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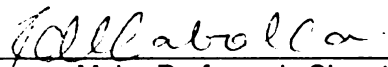
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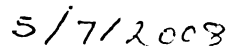
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**INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING APPROACHES: FACTORS OF
SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT FOR MINORITY STUDENTS AT A LARGE
MID-WESTERN UNIVERSITY**

By

Dorcia B. Chaison

A DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING APPROACHES: FACTORS OF SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT FOR MINORITY STUDENTS AT A LARGE MID-WESTERN UNIVERSITY

By

Dorcia B. Chaison

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of an international service-learning approach on the academic engagement of Hispanic/Mexican-American students at a large mid-western university. The program under investigation was one of many operated within the auspices of a study abroad program in conjunction with an academic unit. Academic service-learning was defined as a pedagogy that intentionally integrates academic learning with relevant community service. As applied to the context of this study, participants were involved in service learning activities that were established to deliver direct service to various community agencies throughout areas of Mexico. Further, participants were expected to learn about, and reflect upon the community for which service was provided, and to understand the connection between the service activity and course learning objectives.

Research questions were 1) what transformational learning processes occur for minority student populations who participate in academic service-learning; and 2) can those processes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement at the university level.

Data were collected through one-on-one interviews and journal entries. Respondents discussed the impact of the experience personally, culturally and academically. The study revealed that the International Service-learning experience not only played a role in the students' social and academic engagement as a minority on a majority Caucasian campus, but also assumptions associated with the value of performing service as a factor in making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate were expanded more than that of prior frames of reference. An implication of the study is that for some minority students international service-learning approaches impact them enough to allow for aggregation towards a level of commitment with regard to utilizing education to change pre-determined personal and familial assumptions concerning the value placed upon educational activities.

The study contributes, among others, to understanding the field of service-learning and the impact of such experiences, particularly for minority populations, who tend to be weakly represented in the literature as the focus of empirical studies. Further, findings are useful to policy makers, administrators, and curricular officials who struggle with thoughts of whether international service-learning approaches are reciprocally beneficial to the institution, the community agency and the student.

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I am indebted to the students for sharing their experiences with me. It is my desire that this work will inspire others to move forward with additional research on the impact of service-learning approaches on minority students.

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Chapter I

Introduction and statement of the problem

Major demographic and workforce trends, coupled with the persistent achievement gap of minorities, pose serious challenges for America's universities in the recruitment and education of minority students. In addition, the racial and ethnic composition of the US population continues to shift with the proportion of White Americans declining, and minorities, particularly immigrant groups, constituting a larger share of the population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). In a perfect world, percentages of ethnic and racial groups in higher education would roughly mirror that of the general population; however, this is not the case. In fact, the relatively low percentages of minorities engaging in and subsequently graduating from higher education institutions continues to be a major problem in part because of the disparity between numbers that enter versus numbers that exit with a degree in hand (Tracey & Sedlacek, 1987). According to Tierney (2000), students most at risk of departing from college are low income, urban, black, and Hispanic populations.

Although student college leave-taking is not a new phenomenon (see the early writings of Tinto in 1975), renewed interest in this issue has taken place. This interest is in part based on the need to produce more college graduates as part of being competitive in a global economy. Therefore, graduating students in higher numbers and on time is increasingly of interest in this era of accountability (Kearnes, 1998). Another reason for renewed interest in student engagement and retention is associated with outcome measures in the form of graduates, and

the relationship of graduate numbers to the performance of institutions for which students earn degrees. No matter the reason, the challenge is to find solutions that will thwart the premature departure of all students in higher education, but particularly minority students who have increasingly higher rates of drop-out than majority White populations (Allen, 2006). As such, the investigation of teaching and learning activities that has the potential for greater impact as related to the academic engagement of minority students is crucial during this period of heightened accountability since academic engagement is linked to retention (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). Consequently, this study investigated service-learning as a teaching and learning methodology, and its impact on minority student populations.

Increasing the participation rates of minorities in higher education is critical to the wellbeing of every country (Rendon, Garcia & Person, 2002). In fact, no first world nation can maintain the health of its economy or society when a large portion of its population remains outside of scientific and technological endeavors that result from advanced educational attainment. For that reason, and many more, it is a fundamental responsibility of a modern nation to develop the talent of all its citizens, particularly minority populations, who are increasing at exponential numbers within and throughout the educational infrastructure.

Several factors have been shown to influence the participation of minorities in higher education. These factors include (a) the nature of the curricula and instruction (Green, 2001; Kahlenberg, 2000; National Research Council, 1996; Tobias, 1992); (b) the socioeconomic status of students and their

families which includes parental occupations, education and income (Braswell, 2001; Madigan, 1997; Weston, 2000); (c) the quality , attitudes and access of teachers (Kahlenberg, 2000; National Research council, 1996; Ponessa, 1997); and (d) the availability of role models (Armstrong, 1980; Clewell & Anderson, 1987; Fort & Varney, 1989; Seymore, 1992; Seymore & Hewitt, 1994). Not only do the abovementioned factors influence the achievement and retention of majority White students, these factors have a more disproportionate effect on students from minority groups (Armstrong & Thompson, 2003).

Purpose of the study and research questions

Over the next 10 years, the United States will need to train and educate an additional 1.9 million workers (Bureau of Labor and Statistics, 2000). Increased involvement of under-represented groups will be essential for meeting such a demand. The education and training of all populations will need to be addressed throughout every level of the academic system, but particularly the post-secondary realm because of a closer association between educational study, degree attainment, and actual professional/career performance. The purpose of the study was to explore the impact of service learning approaches on minority students in at a large mid-western university. Research questions were 1) what transformational learning processes occur for minority student populations who participate in academic service-learning, and 2) can those processes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement at the college level. Briefly, transformational learning processes occur when learners critically assess their current perspective based upon some event. As the event occurs, learners

engage in an examination of whether their present approach(s) to performing tasks are right for them (Mezirow, 1991). A more detailed discussion of the transformational learning concept will be presented in the conceptual framework section of this study; however, at this point it may be appropriate to address some definitional terminology to provide clarity and make reference to the many ways in which service-learning has been or might be associated.

Definitions

Experiential education

A number of terms are used to reflect and identify what is meant by the term service-learning. First and foremost, service-learning falls under the umbrella of experiential learning activities, that include, but are not limited to, internships, practical observation experiences, cooperative education programs, apprenticeships, lab-based activities, and modeling (Pratt & Associates, 1998). John Dewey often called the father of experiential learning, addresses experiential learning practices as those experiences in which students are more active rather than passive participants in their learning. Therefore, such experiences have a heightened level of relevance for the student (1968). Such a case may be made for community service, civic engagement, volunteering, and service-learning activities.

Community service

Community service, sometimes used synonymously as service-learning, is a service that is more often unpaid and performed for the benefit of the public and its institution. Students engage in activities to meet actual community needs

as an integrated aspect of a curriculum (Cress, Collier, Reitenaurer & Associates, 2005).

Civic engagement

Civic engagement, sometimes called civic service is an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to local, national or world communities that are recognized and valued by society with minimal monetary compensation (Sherraden, 2001).

Volunteerism

Volunteerism, on the other hand, is determined to be unpaid, done of free will, and includes some sort of exchange between the person, their community, and/or the environment (Kandil, 2004).

Service-learning

Associative definitions for service-learning reflect multiple remarks. The approach represents both formal and informal programs of student participation. The following illustrates what scholars determine to be the meaning of service-learning.

Butin (2005) identifies service-learning as a pedagogical practice and theoretical orientation. Kendal, 1990 and Weigert, 1998 address the pedagogical practice as well, but also position service-learning to be that which goes beyond volunteerism, community service, and experiential education with connected academic engagement. O'Grady (2000) states that service-learning involves the intentional integration of academic course work and community service performance. The approach, according to this scholar, fosters a reciprocal and

sustainable relationship among higher education institutions, students, faculty, and community agencies. Taken one step further, Rosenberg (2000) indicates service-learning to be more than volunteerism, for such practices combines community work with classroom instruction while emphasizing reflection as well as action that empowers students by making them responsible in real world contexts.

For this study, service learning is defined as pedagogy that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service (Howard, 1998, p. 34). Service-learning defined more concretely:

A teaching methodology whereby there is an intentional effort made to utilize community based learning on behalf of academic learning and further utilize academic learning to inform community service. Integration of the two kinds of learning (experiential and academic) works to strengthen one another to make student service-learning experiences relevant to the academic course of study.

As applied to the specific context of the study, participants involved in service learning activities were expected to provide direct community service as a part of a course in a academic program, learn about and reflect upon the community in which the service is provided, and to understand the connection between the service activity and the learning objectives of the academic course.

Academic engagement

For this study, academic engagement is defined in terms of learning productivity that reflects the amount of effort devoted to educationally purposeful activities (engagement) and the extent to which students make progress toward important learning and personal development goals. Therefore, the focus of

engagement is on what students do with institutional resources and what they gain from their experiences (Kuh, 1996; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000; Guskin, 1994; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991).

Conceptual framework

Referencing a lack of research on students of minority racial-ethnic backgrounds who participate in service-learning activities, Jones & Abes (2003) convey the need to conduct more research on the influence of service-learning practices on the construction of identity for minority groups as well as on associative outcomes. Further, Kiely (2004) addressed the need for more research on the impact of service learning approaches for populations not of the primary Caucasian female category, which again addresses a need to increasingly incorporate information from that of minority populations into future modes of inquiry for the sake of theory building and accuracy of knowledge resulting from service-learning experiences. Accordingly, Kiely shows that efforts to draw information from diverse samples that include male participants as well as additional race and nationality samples, would further generate information regarding the utilization of service-learning programs as a factor that enhances or in some cases hinders student learning in postsecondary education (p. 17). Harkavy (2004) identified the need to develop, explore, or expand empirical studies on service-learning in order to help explain all relative meanings associated with the potential of service-learning beyond that of influences upon social movements, institutional change agents, or the creation of socially responsible student citizens. Lastly, Giles & Eyler (1998) highlight the need for

additional research on service-learning outcomes related to students, faculty members, institutions, communities and society in general, but particularly in diverse student populations. As a result of those scholarly comments, this study made an attempt to illuminate the influence of service-learning approaches on a minority population in-conjunction with the possible exploration of information that could be relative to the existence of a new theory or model on service-learning.

Transformational Learning Theory

There are many theories for which service-learning approaches are said to be foundationally connected: Experiential learning (Dewey, 1971; Kolb, 1976; 1981; 1984; Kolb & Fry, 1975; and Jarvis, 1987; 1995), multicultural development and identity development (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Hill, 2001, 2003; Rhoads, 1997; Youniss & Yates, 1997), and the service learning theory (Eyler & Giles, 1993; 1991; Cone & Harris, 1996; Bringle & Hatcher, 2000). The transformational learning theory was selected by this researcher because of its reported connection to adult development and learning that is understood as a process of using prior interpretations to construe new or revised frames of reference (Mezirow, 1990, 1991). Meaning, learning processes occur when learners critically re-assess their current perspective based upon some event and examine whether their present approach to doing things continues to be right for them. Critical self-reflection helps the individual look at things in fundamentally new and different ways, examines behaviors that may be changed and take action(s) based upon new assumptions when making important decisions (Mezirow, 2000). As such, utilization of the theory represents explanatory

possibilities with regard to how service-learning programs impact minority participants.

Numerous scholarly strands and philosophical orientations are used to explain, assess, analyze, and expand the transformative learning process. It is not the intent of this study to decipher them but more to use or highlight the varying opinions in a complimentary way as explanation to the vast range of knowledge associated with the theory. Therefore, views beyond that of Mezirow may be interjected throughout the text as a way to piece together important foundational tenets of the theory while addressing diverse perspective uses as well as commonalities.

Transformations

According to Mezirow (2000) most personally significant and emotionally exacting transformations come as a response to a disorienting dilemma. During or after the experience an individual will engage in periods of self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame; critical assessment of assumptions; and recognition of one's discontent. In addition, the individual will consequently explore options for new roles and relationships; plan a course of action; acquire knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; provisionally try on new roles; building competence and self-confidence in those new roles and relationships; and reintegrate the scheme into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 22). Variations do not have to occur in any specific order to produce transformative results, but critical self-reflection and discourse are positioned by Mezirow to be vital.

Reflection is a key component in the transformative learning progression. Based upon exploration and development of the transformative learning theory, Cranton (2006) confers that reflection, as it relates to transformative learning, is the process of reconsidering experience through reason, and reinterpreting and generalizing the experience to form mental structures (p. 33). Further, she emphasizes distinguishing differences between content reflection, process reflection and premise reflection. Content reflection is presented as an examination of the content or description of a problem, and process reflection involves looking at the problem-solving strategies that are being used by the learner. Premise reflection takes place when the problem itself is questioned. Accordingly, Cranton affords that is the later that has the potential to lead individuals to transform a habit of mind because the learner is engaged in seeing him/herself and the world in a different way.

Service-learning approaches utilize reflection periods to allow participants the opportunity to discuss issues surrounding the service event which differs slightly from the personal reflection associated with that of transformational learning theory. As related to the theory, reflection is a process of reconsidering experience through reason, and reinterpreting and generalizing the experience to form mental structures (Mezirow, 2000). With regard to the process of reflection and that of service-learning participants engage in discussions related to academic material, community infrastructure, personal discourse, cultural and politics to name a few (Eyler, 2001).

In 2000 Mezirow introduced the terms habits of mind and points of view. Habits of mind are determined to be broad predispositions that we use to interpret experience. A point of view is a cluster of meanings that are habitual rules that are used for ultimately interpreting experiences.

Investigation of the transformative learning theory performed by Taylor (2000a; 2000b) establishes that transformative learning takes place in several contexts, is stimulated by different events, and occurs in relationship to multiple kinds of habits of minds. Further, according to Taylor (2000) the process can be provoked by a single event, cumulative events, deliberate efforts to change, or through individual stages of maturity. In essence, when an individual undergoes a transformative state there is a shift in his/her taken – for – granted frames of reference, which are called meaning perspectives, habits of mind, or mind-sets to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified (Mezirow, 2000).

Transformational learning and the learner

Changes of a transformative nature are not easily accomplished (Taylor, 2000). Learners can attend classes, perform assigned tasks, do well on assessment mechanisms, and still not develop the capacity to critically reflect upon their assumptions or premises for the way they go about learning and utilizing knowledge. The ultimate goal would be for the learner to not only know more but know differently as well.

For several reasons the context of the service learning program afforded the students with the opportunity to engage in a period of transformative adjustment. First, no student had ever engaged in such a program or event; thus prior assumptions of the experience were likely to be present. Secondly, the possibility that immersion into a new or secondary culture for which he/she was not intimately familiar would result in periods of disorientation. Third, the program was foundationally linked to cooperative work that necessitated communication, task preparation, goal setting and accomplishment. In many cases the student had not engaged in either of the associative service-learning structures. Forth, each student brought a background of varying skills, opinions, and psychological make-ups that formed a frame of reference for both the experience and the role of a college student while engaging in the experience. Consequently, it is assumed by virtue of how the event was established that all of the learners in the international service-learning program would acquire new knowledge. However, it is unclear if they will leave the experience with a shift in their perspective whereby they are more critically aware of how and why presuppositions have come to constrain the way they perceive, understand and feel about the world.

Although not exhaustive, some outcomes of the transformational learning theory are reported to be an empowered sense of self, an increase in self-confidence in new roles and relationships, fundamental changes in the way learners see themselves and their life assumptions, more functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over their lives, compassion for others, and new connectedness with others (Courtney, 1998; Taylor, 1997).

Further, those aforementioned outcomes are said to more than likely occur through social processes where learners gain a new understanding of how social relationships and culture shape beliefs and feelings (Christopher, Dunnagan, Duncan & Paul, 2001). Interpretively, as individuals develop the capacity to become critically aware of life and living, they are more challenging of roles associated with past, current, or future assigned tasks and social expectations.

While applying the aforesaid information to the context of the current study, the minority student clearly has meanings as well as challenges associated with their life and living as a student. In addition to challenges encounter and persevered through, the student often comes to the college environment with preconceived notions and assumptions of what it means to be a college student. All difficulties aside, identifying learning activities that support, encourage, and make use of existing educational practices as related to minority student engagement appears to be foundational to the learning and development of such populations, and ultimately their persistence in higher education.

From its inception, the transformative learning theory was based on a national study of primarily Caucasian women who were participating in an educational re-entry program at a community college. According to Mezirow (1991) all learning involves “meaning making” which is inherently based upon and connected to experiences. Further, Mezirow et al, postulates that transformational learning as a theory of adult development is characterized by an ongoing process of using prior interpretations of meanings associated with experiences to guide future actions (1995). With those points in mind, using the

transformational learning theory with populations of minorities in postsecondary settings with emphasis on service-learning approaches allows for the expansion of the existing theory, or development of new knowledge which more directly addresses teaching and learning outcomes in the context of service-learning activities for minority populations. The usefulness of such information may affect issues related to academic curriculums and also policies that are developed to increase, enhance, and support minority students in higher education. Meaning information from the study has the potential for use with regard to how minority participants use such experience(s) to expand their academic performance and engagement. The next section will address foundational information pertaining to service-learning as well as literary inquiry on the topic.

Chapter II

Literature review

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of service-learning approaches that have demonstrated points of innovation. By critically reviewing a portion of the existing empirical studies on service-learning, I will attempt to both establish the legitimacy of the study with the need to further explore the utility of the reported knowledge on minority populations. Therefore, the first section will address foundational information related to what is known about service-learning, followed by discourse remarks. Next, inquiry related to what students say about service-learning, student patterns of commitment to service-learning, the purported long-term effects of service-learning, service-learning and the curriculum, and learning processes and service-learning. Finally, information related to study abroad, service-learning and the impact of those initiatives will conclude the chapter.

What we know about Service-learning

Service-learning represents one part of an amalgam of academic services offered across higher education. Other academic services include, but are not limited to, knowledge-based lectures, hands-on labs, internships, field-based practicum experiences and apprenticeship programs (Stark & Lattuca, 2000). Service-learning as a teaching methodology combines community service with classroom instruction while engaging students in critically reflective thinking as well as personal and civic minded responsibility as an aid to communities (Garcia & Robinson, 2005). Something as simple as removing trash from a stream-bed is

reflective of a service-learning activity because students can combine the mental analysis (e.g., critical analysis) of what they have found with suggestions for reducing pollution and sustaining a clean and safe environment.

Insofar as critical reflection and outcomes are concerned learning outcomes associated with service-learning activities are addressed when students perform reflection after their experience. During reflective moments, a key component of the service-learning paradigm, participants are afforded the opportunity to report their feelings, ideas, thoughts, and opinions related to the work they perform. Thus, both intentional and un-intentional learning objectives are addressed through the merging of affective and effective domain characteristics. Common reflection activities include open discussions, debriefing, and journaling (Cooper, 1998).

Other characteristics of authentic service learning activities include: a) positive, meaningful and real like experiences for the participants; b) cooperative rather than competitive experiences that promote teamwork; c) an avenue to address complex problems in complex settings rather than simplified problems in isolation from the environment; d) engagement of problem-solving in the specific context of service activities that address community challenges; e) development of critical thinking through real world situations, and f) support for social, emotional, and cognitive learning development (Weigert, 1998). Such a list of characteristics, although not exhaustive, reflects how service-learning provides a means for students to merge what they know with what they do, which

for the approaches of service-learning, ultimately means serving society through civic engagement.

With particular emphasis at the post-secondary level, research on the topic of service-learning yielded information in the form of intervention descriptions, articles in scholarly journals, and empirical research. Scholars who conducted research on the topic offered a variety of explanations related to outcomes of the particular approach. These projects of inquiry will be critically reviewed and presented with regard to the usefulness of the information for this study.

