.	book										x

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Prouty, C. (2014). Student engagement: Best practices in teaching in a K-5 blended learning environment (Order No. 3643786). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global; Social Science Premium Collection. (1622981747). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/docview/1622981747?accountid=10051	doctoral dissertation			x			x				
Ribeiro, A. B., Caetano, A., & Menezes, I. (2016). Citizenship education, educational policies and NGOs. British Educational Research Journal, 42(4), 646-664. doi:10.1002/berj.3228	article					x					
Richards, M. H., Sanderson, R. C., Celio, C. I., Grant, J. E., Choi, I., George, C. C., & Deane, K. (2013). Service-learning in early adolescence: Results of a school-based curriculum. Journal of Experiential Education, 36(1), 5-21.	article	x	x				x				
Rosing, H., Reed, S., Ferrari, J., & Bothne, N. (2010). Understanding student complaints in the service-learning pedagogy. American Journal of Community Psychology. 46(3-4), 472-481.	article	x							x	x	

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Saltmarsh, J. (1996). Education for critical citizenship: John Dewey's contribution to the pedagogy of community service learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 3(1),* 13-21.	article	x					x	x			
Scales, P. C., Blyth, D. A., Berkas, T. H., & Kielsmeier, J. C. (2000). The effects of service-learning on middle school students' social responsibility and academic success. Journal of Early Adolescence, 20, 332-358.	article	x	x		x						
Schmidt, J. A., Shumow, L., & Kackar, H. (2006). Adolescents' participation in service activities and its impact on academic, behavioral, and civic outcomes. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 36, 127-140. Doi: 10.1007/s10964006-9119-5	article	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Schumacher, D. (2000). The transition to middle school. Clearinghouse on Elementary And Early Childhood Education, 34 (2), 42-57.	article		x	x	x						

SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Serbin, L., Stack, D., & Kingdon, D. (2013). Academic success across the transition from primary to secondary schooling among lower-income adolescents: Understanding the effects of family resources and gender. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 42(9), 1331-1347.	journal article						x		x	x	
Siu, A., & Shek, D. (2010). Social Problem Solving as a Predictor of Well-Being in Adolescents and Young Adults. Social Indicators Research, 95(3), 393-406. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.chapman.edu/stable/40542300	article				x						
Skinner, R. & Chapman, C. (1999). Service-learning and community service in k-12 public schools. National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved from https://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/1999043.pdf	report	x				x					
Somers, M., Welbeck, R., Grossman, J. B., Gooden, S., & MDRC. (2015). An Analysis of the effects of an academic summer program for middle school students. Mdrc. Retrieved from www.mdrc.org	report		x				x				

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Verdi, K. C. (2017). What does it mean to be a service-learning teacher? - an autoethnography. (Order No. 10264061). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1894613103). Retrieved from https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.chapman.edu/docview/1894613103?accountid=10051	doctorate dissertation	x		x	x	x	x				
Vogelgesang, L. J., & Alexander, W. (2000). Comparing the effects of community service and service-learning. Michigan Journal of Community service-learning, 7, R25-34.	journal article	x				x	x		x	x	
Watanabe-Crockett, L. (2017, Feb. 13). *The 8 most important soft skills every graduating student needs and why*. Retrieved from https://globaldigitalcitizen.org/8-soft-skills-students-need	online article			x	x		x				

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SYNTHESIS MATRIX: Service Learning in Middle School Students	Ref. Type	Service Learning	Middle school student issues	Personal Growth	Social Growth	Civic Duty/ Responsibility/ Citizenship/ Engagement	Academic Growth	Theorists	Gaps/ Concerns	Challenges	Other/ Misc.
Webb, S. P. & Grimwood-Jones, D. (2003). Personal development in the information and library professions. (3rd ed.) [e-book]. London, UK: Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.libproxy.chapman.edu/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzExNjM4NV9fQU41?sid=a20e37fd-61o9-4181-8ec4-7e9ad613c8ec@sessionmgr4o1o&vid=1&format=EB&rid=1	ebook			x							
WikiJob. (2018). Soft skills. Retrieved from https://www.wikijob.co.uk/content/interview-advice/competencies/soft-skills	website article			x	x						
Wikipedia. (2018). Social skills. Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org /wiki/ Social_skills	website				x						
Williford, A., Boulton, A. J., Forrest-Bank, S. S., Bender, K. A., Dieterich, W. A., & Jenson, J. M. (2016). The effect of bullying and victimization on cognitive empathy development during the transition to middle school. Child & Youth Care Forum, 45(4), 525-541.	article		x	x	x						

