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Kimberly D. Stokes

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Connecting to history through service-learning: A qualitative case study investigating student engagement in core history courses.

by Kimberly D. Stokes

This dissertation has been read and approved as fulfilling the partial requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Leadership.

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CONNECTING TO HISTORY THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING: A
QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT IN CORE HISTORY COURSES

by

Kimberly D. Stokes

A Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Education
in Curriculum and Leadership
(CURRICULUM)

Columbus State University
Columbus, GA

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Julia Myrtis Stokes, whose love and support I have always known. I love you, Grandma.

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To my committee, Dr. Victor Salazar, Dr. Chris Garretson, and Dr. Doug Tompson, I extend a heartfelt thank you, which does not seem like enough to say, but I hope you all know just how much I appreciate your efforts in helping me through this doctoral process. Dr. Salazar, thank you for your insight and patience as you guided me through the scholarly writing process. Dr. Garretson, I think we both know the methodology section of this study would not have happened without our many consultations and your direction; thank you for helping me make sense of my data (and for letting me raid your candy jar!). Dr. Tompson, I have so much to thank you for, chiefly for allowing me to be a faculty member of the History and Geography Department at Columbus State University. You and the other history and geography professors have always made me feel like an included member of the department, which means a lot to me, and I am grateful.

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ABSTRACT

Surveys have shown that students are not enthusiastic about taking history in college; some describe the discipline as boring and unnecessary. College is a setting where students are investing in themselves, exploring new knowledge to build a career, and gaining insight into the person they want to become in the future. Learning history through a traditional lecture method where memorization of names, dates, and events seems to be the norm is not appealing to students. Universities, promoting the thought that a well-rounded education is beneficial, commonly add history to the collection of general education core courses that are required for degree completion. With this outlook, students enter history classrooms with a 'check-box' mentality and do not put much interest into what they may learn from the course. Using an experiential learning theory, this qualitative case study sought to find out to what degree students in a higher education U.S. history core course would be engaged with and learn history content by performing a service-learning project that was linked to the course's objectives. The data consisted of project assignments including participant diaries, auto-photograph presentations, and virtual discussion questions. The results of the study found that through the experience of service-learning students made new discoveries about themselves and what they liked or found useful. Students self-reported a connection to history. Because of their service-learning experience, they reported that the project was useful to their learning of history, with some changing their attitudes about the utility of the discipline. This study serves as a model for history instructors on how using experiential learning strategies in the classroom can motivate student learning. Also, servant leadership professionals can use this study to promote discipline-specific service-learning endeavors.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

“I just want you to know how inspired I am by your teaching. I am so excited to do the project you assigned” (R. Hinzeman, personal communication, February 1, 2017). Educators hope that students find classes meaningful and that what they learn carries them for a lifetime. The project to which this student was referring was a service-learning project aimed at reiterating the concept of civic responsibility. The project was part of a core U.S. history course. The challenge for educators is to find classroom experiences that will stimulate learning in all students. However, college students are complex, so courses that address various modes of learning are more attractive to students. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), through their research of college students, concluded “...the impact of college is largely determined by the individual’s quality of effort and level of involvement in both academic and non-academic activities” (p. 610).

Teaching a liberal arts course in higher education, such as history, can be tricky. Many scholars consider the idea of taking a series of courses that promote learning for learning’s sake as impractical and a waste of time (Leef, 2017). Sam Wineburg is the director of the Stanford History Education Group and professor of education and history at Stanford University. In his book, *Why Learn History (When It’s Already on Your Phone)*, Wineburg (2018) explains that a survey was conducted in the mid-1990s that asked about “1500 adults to pick a word or phrase to describe their high school history

classes; the word most frequently chosen was '*boring*' (p. 26). Most students think there is something wrong with the way professors teach history (Fowlkes, 2010). The most widely used form of history instruction is a lecture, textbook, and coverage, or 'sit and get' for students (Cutler, 2014). However, as a discipline considered part of the liberal arts, history enables students to become free, autonomous thinkers who can question assumptions, form arguments, and think critically about issues (Hascher, 2015). Learning history involves gaining the development of critical, self-reflective, and analytical skills (Spiegel, 2008). Not learning history risks a lack of understanding of the human condition (Dunn, Mitchell, & Ward, 2016). This study will examine a core higher education history course that uses a service-learning project to find out how the project engages students with history content and what, if any, changes are observed to their interest in learning history.