Service-learning is an experiential learning medium that merges course content with hands on service activities while affording participants the opportunity to critically think, to problem solve, to address real world issues through political, social and personal engagement, to increase racial and ethnic competence beyond one's immediate culture, and to foster the development of civic minded responsibility (National Service-learning Clearing House; Connors & Seifer, 2005; & Garcia & Robinson, 2005). For the initiating agency, in this case higher education, benefits are said to include increased partnerships, research venues, and a unique prospectus to help various constituent populations through outreach and service activities (Garcia & Robinson, 2005). With that context in mind, the purpose of this study is to determine information relative to the impact of service learning approaches on minority students in postsecondary education. Moreover, the research questions to be addressed in this proposed study will be related to *meanings* as associated with service-learning experiences for minority

students, and whether or not such *meanings* are linked to the retention of minority students in postsecondary education. Research questions to be addressed in this proposed study are 1) what transformational learning processes and outcomes occur for minority student populations who participate in academic service learning, and 2) can those processes and outcomes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement in postsecondary education.

Discourse and service-learning

The field of service-learning is not without discourse. Kezar & Rhoads (2001) addressed a number of dynamic tensions of service learning in higher education. Tensions related to learning outcomes are associated with questions regarding whether service learning is best understood as part of the historical mission of higher education or the development of student empathy and multicultural understanding, or should such practices be linked to goals of critical thinking or writing? Locational tensions reside within curricular or departmental domains with questions related to whether service-learning would be more appropriately placed in a formal curriculum, in the auspices of the student affairs profession, or in a specifically designated unit. Another concern relates to how service-learning fits within the expectations of faculty and student affairs work, and hence is presented as an organization of work question. Implementation and evaluation are both directly associated with the nature of service-learning experiences, and how such experiences should be structured for maximum efficacy. These tensions highlight several organizational issues associated with service-learning within and throughout the vast majority of educational

institutions. Beyond comments from Kezar & Rhodes, et al, other scholars invested in the topic of service-learning recognize that research into the outcomes and the effects of service-learning is lacking, and should therefore be expanded (Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Giles, Honnet, & Migliore, 1991, Shiarella, 2000; and Grusky, 2000).

Grusky (2000) particularly speaks to the dichotomous goals of service-learning. He argue that differing goals associated with students, faculty members, organizations and community partners pose challenges beyond the logistics of merely establishing a service-learning program. For example, community partners may desire services work as a supplement to failing financial support for daily delivery and coordination of services where students may take course based service-leaning tasks to supplement their degree programs with the possibility that such experiences will afford them a high or easy grade. In such instances whereby goals between the various constituents differ substantially, conflicts manifest. Annette (2000) further addresses the issue of differential goal structures between the constituent service populations and goes on to state that there is clearly a need to identify the goals as well as the objectives for all parties vested in the service program before, during and after the establishment of a service-learning program.

Student voices and Service-learning

As expressed in the discourse section, students have thoughts, goals, and personal values associated with their service experiences. Therefore, addressing what students say about the type of service activities is relative to the outcomes

as well as the factors of program accountability and sustenance. Bordelon & Phillips conducted an exploratory study to ascertain research information related to what students have to say about their service learning experiences (2006). Taking the position that service learning programs make attempts to bolster the importance of student volunteerism in the community by formalizing the learning experience in subsequent college and university curriculums, this set of researchers focused on collecting information that would shed light on what factors influence students when performing service-learning activities. Specifically, student perceptions and influences upon service-learning involvement.

A midsized Midwestern University was selected for the study by the researchers because the institution emphasized community service as a part of the organizational mission. Of the total population of 9800 students, five hundred were randomly selected from a database. A self administered, mail-back survey was sent to the representative sample over one spring and summer semester.

The survey instrument was designed to collect broad information related to service-learning throughout the campus; such as age, major, gender, employment status, student perceptions of service-learning and volunteer habits outside of course related activities. A 22 percent response return was obtained, and consequently the following findings were reported.

The research information conveyed the mean age of respondents as 29.87 years, the major gender being that of female (74%). In addition, respondents represented all grade levels (14 freshman, 12 sophomores, 22

juniors, 28 seniors, and 28 graduate students). Racial and ethnic composition of the participants in the study included 103 White, 4 African American, 2 Asian American, and 1 Hispanic.

Further results of the study reflect 66.4 percent of respondents actively engaged in volunteer community service apart from any university service learning course. Further, of 73 students reporting connection with community activities, 20 were involved in religious activities and 19 were involved in youth activities. The average amount of time spent in each activity reported by the respondents in weekly and monthly activities were thirty-nine percent (39.7%) and twenty-three percent (23.3%) respectively. Statistically, there was no significant difference between gender and service involvement for this study.

According to these researchers, institutions of higher education are recognizing the potential for partnership with community agencies for their power to hone the skills of students. Results of the study suggest that students perceive service-learning to be an appealing activity whether or not they engaged directly in the experience.

Patterns of commitment and service learning

Increased interest in and attention to community service in both the high school and college realms was the focus of a study performed by Jones & Hill (2003). The researchers wanted to more fully ascertain the reasons for student participation in community service; why they do not participate; how students understand and explain the relationship between high-school and college involvement; and to what extent did students attribute changes in their motivation

to continue to perform service-learning activities. Researchers also sought to develop an understanding of student perceptions related to their patterns of participation in community service.

The study design emphasized the construction of an epic understanding of the patterns of participation based solely on the words and perspectives of the students in a naturalistic setting.

Reported findings of the study centered on several points. With regard to external and internal influences on the participants and their commitment to service activities, stories from the respondents took the form of processes that mirrored movement away from external influences on participation towards emerging personal commitment. For instance, in situations where the influence of external factors became weaker, and as the students' identity formation was evolving within the new environment, students appeared to gravitate towards commitment that resulted from internal means rather than external. Internal means were more reflective of student development and the evolving sense of self for the participants. Identity development played a greater role in determining whether students continued their commitment to community service once external factors were less prominent.

The family, peers, religious habits, and the high school environment were shown to be factors that influence commitment for community service work as well. Seeing and working with parents who were involved in community service, being part of religious programs that strongly encouraged community service, having friends who were involved in community service work, and attending a

school environment where community service work was highly visible and encouraged directly affected the level of involvement by the participants in the study. In such cases, external factors appeared to take on a more prominent role than that of any internal factors which were more related to identity development and the individual's evolving sense of self.

A closer look at the transition to college and a new community, the researchers found that the college environment played a large role in whether students continued their commitment to community service. More specifically, the transition from high school to college was shown as a co-relational factor for nearly all of the participants in the study, and in some cases, an influence for which the study participants were unprepared. For example, managing time for studying, setting priorities, adapting to a new community (e.g. college environment), not being required to perform service, as well as issues related to finding out about community service activities were all presented as factors of influence of continued community service work. Such components reflect issues relative to external factors of continued participation more than internal factors of values, ideals and personal meaning.

The importance of service as being "personally meaningful" appeared to be a foundation related to continued participation and commitment of community service for the study respondents as they made the transition from high school to college. Juxtaposing work from Baxter-Magolda (2000) on interpersonal maturity, this researcher established that students who continued their service after high school and were involved in voluntary service were more likely to have been

involved in direct service in the community, and who had teachers who helped explain why community service was important. Service was influenced by how the study participants saw the world and their places in it. Therefore, the researcher subsumed that patterns of participation in community service may mirror patterns of identity development as individuals move from external definitions of self to an internal authority and self-authorship.

For this study, intersections of identity development and community service participation were of significant influence when race, gender, social class, and religion were considered. The researcher identified several African American students who were classified as non-participants in community service for this study; however, upon further examination it was discovered that they were quite involved in their communities but looked upon the experience as something other than community service work. As another example, several men in the study engaged in service work through blood drives and fraternity activities. Those types of community service events appeared to take on more of a competitive nature, which again was directly influenced by the socially constructed identities that were brought to the experience by the sample respondents.

Implications of the research can be directly applied to programs within the higher education infrastructure that encourage community service and the development of a civic minded student body. More specifically, programs that require community service as a course work may benefit students more if they are established with the intent to help participants make meaning out of those experiences. In fact, the researchers specifically stated that "it seems clear that

when someone helped students make sense of why they were doing what they were doing, it was more meaningful to them, and their communities deepened” (p. 535).

Future research on community service indicates the need for more investigative studies, particularly with minority groups, to continue to add depth and breadth to understanding the connections between community service participation, commitment, and identity development. Also, more studies on community service and self-authorship appear warranted in light of uncovering a strong connection between identity development, and taking responsibility for addressing community issues. Placement of the Jones & Hill (2003) study within the context of other scholarly work on service-learning and ways by which higher education institutions might keep students engaged in such activities seems applicable to continued program development and to the formulation of knowledge pertaining to future service-learning initiatives.

One limitation in particular dealt was the small sample size which reflected the inability of the researchers to generalize beyond that of the study population. Another limitation of the study dealt with the definition of *community service* and how the definition may be interpreted by the study respondents. To illustrate, several of the African American respondents did not self identify with initial definitions of community service work. On further questioning, they were in fact performing service above and beyond that of those who classified themselves as conducting community service work.

Long-term effects of service-learning

From an institutional point of view, ascertaining long term effects of student service activity not only addresses the position of the student but also the institution that provides services as a part of teaching and learning practices.

Taking the position that service learning activities within the curricula is increasing, Astin, Sax and Avalos sought to more closely identify the long term effects of participation in service programs (1999). More specifically, the authors sought answers to three questions: does service participation during undergraduate years have any lasting effects on students once they leave college, what other college behaviors were influenced by the experience of services learning, and what changes related to student values were associated with service participation that persisted after college?

A sample of former college students from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) database was selected for the study. A survey was mailed to 546 institutions of higher education in the spring and summer of 1985. In 1989, a follow-up survey that addressed information gathered from individuals who completed the first survey was mailed out. In conjunction with the survey, post-test questions related to attitudinal and behavioral items were secured from a final sample size of 12,376 study participants from 209 institutions.

The question related to participation in service activities during the last year in college indicated three in five students reported no involvement in volunteer service during their last year of college, while one in twenty reported six or more hours per week.

When addressing the short term outcomes of service-learning work, respondents made a variety of comments. Such comments included personal satisfaction from participating in service-learning programs, increased academic performance that ultimately spawned an interest in graduate school, and a sense of personal empowerment. The nature of those comments supported two earlier studies conducted by (Sax, Astin, 1996 & Astin, 1996). Further, comments related to a deeper understanding of social problems, such as environmental degradation, poverty, and racial tensions, were also reported by the respondents, and hence were connected to the experience of undergraduate service work as an increased value of such programmatic participation.

The study respondents reflected increased personal satisfaction, increased academic performance, future academic aspirations, and an increased sense of personal worth as a result of participating in service-learning type programs during the undergraduate academic experience.

Service behaviors and undergraduates

Fenzel & Peyrot (2005) investigated the long-term effects of service participation by examining the attitudes and behaviors of college students from one to six years after graduation. More specifically, the researchers sought information regarding whether participation in service-learning made a unique contribution (over and above that of non-course related community service) to social justice attitudes and service behaviors of alumni, and whether service related outcomes are related to the quality of the service learning experience.

For this study, 481 sample participants were asked a series of questions over the telephone. Information related to the measure of quality of the service-learning experience, the number of hours performed for the course, the manner and forms of reflection utilized in the service experience, and the extent to which the service component was integrated into the course materials were questions addressed by telephone interviewers. Further, behavioral and attitudinal measures were assessed through a combination of single and multiple response categories. Those categories took the form of asking respondents to comment on whether they had participated in any community service in the previous years, whether they were a member of any community organization, whether they had participated in a post graduate service immersion experience(s), and other outcomes related to the importance of personal responsibility, community/society responsibility and the importance of becoming involved in political or social action.

As a result of the study, the researchers came to several conclusions. The measures of service learning quality indicated that a large portion of classes had high quality service-learning components. High quality service-learning components were determined as meaningful student placements, alignment with facility needs, and structured periods of student reflection. Further, respondents were active in service as alumni with more than sixty percent (60.1%) performing service. Other retrieved data reflected close to fifty percent of the study participants worked in the service field, and some participated in a major service immersion experience such as Peace Corps or Americorps.

Additional noteworthy results were related to the attitudes and behaviors of the participants. This study showed that participation in quality service-learning programs extend beyond college graduation to a time when it is imperative that alumni address proactive stances as related to social and community issues (e.g., being socially responsible citizens). Participation in service-learning activities at the undergraduate level is shown to have a positive and direct effect upon the attitudes and behaviors of service participants as they join the greater make-up of society.

The small sample size and participants from a Catholic facility made generalizability to a wider audience an issue. The majority of the study participants were of a White/Non-Hispanic origin (90.6 %). Therefore whether the information is applicable to other ethnic groups is a second limitation. There is a final and larger limitation. The sampling selection was enriched by obtaining additional service-learning respondents and is, therefore not representative of the college graduates pooled during those years.

Fenzel & Peyrot (2005) addressed the need for future research in the area of attitude and behavioral development for individuals who perform service-learning activities as a part of a curriculum during undergraduate experiences. Understanding how service-learning affects attitudes and behaviors, in the short and long term, will help shed light on the constructivist and developmental nature of emerging young adults as they navigate developmental attitudes, beliefs, and understandings related to service behaviors. The need for additional research on the attitudes and behaviors of undergraduates as a factor of development was

also addressed by Vogelgesang & Astin (2000), in their study of the effects of community service and service-learning.

Community service and Academic service-learning

Vogelgesang & Astin (2000) performed a qualitative study to compare service-learning and co-curricular community service in order to identify any unique contributions of course-based service beyond those of community service. The rationale offered for conducting the research was to contribute to understanding, the educational value of course based service activities, and to understand faculty concerns about the value of student participation in service as part of course work. As identified by the researchers, the specific purpose of the study was to address whether participation in service, as part of an academic course, had any effect on outcome measures beyond those of generic community service secondly, using a new sample of students and several new outcome measures the researchers desired to replicate a previously reported study.

Samples were developed using the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) data base and the College Student Survey (CSS) program. As such, the database provided past and on-going information, while taking into consideration longitudinal information relative to the position of the respondents four years after college entry.

Eleven dependent measures including subscales related to values and beliefs, academic skills, leadership skills, and future plans were paired with two independent variables that focused upon generic community service participation

and participation in a service-learning course. With those scales in hand, the researchers gathered information to address subsequent outcomes of service programs upon students.

Results of the study included the following: over twenty-nine percent (29.9%) of the participants indicated they had participated in course based service-learning, and forty-six percent (46.5 %) reported participation in some other form of community service. Generic community service activities appeared to have a stronger effect than did service-learning activities to the point where students who engaged in service learning also participated in generic community service. Hypothetically, researchers would have expected to see a stronger effect in the area of service learning during the undergraduate experience; however, that was not the case. As a way of explaining the incongruence, researchers addressed elements of service-learning experiences, and took the position that course-based service activities were embedded in generic community service activities. For example, co-curricular leadership development programs that require service and a strong reflection component share outcomes related to the effects of service-learning and that of community service. Other results of the research indicated that there were certain characteristics that predispose students to participate in community service: a) volunteering in high school, b) tutoring other students in high school, c) expressing a commitment to participate in community actions programs, d) attending religious services, e) not placing a high priority on making money (p. 28-29), and f) genders.

The researchers specifically selected the outcome measure of value and beliefs to directly address the extent to which community service and service learning are tools that higher education uses to strengthen democracy by fostering a sense of civic responsibility and community participation. Two of the three measures of values (commitment to promoting racial understanding and commitment to activism) were determined to significantly affect participation in course based service over generic community service. Thus, service-learning had a noteworthy effect both on a student's commitment to promoting racial understanding and activism suggesting that service-learning provides a means for institutions of higher education to foster and develop concerned and involved citizens.

Student participation in service-learning was determined to affect growth in critical thinking, writing skills, and college Grade Point Average (GPA); however, the same was determined to be true of the generic community service. Of significance was the determination that service-learning produced stronger effects in writing and the college GPA component when compared to the generic category.

Outcomes related to leadership did not appear to reflect a relational effect between service-learning and generic community service work. A possible explanation for such an outcome was explained by the researchers to be relative to the fact that service-learning focuses more on cognitive skill development than on the development of leadership or interpersonal skills for this particular study.

Choosing a service-related career was associated with both service learning and generic community service, although service learning maintained a slight direct effect on the outcome measure than did community service. Consequently, participation in any kind of service during college years is indicative of plans to do so in the future and is thought to show the usefulness of service-learning activities as a component of student development.

For this study, limitations on the effects of service learning versus community service work is directly associated with the quality of experiences for both categories that were not measured in this study. To address the quality component, these scholars suggested that future research focus on the specifics of service experiences by using the factors of training, the type of experience, and the length of experience to determine the effect on student development.

There is another limitation of this the study. It examined outcomes solely from the perspective of the student. Faculty assessment information is thought to be yet another way to provide an understanding of how learning takes place, particularly as related to service-learning activities embedded into various academic courses throughout higher education. Additionally, a more detailed study of the component of critical thinking is thought to be a limitation because the self-efficacy measures in the study were not intended to substitute for independently assessed skills. Looking more in-depth at the relationship between self-reported growth and cognitive constructs would prove to be useful to understanding how learning takes place when placed along side service-learning mediums.

In conclusion, analysis of this study related to the outcomes of service-learning versus community service appears to enhance the broad base of knowledge concerning how students participating in service-learning benefit from such experiences. Further questions related to a clearer explanation of why students, who participate in service-learning, have higher GPAs as opposed to those who perform generic community service is thought to be worthy of further research. The question of why more women are represented in larger numbers than men when performing service learning activities continues to be an area for which more research is needed. This particular group of researcher did not address any gendered component; however, with larger numbers of women attending post-secondary institutions, knowing the impact of service learning activities upon this respective group would make for increased knowledge relative to their prominent participation and general service to society upon graduation.

Learning Processes and Service-learning

With a deficit in studies that generate theory and investigative factors related to contextual features and learning processes in service-learning programs, Richard Kiely (2005) conducted a longitudinal study which lead to the development of a theoretical framework for explaining how students experience the process of transformational leaning in service-learning programs. More specifically, the transformative learning model by Mezirow (2000) was applied to the context of service-learning activities in order to add an additional lens for guiding future critical and transformative service learning pedagogy and

engagement. It should be noted that according to Merizow's transformative learning model, the following non-sequential learning processes occur: 1) A disorienting dilemma, 2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame, 3) a critical assessment of assumptions, 4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared, 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans, 8) provisionally trying new roles, 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and 10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p 22). With those processes in mind, the researcher appeared to move towards the utilization of a longitudinal design. An end result would further explain how or what it is about service learning activities that empowers individuals to be more socially responsible, self-directed, and less dependent on false assumptions.

Data analysis revealed five categorical descriptions for how students experienced transformational learning in service-learning activities. The five categories included contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting. Contextual border crossing describes how personal, structural, historical, and programmatic elements of the service activity context frame the nature, and ultimately impact the service-learning experience of the participants. Dissonance, another critical element of the findings, was reflected through comments related to historical, environmental, physical, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, social, communicative, and technological aspects.

More specifically, because students were living in dramatically different environments from those to which they were accustomed, they were forced to function, think, and learn in ways to which they were unaccustomed (p. 11). Therefore, multiple dimensions of dissonance occurred.

Personalizing was used as a category of transformative learning. Participants reported a variety of emotional responses that were connected to the various forms of dissonance that experienced were. Because of the economic nature of this particular service-learning context, (e.g., being an economically strained area) study participants conveyed feelings of outrage, compassion, guilt, shame, anger, confusion and sadness, which reflected the intensity of the personalizing component.

The last two categories of information obtained in the study, *processing* and *connecting*, highlight the interconnectedness of cognitive and affective dimensions of the transformative learning process in service learning. In short, processing entailed rational, discourse and reflective ways that students explored and reevaluated their assumptions or engaged with others to understand the origins of and solutions to social problems (p. 13). Connecting for the students represented periods of deep affective processing which appeared to result from making attempts to understand the Nicaraguan culture and inherent social problems.

The study added to the scholarly literature by identifying and describing transformative learning processes that are connected to service-learning programs. Particularly, the study addressed the component of *context* as a major

factor of transformative learning for service participants. As an implication for future service-learning program development, the researcher suggests that information from the study will be most useful to practitioners who are in the process of developing programs or continuing programs of a service nature. With regard to the development and planning of service programs, practitioners and policy makers will have a clearer understanding of the various contextual factors that may be unique to their programs and will have a lasting effect upon the transformation of the participants. Of important note, Kiely (p. 15) made it a point to state that the identification of a dialectical relationship among non-reflective learning processes of personalizing and connecting, as well as rational forms of learning add to important theoretical insights of how emotional, affective, and visceral factors of learning enhance or hinder transformational learning for students.