APPENDIX B

Interview Feedback Reflection Questions for Facilitator

INTERVIEW FEEDBACK REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATOR

Conducting interviews is a learned skill and research experience. Gaining valuable insight about your interview skills and affect with the interview will support your data gathering when interviewing the actual participants. <u>Discuss the following reflection questions with your 'observer' after completing the interview field test.</u> The questions are written from your prospective as the interviewer. However, sharing your thoughts with the observer and considering their feedback will provide valuable insight into improving the interview process.

1. How long did the interview take? Did the time seem to be appropriate? Did the respondents have ample opportunities to respond to questions?

2. Were the questions clear or were there places where the respondents were unclear?

3. Were there any words or terms used during the interview that were unclear or confusing to the respondents?

4. How did you feel during the interview? Comfortable? Nervous?

5. Did you feel prepared to conduct the interview? Is there something you could have done to be better prepared?

6. What parts of the interview went the most smoothly and why do you think that was the case?

7. What parts of the interview seemed to struggle and why do you think that was the case?

8. If you were to change any part of the interview, what would that part be and how would you change it?

9. What suggestions do you have for improving the overall process?

APPENDIX C

National Institute of Health Clearance Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that
Kae Saelee-Hiraoka successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course
"Protecting Human Research Participants".

Date of completion: 05/23/2016.

Certification Number: 2080266.

APPENDIX D

Participant Invitation Letter for Research Study

Date

Dear *Potential Study Participant,*

My name is Kae Saelee-Hiraoka and I am a doctoral candidate in Brandman University's Organizational Leadership program, as well as a middle school teacher with Visalia Unified School District. For my dissertation, I am researching middle school administrators', teachers', counselors', and coordinators' perceptions of the effects of service-learning participation on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement.

The purpose of this letter is to find principals (or assistant principals) who are willing to participate in this study if they meet the criteria below. If you meet the criteria and are willing to participate, please respond to this email indicating your willingness to partake in a 30- to 45-minute interview. I would also appreciate any documents you can provide such as anecdotal notes, reflections, observations, school communication, and any other helpful documentation that can support service-learning outcomes.

The criteria of this study are:
1. Participant must have been employed at the middle school site in the 2017-2018 school year, or prior.
2. Participant must have participated in staff development related to the topic of service-learning or discussed/ disseminated information to others about it.
3. Participant must be working at a middle school with service-learning components that had one of the following:
    - One classroom-integrated Service-Learning project +25 individual service hours
    - Two classroom-integrated Service-Learning projects +15 individual service hours
    - Three classroom-integrated Service-Learning projects

If you agree to participate, a second email will be sent with possible dates/ times for the interview as well as a consent form to participate in research and a consent agreement for audio recording, which need to be signed, and a participant's bill of rights. I will also be asking you for recommendations of teachers, or coordinators from your site whose perceptions will be helpful to the study. Understand that the interview and any identifying information will be kept confidential. A coding system for interview notes, recordings, and transcripts will maintain anonymity. The interview will be digitally recorded; the recording will be destroyed after transcripts have been accepted by the participant as valid. The interview records will be kept safe, accessible only by the researcher. You are free to stop or withdraw from the interview at any time.

I am available to discuss this research by email or phone. I would be honored to hear your observations and experiences with service-learning and the effects it has had on your middle school students. I realize that your time is valuable and I appreciate your efforts to participate in this study. I look forward to hearing from you! Thank you!