A recent study revealed that when students are involved in their learning, then learning becomes meaningful and provides a basis on which to build more learning (Pak, 2018). Involving students in learning is not new. John Dewey, one of the most significant educational thinkers of the 20th century, formulated the idea of learning by doing (Lavery, 2016). Putting this theory into practice in the discipline of history, Kolb and Kolb (2005) explained that experiential learning motivates students to learn history and link past events with happenings today. Using service-learning in the history classroom allows students to focus on and encounter real-world problems, such as homelessness, poverty, and the tolerance of others unlike themselves. The meaningfulness and relevance of the service-learning activity motivate students to make society a better place by helping others. When students are made aware of community

problems, they are, in effect, experiencing historical problems. Harkavy and Donovan (2000) explain the concept this way:

The complex, interrelated real-world problems of real communities are, of course, historical problems, which are profoundly shaped by past events and experiences. Students “discover” this through their reading, activity, and reflection, and they also “discover” that historical knowledge is essential for understanding and effective action.

Moreover, service-learning engages students in active doing, thus providing an opportunity for them to put their ideas into practice and make a contribution. It provides a starting point for history, a present situation with immediate and pressing problems. (p. 10)

The significance of this study was related to the improvement of the scholarship of teaching and learning. Through the rigorous study of student learning and with an outcome of finding new and measurable teaching strategies and practices, the emerging discipline of the scholarship of teaching and learning is being taken more seriously as a form of intellectual work (DePaul University, 2019). This study used a qualitative case study design with an online U.S. history course at a southeastern public university where an instructor used a service-learning project as part of the learning activities in the course. A review of the recent literature looked at the different methods used to teach history in post-secondary courses. The literature review focused on how students responded to learning through methods and strategies, including service-learning, which showed that learning occurs when students engage in service-learning; however, that learning is self-reported through reflection journals. This study sought to find out the degree of influence

using a service-learning project that was linked to a course objective in U.S. history engaged students and helped them to learn, or to relate to history.

Statement of the Problem

The higher education experience for undergraduate students typically begins with two-year matriculation of general courses that universities gear toward providing a well-rounded education (University of Chicago, 2019). These courses consist of a core curriculum of arts, letters, and sciences, making up the foundation of a liberal arts education (Jiang, 2014). According to Rudolph (1977), a classical curriculum and the study of liberal arts in the United States dates back to the founding of Harvard College in 1636. Liberal arts core curricula, which consists typically of general courses relating to the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, are needed to educate citizens broadly (Jiang, 2014). The humanities is a collection of subjects that seek to explain the human condition, or experience, through thought, understanding, interpretation, and documentation; history is a subject that falls under the umbrella of humanities (Stanford University, n.d.). However, students view the core curriculum in higher education with a checklist mentality, as some students consider the required core courses as something they need to get through, or boxes that need to be checked off (Flaherty, 2018; McMurtrie, 2018). Duthie (2012) explains that the study and practice of learning history is a “highly complex process, involving a wide range of sophisticated intellectual skills” (p. 24). However, a survey conducted in the 1990s revealed that the most common words U.S. citizens used to describe history class were boring and irrelevant (Erekson, 2013). According to Sprau (2001), the traditional history classroom has “five pillars of history instruction: lectures, note-taking, texts, tests, and term papers” (p. 2). This type of

traditional learning can produce a boredom-emotion that can adversely affect the success of a student in the class and can be a risk factor of achievement in other discipline areas (Pekrun, 2006; Weiner, 1985). Boredom with subject matter appears in student feelings depending on how and when instructors present content in the classroom; “Boredom arises from being over- or under-challenged, unchanging academic routines, meaningless classroom tasks, and lack of involvement” (Parker, Perry, Chipperfield, Hamm, & Pekrun, 2018, p. 180). Experiential learning is a teaching method used to engage students with classroom content.