Generalizability of this information to a wider audience is a limitation because the population used in the study conveyed information from 57 participants from a set of two and four year colleges. Therefore, studies of this nature appear to need replication in order to apply such findings to more diverse programs and audiences. Of further note, demographics of the study population were not identified; therefore, it is unclear if the information is applicable to specific cases of ethnic/racial groups or different contextual settings. Again, replication of the study with varying groups or populations may prove useful in applying the theory to broader audiences and service programs.

University, Study abroad and Service-learning

Various higher education institutions seek to address the impact of study abroad experiences, particularly one university Michigan State University (MSU), which encourages thousands of students to become involved in such programs on a regular basis. Administrators within and throughout MSU are strongly committed to the idea that study abroad is deeply beneficial and important to undergraduate learning and development (Ingraham & Peterson, 2005). In fact, with the year 2006 being proclaimed the “Year of Study Abroad”, more students embarked upon national and international activities that promoted the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to work with diverse populations in the 21st century. Alternative Spring Break, one component of a vast MSU study abroad configuration, promotes service-learning elements as part of the goals and objectives for the respective program. While using the large rubrics of study abroad, information pertaining to the impact of experiential services (e.g., study abroad) on student learning for MSU students will be addressed in the hope of gleaning any information thought to be a useful addendum to the limited amount of research on the effects of service-learning approaches on minority student participants.

MSU conducted a broad based pilot assessment project to look at the impact of study abroad activities on undergraduates. Generally, the purpose was to ascertain information pertaining to the acquisition of knowledge, skill, attitudes, professional development, intercultural awareness, and personal growth. Phase I occurred from the summer of 2000 through May 2001 with the

identification of student assessment outcomes. Phase II occurred from May 2002 through December 2002 with further student assessment activities as well as the securing of information related to budgetary and faculty information as a factor of assessing the quality of the approaches. Lastly, Phase III, January 2003, continued with components of student learning while investigating other aspects of the effects of study abroad on the university (Ingraham & Peterson, 2005, p. 83).

Methods employed were both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Pre-post data in the form of surveys were secured from the assessment of students of the impact on themselves as related to their experiences studying abroad. Faculty reports containing information related to their reflections of what they observed to be the impact of study abroad approaches upon their students was secured as well. A total of 1104 participants from 295 study abroad programs covering 40 countries were secured with 74 percent of the respondents reported as women, 89 percent Caucasians, and 62 percent of the sample encompassing majors from the College of Arts and Letters.

Findings from student surveys, faculty reports, and other database information indicated that intercultural awareness reflected the highest average score of 4.13 out of all five categories of respondent information. Meaning that as a result of the experience, the students attained a higher level of intercultural awareness. Other categories included personal growth which accounted for the second highest response (3.68) followed by academic performance (3.22), language learning (2.73), and professional development (2.72). All scores were

reported to have moderate and positive correlates with each other at a statistically significant level (p.89). Interpretive findings suggest that the length of the event had a more pronounced effect upon all of the five impact correlates with the full academic year category having the most substantial score. Regardless of the length of program participation, all post measures were relatively strong, which lends support to the value of short-term programs as well as long-term ones.

Limitations of the study were relative to the fact that the discussions were bound to university results only. Another limitation was related to missing comparative measures of differences in learning achieved in courses taught abroad as compared to the same course taught on the university campus. In no part of the study did researchers address the high incidence of female participants, or the low incidence of minorities engaged in the activities. Although it was not acknowledged as a primary focus for the research, the impact of such services on minority populations would appear to be a necessary addition to the limited amount of scholarly inquiry on the impact of experiential activities, particularly study abroad programs, for populations that generally have low percentages of engagement.

In summary, themes that resonated throughout the scholarly literature on service-learning address issues with such approaches at the individual, institutional as well as community level. As reported in the section on service-learning discourse additional research would not only expand the field through new knowledge but add credence to existing or future plans to incorporate such

strategies into curricular restructuring efforts. In addition, all reported studies encouraged involvement of future research to include that of specific populations of students, and more in-depth analysis of associative meanings of the approach. Therefore, this study attempts to determine what processes and outcomes result from minority student populations who engage in service-learning activities and to substantiate existing empirical studies as an enhancement to service-learning pedagogy. The next chapter will address design of the impact of service-learning approaches on minority students at a large mid-western university.

Chapter III

Methods and Research Design

The purpose of the study was to explore transformational learning processes within the context of a service-learning approach for a group of minority students at a large mid-western university. The program under exploration was offered through the Office of Study Abroad in conjunction with an academic unit on campus. Sample for the study were a group of ethnic minority students who participated in an international service-learning course held in Mexico during spring break 2007. The research questions addressed were: 1) What transformational learning processes and outcomes occur for minority student populations who participate in academic service-learning; and 2) can any of these processes and outcomes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement in postsecondary education.

In order to obtain information pertaining to the abovementioned research questions, data were collected from interviews and journal writings. Prior to addressing the study design in detail, information related to the university, and service-learning activities at the university will be presented along with contextual components of the Mexico service-learning project, followed by statements related to the position of the researcher.

South State University and its history of service

Land Grant institutions of 1862 were founded with a mandate to serve the farmers of their respective state (Robertson, 2001). Today, such institutions have a compelling interest to serve public and society needs abroad that results from

transnational or global connections. The opportunity of universities with their diverse student populations to help communities improve their environments while satisfying learning objectives related to critical thinking by students and civic responsibility is reflected as directly connected to one of many uses of the university (Kerr, 2000). South State University (pseudonym), a Land Grant institution, not only serves the needs of society through strategically placed research, outreach and public service; it also promotes intense student service learning activities. Emphasis on South State University's conviction towards an involved and civically minded student population is further expounded with comments by its President:

As a pioneer land-grant institution, this university has always been committed to education for the public good. The first students had strong connections back to their communities while providing cutting edge knowledge. Service-learning and civic engagements are extensions of the belief in the land-grant history and democratization of cutting edge knowledge has never been needed as much as it is today. One of the things about service-learning, particularly academic service-learning, is that it is a very powerful learning tool because you are confronted by a framework very different than your own. You do not just "do", but leave behind the capacity for others to do a project which has a greater impact than that of any individual (Speech on the preparation of civic minded students, Spring 2004).

One may surmise from the President's statement, service-learning, civic engagement and giving back to communities in need, not only have foundational roots for the institution but also a future prospectus of outcomes for student learning. The next section will present information related to one of many departments that provide service learning activities as a core foundation for the support and commitment of students who engage in service-learning programs through-out their academic preparation.

Center for Service-learning and Civic Engagement (CSLCE)

South State University's Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement (CSLCE) is the Board of Trustees, university designated, campus-wide center for service-learning and civic engagement. As such, the center is committed to empowering students with service and civic based educational opportunities that extend within and beyond the classroom. More specifically, the mission of the center is to provide active, service-focused, community based and mutually beneficial, integrated, learning opportunities for students while building and enhancing their commitment to academics, to personal and professional development, and to civic responsibility. Hence, local, national, and international communities reap multiple benefits from student engagement in service-learning activities by way of curricular and co-curricular service-learning placements.

The CSLCE reports a steady growth in the number of students involved in service-learning activities since the year 2002 when the department officially welcomed the title of CSLCE. During 2000, the number of students engaged in, and subsequently reported service-learning participation was approximately

4,400. In the 2005-2006 academic year over 11,000 students applied for and subsequently were registered for service-learning and engagement opportunities through the center. Respectively, the director of the center expects the 2006 – 2007 academic year projections to be well over 13,000 students based upon enrolled numbers at the fourth week of the spring 2007 semester (Casey, 2007). In addition, future initiatives of CSLCE involves increasing the number of students engaged in service-learning activities to approximately one-half of the general student body to equate to placement of over 20,000 students. The next section reflects information from one college, of many, that support service-learning activities throughout various departmental units.

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

During the 2006 – 2007 academic year, the center for service-learning reported that a total of 599 service-learning participants from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources were engaged in various service learning activities. From that number, 495 (82.63%) were of White/Caucasian racial/ethnicity grouping, 38 (6.34%) were Black/African American (non-Hispanic) students, and 17 (2.83%) were Hispanic/Chicano students. The relative percentage of minority student participation is small in comparison to typical White/Caucasian student numbers (See Appendix “A” for complete table/groupings). However, those figures of low to marginal minority student enrollment in service-learning activities actually represent what is typically depicted in the literature when it comes to performance and characteristics of

particular student populations who engage in such activities in post-secondary education (Eyler, & Giles, 1999).

To justify conducting this study, the literature reflects a need for studies on the impact of service-learning activities on all student populations but with particular emphasis on the impact of such activities for minority populations (Bordelon & Phillips, 2006; Kiely, 2004; Jones, & Abes, 2003; Giles & Eyler, 1998; & Jacoby, & Associates, 1996). Further, the director of the Center for Service-Learning at SSU addressed the desire to increase minority student participant numbers as a factor of enhanced future programming and to align with university initiatives of creating a "Globally minded student population." Therefore, acquiring new information relating to the impact of service-learning activities, particularly for minority populations, would not only add depth and breadth to the field of service-learning inquiry it would also assess whether service-learning activities in fact engage minority students to the point whereby such programs increase the likelihood of them fulfilling or sustaining an academic degree program.

The Mexico Service-Learning program

For the past five years SSU has provided an opportunity for undergraduate students to participate in a service learning immersion program in various parts of Mexico. From 2003 to 2007, more than five hundred students participated in the program during spring break periods. Participants can receive up to six credits in the parks and recreation curriculum for attending monthly classes, fund raising, and performing actual service work at non-governmental

and human service agencies. Other course requirements include daily evening reflection periods, journaling, a group site presentation, and a final reflection activity (See Table 1: Complete city and agency descriptions) (<http://www.visitmexico.com>).

Table 1: City and Agency descriptions

Puebla: located about 80 miles southeast of Mexico City, Puebla was founded in 1531, and became the Spanish empire's principal city serving as an agricultural and industrial center. This state capital it is considered one of the oldest colonial cities on the American Continent.

Puebla Service-learning Agencies:

Casa Hogar San Jose de Bri: The agency was established as an orphanage to provide care for girls ages 4 to 12.

Hogares Infantiles y Juveniles Calasanz, A.C.: This agency provides assistance for street children, boys ages 8 to 14.

Taller de Educacion Especial: San Pedro Claver A.C.: This agency serves as an education site as well as a therapeutic center for children with Cerebral Palsy.

Merida: founded in 1542, Merida, the capital of the State of Yucatan, is influenced by Spanish colonial, Caribbean and Indigenous populations. With a population of a little over 700, 000, the state was built on the site of a Maya city of five hills, better known as pyramids.

Merida Service-learning Agencies:

Ejercito de Salvacion (Hogar de Ninos): The agency was created to work with children who have been abandoned.

Amore Y Vida: This agency was established to work with abandoned children by providing basic needs which include medical as well as psychological care.

Albergue San Jose Del Pastoral Del Amor: This agency was designed to support children with special needs.

Amigos de Santiago (Acilo de Ancianos): The primary function of this agency is to provide housing and care for senior citizens.

Sol y Luna: This non-profit agency was founded in 1998 to serve children from low-income families. The agency relies upon various community professionals as well as service providers to deliver assistance to children with intellectual handicaps.

Cuernavaca: Known as the "city of eternal spring" because of its' enduring spring-like climate, it is the capital of the State of Morelos in Mexico. Cuernavaca's population, according to the 2005 census, is 332, 197, and it is located 50 miles south and 2300 ft below Mexico City which establishes it at the heart of the region.

Cuernavaca Service-learning Agencies:

Ejercito de Salvacion A.C.: The agency serves as a foster home for children with dysfunctional families. The facility provides housing, meals, education, and other services for children 4 to 15 years of age.

Vamos: This facility serves children, pregnant women without pre-natal care, homeless and abandoned elderly, and men and women who are out of work.

Service-learning and the college assistance program

While student service-learning programs are not new and are utilized within a conundrum of curriculums throughout higher education, the selected program of study represents something out of the ordinary because 90 percent of the student participants come from the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). Briefly, CAMP provides supportive and retention services to over 300 college students from migrant and seasonal farm-worker families (See Appendix “B” for complete CAMP information). In order to be eligible for the program, students must meet the qualifications for being a migrant and/or seasonal farm-worker, meet university guidelines for admission, and participate in tutorial, academic and cultural programs as designated by the program director. All in all, the primary race/ethnicity of the participants is that of Hispanic/Mexican origin. In some cases, the participants are of direct Mexican heritage where the students, their parents and/or their grandparents were born and raised in Mexico.

One component, of many, encouraged through the assistance program is participation in the service-learning activity held during spring break of each year at the university. Students are told that they are expected to participate, are given financial resource information to help defray costs associated with participation, and are scheduled into existing course roles.

Traditional student populations who perform service-learning activities represented in the literature are White/Caucasian females from middle-class families (Bordelon & Phillips, 2006). The particular group under inquiry is largely considered an under-represented group. Meaning, Hispanic-American, or self

selected Mexican-American participants by and large are not represented as a student population that typically gravitates toward service-learning type activities. Additional ISL program participants include a number of African-American students, a small number of individuals identified from the Caucasian category (e.g. about 1 percent), and lastly other(s) ethnic groups.

As a point of emphasis and reflective of the literature, there is a need to investigate the impact of service-learning activities on all students as a factor of academic value and practice (Eyler & Giles, 1999). However, providing supplemental information for minority populations is needed as well. Warrants for additional investigative studies are further linked to the identification of teaching and/or learning approaches that hold the potential for increased student academic engagement by Ewell & Jones, 1996; National Center for Higher Education Management [NCHEMS, 1994]; and Koljatic & Kuh, 2001). Participants of the study are classified as minorities on campus, and in most cases they are looked upon as a population at risk for dropping out of post-secondary educational activities (Tierney, 2000). Thus, investigation of the service-learning approach is positioned as a way to provide supplemental information regarding the connectivity of the experience towards that of academic engagement, and to address outcomes for future delivery of the program.

Study Design

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of academic service learning approaches on Hispanic-American participants. The specific program evaluated was the international service learning project (ISL) offered

during spring break at a large mid-western university. This researcher gathered data from respondents with regard to their service-learning experience, and made attempts toward applying the information to outcomes of transformational learning (Merizow, 2000). Specific outcomes associated with transformational learning are said to be an empowered sense of self, increased self-confidence in new roles and relationships, changes in the way the learner sees himself/herself and his/her life assumptions, increased functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over one's life, compassion for others, and increased involvement in ways of knowing that are other than rational.

Participants for the study were purposefully solicited from the course - Park, Recreation and Resources (PRR) 491: Mexico Spring break. Two research questions guided the study: 1) What transformational learning processes occur for Hispanic-American students who participate in international service-learning activities, and 2) can any of those processes be linked to future behaviors of academic engagement at the university level. As a point of clarification, many learning activities and experiences are established under the guise of a transformational learning concept; however, not all individuals transform as a result of the experience. Solicitation of comments related to both will occur.

Sample

A study sample is identified as a strategically and systematically identified group of people or events that meet the criteria of representativeness for a particular study (Merriam & Simpson, 1984). The target sample of this study was Hispanic/Mexican-American students at a large mid-western university.

Participants were initially contacted by email which introduced my project, and mentioned that I would be following up with them in a few days to determine their interest in participation. The researcher also provided their contact information, should anyone wants to get in touch with her prior to follow-up. Over the course of two weeks, five students contacted me with a willingness to be represented in the study. When respondents to contact the researcher, interviews were scheduled at mutually agreed upon times. In all instances, the students appeared eager to talk about their ISL experiences, and one student even suggested another student for me to contact, the researcher interviewed later. All in all, nine students were secured and interviewed, with three additional students dropping out due to time constraints.

Gender, class level, major, and other respondent characteristics

The gender distribution of all interviewed cases included three males and six females, while the fully represented study cases involved three females and one male. In all cases, the class level, or student status at the time of the first ISL event was that of a freshman. Individual students, who performed the ISL event for the second time, participated the following year as sophomores.

For all cases, disciplines or major fields of study included no preference/undecided, psychology & Latin American studies, criminal justice, construction management, food industry management, retail, and forestry.

The ISL respondents lived on campus during the year to which they performed the ISL activity. Other demographic information included the fact that 66.7% of the respondents claimed in-state residency, while 33.3% were

classified as out-of-state. Further, 88.9% of the respondents were identified as first generation students, and all respondents concurred that no prior service-learning activity had taken place before their college ISL event. (See table 2 for complete respondent demographics

Table 2 Respondent Demographics

Name	Gender (GD)	Age (AG)	Citizenship Status (CS)	Race/ Ethnicity (R/E)	Major(s) (MJ)	Student Classification (SC)	Live During the Semester completed SLE
Dias	Female	20	USA	Mexican-American	No Pref.	Freshman	On Campus
Dove	Female	19	Mexican	Mexican-American	Psychology: Latin American & the Caribbean (Specialization)	Junior	On Campus
Celia	Female	20	USA	Hispanic-American	Criminal	Freshman	On Campus
Frank	Male	18	USA	Mexican-American	Construction Management	Freshman Sophomore	On Campus
Constance	Female	18	USA	Mexican-American	No Pref.	Freshman Sophomore	On Campus
Edwards	Male	19	USA	Mexican-American	Undecided	Freshman	On Campus
Camilla	Female	18	USA	Mexican-American	Retail	Freshman	On Campus
Ariel	Female	21	USA	Mexican-American	Food Industry Management	Sophomore	On Campus
Jose	Male	21	USA	Mexican-American	No Pref.	Freshman	On Campus

Table 2 continued: Respondent Demographics

Name	MSU Residency Status (MSURS)	Marital Status (MS)	Birth Place (BP)	Number of Credits taken during ISL (NCDASB)	First Generation College Student (FGCS)	Previous ILS Experience (PISLE)	City/Site of ISL (C/S ISL)
Dias	Out of State	Single	Houston, Texas	13	Yes	No	Puebla México, Casa Hogar San Josede Bri
Dove	In State	Single	La Piedad, Michoacán , Mexico	12	Yes	No	Puebla, México; Taller de Education Especial: SanPedro Claverard Hogares Infantiles Juveniles Calasanz
Celia	In State	Married	Weslaco, Texas	15	Yes	No	Puebla México, Hogares Infantiles Juveniles Calasanz
Frank	In State	Single	Miami, Florida	12	Yes	No	Puebla, México; Taller de Education Especial: SanPedro Claverard Hogares Infantiles Juveniles Calasanz

Table 2 continued: Respondent Demographics

Name	MSU Residency Status (MSURS)	Marital Status (MS)	Birth Place (BP)	Number of Credits taken during ISL (NCDASB)	First Generation College Student (FGCS)	Previous ILS Experience (PISLE)	City/Site of ISL (C/S ISL)
Constance	Out of State	Single	No answer	13	Yes	No	Puebla, México la Casa Hogar Calasanz (Boys Orphanage) (HOCA)
Edwards	In State	Single	Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico	12	Yes	No	Puebla, México Hogares Infantiles Juveniles Calasanz
Camilla	In State	Single	Detroit, Michigan	12	No, *Brother attended before Camilla	No	Puebla, México, Boys Orphanage Hogares Infantiles Juveniles Calasanz
Ariel	In State	Single	Reynosa, Tamaulipas, Mexico	13	Yes	Yes, Alternative Spring Break 2006	Puebla, México; Taller de Educación Especial San Pedro Claver (Cerebral Palsy)
Jose	Out of State	Single	No answer	12	Yes	No	

Data collection

Interviews

Qualitative interviewing is said to begin with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit (Patton, 2000). Interview approaches include the informal conversational interview, the guided approach interview, and the standardized open-ended interview with each approach occupying both strengths and weaknesses associated with them. For example, the informal conversational interview relies upon the spontaneous generation of questions, and a natural flow of interaction. Often called “unstructured interviewing”, this particular approach offers maximum flexibility to pursue information in what ever direction it appears to present itself based upon the contextual situation (Fontana & Frey, 2000). I interpret such a comment to reflect the possibility that the researcher may, in some cases, be able to go with the flow of the conversation or discussion which will lead to greater extraction of information.