Sincerely,

Kae Saelee-Hiraoka
Doctoral Candidate, Brandman University
Email: ksaeleeh@mail.brandman.edu
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

APPENDIX E

Interview Script

Hello, my name is Kae Saelee-Hiraoka and I am a doctoral student at Brandman University, working towards a degree in Organizational Leadership. I would like to thank you for taking the time to participate in this interview. I know that your time is valuable and I appreciate your efforts in contributing to the body of knowledge in this research study.

Before we begin, we will review the steps that led to this interview. First, an email letter was sent to you which outlined the processes involved in a research study interview. Attached to that email were two documents: a Research Participant's Bill of Rights, and an informed consent affidavit that needs to be signed before the interview process begins. The letter also informed you that you may stop the interview at any time. As mentioned in the letter, the interview will be recorded with your consent. After the interview has been transcribed, you can review the transcription to verify that the interview was accurately recorded. Upon verification of the transcription's accuracy, the audio tape will be destroyed. All records dealing with the interview will be strictly confidential.

In my dissertation, I am exploring middle school administrators', teachers', counselors', and coordinators' perceptions of the benefits and drawbacks of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement and responsibility. A possible benefit of this study is exploring benefits which may outweigh drawbacks pertaining to adolescent personal and social growth as well as civic engagement and responsibility.

Do you have any questions before we begin? (Address any questions that are posed and then begin the interview).

Preliminary Questions

a. **Please state your full name.**
b. **Please state the school and district where you work and your job title.**
c. **What grade levels does your school service?**
d. **What is the approximate size of your school?**

Interview Questions

1. What personal or social issues do you see middle school students dealing with on a regular basis? Can you name some of them?

2. What is your description of service-learning? Describe the service-learning program at your school.

3. Based on your observations, do students generally participate in service-learning for more than one year? If yes, why do you think they continue? If no, why do you think they only participate for one year?

4. What academic or social emotional behavioral differences, if any, have you seen in students who have participated in service-learning? Please give some examples.

5. What are some drawbacks or risks that you have observed pertaining to service-learning? Can you explain?

6. What types of personal growth, if any, have you observed in your students as a result of their participation in service-learning? Please explain.

7. What types of social growth, if any, have you observed in your students as a result of their participation in service-learning? Please explain.

8. What types of civic engagement or responsibility growth, if any, have you observed in your students as a result of their participation in service-learning? Please explain.

9. In your opinion, are the benefits worth the risks or drawbacks associated with implementing service-learning in a middle school setting? Please explain your reasoning.

10. Have you heard students talking to each other about service learning? What do they say?

11. Do you believe all schools should include service-learning as part of their educational program? Why or why not?

This concludes my questions.

Is there anything else that you would like to add to describe your experience working with students and service-learning?

I will transcribe the interview and provide a copy. If you have any corrections or additions, feel free to send them to me. Thank you very much for your time and support in completing my research.

Possible probes that can be added to any question, for clarification:

1. "Would you expand upon that a bit?"
2. "Do you have more to add?"
3. "What did you mean by …."
4. "Why do you think that was the case?"
5. "Could you please tell me more about…. "
6. "Can you give me an example of ...."
7. "How did you feel about that?"

APPENDIX F

Privacy Act Statement and Consent Agreement for Audio Recording

I give my consent to permit audio recording during the interview, and for those records to be reviewed by participants in the study. I understand that all information will be confidential and will be reported with anonymous identifiers. I understand that the recording will be erased following the transcription of the interview. I understand that I may choose to receive a copy of the transcript of the recording so that I may review and correct as necessary. In addition, I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time without penalty.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____
Signature of Participant

□   Please provide a copy of the transcript for my review at the following address:

_____

_____
Signature of Principal Investigator

_____
Date

Informed Consent

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

TITLE: The Effects of Service-Learning on Middle School Students' Personal Growth, Social Growth, and Civic Engagement

RESPONSIBLE INVESTIGATOR: Kae Saelee-Hiraoka

PURPOSE OF STUDY: This study is being conducted for a dissertation in Organizational Leadership at Brandman University. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the effects of service-learning on middle school students' personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement/ responsibility as perceived by middle school administrators and teachers or coordinators.