For this study a combination of structured and unstructured formats were used. Specifically, I started the interviewee/interviewer conversation(s) with open-ended questions related to the international service-learning experience followed by prompts for elaboration of conveyed points. In addition, other questions of relational inquiry were interjected (See appendix “C” for questions).

Strengths and limitations of interviews

Strengths of the approach are said to reside in the opportunity for flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences as well as

situational changes (Patton, 2002, p. 343). Respectively, limitations of this approach are related to issues of dealing with large volumes of information that may result from numerous conversations with respondents. In some instances while utilizing the unstructured interview process, it may take several conversations with many individuals to yield emerging themes or valuable study information. Consequently, the data that emerges may be difficult to analyze; however, one way to minimize such complications is to first read the data, immediately, with the intent to identify aspects of the data that may be significant. Following that step, the researcher should specify categories that indicate patterns of thoughts, actions, beliefs and/or meanings with which the particular group views revolve. The next step involves gathering segments of data from different parts of the combined records that were relevant to some category of transformational learning. Regarding this study, the aim was to generate categories, themes and/or patterns that would be used as a basis for further organization of the final analysis and report (Sapsford & Jupp, 2006).

Prior to beginning the sessions, the participants were asked to sign a consent form (See Appendix D for the consent form) that granted permission to record/tape the session. Further, the participants were told that their participation was strictly voluntary, and they could refuse to answer any question or could withdraw at any time without penalty. Primary, data for the study involved semi-structured interviews with nine students who participated in the 2006, 2007, or 2006 & 2007 ISL programs. Further, supplemental journal documents were used to substantiate verbal claims. During the actual interviews, presentation of the

purpose and topic of the study was presented to all of the participants followed by procedural guidelines.

With the desire to obtain a rich understanding of particular experiences, I purposefully selected both first time participants as well as individuals who chose to attend the service-learning event for an additional year. This criterion allowed me to gain insight into the full range of potential effects from initial reactions through reasons of repeat selection in the program.

Saturation of the data occurred at or around the seventh interview whereby each student presented and confirmed that of the prior interview sessions. Therefore, no new information was retrieved at that point, but the decision was made to continue with definitively scheduled cases in hopes of securing supplemental information. Consequently, of the nine interviews secured, four are presented at an in-depth level. From the four in-depth cases, three students were first time ISL participants, and one performed the ISL event twice.

Data analysis

According to Glesne & Peskin, (1992), the process of analyzing qualitative data remains continuous and should start as soon as the research begins. Further, interviewing is not completed by mere data acquisition. It is also a time to consider relationships, salience, meanings, and explanations that help prepare the researcher for more concentrated periods of analysis. I worked hard to instill a level of comfort among the interviewees while being careful to intrude no further than what I thought necessary to receive adequate information. In multiple

instances, the students offered information or gave examples without probing, but when it was necessary, analysis of individual comments were followed with additional probes for meaning or explanation.

The use of coding strategies served as my primary method for analyzing first, the transcribed interview material, then the secured journal entries. I began the study with some broad ideas of what the students might identify as potential impacts or associative outcomes of the ISL experience but, I did not want to overly influence the questions I asked or the comments received. As data were collected and analyzed, a process of sorting and interpretation ensued that resulted in the placement of emergent themes into respective categories. Properties of all respondent themes were then compared to outcomes of the transformational learning theory which was the basis of my conceptual framework.

The constant comparative method emphasizes the continuous interplay between analysis and collection (Glaser & Strauss, 1976; Straus & Corbin, 1994). With the constant comparative method, I examined emergent patterns, themes, and categories of the respondents and compared to the processes of the theory of transformational learning. Analysis was further related to the research questions to determine what was conferred by the respondents.

Quotations from the participants were used to illustrate and support study results in narrative form. As such, selected quotations were written on index cards and grouped into categories based upon the various transformational learning processes. Additional quotations were selected to illustrate various

descriptive portions of the data, particularly background information related to respondent college attendance. Punctuation was added to quotations to make the text easier to read, and case respondents were given an alias. A background profile of each respondent was provided along with what the participant identified as outcomes associated with the ISL experience.

Generating categories, and Themes

Cross case analysis was used via content analysis to reduce the data and group it to discover emerging themes across the cases. Data was then analyzed first by the answer to the question, followed by comparison to transformational learning outcomes. The search for statements related to transformational learning outcomes were noted both on the interview transcripts and the interviewer catalogue of notes. Patterns were further explored through constant comparison of all themes and categories that emerged. The process was brought to closure when all of the data sources were exhausted, and no further category themes resulted.

Position of the researcher

As an adviser, researcher, educator, advocate, and counselor of many students in higher education, I saw the need to further investigate programs and services that help address issues related to student engagement and retention, particularly for minority populations who appear to have a high drop-out rate. When I taught my first class on the campus of a Historically Black College (HBCU), I knew I wanted to make a difference in the lives of minority students who decided that education would help them get ahead in life. After all, I was not

supposed to make it to college because I came from a long line of family members who worked in the fields and the factories with barely 8th grade competency skills. I was told by my high school guidance counselor that I would most likely “Not” be accepted into a college program, and “if I was accepted, my family would not have the financial support to sustain me.” The guidance counselor told me that my best bet was to join my family members at one of the many factories in the surrounding areas. Those comments, coming from a person who was supposed to help me use education as a matter of assistance to a life out of poverty, hurt like salt poured upon an open wound. It was because of those comments that I made a point to go to college, to finish college, and to help anyone that wished to use education to get ahead in life.

Beyond the trials of being a first generation minority undergraduate on a predominantly White majority campus and beyond helping other students persist through advising, mentoring, supporting and counseling, I was afforded the opportunity to co-teach a service-learning course. I have always gravitated towards hands-on type activities, recreation therapist during my early professional years. However, this particular pedagogy elicited excitement as well as purpose for me. Additionally, in the course of a year, I had numerous conversations with various students who were involved in the service-learning program. I kept hearing statements related to the event being “life changing” or “very meaningful”. For example, during a conversation with an ISL participant a year ago, remarks related to culture, history and meaning were expressed. When

inquired as to the student's experience in Puebla, MX while performing service, he remarked:

I thought that I knew the culture, but then I realized that what I knew wasn't all that compared to what I experienced in Puebla. It {the experience} gave me a new meaning of culture and pride, and it opened my eyes to see that my heritage was struggling but with help of a couple of people, I could make a difference and more can be accomplished.

Another respondent stated:

My experience in Puebla is going to live with me for the rest of my life, and I'm going to use that experience to do better in school and my community. By keeping up my grades so that I can continue going to help people in need and advise my community and friends to go and put their time in for the people in need.

From a preliminary point of view, those respondent comments may seem vague, but there appears to be some connection between what was done, and what will be done as a result of the service-learning experience. Therefore, extraction of additional participant meanings associated with international service-learning experiences is included as a way to understand the effects of such approaches on minorities as well as to provide feedback to policy makers, administrators, and other concerned researchers about the impact of such programs as a factor of quality program delivery and future teaching and learning practices.

Chapter IV

Findings

In the previous chapter, I identified the methods that guided my investigation into the impact of a service-learning approach on a sample of minority students at a large mid-western university. In this chapter, I present the findings and describe the impact of the experience. As I interacted with the study respondents, I was guided by two research questions:

- 1) What transformational learning processes occur for minority students who participate in academic service-learning, and
- 2) Can those processes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement in postsecondary education?

For the purpose of clarification, I included a review of the terms service-learning, academic engagement, and transformational learning theory that establishes the context of the study as well as the framework for which I was guided. Service-learning is an experiential learning approach with multiple definitions and associative meanings; however, for this study it is defined as a teaching methodology with intentional efforts to utilize community based learning on behalf of academic learning, and to further utilize academic learning to inform the community service work. Integration of the two efforts (experiential and academic) combine to strengthen one another in an effort to make student service-learning experiences relevant to the academic course of study (Howard, 1998, p. 34).

Academic engagement is defined in terms of learning productivity that reflects the amount of effort devoted to educationally purposeful activities (engagement) and the extent to which students make progress toward important learning, and personal development goals. Therefore, the focus of engagement is on what students do with institutional resources, and what they gain from their experiences (Kuh, 1996; Kuh, Hu, & Vesper, 2000; Guskin, 1994; & Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Though it is important to know that students use institutional resources to the fullest extent possible, this study is more concerned with what the students gained from their service-learning experience in Mexico as a factor of engagement.

Transformational learning is the conceptual framework that guided this study. Transformational learning is based on the assumption that a learner's current perspective and consequent approach to life derives from his or her experiences, thoughts, values, knowledge, and skills (Mezirow, 1991). Goals associated with the theory are connected to assisting learners to assess their current perspectives and approaches to life through education and to provide learners with opportunities to change those perspectives and approaches. The process of transformational learning is said to occur over three stages. In the first stage, learners become critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the way they perceive, understand, and feel about their world. During the next stage, learners revise their belief system as they make structural changes related to habitual expectations. Hence, learners make adjustments to accommodate a more inclusive, discriminatory and integrative perspective.

Lastly, learners adopt behaviors that are more consistent with their renewed perspective.

In a constant comparative method, data was retrieved through in-depth interviews with a sample of service-learning participants who went to Mexico during spring break of 2006 and or 2007 to perform service. The information that follows is their account of the impact of that experience.

First respondent case

A habit of mind is a way of seeing the world based on our background, experience, culture, and personality. According to Mezirow, there are six habits of mind (2000). Epistemic, sociolinguistic, psychological, moral-ethical, philosophical and aesthetic encompass all of the categories, and are not viewed as independent but overlapping and influential of each other. For the first case, the respondent describes in detail her ISL experience included comments about the site, the nature of the service work, and her prior pre-conceived notions. Narrative comments related to the respondent's background, particularly her family relationship, were highlighted because of the relative nature of that information towards associative meanings and outcomes of the experience. Each habit of mind was addressed in some shape form or fashion by this respondent with supplemental information related to goals of the program.

Over and above the benefit of helping a community in need, one ISL program goal is for the participants to increase their knowledge and understanding of the Mexican culture as well as the service recipients. This respondent specifically reports an increase in her knowledge and understanding

with regard to the Mexican culture, a place for which she identified as frequently visited, but never in the context of an educational experience.

Bueños Dias me amigos

We would wake up at 4:00 in the morning to make breakfast and pack lunch to be in the fields at 5:00. The sun's barely rising, but yet that's when you have to get up and go because the plant leaves are rising and you can best see the bottom and stuff to work on pulling the weeds of the sugar beets.

That remark was made by a female Hispanic-American student who came to SSU through the College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP). This particular respondent performed service work at Hogares Infantiles y Juveniles Calasanz, A.C (boy's orphanage) in Puebla, Mexico (see Table 1 for city and agency descriptions). Prior to providing information related to the engagement of this student in the international service-learning activity, brief historical information will be offered as a manner of addressing her background as a relative and associative factor for how she sees the world, and she transformed afterwards.

Dias (alias) is a second year SSU student from Texas. Her persona is that of an independent, outgoing, and gregarious type, as she speaks with ease, uses hand gestures and generally commands an audience of interest when she talks. She addressed her independence not as an accomplishment, but more a matter of fact because her family did not necessarily want her to attend an out of state college. She remarked that tension resulted when she conveyed her decision to go out of her home state to college:

My parents were like nope, if you going to go over there, forget about out financial support, forget about our moral support for that matter, or anything like that.

Further comments from her convey not a total abandonment by her family, but a desire for her to not leave home and go to school so far away.

My parents have the mindset that an innocent young lady doesn't leave home until she gets married . . . my father told me he did not want me to go to come here to college . . . he said he was not afraid that I was not going to make it over here . . . I think he knew the kind of person I was . . . he said I was always ambitious and worked hard to get what I needed.

However confusing and encouraging those words were from her father, Dias received similar comments from her mother who addressed her lack of desire for her daughter to go away to college:

My mother literally told me that she would rather I get married than go off to college. . .she literally said to me, how could you leave boyfriend, and why can't you go to school in Texas. . .you can get an education anywhere you go to school.

This respondent empathetically stated that one reason she came to college here was for the experience:

Over where I'm from, everybody's Hispanic . . . Everywhere I go and the college that they (her parents) wanted me to attend. So it's like, I would've never gotten that outside look. Now I go back to

Texas and I'm just like, everything is so little (showing a sign of smallness with her hands), everybody is exactly the same. . . a lot of friends that I went to school with, they've dropped out or are married now or something like that. I feel like I have accomplished a lot more than they have in the few times (years) that I have been here, and they have been there. I know if I would have stayed there it would have been different because my parents would have been like – "help us out with chores, and help us do this and you know, help us! And, I would not have been able to have enough time to do my school work and to put as much effort in as I could on essay papers or anything like that.

Dias' struggles about leaving home are confounded by the fact that she is the oldest of three with a sixteen year old brother, and a ten year old sister at home. When asked if she ever talked to her siblings about college, she stated that she was trying to convince her brother to come to the same college. Even those words of encouragement represented tension:

My brother is like, no, I'm not going to put mom and dad through the things you put them through.

With sad eyes, she further went onto to say:

I guess my parents suffered a lot when I would leave, and my brother would see that and the fact that they would feel bad . . . my brother held a grudge against me for two months. He wouldn't talk

to me when I moved over here, and I and my brother are usually close.

My inference of how hard that must have been was confirmed:

Yes, it was really bad . . . it was like I'm doing wrong by being here and stuff like that. My sister would ask: "Why'd you leave?" And I would tell her, "I didn't leave you, I'm coming back, and I'm just working on this.

Dias was not only trying to convince her siblings that she did not abandon them; she also encouraged similar educational goals for her brother in particular:

I try to convince my brother to think about college. He's going to be a junior next year, and I ask him – have you thought about college? But his mindset was like mom and dad didn't go to college. They didn't even graduate from high-school, but they are doing fine. My brother would say: We have a house in Texas, and we have vehicles, and stuff like that.

During conversations of that nature, Dias stated that she would tell her brother that he does not really see what they, her parents, go through. There were six months out of the year that it seemed like her parents were on vacation, but they were thinking about their finances because no money was coming in:

I'd tell him, look at the labor that they do, like the hard work they do.

You can have a better career, and you don't have to work as hard.

Her words of wisdom must have struck a cord of influence because she stated that the last time she talked with her brother, he conveyed thoughts that going

away to college might not be so bad. Now the two are having ongoing conversations about some of the things that she does as a college student.

Service-learning experience: overview

Dias had much to say about the ISL experience:

It was a great experience . . . I did so many things I've never done. I usually go to Mexico when I am home in Texas, but it was completely different. The culture, atmosphere, the way things worked, the way people dressed, and the way they talk. Everything was completely different than what I thought it would be.

When specifically asked about the work that she performed, helping the kids was at the top of her list of bright moments:

Living in Texas and being right across the border, I always see poverty, but I never saw it as much as I did there. There were small kids selling stuff on the street . . . anyway, we painted and interacted with the kids at the boys orphanage. I think it's priceless to see the smile on those kids' faces when they saw the whole wall painted. If you were feeling bad or anything, everything would go away as soon as you'd see their faces, and just the fact that you are working for them, and you are going to help them!

Personal changes and the service-learning experience

Changes occurred beyond that of interacting with the kids or painting:

I think in a way that I've changed. . .before I listened to my parents talk about not giving street people money because they are

beggars and stuff like that. When I went to Puebla, I thought about how my parents raised me with thoughts that some people are just faking it, or some people don't use the money they are given wisely, and stuff like that. But you are there, and you see the people on the street everyday, so it changed my way of thinking. Even if they don't need the help, but they are asking for it, if you have a good intention then you help them out because you really do believe what ever . . . that's the way I see it now.

In addition to the changed perspective on whether a person should help another, Dias also commented on her increased thoughts and behaviors of thriftiness after she returned from the experience:

A lot of people take things for granted. Now [after that experience], I'm not the kind of person who is going to go buy a \$100 shirt or any thing like that. If it [the shirt] costs \$5 or \$10, it's going to look the same on me. But after going over there, I'm more aware of spending money on stuff like a name brand this or that.

She further states:

Since I'm completely on my own since my first year, and I haven't asked my parents for one dollar since I've been here, but now I don't spend as much because I think I have so much more than those boys we helped or those people who were in need.

Motivating others and the service-learning experience

Motivation of others is yet another change Dias expressed as something she could connect to the ISL experience as well as her presence as a college student. During the ISL activity, motivation was directed at her fellow peers as they made plans to paint various areas of the orphanage. For example, when presented with a twenty foot high wall that was in need of a serious coat of paint, Dias remarked that the group questioned whether or not they would be able to get the job done in a week's time frame:

That wall was a big job. It took us forever because it was not flat [a textured surface], but we got it done. There were times when I didn't think that we were going to get it done, but I kept talking to everybody, and telling them, No – we can accomplish this, and we got it done.

Engagement beyond the service experience

One of many outcomes reported to occur as a result of transformational learning is increased involvement in ways of knowing that are other than rationale. In addition to that outcome, academic engagement can manifest in many forms including but not limited to discussions with family members (Astin, 1997). The latter assertion appears to be reflective of a situation of engagement beyond that of the service event for this respondent. On an occasion shortly after her return from performing service in Mexico, Dias remarked that she was telling a family member about her trip, and what her group did. Moments after that

conversation, the same family member conveyed words of discontent related to her current teaching position:

My aunt passed the teachers state certification exam . . . then she finally got the school she wanted, but since there were not enough students in that school they transferred her to another school. She was completely down, she was bummed, depressed. She told me that she did not want to do this anymore. I told her – wait a minute – you worked so hard for this, and teaching is what you wanted. My aunt said that at the school they transferred her to, the kids don't know anything, and the kids she was working with before were smart. I told her, what did you become a teacher for – to teach kids . . . do you want to teach kids that know everything? Then she looked at me and said, I never thought about it like that. I told my aunt to discipline the children, show games, make it fun, and by the end of the year she will feel so accomplished than just having kids who already know everything and having it easy.

According to Dias, she and her aunt had a good conversation which led to her aunt asking her who taught her to speak like that and to motivate others? As a result of the conversation, Dias acknowledged that she had changed and most likely did not know it: "I guess I have changed. Like maybe I changed the way I view things in general."

Challenges and the service experience

As conveyed in the section regarding motivation of other group members, challenges most certainly occurred during the ISL activity. But when asked if the challenge of finishing the wall could be associated with any challenges that she encountered as a college student, she quickly remarked:

Yes, getting things in order. I mean time management was a big thing for the project, and I think it is a big thing for school because everyone likes to put things off till the last minute. I use to be a procrastinator, well I am still a procrastinator, but I've learned to work better with my time and not put things off until the last minute.

When probed a bit more for an association, Dias stated:

While we were there, everyone would go out at night and stuff like that. I did that a couple of times, but then I said to myself, I have to wake up early in the morning and go paint and play with those kids. So setting priorities and managing time was what we had to do there, and I have to do it here [at college]. You have to know what you are here for – college. . some of my friends tell me to come and eat or they talk to me, and I say – No, I know there is something I have to do! Last year, I did not do as well as I could have done [grades wise]. Now, I set my priorities and manage my time a lot better.

Respondent information and that of transformational learning

Outcomes of transformational learning include an empowered sense of self, increased self-confidence in new roles and relationships, changes in the way the learner sees himself/herself and life assumptions, increased functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over one's life, compassion for others, and an increased involvement in ways of knowing that are other than rationale (Mezirow, and Associates, 2000). Notwithstanding the effects of experiencing a new culture (i.e.: different people, food, and language), a willingness to motivate others and deal with time constraints, relational comments of all of the transformational themes surfaced throughout my conversation with Dias. (See Table 3. for complete transformational learning outcomes and respondent comments).

After what seemed like an hour, Dias and I ended our conversation, but not before I could ask her if she has been able to see the sunrise as a college student. With a smile, she happily told me she had:

Just before we left for Christmas break last year, all of us [college friends] exchanged gifts because we were not going to see each other. So all of us just had a little gift exchange and everybody stayed up to watch the sunrise. My family never does that [staying up to watch the sunrise on purpose]. It was special just because of the simple fact of knowing the sun is rising, but I'm not working. It's kind of beautiful.

Table 3: Transformational learning outcomes and respondent comments	
OUTCOME(S)	NAME: Dias
An empowered sense of self	◊ I've changed, I set my priorities and manage my time better
Increased self confidence in New roles and relationships	<p>◊ I spent time getting to know people in my group. We had not met before, so I encouraged and motivated them to keep going.</p> <p>◊ We didn't think we would have enough time to finish the project? But I told them to keep going.</p> <p>◊ The wall took us forever to paint, and I'm afraid of heights. But we got it done, and that was a big accomplishment.</p>
Changes in the way the learner Sees him/herself and his/her Life assumptions	<p>◊ The experience changed my way of thinking about those in need.</p> <p>◊ I'm going to be a site leader next year. I didn't really think about any of this stuff {service-learning} until I went to Puebla. So, next year I thought I would try being a site leader for Merida.</p>
Increased functional strategies And resources for taking action And gaining control over one's life	<p>◊ After seeing those kids, well; I expect more of myself now. I have higher expectations.</p> <p>◊ Last year was not such a good year for me with academics. I could have done better. But now I manage my time, and always think – "is there something I need to be doing?"</p>
Compassion for others	<p>◊ Because I live right across the border from Mexico, I always see poverty, but I never saw that much. The children were out selling things, and I just wanted to tell them to go to school. If I had it my way, I would make it mandatory for all kids to go to school.</p> <p>◊ Seeing the smile on those kids faces after we finished the wall was priceless. That made it for me! Knowing that I helped to make them happy.</p>
Increased involvement in ways of Knowing that are other than rational	<p>◊ The people in Mexico don't seem to be stressed out. Everybody looks like they live day by day...they don't look like they are worried all the time like we are here in the United States.</p> <p>◊ After I came back from the trip, I told my family about it... we talked about the people, and the food, and other stuff.</p>

Second respondent case

The second student to share her ISL experiences was a student whose parents have been in the same state (i.e., Michigan) where she has attended college for some years, but nevertheless they are not foreign to the country of Mexico. This student was born in Mexico and migrated to the United States when she was ten years old. For this particular case, the respondent always knew she would attend college; however, based upon her comments, never did she imagine that she would attend college and become involved in international service-learning activities.

With no prior service activity, this respondent addressed not only the immediate effects of the experience but also her long term plans for how she would extend the benefits of the experience beyond that of spring break.

From Hope College to Grand Valley to South State status

My parents actually wanted to me to go to Hope College, which is 10 to 15 minutes away from where they live, but I didn't want to go there because I knew if I went there, eventually it was going to be like living at home, but just going to classes on campus. I wanted the growing experience for me to become more of me.

The aforementioned remark came from a student who was the youngest of five children born to migrant workers from Mexico. She explained how she became a Spartan prior to comments related to her first international service learning experience.

Dove had to convince her parents to let her go further away to school, but it was not a simple task. She states:

When I was younger, my parents were always scared that if I went out with friends, I would become a bad child. So a lot of my time was spent in the house doing homework, reading or sometimes sitting in the backyard. They [parents] were kind of biased toward certain things like what I should study or what career I should follow. I knew if I stayed close by I would have some sort of conflict with them, and I didn't want that.

As time would pass, Dove convinced her parents to let her attend Grand Valley State University, which was a slight deviation from Hope college, but at least she would be only an hour away as opposed to 10 to 15 minutes away from their eyes of rule [her words]. After her parents warmed up to that option, Dove convinced them to let her go to South State University because a friend from the home area was attending and could offer a ride home when she wanted one.

Dove stated:

My dad was more comfortable with me going to SSU after he found out that I had a school mate that was coming to State. More than anything, I think he felt better because he wouldn't have to come and get me.

When asked if that would have been a problem for her father to come and get her, Dove interjected with comments related to her fathers' capacity to negotiate the drive more than his willingness:

I think my dad was more comfortable with me going to SSU because I would have a friend to come home with, and he would not have to go pick me up every week-end. I think that he's scared of not knowing and he didn't how to get here to the college campus and then back. So for him, it would have been really awkward for me to tell him to go this way or that way because he is the father. You know the one who knows everything. So, even though he only finished 9th grade, he is still very smart because of his experiences and stuff, but I guess he was scared to reach a point where he no longer knew.

Service-learning experience – overview

When asked about her service experience, with a large smile Dove exclaimed: "That was the first time in my life that I had done something like that! The people were completely different that what I expected". She further went on to say that she had a mindset about the type of people that she would work with, and she was really surprised to be wrong. While performing service at the cerebral palsy site in Puebla, Mexico, Dove and her peers performed a variety of activities. Those activities included playing with children as well as providing therapy. "I really liked playing with the children. I had never done that before. I thought they [the service recipients] were not going to be able to do anything because they were in wheelchairs and stuff." Dove remarked that she was surprised to see that even though the children were in wheelchairs, in some

cases, nothing was wrong with their brains, and some of the children were really smart for their age:

I have an uncle that has Down's syndrome, and I thought that the children were going to be like that [like him], but I was wrong. It was a completely different experience. It taught me to be more patient with them [the service recipients]. Like when we were doing some sort of therapy with different types of grains. I never worked with children, so I had to be patient while trying to get them to do the therapy.

Further comments of service reciprocity were related to helping the community in general.

While I was helping the children, I couldn't help but to think about the fact that we were doing good [service work] for the community. I was amazed that so many people [college students] could come together for one cause. It was really fun. The experience developed my own perspective on helping others and helped me to be more open minded about people in general. I try not to pass judgment as much now. That is what I got out of the experience.

When probed more, Dove connected some of the behaviors of individuals in the community with that of the children:

Some of the ladies from the community would come to the center every day to help us, but we were there to help them. I didn't expect that. Now, I don't look at whether an individual is young or old or

this or that because I can still learn something from them. The ladies talked to us [the whole group of college students], and we learned things about them and the area. Then I learned from the children. Even though I would look at them and think that they won't be able to do anything, but I learned from them that they could.

Assumptions about the culture were also addressed by this respondent as something that she remembered as meaningful. To illustrate, many individuals might think that a person of Mexican heritage would feel totally comfortable in their home country, but Dove presented another picture:

Even though I'm Mexican, and I went to Mexico with Mexican people, it was a different place with different customs. For example, I lived in Mexico until I was ten years old. Then I moved to the United States, but when I went back I noticed differences in the way they cooked food. In my past home town, we ate a lot of vegetables, and not as much meat. In Puebla they ate more meat around the places where we were doing service. Also, seeing the individuals perform the Aztec dance was something new. I've been there before, but did not see the dances.

On a more personal level, Dove remarked that in some instances her Mexican heritage did not afford her the opportunity to be welcomed with open arms:

I don't know how to explain it, it was completely different. I think I was seen as a Mexican person who speaks differently because the

way I speak was not the same as them, but I could understand them, and they could understand me. So, I felt like they [the indigenous population] treated me a bit differently. Like they were saying, oh, you come from the United States, blah, blah, blah. It was like experiencing the negative image that they have of the Americans.

Challenges and the service experience

Although no challenges were directly mentioned beyond that of misconceived notions about the population that she was going to work with, this respondent did address her desire to advance herself through service experiences:

I've always liked helping people, but I don't do a lot of service. So, I really want to continue to do service and go back and help again because it did change me. I developed my own perspective about helping others . . . I'm more open-minded, and I also want to acquire more leadership skills.

For Dove, developing her leadership skills meant that she would look into the role of being a student leader for one of the sites in the future.

When asked about a memorable moment, Dove addressed the gratefulness that she witnessed from the service recipients:

I remember one of the little boys just got up out the blue and gave a speech about how thankful he was that we were there and that he hoped we would remember him and the rest of the students. It was

very touching to me . . . It made me think that sometimes people can be very objective and lose sight of other things that can be just as important or even more important. I thought to myself, that's all he wants – just to be remembered.

She went on to say:

Some of us students [ISL participants] were just glad we had the opportunity to travel, but I do think that they see that it is more than that – meaning, just getting away from school. It's about helping those who need help.

When questioned as to what she would tell other students who are contemplating this type of experience, Dove stated emphatically that she would encourage such experiences.

I would tell them that it [this type of service experience] helps you develop areas that you didn't know you had. Even though I am Mexican, it was a different place with different customs. So the experience helped me see through the eyes of others, and I was surprised that I got so attached to the children and to see what they could do.

According to Dove the service experience could be improved with even more cultural and educational activities and some talk or discussion about abstinence from the use of alcohol and drugs by some students. Specific training of site leaders was emphasized as well:

Some of the site leaders were in situations that they did not know how to handle because they were not told what to do. So it would be important to have training or different scenarios on how to handle other students who use alcohol and drugs . . . stuff like that would help the program.

Relationship of respondent information

To that of transformational learning

Within the context of the international service event, this respondent conveyed outcomes of an empowered sense of self, increased self-confidence in new roles and relationships, changes in the way the learner sees herself and her life assumptions, and compassion for others (See Table 4 for complete list). From her initial thoughts of what the experience would be like for her to her desire to build upon the experience through future site leader opportunities, and simply her reflective desires to continue to help the community in the future, Dove did appear to transform as a result of her service-learning experience in Mexico. In addition to the actual event of traveling back to what she calls “the place where it all began for her ancestors”, this student had multiple conversations with one parent in particular, about the city of her service work, and the culture of Mexico in general. Those conversations provided her with a means to engage her father into her world of learning: “My father really got excited that I went to Puebla [her father visited Puebla on numerous occasions]. We talked about where it was and how it looked and what I did.” She stated further that prior to her ISL experience she did not have a conversation with her

father about that part of his life or what she was doing in college. Hence, the experience offered personal, cultural, and associative meanings for this student as the service-learning event allowed her to connect to a community, and those needing assistance in the community have ownership in a project established to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate, provided her with an empowered sense of self, and confirmed for her that performing community service type activities is rewarding, fulfilling, and needed.

One aspect of academic engagement is being able to bring individuals of influence (i.e. family, friends, etc.) into one's sphere. For this respondent, the experience afforded her the opportunity to transform as a student through the experience as well as to engage family members.

At an additional level, engagement occurred within the auspices of an associative connection between this student and pre-established goals for the ISL experience. Dove identified her desire to achieve all program goals. Retrospectively, ISL program goals were to increase the capacity of the student to understand another culture, strengthen the relationship between academics and service, promote the need for civic engagement and community leadership, and expand student knowledge about the benefits and values of volunteerism. Based upon conversations with Dove regarding the impact of performing service at the site for individuals with disabilities; all program goals were achieved.

Table 4: Transformational learning outcomes and respondent comments	
OUTCOME(S)	NAME: Dove
An empowered sense of self	<p>◇It was the first time in my life that I had done something like that...</p> <p>◇As a result of that experience, I'd Like to do another similar experience And possibly acquire leadership skills to be a site leader.</p>
Increased self confidence in New roles and relationships	<p>◇I didn't work with children before, so dealing with them was a completely different experience...now I have more confidence with working with children.</p> <p>◇Dealing with all the people around Me...it was a good experience because</p> <p>◇ I'd never had so many people who my age Were doing something good For the community in the same place.</p>
Changes in the way the learner Sees him/herself and his/her Life assumptions	<p>◇It {the experience} helped me to develop me own perspective about things and helped me be more open minded with people. ◇One situation with a little boy made me Think that sometimes we can be very Objective and lose site of other things That can be just as important or more...</p>
Increased functional strategies And resources for taking action And gaining control over one's life	<p>◇I think the experience helped me by not letting expectations block you from learning like not looking at whether the individual Was young or old or this or that because you Can still learn something from them.</p>
Compassion for others	<p>◇I was really attached to the children at the End of the week and I didn't think I would be able to.</p>
Increased involvement in ways of Knowing that are other than rational	<p>◇I was really surprised to see that the children were really smart even though they were in Wheelchairs... There was nothing wrong with Their brains!</p>

Third respondent case

Transformational learning is said to be inherently connected to one's experiences. Experiences are filtered through meaning perspectives or habits of the mind that include uncritically assimilated ways of knowing, believing, and feeling. In some situations, meaning perspectives may involve distortions, prejudices, stereotypes, and unquestioned or unexamined beliefs. Learning occurs when an individual encounters an alternative perspective and prior habits of mind are called into question. Such was the scenario for the next case.

Celia not only questioned whether she wanted to attend college, she also questioned the value of attending the ISL activity. Irresolute thoughts related to attending college were associated with what she was told by others while growing up, migrants were not expected to go to college. On the other hand, prior family visits to Mexico proved to be events for which "dirt" was associated. It was with those past images and thoughts that performing service there remained at the bottom of her list of things to do. Although reluctantly, the participant did engage in the ISL activity, and the experience proved to be meaningful when a sense of accomplishment was achieved as well as a changed perspective regarding aesthetics.

"No, Gracias, I don't want to go."

I didn't even want to go perform service in Mexico. I've been to Mexico so many times, and it's going to be the same thing. Dirt everywhere, dirt on your shoes, dirt on your clothes, small little houses . . . I didn't want to go.

Those were the words of Celia, who had frequented Mexico so many times she could not even keep count. Therefore, going to Mexico to perform

service work was the last thing on her mind. In fact, going to college was not an initial consideration either. In high school she reports a 3.9 GPA, but even that was not enough of an accomplishment for her to consider leaving home to go to college. She commented in a joking manner the following:

I was a migrant student from the valley [south side of San Antonio, Texas] . . . Migrants weren't expected to go to college. I was supposed to carry on what my parents did. That's what I was told, especially in Caribou, Maine, where we worked the fields.

Celia reports closeness to her family, particularly her father who, once he was given information that his daughter could attend college in Michigan, encouraged her without hesitation. By Celia's account, her father told her that he wanted her to leave and go to college because he missed out on such an opportunity. Her father has a 10th grade education that was cut short due to the fact that he had to stop going to school and go to work full-time to help support his family. Her mother has a fifth grade education and has what Celia calls a "cold shoulder" personality:

Since I left Texas, it feels like my mom gives me the cold shoulder . . . I mean she had always been distant emotionally, but it just feels like she hasn't accepted me coming here to college.

Upon reflection, Celia expressed numerous years of disconnection with her mother as she went on to explain that her mother never been a social person: "My dad is the *lovely dovey* person who says I Love you." Retrospectively, it was, and continues to be the father who encouraged and supported the opportunity for

Celia to attend college. In a casual voice Celia recounts the day she spoke to her father about going to college after she heard a presentation about the college assistance program while in high-school:

I spoke to my dad, and he told me that he wanted me to leave, to go to college. He said I want you to be the first. The first to go to college!

With those words of proclamation, Celia became a college student. Her acceptance of the status of being first in her family to go out of state to college was not without struggles. Celia stated:

I was scared because I didn't know anybody here [at the college]. I came to orientation and saw all of the other Mexicans, and I was amazed at how many of them were excited to be going to college.

As per her comments, a closed mind to the whole concept of going to college remained ever present: "I just kept thinking, I still don't know yet [about being here at college], I just don't know".

Service-learning experience – overview

Celia performed service at the Boy's home in Puebla, Mexico. She was adamant that the overseer did not want to use the term orphanage because of the negativity associated with the term:

I worked at the Boy's home. We painted and played with the kids. Before I went there, I thought that they [the service recipients] just wanted us to give them stuff like food, money, clothes. . .I was thinking to myself that they were going to ask us. . .what did you

bring me. But it wasn't like that. The kids kept asking us to speak to them in English so they could learn the language, and other times they just wanted us to play with them.

When asked what the hardest part of the service experience was for her, Celia did not address the fact that her group scraped, primed, and painted walls for the recreation center. Nor did she bring up the fact that her group was the last to return to the hotel everyday because of the large volume of work that was needed. Such information was gathered through further conversations. More than anything, she expressed the hardest part as leaving the service recipients:

I wish we could have stayed longer . . . say two weeks. I really didn't expect to become so attached to the kids. Now, I see how we [meaning students] take allot for granted, like our parents. They are not going to be here forever. I think a bit differently now.

Beyond her general compassion as well as attachment to the kids, Celia expressed a moment of learning from one of the young boys as being meaningful and thought provoking:

A little boy was talking to me and he said, well you know we are Americans too, right? I said to him, no, no you are not! And he went on to say, yes I am. We are South American and you are North American. So we both are Americans.

Celia had never thought about the fact that both geographic locations shared at least one term in common, so for her a bit of enlightenment appeared to result: "I thought, um, he is smart. I never thought about it like that." The representation of

insightfulness was one of a few comments related to the impact Celia felt as a result of the service experience. By her account:

Like I said, I did not want to go to Mexico. I'm Mexican, I've been there before . . . but this time it was different. The culture, the people . . . I don't know, but I think I'm more *open-minded* now. I can remember before I left for the trip the site leaders were telling us to keep an open mind and experience as much as possible. I'm not usually a person that tries many different things. I was thinking one way before I left, now, I think – don't judge a book by its cover. So, I'm more willing to open up and talk to more people, and just try some things.

With specific regard to experiencing a different culture, Celia recounts differences in foods, social customs, and words used. To illustrate, even though she proclaims to be fluent in Spanish, some of the words she used with her family members, who are from Mexico, were not accepted or understood by other natives of Mexico:

I had this experience when I was talking to an elderly lady, I said "Mande", which is what I used growing up to mean – yes ma'am. The lady looked at me strange and asked me what I was talking about. It was weird.

Upon her return from the service experience, Celia chatted with her mother about that particular incident and found out that the term was only used in the region of Mexico where her mother was from. However, knowing that the term was only

used in the northern portion of Mexico as opposed to the southern region did not quell her thoughts of feeling like an outsider in a country for which she expressed her nationality. "I felt like a stranger, but I did learn some things about my own culture." (See Table 5 for relationship of respondent information to transformational learning outcomes.)

Although no mention of an increased capacity to understand course material was conveyed by this informant, information presented can be directly associated with all processes of transformation. With particular outcomes in the areas of an empowered sense of self, increased self-confidence in roles and new relationships, and changes in the way she sees herself, the impact of the experience represented a more open frame of reference. That enhanced frame of reference is one that she further utilized in other components of her life as a university student. Specifically, areas of peer interaction and changes in her view regarding the utility of education, as well as things she and peers could do as university students were all areas for which the experience represented a transformative shift. More than anything, the experience allowed her to critically reflect upon what her parents must have gone through while trying to provide a safe and nurturing home environment for her and her siblings with less than adequate wages of subsistence. Notwithstanding her increased compassion for those less fortunate at the service site, she appeared to address an even deeper compassion for her parents.

Table 5: Transformational learning outcomes and respondent comments	
OUTCOME(S)	NAME: Celia
An empowered sense of self	<p>◊I liked going to Teotichan (1)...that was awesome. I had never been there. Me and a peer were standing at the top And I thought...look at us, two little Mexicans standing on top of a pyramid. Last year, I would have never thought about myself being in Puebla. I'd go back.</p> <p>◊ After I came back, I started talking to more people. My group of friends grew, and it was not just the same nationalities. It was different ethnicities.</p>
Increased self confidence in New roles and relationships	<p>◊It was a good feeling to know that I was there, and helped. That was a big high.</p> <p>◊ I would do it again, I would want to see the children again, and spend more time. Maybe two weeks.</p>
Changes in the way the learner Sees him/herself and his/her Life assumptions	<p>◊I didn't want to go because I thought it was going to be the same thing I've seen before in Mexico. Dirt everywhere, dirt on your shoes, dirt on your clothes, small little houses...I didn't want to go. But once I got there, I was really amazed, it was different. I was wrong, and I'm glad I went, it was awesome.</p> <p>◊I was really closed minded. Now I see that we take a lot of Things for granted like parents. They are not going to Be here for ever. I think differently now that I have Worked with those kids who don't have parents.</p>
Increased functional strategies And resources for taking action And gaining control over one's life	<p>◊I'm more open minded now. Before, I use to think that all white people came from the same place, and that people who were from Dominican Republic were just African Americans. Now, I talk to more people.</p>
Compassion for others	<p>◊I did not think that I was going to get so attached to the Kids. It was just a week.</p> <p>◊It was crazy to listen to the children tell you about their experiences and what they go through. I was like... Oh my gosh, come here and let me hug you!</p> <p>◊ On the last day, you could visit all the other sites. That Was a big issue for me because I felt like I was gonna Miss my kids. So, I said no, I'd rather stick with my kids All day because it was the last day they are going to see me.</p>
Increased involvement in ways of Knowing that are other than rational	<p>◊I'm a good example of why students should engage in service-learning in Mexico. Even though I'm Mexican American, and I go to Mexico all the time, I thought the Same thing about it. Now, I would say don't judge a book by its' cover.</p>

1: Teotichan is an ancient Aztec pyramid, and one of many cultural and educational activities the ISL students engage in.