PROCEDURES: I agree to participate in an interview lasting 30 to 45 minutes, which will be audio-recorded (separate privacy statement attached).

I understand that:

a) The possible risks of this study are minimal. However, there may be some discomfort as a result of participating in the interview. I understand that I do not need to answer any interview questions that cause discomfort.

b) I will not be paid for my participation in this study. A possible benefit of this study is generating new insights concerning administrators', teachers', counselors', and coordinators' perceptions of benefits to personal growth, social growth, and civic engagement/ responsibility as a result of participating in service-learning. The findings and recommendations from this study will be made available to all participants.

c) Any questions I have concerning my participation in this study will be answered by Kae Saelee-Hiraoka, at ksaeleeh@mail.brandman.edu (email) or (xxx) xxx-xxxx (phone). Questions may also be answered by the dissertation chairperson: Dr. Carol Riley at criley3@brandman.edu

d) I may refuse to participate or may withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences. Also, the investigator may stop the study at any time.

e) I also understand that no information that identifies me will be published without my consent and that all identifiable information will be fully protected. If the research design or the use of the data is to be modified, I will be informed and my consent re-attained. I understand that if I have any concerns about the study or the informed consent process, I may write or call the office of the Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA 92618, (949) 341-7641. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form and the Research Participant's Bill of Rights.

I have read the above and understand it. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in the study.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____
Signature of Participant

_____
Signature of Principal Investigator

_____
Date

APPENDIX H

Participant's Bill of Rights

BRANDMAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Research Participant's Bill of Rights

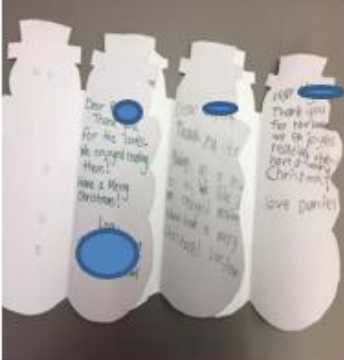Any person who is requested to consent to participate as a subject in an experiment, or who is requested to consent on behalf of another, has the following rights:

1. To be told what the study is attempting to discover.

2. To be told what will happen in the study and whether any of the procedures, drugs or devices are different from what would be used in standard practice.

3. To be told about the risks, side effects or discomforts of the things that may happen to him/her.

4. To be told if he/she can expect any benefit from participating and, if so, what the benefits might be.

5. To be told what other choices he/she has and how they may be better or worse than being in the study.

6. To be allowed to ask any questions concerning the study both before agreeing to be involved and during the course of the study.

7. To be told what sort of medical treatment is available if any complications arise.

8. To refuse to participate at all before or after the study is started without any adverse effects.

9. To receive a copy of the signed and dated consent form.

10. To be free of pressures when considering whether he/she wishes to agree to be in the study.

If at any time you have questions regarding a research study, you should ask the researchers to answer them. You also may contact the Brandman University Institutional Review Board, which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. The Brandman University Institutional Review Board may be contacted either by telephoning the Office of Academic Affairs at (949) 341-9937 or by writing to the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Brandman University, 16355 Laguna Canyon Road, Irvine, CA, 92618.

Brandman University IRB   Adopted November 2013

Artifacts - Photographs

Donating to people who lost their homes in fires

Donating to people who lost their homes in fires

Donating to people who lost their homes in fires

Tulare Rescue Mission

Community Free Library

Appreciation from Recipients

Recognition

Recognition

Appreciation from Recipients

APPENDIX J

Artifacts - Observational Notes

Observational Note 1

With our Community Free Library we have given more than 2400 books. The kids donated 996 to Lighthouse Rescue Mission. Most recently our school adopted a school in Paradise, CA. My scholars adopted the 4th grade class. We called it a "Slice of Paradise." We filled pizza boxes with 5 items they may need and 5 items they would like (they included school supplies, gloves, hats, coloring books, etc.). My scholars also donated 200 books for a classroom library and more than $500 in item for this 4th grade class. If you look at before and after pictures of Paradise, CA following the horrible wildfire you will see that their entire town was consumed. We are a 97% below poverty school and I am constantly amazed at the generosity of our scholars. I believe that they have learned over the years that caring about their community as well as others is vital. My scholars have learned the importance of reaching out to others knowing that there is always someone in greater need than themselves. I am so very proud of our scholars!