Fourth respondent case

The next respondent performed the ISL experience two years in a row. For this student, his initial participation in the 2006 ISL experience represented a series of first time events. Specifically, it was his first time on a plane, it was the first time he ever performed service-learning activities, his first time to Puebla, and the first time he ever worked with children who had physical limitations. For this college student, differences between the first and second years appeared to be behavioral as well as attitudinal. Because he did not know what to expect during the first ISL experience, his attitude was to merely do everything that he was told to do prior to leaving for the trip and at the service-learning site. On the other hand, the second experience represented multiple scenarios of leadership in that he requested, and was selected to become a student site leader; therefore, he was put in the position of directing the actions and behaviors of peers while they performed service work.

“I’m kind of shy”

As the oldest of four children born to parents who started migrating to the United States in 1987, Frank didn’t express much about how he came to be a college student. In a seemingly nonchalant manner, he conveyed that he heard about the college assistance migrant program through a family member and decided that he would give it a try: “My cousin convinced me to come to college here, so I thought I would give it [the university] a try.” When questioned further about different familial points of view regarding his going to college, Frank stated that his mother didn’t want him to go but resigned herself to that of the decision

being his, and his father was supportive. The younger twin brothers represented what Frank calls a lack of interest in education overall, so their encouragement of his educational pursuits was conveyed as merely differences in life goals:

My brothers want to work . . . They don't want to waste time on education. They are more like my dad who works hard all the time. I talk to my brothers about coming to college here, but I don't think they will come. They just want to work, but I tell them at least take the ACT.

Service-learning overview

Sometimes it is hard to see the connection between service-learning tasks and larger social issues. Yet, most communities have concerns that are multi-faceted and interdependent. For example, one facility in Puebla, Mexico (Taller de Educacion Especial San Pedro Claver A.C: the Cerebral Palsy Site) has several residents with multiple physical, social, educational, and mental needs. The administrator has made use, to the best of her ability, of resources in the area to extend quality care to the residents; however, with so few staff and so many residents, valuable field trips to area facilities such as the museum and zoo are virtually out of the question. The non-existent field-trips are due to deficits in the patient to staff ratio which is said to be around ten patients to one staff person, and ninety percent of the residents are wheelchair bound or have some form of mobility impairment.

When questioned as to how the service of college students could best be utilized, the administrator decided that all things considered, additional bodies (in

this case college students) would allow the residents to gain valuable kinesthetic, educational, social, and sensory skill development by allowing the service-learning participants to act as site guides and educational interpreters throughout the week. It should be noted that without the one to one assistance from the students, the trips would not occur as the majority of the residents do not have family members available because they must work to support their families.

Given the above scenario, college students are solicited for their willingness to volunteer but also because such activities are looked upon as a beneficial difference in the delivery of services to the respective population of residents. Consequently, for the past four years the ISL program has placed a contingency of college students at the facility with goals of providing much needed one on one attention to the residents, and to act as individual tour guides, which was the situation for Frank.

To observe Frank on any given day, one would see is a quiet, mild-mannered, soft spoken individual who appears to sit back and watch things happen. Not that Frank's side-chair persona is allusive to what's going on; he just prefers to watch and sort things out before engagement, which was conveyed when he was questioned about the impact of the service-learning experience upon him:

I never thought I would be doing anything like this [the ISL work].
Actually, I'm a shy person. . .I kind of sit back and watch things first. . .because if I jump to it, I might not know what to do, and I'll mess up.

His behavioral patterns of watching and waiting throughout new and existing situations have changed a bit towards more comfort. His new confidence allows him to take charge of situations rather than watching them happen from the sideline. This was evident with his comments regarding his selection as one of the student site leaders for the second year:

I was kind of shocked that I was chosen to be a site leader. I applied, but I was not sure I would get the position. When they told me I was a site leader, it was really a great feeling. Then I thought about everything that I was going to be doing, [pause of silence and thinking] . . . then I just stepped up to the plate.

He began to gather necessary information of what was needed at the site as well as to ascertain, more clearly, what his responsibilities would be as a site leader.

As anyone can surmise from his intentions, Frank could be looked upon as a veteran to the international service-learning program. When he was a freshman he went to the cerebral palsy site in Puebla. During his second international service-learning event, he again went to Puebla, but performed service at the Boy's orphanage as a student site leader in the course of his sophomore year in college. His future plan includes another service-learning.

I asked Frank why he kept signing up for the service-learning events, and he stated in a matter of fact way that the trips to Mexico allow him to learn something about his ancestors, to socialize with other students as well as help those in need. He was careful to say that socializing with peers was not the focus of his desires; it was just an added bonus:

The first time I went, I didn't know what to expect. I was scared . . . but it was a good experience [the first time], and I got a taste for seeing the world. I really enjoyed learning about the Aztecs, and touring the different archeological sites. The second time, I made up my mind that I could help raise more money than they did the first year for the organizations in Mexico. Also, I promised one of the little girls at the site that I would come back, so I did. Basically, helping others feels good.

With his leadership skills in place as a site leader, his group did raise more money than that of the previous year, but challenges as a student site leader were not without incident for him. In fact, as conveyed by Frank, one of the low points of the second trip occurred when he lost his wallet which had some of the facility money in it:

When I lost my wallet, I felt bad, really bad. Everyone [students at the Puebla site] came together and donated their money to make up for the loss . . . it made me feel good, but I still felt bad.

All bad thoughts of being an inept leader appeared to be erased when Frank described a group incident whereby he was acknowledged as one of a few who exhibited purpose and meaningfulness as a participant. The exercise was initiated by one of the faculty leaders with the purpose of acknowledging the hard work and commitment of the students. Briefly, all of the ISL participants are placed in an outward facing circle. In groups of four at a time, students are selected to be in the inner circle. Instructions were to tap another student on the

shoulder who had exhibited various characteristics like motivation of others, initiative, thoughtfulness, leadership, and an overall willingness to go beyond what was asked. With an enlightened look on his face, Frank expressed exuberance at being singled out several times by his peers: "I was touched many times as a person that was meaningful, and a good leader, and different things . . . that just brought up my self-esteem and made me feel good."

As a result of both service-learning events, Frank conveyed that he was able to apply some, if not most, of the experience(s) to that of his role as a college student. For example, his freshman year was described in relationship to a baseball game whereby he was in the position of the person at bat:

It [meaning his freshman year] was like a ball that started out slow, but at the end it was really fast. I thought I was doing so well in my classes. Then at the end of the semester, I was shocked with my grades. I guess I should have checked with my professors about my grades before the end of the semester. Now, I feel more comfortable with asking questions and checking in with people.

According to the literature, interpersonal skill development is a common outcome associated with service-learning approaches. In fact, according to Fisher & Bidell (1997) interpersonal skill development is, in a number of cases, where the learning begins for some service-learning participants. For this respondent, site-leader responsibilities during the service-learning activity appeared to help facilitate communication skills that were used immediately in the course of the service experience and at the conclusion of the program when

addressing professors and class peers, which is where components of academic engagement reside.

At the time of this interview, a more organized quality is conveyed by Frank as one thing that crosses the boundary of being a well performing student and a good site leader. Additional comments of communal learning with regard to the ISL experience and his role as a student were related to the development of his leadership skills, communication capacity, and a more extended comfort zone. The extended comfort zone, personally and interpersonally, allowed him to engage a bit more with college peers which is viewed as skills needed for engagement. Specific incidences of additional leadership scenarios beyond the international service-learning activities was the fulfillment of 300 hours with the Ameri-Corps group, and volunteer work with Gear-Up an organization that facilitates the link between high-school students and college campuses as a way to encourage gravitation towards higher education.

Frank and I ended our discussion with him thanking me for listening to him talk about the international service-learning experiences. However, at that moment, I could not help but to think that I was ever so thankful to him for the opportunity to hear his thoughts about the value and benefits of such a program (See Table 6 for Relationship of Transformational Outcomes and Respondent Comments).

Table 6: Transformational learning outcomes and respondent comments	
OUTCOME(S)	NAME: Frank
An empowered sense of self	◊The experience allowed me to get out of my comfort zone. I'm a shy person, and I usually don't warm up to people...but when I was in Puebla, I just talked to people more because you have to work with others.
Increased self confidence in New roles and relationships	◊I wanted to go the second time to work on my Leadership skills by being a program leader...I felt as though the group could have done more to fund raise, so as a site leader, I could do more to get the students involved.
Changes in the way the learner Sees him/herself and his/her Life assumptions	◊I don't take things for granted as much now like my parents And family because some of those kids didn't have parents so I thought about that allot. ◊I have more confidence in being a leader or being willing to step up as a leader... my peers recognized me as a leader and that made me feel good. And now, I'm more willing to step out of my comfort zone.
Increased functional strategies And resources for taking action And gaining control over one's life	◊I check in with my professors more than I did before. Taking to people and networking are a few of the things that I feel comfortable doing now . . . planning activities and setting goals and accomplishing them.
Compassion for others	◊The kids talked to me and I Just softened inside. Onetime I had tears in my eyes...Those kids are so Gifted and special....they Mean allot to me. ◊I want to keep going to help. I have a deeper understanding of how the kids have to live, so I want to keep helping which was another reason why I signed up to go again.

Summary

In this study a sample of minority students were interviewed regarding their international service-learning experience (See appendix E for summary respondent comments). Journal entries (See appendix F for summary journal comments) were also utilized to substantiate verbal information. Research questions addressed were what, if any, transformational learning outcomes resulted from their participation, and can any of those outcomes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement at the university level. In all case interviews, I encouraged the informant to critically reflect upon the service-learning event, while questioning and probing for further explanation of shared references regarding what the experience meant to each individual. Extrapolated data was juxtaposed towards processes of transformation and subsequently towards behaviors of social and academic engagement. It should be noted that for this study academic engagement was defined in terms of learning productivity that reflected the amount of effort devoted to educationally purposeful activities (engagement), and the extent to which the student made progress toward important learning and personal goal development. Next, I will summarize themes that resonated from the data, and parallel such information to that of the literature.

Themes

For many educators the whole idea behind service-learning is to learn. Learning in this context is to use the service-learning experience to expand a students' understanding of underlying community problems and to find solutions,

whether individually or collectively (Cress, Collier, Reitenaurer & Associates, 2005). All students in this study did not necessarily present evidence that they evolved with an expanded understanding of underlying community issues, but other meanings did result, particularly as related to outcomes of a transformative learning capacity. In fact, strategies for utilizing changes resulting from the impact of the experience appeared to be more of a personal and interpersonal configuration than that of a direct academic association. Hence, the personal and interpersonal engagement for this group appears blurred as a significant difference from majority Caucasian populations who appeared to address a bit more academic course connectivity. Consequently, the impact of the experience for the sample indicated that they came away from the experience with a renewed sense of accomplishment as well as an ability to apply information from the experience to supplementary areas of performance as a university student.

Meaning transformation and academic engagement

Rhoads' (1997) study on service-learning concluded that students who experienced transformation began to develop a more critical and caring self, one that understands the structural nature of social problems, identifies with the poor, and intends to advocate on their behalf. Rhoads' research also indicated that most students continue to see the world through the lens of charity or "do gooders" once they have participated in such activities. For the sample of students in this study similar results were obtained. Specifically, identification with individuals who are poor, seeing the world through the lens of charity and development of a more caring self were all respectively addressed by the

students. To illustrate, several of the respondents conveyed familiarity with the service recipients via not having as much financially or through first hand knowledge of what it felt like to support oneself on wages that were thought to be less than adequate for subsistence. Hence, in the majority of the cases, respondents indicated an increased willingness to help and to advocate for the service recipients as well as generally do all that they could to make the life of the service recipients better. Their statements reflected an intense compassion for others, and a clarified view of what the service recipients seemingly go through on daily basis. In other instances, participation in the experience represented a meaning of gratefulness with regard to having parents that chose not to give them [the student or their siblings] up to the government or state based upon an inability to support the needs of their children. For at least one of the student cases, talking, interacting, and hearing the various stories conveyed by the boys at the orphanage provided her with a moment of awakening when she recognized that she was indeed fortunate to have her family and the availability of regular phone contact with them. Comments of that nature continually addressed identification with those less fortunate, but appeared to represent a personally meaningful connection rather than a seemingly academic meaning.

For another student, the experience validated her philanthropic tendencies of giving money to people on the street. Incidentally, for this particular respondent giving money to street people was discouraged and frowned upon by her parents. But after seeing and working intimately with those less fortunate, the

student established that her acts of kindness did in fact make a difference and were of greater influence than that of her parents. Hence, she reflected enough upon the experience to aggregate towards a frame of reference that was more inclusive of her belief and opinion regarding helping those in need.

Yet another respondent identified the experience as meaningful enough that she ended the experience with an increased desire to use education, or educational experiences, to thwart the cycle of labor intensive work that she thought was more associated with individuals of limited educational attainment. More specifically, the experience was significant enough that she began to identify behaviors that were not academically productive, and addressed changes as a way to stay connected as a student. As a result, this respondent explored options for new roles, relationships, and action-oriented behaviors. Her comments can be interpreted towards increased functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over one's life, which is again reflective of a transformative learning process.

Therefore, in comparison to the study performed by Rhoads, all students conveyed that the experience was "impactful" but not all meanings appeared to equate to an across the board increase in understanding the structural nature of social problems (e.g., the academic portion of the course) as was one of the many outcomes he derived. However, comparatively speaking equivocal processes of transformative learning held constant for participants in this study and those of study performed by Rhoads.

Besides the study performed by Rhoads on the transformative nature and context of service-learning approaches, noted scholars Eyler & Giles confer outcomes of a transformative nature for students who performed service-learning activities within the framework of an educational context as well (1999). With the voices of over fifteen hundred students and supplemental survey data, these researchers found that as a result of participation in service-learning experiences students transformed enough to change their lifestyles, select or confirm a career choice, and become more involved in political issues. Briefly, the researchers' desires were to understand, at a deeper level, both outcomes and processes associated with service-learning. From the extensive study, multiple outcomes were identified, but more than anything, this set of researchers secured un-refutable evidence that when students are engaged in highly reflective service events, where course and community service are well integrated, perspective transformation resulted.

While comparing outcome information from the study by Eyler & Giles towards the cases in this study, there were similarities. Both programs operated through a course structure whereby credits were assigned, specific student objectives identified, and the students performed service in a variety of settings. Also, students in both programs engaged in reflection activities that included both oral and written features. Differences reside in the fact that students in this study were required to be involved in the service-learning project whereas students in the study by Eyler & Giles either signed for service-learning activities of their own

free will, or they knew that the course configuration was such that performing service was one of the features in the course design.

Even though the students in this study were not involved in an avenue that directly addressed formal social issues that allowed them to have an educationally connected locus of social problems or the importance of social justice, perspective transformation appeared to be relegated to a more personal level. To illustrate, in only one instance did a respondent convey that the experience helped her understand deeply embedded social inequities or the nature of social problems in Mexico. During a follow-up conversation, she also conveyed that she was in a humanities class that addressed information regarding structural tenets of Mexico as well as other countries where poverty is a major issue. As a result, when she participated in the program, she could associate former course information. Hence, academic engagement (through cross association of course information) occurred for this student, but not directly related to the course for which the service activity was established. However, much like other outcomes of lifestyle changes and solidification of career choices reported from the students in the study by Eyler & Giles, students in this study also addressed, albeit at a more personal level, lifestyle changes. In fact everyone either stated that the experience *changed* them or that the experience was personally *meaningful*, or that their *views* and *thoughts* about helping others expanded after they performed service. Again, the transformative perspective component was not solely relegated to understanding structural or social issues at a profoundly different level than prior to the experience, but more so at an

expanded point of view or understanding of the type of things that college students do while engaged in various courses.

For at least three of the student cases, solidification of their career choice was conveyed as something that occurred as a result of participation the service-learning experience. As stated before, outcome related statements from the students did not appear to resonate from the intensive course connection, for no one stated that they wanted to go into a relative parks and recreation field of study. More comments related to solidification of a career choice appeared to come more from a critical awareness of how they saw themselves using the experience to help others in the future, in conjunction with the need to expand their capacity to productively interact in the educational environment. This further challenged them to adopt attitudes and behaviors that were consistent with continued academic engagement and performance overall.

Transformative forms

A transformative experience occurs when learners critically assess their current perspective based upon some event. Once an event occurs, results may include an empowered sense of self, an increase in self-confidence in new roles and relationships, fundamental changes in the way learners see him/herself and his/her life assumptions, increased functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over one's life, and compassion for others (Mezirow & Associates, 2000). With regard to this study, data revealed that as a result of participation in the service-learning activity in Mexico, each participant experienced at least one of six abovementioned transformational learning

processes. Further, in four of the six processes (increased self-confidence in new roles and relationships, changes in the way the learner sees him/herself and his/her life assumptions, increased functional strategies for taking action, and compassion for others) attainment by each of the students resulted as well.

In comparison to another study on the transformative learning potential of students who perform service-learning activities, Kiely (2005) performed a longitudinal study on the impact of international service activities on college students as well. The service activity explicitly linked social justice information within the auspices of a course configuration with students participating in an immersion program in Nicaragua. Course topics included that of Nicaraguan history, health issues, political economy, and community development. All in all the study confirmed that for the study participants, involvement in the international service learning program produced changes in the areas of global consciousness with specific adjustments in transformative forms and identity reconfiguration. Incidentally, transformative forms were relegated to categories of political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual tenets. Students in this study also revealed changes in transformative forms, particularly in areas of cultural, moral, and personal adjustment. This is not to say that other areas of political, intellectual, or spiritual transformative forms were not obtained, but comments of the former reflect a clearer pattern of achievement.

In addition to outcomes of a transformative nature, respondents in this study also conferred information that could be associated with other themes

reflected in the literature on the topic of service-learning. These will be highlighted next.

Multicultural and cross-cultural competency

Enhanced multicultural and cross-cultural competency skills were thematic occurrences throughout all case responses in this study. Even though most of the students self identified as Hispanic or Mexican-American, their ancestral linkage to Mexico did not, in some instances, afford them an insiders' stance when it came to understanding differences between the cultures. Things like foods, dress, word usage, and customs of the country were all verbally mentioned as something by which students came away from the experience with an increased perspective. Hence, outcome(s) with regard to multicultural or cross-cultural competence was an area for which the students had a different frame of reference than prior to the experience. In addition, verbal comments were consistent with data retrieved from respondent journal entries, which substantiated the data. Respectively, findings that this sample of students reaped multicultural or cross cultural benefits from the service experience are consistent with previous research by a host of scholars (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Boyle-Baise, & Kilbane, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Howard – Hamilton, 2000; Moely, Mcfarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002; O'Grady, 2000; and Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2001) who determine service-learning, among other pedagogical practices, to be effective towards increasing the global, multi-cultural, and cross-cultural competences of students in post-secondary education.

Personal and interpersonal development

Another theme that resonated from respondent conferrals was that of personal and interpersonal development. First, with regard to interpersonal communication, the international service learning experience allowed students to meet individuals they had never met before, work as a team member, and generally obtain a deeper level of communication with others than what was occurring before the event. In almost every instance of the service work, from pre-trip activities to actual work at the site, respondents in this study conveyed thoughts of expanded comfort and capacity for communicating with peers, site organization personnel, and indigenous populations. By one student's account: "Everyone is almost forced to talk to each other, ask questions, and offer feedback because in many cases you didn't know anyone [class peers] before you left." This is not to say that the respondents suffered from ineffective communication skills prior to participation in the ISL program, but that statement, and many similar statements appear to be more a testament to the fact that in all respondent cases, the service experience facilitated, developed, and encouraged the enhancement of communication skills. As a factor of the applicability of those skills towards that of academic engagement, most students were able to articulate cross-utilization in classes while working with peers on various projects and during future leadership roles for which he/she envisioned as a goal for him/herself while performing various activities related to academics.

Beyond enhanced interpersonal communication skills, students in this study also addressed a level of personal growth and development. By all

accounts, increased personal efficacy was one impact that the experience had upon them. The desire to make a difference in the lives of those less fortunate and then feeling good about the fact that he/she felt as though a difference was made resonated throughout interview data as well as the journal documents. Comments related to areas of personal growth included feeling increasingly self-confident about him/herself, a willingness to *think outside of the box*, seeing oneself in the capacity of a leader augmented thoughts of accomplishment and an expanded comfort zone, rounded out the thematic area of personal growth and development identified as an impact of the experience.

Critical reflection

One component of quality service-learning approaches is the reflection component whereby students are challenged to reflect upon the experience and connect those thoughts to that of their academic and/or personal life (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Accordingly, Mezirow establishes that critical reflection is the process of precipitating transformation in frames of reference by surfacing and challenging uncritically assimilated assumptions about oneself and one's world (1991). In essence, reflection, one key component of transformative learning, involves a process of reconsidering experience(s) through reason, reinterpretation, and generalization of the experience to form mental structures. Therefore, in order for transformational learning to occur, critical reflection must exist. At some level all students appeared to engage in the critical reflection process, either through formal means of open dialogue or in their journal writings.

Beyond the fact that one component of the service-learning experience was a daily peer exchange to discuss and reflect upon events, participants in this study also appeared to engage in their own reflective process both during and after performing the service event. Pronounced reflective comments were addressed in the journal documents whereby students wrote down free thoughts without appraisal of peers; however, in other instances the process of reflection and reconsideration of the experience resonated throughout individual interview structures whereby the respondents offered comments related to a moment of reflection, and the changed point of view that resulted from the reflection. Themes conferred through reflective comments included enhanced clarity with regard to prior assumptions of what the experience would be like, validation of thoughts regarding making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate, deeper appreciation and gratefulness for family, enlightenment with regard to parental roles and responsibilities, increased thoughts about how to utilize education and the educational process to get ahead in life, moments of feeling out of place in a country for which he/she spoke the language fluently, and increased self-identity with regard to a better understanding and identification with one's ancestral culture (See Appendix F for complete table of all respondent outcomes). In the next chapter, final discussion on the impact of the service-learning approach on the group of students will be conveyed along with limitations, implications, recommendations, and comments related to future research initiatives.

Chapter V

Discussion and Conclusion

Eyler & Giles (1999) claim that service-learning, as a transformational learning process, is not about accumulating more knowledge but is about seeing the world in a profoundly different way. For a sample of minority students, seeing the world in a profoundly different way was but one of many outcomes reaped as a result of participation in a service-learning project. With an interest in identifying transformational learning outcomes associated with an international service-learning approach and to broaden knowledge connected to the performance of under-represented populations who engage in such activities, an investigation ensued with a sample of students at a large mid-western university. The study was guided by two research questions: 1) what, if any, transformational learning processes occurred for minority student populations who participated in an academic service-learning program, and 2) can those processes be linked to behaviors of academic engagement. In the preceding chapter, I reported findings of the data received. In this chapter, discussion and concluding remarks are presented as well as study implications, limitations, and finally recommendations. Prior to presenting that information, a brief overview of the study will be highlighted.

Overview of the study

Nine subjects were interviewed with four subsequently presented in an in-depth case format. Of the sample, all students self identified in the ethnic group category of either Hispanic-American or Mexican-American. Gender composition

included that of three males and six females, majoring in various professional fields and academic programs. The study respondents participated in either the 2006, 2007, or both 2006 and 2007 service-learning programs offered in Mexico during spring break. In a semi-structured format, open-ended questions were used to extrapolate information regarding what the respondents conferred as outcomes of the experience. Nine students were interviewed; however, due to data saturation, four cases were selected for presentation at a more in-depth level.

Qualitative data is analyzed by one or more of the following techniques: analytic induction, enumeration, constant comparison, or clustering (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). For this study, constant comparison techniques were used to examine emergent patterns, themes, and categories as related to outcomes of the transformational learning theory (Mezirow, et. al).

According to Mezirow, transformational learning processes occur when learners critically assess their current perspective based upon some event. Processes of transformational learning are said to occur over three stages. In the first stage, learners become critically aware of how and why their assumptions have come to constrain the way they perceive, understand, and feel about their world. During the next stage, learners revise their belief system as they make structural changes related to habitual expectations. As such, learners make adjustments to accommodate a more inclusive, discriminatory, and integrative perspective. Lastly, learners adopt behaviors that are more consistent with their renewed perspective.

Respondents in this study *changed* in many ways as a result of the experience, which reflects the transformative learning effect of service-learning approaches and the contribution of this research. Outcomes that resonated throughout the respondent comments included an empowered sense of self, increased self-confidence with regard to new roles and relationships, fundamental changes in the way the learner see him/herself and his/her life assumptions, particularly in regard to his/her role as a college student, by increased functional strategies and resources for taking action and gaining control over one's life, by compassion for others, by enhanced cultural awareness and appreciation for individual differences, by confirmed sense of self-efficacy, and by new connectedness with others through personal and interpersonal development.

Beyond identification of information related to processes of transformation, study respondents were questioned further about any link between the international service-learning event, and their status as a college student. The purpose of the latter was to bring forth information that would be applicable to activities of academic engagement.

Academic engagement is presented in terms of learning productivity that reflects the amount of effort devoted to educationally purposeful activities (engagement), and the extent to which students make progress toward important learning and personal goal development. Therefore, the focus of engagement is on what students do with institutional resources as well as what they gain from their experiences (Kuh, 2007; Farrell, 2006; and Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Engagement has both behavioral and psychological elements.

Behaviorally, student engagement includes interactions with faculty members, cooperating with peers in learning activities, actively investigating new and useful sources for learning, spending time studying, and other learning tasks. The psychological element of engagement includes student perceptions and attitudes concerning the norms of the institution (Gonyea, 2006). With specific regard to institutional resources and engagement of students, noted scholar George Kuh identified six concrete steps higher education institutions can implement to help students achieve. Strategies include 1) teach and instruct first year students on how to use college resources effectively by providing supplemental support mechanisms, such as first year seminars, more accurate course placement, intrusive advising, and participation in a living/learning community; 2) make the classroom the focus of the learning community which affords commuter and non-traditional student an opportunity to have more contact traditional students populations as well as faculty members; 3) connect every student in a meaningful way with some activity or positive role model; 4) remove obstacles to student engagement and success that involves abolishing, to the fullest extent possible, the *run around effect* or anything that resembles a muddled environment where students cannot obtain needed resource information; 5) develop networks and early warning systems to support students when they need help, and lastly; 6) make widely available programs and practices that work such as well designed internships, service-learning programs and study abroad activities (2007). It was acknowledged that no single teaching approach, classroom structure, or out of

class experience will be effective with every student, and such efforts will most likely not make up for inadequate academic preparation in elementary and secondary school. However, based upon empirical evidence, attentive and purposeful placement of the six categories was shown as a way to promote student engagement, and ultimately academic success.

Results abound, what a person would see as a result of student engagement encompass but are not limited to, effective student-faculty contact, cooperation among student peers, a welcoming respect for diverse talents and ways of learning, active learning that involves asking questions, seeking answers, and questioning pre-existing modes of knowledge, effective communication capacity, critical and active thinking, confirmed or confirmation of degree aspirations, enhanced cultural awareness, higher levels of civic engagement and applications of learning to various settings (Hu & Kuh, 2001; Huh, 201; 203; and Kuh & Associates, 2001).

Based upon the findings, and within the limits of this study, it is concluded that for the respondents in this study, transformational learning processes did occur and those processes can, in most cases, be linked backed to activities of social and academic engagement. In some instances the experience provided a means for the participants to gain more in-depth knowledge regarding the culture of Mexico, which was one of the program goals. However, in other instances the experience challenged the participants to question pre-conceived notions and/or assumptions related to the value of performing service in Mexico (enhanced civic minded responsibility), what the service recipients would select career

aspirations, and even how they saw themselves using the experience within and throughout their role as a college student (application of learning into other areas).

Beyond enhanced understanding and increased knowledge of the history and culture of the host country the study respondents took away from the experience a heightened level of meaning with regards to making a difference in the lives of those less fortunate. Whether the engagement was merely the fact that the respondents felt good enough about the experience to share details with family and friends, or that engagement took the form of increased personal and interpersonal skill development (i.e. effective organizational skills, better budgeting of finances, a willingness to manage time better, and increased communication ability and comfort while working as a member of a goal-directed team, participants in this study were more engaged in activities of higher education after the event.

In no instances had either of the individual cases performed international service-learning activities prior to that of the spring break event. Continual participation in civic minded activities was addressed throughout the literature as one of the many outcomes of educationally related service-learning programs. Scholars, Cress, Collier, and Reitnauer & Associates (2005) offer that for many students, their first strong interest in service-learning activities develops when they get to know someone whose life differs, dramatically, from their own. This early constructive engagement with others is said to be commonly found in those who go on to incorporate service and civic type activities into the

mainstream of their lives. In this study, all of the participants conveyed a desire to continually engage in service related activities. From a conclusive point of view, only two respondents showed implementation of her/his desires through participation a second year. Therefore, follow-up will provide a more accurate means to conclude if words turn into actions. Giles & Eyler (1998) highlight the need for additional research on service-learning outcomes related to students, faculty members, institutions, communities, and society in general, but particularly among diverse student populations. Research on service-learning approaches has come along way, but reinvestigation of past studies will provide confirming as well as expansive potential for future use of the approach.

Implications

Findings of the current study offer insights into the use of international service-learning approaches as a factor of social and academic engagement for minority students in college. Transformational effects of the approach appeared to be connected to a variety of components that included participation in cultural events and excursions, reflection activities, intimate connection with those in need or a particular individual in need, and fulfillment of the actual service work.

The actual service work involved painting, cleaning, tutoring, fund raising, playing with the children, performance as a therapy aide, event planning, and other things. More than anything the respondents conveyed the most powerful part of the experience as that of working directly with an individual or the group of service recipients overall. This is not to say that accomplishment was not received from other physical tasks, but clearly a connection for the respondents

was derived from intimate contact with those on the receiving end of the service event, and acknowledgement of what he or she could do in the role of a college student involved in a service-learning program. As such, contact through the service exercise with those less fortunate allowed the students to become more engaged in and with the concept of education as a factor of goal formulation and long term degree attainment. To illustrate, for some of the respondents their status as a *first generation* student did not afford them a prior context for which to associate such activities. Thus, the mere act of participating in an event of this nature was unimaginable prior to attendance. For others, seeing firsthand what a devoted group of students could do in the context of meeting the needs of a community appeared to make all of the difference with regard to their academic engagement because they used the experience as an impetus for personal development, which is a viable characteristic of student success.

Differences between minority and majority populations

One implication of the study is that outcomes of service-learning approaches for minority students are not dramatically different from outcomes achieved from participants who represent the majority Caucasian racial category. However, as was mentioned earlier, an increased level of comfort with regard to being more willing to engage peers within and throughout various academic and educational contexts appears to be an outcome that surpasses that of majority populations which represents a seemingly blurred outcome arrangement. Meaning, for the respondents in this study achievement in the areas of peer collaboration, enhanced perspective of diversity and changes in frames of

reference regarding the value and use of higher education appeared to be thoughts and behaviors not initially sustained, but after performance in the service-learning experience occurrences increased. Hence, information obtained from this study will be useful to practitioners, administrators, and curricular officials who struggle with the question of whether or not activities of this nature support student engagement, and if so, what outcomes would one expect to see. Further, researchers will be able to build upon this study and pursue new areas of inquiry related to the impact and outcomes of international service learning experiences on minority populations which, based upon the literature, is a needed addition.

Service-learning, student engagement, and retention

An implication of the study is related to the experience being required as one of many components of the Hispanic/Mexican-American support program offered at the college. In particular, all respondents performed the ISL experience during their first year of college, and they all returned to continue their academic journey as a sophomore. With a one-hundred percent college return rate beyond that of the first year for the nine respondents, one suggested implication is that the ISL program offers assurances of continued college attrition and conviction, although other factors are most assuredly of influence. Further research is certainly needed. But at the level of inference, a connection appears to exist between mandatory service-learning performance during the freshman year and participation in college there after.

Organization and structure of service-learning

Information obtained from study participants as well as a conversation with the director of the academic support unit would imply that the ISL program could benefit from increased organization and coordination. Moreover, deficits in the structure and coordination of the ISL program appear to create occasional situations of difficulty and confusion for some of the participants as well as the site leaders. The site leaders are not purposefully trained, and hence are not prepared, to handle extreme issues of student alcohol use/abuse or situations of physical fighting among peers. Although one sponsoring department, the Office of Study Abroad, offers a faculty handbook which addresses what to do in the instance of an emergency, a specific site leader handbook may afford the student leaders with an additional reference or resource when faculty are not present. Therefore, in many ways the present study validated the extreme value of the experience but some of the value may have been lost when an essential component, e.g., student site leaders, felt ineffective and unclear about what they should do in situations of peer turmoil or other behaviors of duress.

Constituent goals and service -learning

In addition to the implied suggestion of increased coordination and development of the program, the importance of being familiar with the ISL sites, the ISL organizational leaders at the various sites, and goals of the ISL program has direct implications for continued placement of students. Grusky (2000) concedes that differential goal formulation or the multiplicity of goals on the part of the student; faculty, the learning institution, and the receiving organization

pose significant issues and challenges when established under the guise of service-learning approaches. Further, if programs are to continue at a level of quality delivery, then differences between established goals will need to be brought into alignment, or most certainly addressed during periods of revision.

Students performing service in the program did address what one would consider a differentiation with regard to their respective goal(s), and that of the facility. Actually, several of the student cases did not know exactly what they were going to be doing, while others went with the goal of *having a good time*. In addition to student goal formation, it is not fully clear what goals the agencies had beyond that of receiving financial support (through student fund raising), and student help (labor and therapy assistance). Therefore, as suggested by Grusky, and implied as an issue worth future consideration from the students, a re-evaluation, revision, and/or broad-spectrum clarification of program goals appears to be needed for quality delivery and sustainability of the relationship between the university and constituent groups.

Academic service-learning versus community service

As established in the methods section, the ISL program was a collaborative initiative involving several units on campus as well as external partners. The campus infrastructure, units include the College Assistance Program where the majority of the students came from, an academic unit that offers the credit-based course(s) for the experience, the Office of Study Abroad which provides seed money in the form of pre and post-trip expenditures, and the

Office of Internationalizing Student Life that provides staffing assistance and a small portion of student attendees.

The academic focus of the ISL experience was associated with civic engagement (i.e., volunteerism) as an expression of leisure behavior in a cross-cultural context, issues of international social service organizations, and community leadership. It should be noted that respondents were not asked specifically to distinguish between academic service-learning and community service, but they were asked if the particular service learning activity helped them understand course material. Comments related to increased cross-cultural knowledge were addressed several times by nearly all of the respondents. However, specific reference to issues of the various international social service organizations (Ngo's), or community leadership was not mentioned within the boundaries of the respondent interviews or inclusive of documented entries by the students. This information implies that although the program was housed within an academic unit and established within the auspices of a credit based configuration, ISL course content did not appear to be associated with outcomes of the hosting academic curriculum, or there was inadequate conferral of information regarding the purpose for which the program was established.

Tapia, Gonzalez, & Elicegui (2006) make a differentiation between community service and academic service-learning programs. Academic service-learning programs were established as a formula of student participation + service + outcomes associated with curricular content while community service equated to student participation + service work. The latter, more than the former

appears to be reflective of what occurred based upon student responses. Nevertheless, outcomes were achieved but not necessarily associated with objectives identified under the auspices or specific competencies associated with the curriculum. Therefore, making the distinction between service-learning or community service, and possibly conferring the experience to that of a unit/department that more accurately reflects what occurs has implications of program clarification which again is a long standing issue of discourse in the field of service-learning.

Limitations

A primary characteristic of successful qualitative research is the researchers' ability to acknowledge and address issues of validity. In some instances, qualitative research has been scrutinized by various scholars because such strategies do not necessarily adhere to standard means of assurance. For example, whether a researcher can draw accurate and meaningful inferences from inquiry information is suggested as a weakness of qualitative studies (Campbell & Stanley, 1972). With that statement in mind, the following limitations are offered.

Generalizability

The current study explored transformational learning in the context of an international service-learning activity. In-depth interviews were performed with a sample of nine minority students at a large mid-western university. In addition to the interviews, journal/reflection documents were analyzed to further substantiate

information obtained. Maxwell (1992) refers to generalizability as the extent to which one can extend the account of a particular situation or population to other persons, times, or settings than those directly studied. Further, with particular regard to generalizability and many qualitative studies, results are not generalizable beyond the population for which it was initially constructed. That being the case, this study is limited in such a capacity.

Respondent cases

Resource constraints will naturally produce limitations for any research study. Therefore, another limitation of this study relates to the small number of cases. First, while saturation seemed to be reached within all of the cases, including more participants might have allowed the researcher to capture the possibility of additional or divergent viewpoints and experiences. For example, three of the four in-depth cases presented were female. Hence, there is a possibility that male student experiences were not fully portrayed at a sufficient level. Securing resources to expand the study would potentially decrease the limiting capacity of a small sample, thus allowing for increased generalizability.

Respondent and researcher bias

Participant leanings and motivations is an additional limitation for consideration. Specifically, some of the respondents clearly had prior conversations with past ISL participants regarding what the experience would be like. There is the possibility that the sample respondents tended to highlight the positive aspects of the experience in lieu of a desire to encourage continual support for the program. At the same time, some participants responded to the

recruitment email with what appeared to be a strong desire to tell their story, which could mean that bias toward the program or service-learning approaches in general had already ensued. In response to the potential limitation, efforts were made by the researcher to corroborate data across the data collection methods of interviews as well as document reviews, member checking, and consultation with a qualitative research expert to assess, in part, my ability to analyze and correctly portray information received.

As with any interviewer/interviewee session, a researcher must be aware of what the respondent says versus what he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear. In such instances, valid inferences may be called into question. Utilizing multiple means of data collection may help resolve such a limitation, but also awareness on the part of the researcher to not coerce or present predetermined inferences will help. With consideration of the researcher/respondent relationship being a possible limitation, the researcher utilized all means at my disposal to not subject personal thoughts, views or opinions upon the respondents. However, there is always a chance that my enthusiasm for knowledge of the impact of the experience on the students may have inadvertently influenced what was said. For that reason, what the researcher was told versus what the respondent thought he/she wanted the researcher to say is addressed as a potential limitation as well.

The researcher assumed that the transformational learning processes would be connected to academic engagement via the ISL experience. In most cases, my expectations aligned with the findings. Nevertheless, those

expectations and biases shaped how I examined, understood, and described participant accounts. Once more, incorporation of member checking and consultation with a qualitative researcher helped in regard to that area of potential weakness.

Timing and the cases

With regard to the portrayal of the ISL experiences by the respondents, timing is yet another limitation of consideration. Respondents were reflecting on their experiences with accounts of the occurrence that were one to two years prior to the interview period. There could be many, if not endless variables for which an alternative explanation of the results would appear likely or inherently connected. To address this limitation, again, through the corroboration of the interview data with the document data, in three of the four cases, respondent comments was checked by the respective individuals to elicit constructive feedback and acknowledgment of accurate interpretation.