Observational Note 2

Service learning helps students understand that there are those less fortunate than us and it is important to help one another. At the time, I think that it sinks in and makes them feel better. But I don't think that it always rolls over to wanting them to do more service learning on their own. I have advised them to assisted living center is always looking for people to just spend time and talk to the elderly. I tell them stories of my own experiences and I can tell they are moved by them but I don't think it has convinced them to try it themselves. I think that a local field trip and actually going there as a class, club, or school would help them understand how important service learning is and maybe will want them to continue it on their own.

APPENDIX K

Artifacts - Journal Entries

Journal Entry 1

Service Project Effect on Student with Behavioral Challenges

I will refer to the student as Student A in this summary. Student A, a male 11-year old, had a severe challenge with proper classroom behavior and interactions with peers. He also had difficulty with staying on task. To add to his challenges, he had little respect for authority or rules. Student A also was doing poorly academically—he refused to pay attention or work in class and was getting low test scores. The school counselor and I met with his mother because of his aggressive, disrespectful behavior and refusal to engage in classwork. The meeting was not very fruitful. Unfortunately, there was little or no improvement in his behavior.

One morning Student A announced to me that he had been chosen by the school counselor to participate in the sports park clean-up. He was so excited, he could hardly contain himself. He was also enthusiast about being able to choose a buddy from class to go with him on the venture. Conclusively, this was the most interest and pride I had ever seen exhibited by him.

Following the clean-up day of the park, Student A returned to class beaming and wanted to share his experience with the class. He spoke with such pride—like it was an honor to have been chosen to clean the park. In addition, he was appalled at how people could be so disrespectful and throw trash and debris everywhere.

During the days that followed his experience, he became more active in the classroom (in a positive way). He formed a group that he called the "Nerds" and they worked together, preparing for the Unit Test. Up to this point, he had not made green for "Met Standard". The group was determined to meet the standard on that particular test. Therefore, they worked diligently quizzing each other and studying the concepts that had been taught. With Student A as their driving force, they stayed on task and studied harder than I had ever seen any of them do (particularly Student A). The payoff was huge with the majority of the group Meeting Standard and some Exceeding Standard.

Student A became a positive leader, encouraging other students to act responsibly. In the classroom and on the school yard, he had a more positive attitude. He also showed more respect for staff and his peers. Truly, being chosen for the service project made a difference in how he felt about himself and others and it was evident in his behavior. Even though he still had challenging days, overall, he was a much-improved student.

Journal Entry 2

I received the following message from our AP... Last year you had a student attending Valley Oak that eventually went out on Home and Hospital due to serious health issues. His name is Michael Reynolds I was blessed to be able to work with him while he was on H&H (He is currently still on H&H). Over the summer he was diagnosed with brain cancer and is undergoing treatment at Stanford. His family is not well off and is having to come up with a lot of money for travel back and forth plus hotels and so on. I would love to alleviate some of their burden and will be offering a donation. If there are any other staff members that would like to contribute please come see me. Michael is about as sweet as they come and his family is really going through a lot.

Our leadership team decided to host a penny drive, during lunch for the following month students sat a table out in the courtyard collecting spare change from their peers. We also had a home room challenge to see which class could collect the most change, to earn a doughnut party. When everything was collected we were able to raise $1000 for the Reynolds family. To present the family with our donation we had a small reception with cake and punch. Our leadership students were invited to present Michael with a check and meet him. While the presentation was taking place one of my leadership students started to cry. Myself and our school social worker pulled him aside to see what was the matter. He simply stated he felt good to help this family and see how happy it made them. Needless to say I couldn't have been more prouder of this group of kids for giving up their lunch period to do for others. It was a great start to our leadership team and they are continuing to reach out to the community to find ways to help.