Other factors of impact

For this study, patterns of meanings with regard to the ISL event were most important to this researcher and connected to how the students transformed after the event as well as how the impact was to be linked to activities of academic engagement in the future. A final limitation could result from other confounding or unknown mitigating factors such as the cognitive development of the respondent, or the setting/environment, as well as the time frame for which the service takes place (e.g., during the spring break session

versus a whole semester of service-learning activity). Addressing the limitations to the fullest extent possible would be the course of action for follow-up studies.

Recommendations

The international service learning activity is a required part of the Hispanic/Mexican-American support services program at the college. Clearly, further research on all aspects of the program should be taken into consideration as a basis for the continuation of the program as well as development of policies and procedures that support student learning outcomes related to approaches of this nature. With that in mind, the following recommendations are offered.

Based upon the relatively new status of the program (e.g., less than six years) and the vast amount of information that was retrieved from student input, participants of the program clearly see the need and the value of the experience. Therefore, a resounding affirmation for the continuation of service-learning activities of this nature appears warranted. However, ascertaining a more clearly focused impact of the experience on the participants necessitates further research if international service-learning activities are to be truly beneficial in addressing local as well as global constituent issues. Hence, additional inquiry will add to the existing base of knowledge.

Much work goes into the planning, development, and coordination of service-learning activities. As such, multiple levels of involvement must be considered. Levels of involvement include that of the student, the institution, and the receiving agency. To increase the likelihood that all parties harvest reciprocal benefits, communication appears to be one recommendation for future program

directives. Increasing lines of communication for all parties would help decrease what could be looked upon as one-sided goal attainment on the part of any constituent group. For example, when an educational institution decides to extend its' mission through service-learning activities, it would be of utmost importance to allow the receiving agency to communicate how they see the service work addressing short comings of funding deficits or financial inadequacies. Whereby the receiving agency is kept in the loop through communication, it is thought that discourse may be decreased in lieu of all parties (institutional, student oriented, and receiving agency) working collaboratively instead of singularly for the common good of those most in need. Therefore, from an unequivocal point of view, direct communication and the re-evaluation of goals for all constituent groups is recommended for the future.

This study raised questions about domestic versus international service-learning placement of the students. Although this particular international service activity currently functions outside of the United States, investigation into domestically-based service programs would be worthy of thought and pursuit as well. Large numbers of communities and community agencies within the United States that need help. With the service-learning component assigned as a requirement of the academic support services offered to the minority students, it would seem beneficial to present the students with the option of attendance in either a domestic or an internationally-based program, so they may address community needs closer to the country in which they reside. This is not to say that the value of the international experience would not continue to fulfill the

student's intellectual growth, global connectivity, professional development, or relationship to their ancestral heritage, but the outcomes of increased learning from domestically-based cross-cultural experiences could prove to be an added benefit to student learning and engagement. After all, Rhoads (1998) established similar benefits from a domestically based program that was initiated in Washington, D.C to help individuals and families as a homeless shelter.

Based upon the participation of more than three hundred former participants from Hispanic-American support services program, ascertainment of follow-up information is another recommendation. Comments from students who performed the ISL event and that of the director of the Hispanic/Mexican academic support program indicated that in some instances other students from the support program withdrew from college after participation in the event. Currently, no formal follow-up with ISL participants beyond that of the first year is in place. Hence, as a potential factor of accountability regarding associative outcomes of the program, follow-up with students would, in this researcher's view, enhance program delivery and secure for institutional administrators the feasibility of continued support for placement of students in the Mexico service-learning event.

Directions for Future Research

The present study was an exploration of transformational learning in the context of a service-learning approach for minority students. Although the literature addresses multiple outcomes of service-learning approaches in general, limited studies with minority student populations have occurred.

Therefore, the following comments are offered as future research directives.

Future research on the impact of service-learning approaches might benefit from expansion of the study to encompass additional means of data collection, such as observations in conjunction with interviews, class discussions, and written reflection/journal documents. This may provide supplemental meanings, themes, and/or an intensified understanding with regard to how minority students further utilize the teaching and learning approach as a factor of academic engagement. Neumann (1996) concurs with comments of the need for future research to include alternative methodological designs such as longitudinal studies, or comparisons between groups.

Using transformative learning in the capacity of understanding what students reap as a result of their service-learning participation is worthy of further research that particularly addresses factors of culture and context. This study can provide some direction, but the extent to which minority students transform and then become engaged in higher education clearly needs further exploration. Taylor (2000) interjects that influences of culture and context have been only marginally looked in how they influence transformative learning. Further analysis would provide information related to how certain groups respond and make meaning of significant experiences in life (p. 311). Thus this dissertation offers a valuable way to share not only in-depth case study documentation on how students experience the process of transformational learning. It also provides educators with useful conceptual information for understanding how minority

students transform *after* such experiences which, for this sample, reflects a bit more of the cultural tenet of transformation.

Further research on the role of the community organization in the learning of the student would not only bring forth additional information related to another constituent party, but also work towards addressing long-standing issues of ambiguous and unequivocal goal structures that are represented in the literature. Thus, to learn at an in-depth level, why the organization needs the services of students, and to identify what they see as their role as a learning community would provide advanced understanding.

In summary, there is a significant amount of research on outcomes associated with service-learning; however, there are few empirical studies that specifically explore the impact of the approach upon minority students. This study provided supplemental knowledge and evidence that much like peer counterparts from majority ethnic groups, minority students reap multiple benefits from performance in service-learning activities; the impact of the experience does further engage them in higher education activities.

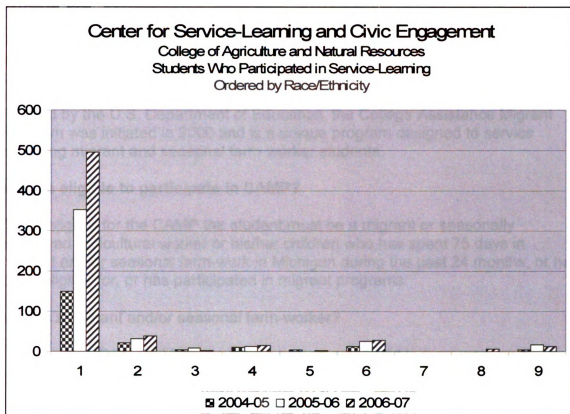
Notwithstanding the short but concentrated program configuration, the ISL experience did make a difference for the students who participated. Therefore, information obtained will be useful to policy makers, administrators, and faculty who question the value, long-term or otherwise, of having students perform service-learning activities in light of the vast amount of energy that goes into program development and coordination. Whether the students in this study embrace long-term civic minded responsibility with supplemental actions remains

to be seen, but at least during one week of the year, in this case spring break, students “*made a difference*”.

By documenting stories and testimonials, the reader was provided with a more holistic view of the transformational nature of the experience. The case presentation highlighted the complex relationship, of the role of non-cognitive variables on minority student engagement while in college. Non-cognitive factors such as family and peer support, communication to and with individuals outside of one’s sphere of comfort, self-esteem, finances, and leadership skills all resonated throughout the respondent comments. Again, the utility of the information obtained will act as a guide for service-learning practitioners, faculty, and administrators who have an inherent desire to develop domestic and international programs of a similar nature.

Appendix A

CSLSE Table/Groupings



- 1 = White/Caucasian (Non-Hispanic)
- 2 = Black/African American (Non-Hispanic)
- 3 = Chicana/o, Mexican-American
- 4 = Hispanic
- 5 = American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 6 = Asian/Pacific Islander
- 7 = Other (Not used any longer)
- 8 = Not reported (Question was left blank)
- 9 = Not required (Question was not asked)

Appendix B

CAMP information

What is CAMP?

The College Assistance Migrant Program is an educational program that offers individuals with a migrant or seasonal farm work background, a unique opportunity to begin an undergraduate program. This program offers the best conditions in order to help the student succeed in a university environment. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the College Assistance Migrant Program was initiated in 2000 and is a unique program designed to service incoming migrant and seasonal farm-worker students.

Who is eligible to participate in CAMP?

To be eligible for the CAMP the student must be a migrant or seasonally employed agricultural worker or his/her children who has spent 75 days in migrant and/or seasonal farm-work in Michigan during the past 24 months; or has been eligible for, or has participated in migrant programs.

Who is a migrant and/or seasonal farm-worker?

- Seasonal farm-worker: a person employed in farm-work on a temporary or seasonal (not year-round) basis.
- Migrant farm-worker: a seasonal farm-worker whose employment requires travel which keeps the farm-worker from returning to a permanent home within the same day.

Complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Agree to participate in the required tutorial, academic, and cultural programs and activities as designated by the CAMP staff.

Services:

The CAMP program collaborates with campus faculty, student services, and community-based agencies to improve educational opportunities for migrant and seasonal farm-worker students.

In addition you will receive:

- Assistance with completing all the necessary forms for admission, financial aid and university services.

- Help securing on-campus housing. Assistance in class registration and selection. Introduction to the support staff at Michigan State University.
- Assistance in developing a support system that will improve your study skills, along with learning essential college survival skills.
- Securing tutors that will assist you in reviewing course materials.
- Limited supplemental financial assistance for books, supplies, health insurance and transportation may be available to qualified candidates

Admission

CAMP students are admitted for fall and spring semesters. Our program of recruitment continues through the entire calendar year, however, early application is strongly encouraged as space is limited.

Application Process

How do I apply to the University CAMP Program?

Each applicant must complete a CAMP application form before he/she will be considered. To request an application packet please contact the CAMP recruitment coordinator toll-free at 1-866-432-9900. Also the application can be downloaded.

Each applicant must complete the followings requirements:

1. University CAMP Interest Letter & Checklist
2. University Application for Admission
3. CAMP Application for Admission - online
4. FAFSA

Please understand that each student's financial aid packet may include federal grants, MSU student aid grants, and work study. MSU CAMP Staff and a MSU Financial Aid Officer will determine each student's financial aid package that will supplement the federal financial aid award. Please understand that students are NOT guaranteed a full scholarship through MSU CAMP. Please mail the university and the CAMP Application together to:

**Recruitment Coordinator
CAMP
C-249 Holden Hall
East Lansing, MI 48825**

Appendix C

Interview Guide: Questions

1. Interview process started with explanation of the purpose for the study, followed by reaffirmation of confidentiality, review of the consent form and asked for permission to tape?

2. Please tell you came to be a college student here at the university?

3. Now, tell me about your service learning experience in Mexico? (i.e. what kind of things did you do; where was the service performed, etc...)

4. While thinking back to the time before you left for the trip, what assumptions did you have about the experience?

The Culture:

The people:

The service experience:

5. After you participated in the experience, were your prior assumptions true or false?

Please explain:

6. Are there any events or incidents that had an impact on you? Or is there a story that stands out in your mind as something you would like to share?

7. As a result of your service learning experience in Mexico, can you apply any part of your involvement in that experience to your educational experience(s) as a college student?

8. What would you say was one of the most memorable parts of the experience for you?

9. After you came back, were there any memorable moments that were connected to the trip but applied to your status as a college student?

10. Overall all, what would you say has been the "impact" of the experience upon you?

11. In what ways have you changed as a result of the experience. (i.e.: personally, academically, politically, habits, lifestyle, etc?)

12. Is there any part of the experience you would have done differently as a participant?

13. If given the opportunity, would you participate again in such an experience, why or why not?

14. In your own words, why should students engage in service-learning activities of this nature?

**15. What could have occurred to make the experience better for you?
Or what types of program improvements would you like to see
implemented in the service-learning course?**

Appendix D

Consent Form

International Service Learning Study

Student Consent Form

PURPOSE: We would like you to participate in a study of international service learning programs here at the University. The goal of this study is to identify how participation in service-learning activities in an international context, helps students academically, socially, and personally. Information from this study will not include personally identifying information. Further, information obtained may be used for the completion of dissertation requirements, or evaluative criteria for project administrators. General information from this study also will be used to provide reports for the community, and may be published in academic journals.

BENEFITS: Information from this evaluation will provide many valuable information for future service-learning programs and activities, as well as information related to student learning in general. For example, evaluation data can be used to help identify a program's strengths and weaknesses so that future programming can be made better. Further, the University can use the evaluation data to provide evidence that it is providing valuable opportunities for its students. As such, the evidence gathered from your comments, can be used to request additional funds from federal agencies or foundations to expand current programs so that more students have the opportunity to study abroad and help others.

Participant interviews: To help identify the positive effects of this program, we are asking you to comment on your experiences while participating in the Mexico international service-learning activity. The interview session is expected to last about 45 minutes, and we will ask you questions about your beliefs, attitudes, activities, and actual service-learning experiences.

Session format: During the session, there is the possibility that a pair of observers/evaluators will be participating to get a sense of themes and comments related to each session member. The evaluators are trained to observe general trends in the positive quality of interpersonal interactions between the research participants.

PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY: Your privacy is my top concern. As such, I will **NOT** ask you for your name or identifying information (e.g., Social Security Number, PID Number, etc.). At all times, you have the option to not answer a question without any penalty.

RISK AND DISCOMFORT: There are no significant risks in participating in this study. There is the possibility that you may find some questions embarrassing, or

that presented are sensitive. For example, there may be a question related to your academic progress after participation in the international service-learning session. Again, you have the right not to answer any or all questions asked during the focus session. To minimize any discomfort, I have included only those questions most important to this study. If, for any reason, you are not comfortable answering a question, please feel free to say, "I pass".

REFUSAL OR WITHDRAWAL OF PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw from the session at any time for any reason. There are no negative consequences for not participating, skipping questions, or withdrawing from this session at any time.

RESEARCH CONTACT INFORMATION: If you would like to discuss any questions related to this study, please contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Reitu Mabokela (phone: 517-353-6676), regular mail: 425 Erickson Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a focus group participant, or are dissatisfied at any time with any aspect of this study, you may contact - anonymously, if you wish, Peter Vasilenko, Ph.D., Director of the Human Research Protection Programs (HRPP) (517) 355-2180, fax: (517) 432-4503, regular mail: 202 Olds Hall, East Lansing, MI 48824.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

If you would like to participate in this important focus group session, to present and discuss your presence in the

Mexico International Service-learning program, please complete the information below.

INFORMED CONSENT: Please complete the "yes" circle and sign below if you agree to participate in this study.

If you do not agree, please complete the "no" circle.

PLEASE MARK ONE BUBBLE →

☐ Yes, **I AGREE** to participate in this study

☐ No, **I DO NOT AGREE** to participate in this study

Your Signature

Your Name (please print clearly)

Appendix E

Table 7: Total Respondent Comments

OUTCOME(S)	Dias	Dove	Celia	Frank
An empowered sense of self	I've changed, I set my priorities and manage my time better	It was the first time in my life That I had done something like that... As a result of that experience, I'd Like to do another similar experience And possibly acquire leadership skills to be a site leader.	I liked going to Teotichan (I)...that was awesome. I had never been there. Me and a peer were standing at the top And I thought...look at us, two little Mexicans standing on top of a pyramid. Last year, I would have never thought about myself being in Puebla. I'd go back. After I came back, I started talking to more people. My group of friends grew, and it was not just the same nationalities. It was different ethnicities.	The experience allowed me to get out of my comfort zone. I'm a shy person, and I usually don't warm up to people...but when I was in Puebla, I just talked to people more because you have to work with others.
Increased self confidence in New roles and relationships	<p>◊ I spent time getting to know people in my group. We had not met before, so I encouraged and motivated them to keep going.</p> <p>◊ We didn't think we would have enough time to finish the project? But I told them to keep going.</p> <p>◊ The wall took us forever to paint, and I'm afraid of heights. But we got it done, and that was a big accomplishment.</p>	<p>I didn't work with children before, so dealing with them was a completely different experience...now I have more confidence with working with children.</p> <p>Dealing with all the people around Me...it was a good experience because I'd never had so many people who Were my age doing something good For the community in the same place.</p>	<p>It was a good feeling to know that I was there, and helped. That was a big high.</p> <p>I would do it again, I would want to see the children again, and spend more time. Maybe two weeks.</p>	<p>I wanted to go the second time to work on my Leadership skills by being a program leader...I felt as though the group could have done more to fund raise, so as a site leader, I could do more to get the students involved.</p>

Table 7 continued

OUTCOME(S)	NAME			
	Dias	Dove	Celia	Frank
Changes in the way the learner sees him/herself and his/her Life assumptions	<p>◊ The experience changed my way of thinking about those in need. ◊ I'm going to be a site leader next year. I didn't really think about any of this stuff {service-learning} until I went to Puebla. So, next year I thought I would try being a site leader for Merida.</p>	<p>It {the experience} helped me to develop me own perspective about things and helped me be more open minded with people. One situation with a little boy made me Think that sometimes we can be very Objective and lose site of other things That can be just as important or more...</p>	<p>I didn't want to go because I thought it was going to be the same thing I've seen before in Mexico. Dirt everywhere, dirt on your shoes, dirt on your clothes, small little houses...I didn't want to go. But once I got there, I was really amazed, it was different. I was wrong, and I'm glad I went, it was awesome. I was really closed minded. Now I see that we take a lot of Things for granted like parents. They are not going to Be here for ever. I think differently now that I have Worked with those kids who don't have parents.</p>	<p>I don't take things for granted as much now...like parents And family because some of those kids didn't have parents so I thought about that allot. I have more confidence in being a leader or being willing to step up as a leader... my peers recognized me as a leader and that made me feel good. And now, I'm more willing to step out of my comfort zone.</p>
Increased functional strategies And resources for taking action And gaining control over one's life	<p>◊After seeing those kids, well, I expect more of myself now. I have higher expectations. ◊Last year was not such a good year for me with academics. I could have done better. But now I manage my time, and always think – “is there something I need to be doing?”</p>	<p>I think the experience helped me by not letting expectations block you from learning like not looking at whether the individual Was young or old or this or that because you Can still learn something from them.</p>	<p>I'm more open minded now. Before, I use to think that all white people came from the same place, and that people who were from Dominican Republic were just African Americans. Now, I talk to more people.</p>	

Appendix F

Respondent Journal remarks

Celia

- I will never forget today! The father took us to the school where the children go. When we got there they [the children] were having recess and playing games, but the director wanted us to speak with the children about how important it was to stay in school and to be successful in the world. All of the children were great and that made me think about how lucky I was to be in the United States.
- There are some things that a person takes for granted that other people want and I learned from the boys to not take things for granted as much . . . I have a different view of my parents.
- The week seemed short to me. I got attached to a little boy named Raul. I heard his story about his mother leaving him . . . that made me feel sad.
- This week is unforgettable. I will cherish it for life. It ended up being a huge part of my life that I will never forget.
- After the trip the group [service group] from the boys' site would hang out and talk about things. This is an accomplishment for me because I usually don't get out of my comfort zone.

Dove

- This was the first night and it was an awesome night because we went to a club and there was music and the show girls performed carnival dances all around the dance floor. I had never seen something like that in Mexico.

- Today we visited Cholula. Beautiful place! It was amazing to have living evidence of such a beautiful and intelligent culture.
- I am very afraid of meeting the children. I feel like I am not good with kids – yet I can't wait to see them.
- [next day] I expected to see orphan children suffering in bad conditions. I was scared that I wouldn't be able to reach out to them, to treat them with sensitivity and the care that they deserve.
- I have to say that I cried today! It was fascinating to see all that the kids can do. Some of the kids are very bright but just need physical assistance.
- Today I have learned to respect that fact that just because someone has a disability they have intelligence and other capabilities.

Frank

- At the beginning of the spring semester I was anxiously waiting for spring break . . . couldn't stop thinking about the ways that I was going to help others and what they were going to think about me [status of student site leader].
- We were all total strangers [peer group performing service in Puebla, Mexico] . . . as a result of the large group socializing between the group members was not a factor at all. Our group got along very well and we became a family . . . our family became closer every day.
- The children that we worked with at the CP [cerebral palsy site] were very special and I feel a lovable relationship with them.

- A staff person told me that when we [the college students] are here it is the only time that the kids can go out on field trips and watching them laugh and have a good time was contribution enough.
- Before alternative spring break I would judge the book by its cover . . . after the experience I learned to value the person no matter the cover . . . I learned to like people for who they are.
- This experience of a lifetime has affected me in a way that will help me use my determination for my academic goals. Even though last semester was a bad experience [grade wise] this experience helped me become a little more responsible and realize that I have to put my full effort into what I want to accomplish in order to get the best outcome.

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