Similarly, service-learning is a strategy of experiential learning. A review of the literature revealed that service-learning in academic courses increased student interest in the content. Several academic courses were shown to use service-learning for this purpose, most notably in history courses as the course content covered civic education (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). However, this research focused on how linking a service-learning project to a course objective affected students when they reflected on their service-learning experience about learning a historical concept. This study sought to fill a gap in the literature by examining the degree to which the service-learning experience helped students learn and engage with specific objectives taught in the U.S. history content. The researcher intended to address the problem of boredom and disengagement of students by investigating the impact of a service-learning project on students who were enrolled in a core U.S. history course.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the scholarship of teaching and learning in regard to higher education history pedagogy. Instructors of higher education should

gear classroom activities toward preparing learners for future life experience, including career choices. Preparation for jobs includes not only knowledge but also abilities that allow for the interaction with people.

Experiential learning activities expose students to real-world situations and serve as a testing ground that exposes learners to people interactions. Experiential theorists, such as Kolb (1984), recommend setting up a link between classroom learning activities and the events students may encounter in the future. He explains that it is necessary to "translate abstract ideas of academia into the concrete, practical realities of these peoples' lives" (p. 6). Kolb (as cited in Beaudin, 1995) "believes that students are not adequately prepared for the workplace. He suggests that instructors in higher education design lessons that incorporate authentic learning practices that will help prepare students for real-world experiences" (p. 3).

Theoretical Framework

According to Weinberg (2004), traditionally, learning history in higher education involved a teaching strategy where students were lectured to and expected to learn facts that they could then recite on a multiple-choice test. With this method, instructors reduce mastery of historical concepts to scores on a multiple-choice test. Absent from this approach is the ability of the instructor to measure the depth at which students are engaged in and mastering the learning of history (p. 1401).

This research focused on using an experiential learning strategy (i.e., service-learning) to engage students with historical content in a higher education core U.S. history course. The researcher used an experiential learning theory as a framework for the study. Experiential learning theorists describe learning as "the process whereby

knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41).

Participants of this study were students in an online U.S. history to 1865 course. At the beginning of the semester, students were asked to select a group based on five broad themes (each linked to a course objective) that the instructor will teach in the course. The themed-groups related to interest areas of service-learning. The groupings only served as a gathering of like-minded people; each student independently performed a service-learning project.

Action is the core of experiential learning. In this case, students did not merely think about abstract ideas of history, but put action into their learning. John Dewey (1938) conceptualized the idea of moving from a more formal abstract education to one that is experienced-based. Building from his idea, students in this study chose their group based on their interest in history and the type of service-learning they chose to perform and then reflected on their experience. The researcher was interested in knowing to what degree there was impact on the student’s learning experience by conducting service-learning and connecting that experience to specific historical concepts. In addition the researcher looked at how the experience of service-learning affected the student and how the student transferred their service-learning experience to their knowledge of U.S. history. The emphasis of the research was between the experience of serving and the possible emotional relationship that the student developed and connected with as they learned history. This aspect of the study connected to the humanist paradigm that is associated with the experiential learning theory. The theoretical framework for this study

focused on the action and reflection of students in the study and reported the emotional effect, if any.

Learning by doing is the foundation of experiential learning. The experiential learning theory, developed by the works of John Dewey, highlighted that experience was critical to the learning process (Kolb, 1984). Experiential theorists of the 21st century expanded on the idea by asserting that learning occurs when learners can combine ideas with experience and then connect the experience to their lives (Boud, Cohen, & Walker, 1993; Gass, 1992; Keeton & Tate, 1978).

According to Lewis and Williams (1994), David Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning is most influential in terms of linking theory into practice. Kolb describes this theory as a process that asks learners to participate in an experience and then to reflect on that experience while linking it to experiences. Kolb explains, "In the process of learning, one moves in varying degrees from actor to observer, and from specific involvement to general analytic detachment" (Kolb, 1984, p. 31). See Figure 1 displays Kolb's model for the learning cycle. Kolb and Fry (1975) describe the learning cycle as, "(1) here-and-now experience followed by (2) collection of data and observations about that experience. The data are then (3) analyzed, and the conclusions of this analysis are feedback to the actors in the experience for their use in the (4) modification of their behavior and choice of new experiences" (pp. 33-34).

Kolb's Model for the Learning Cycle

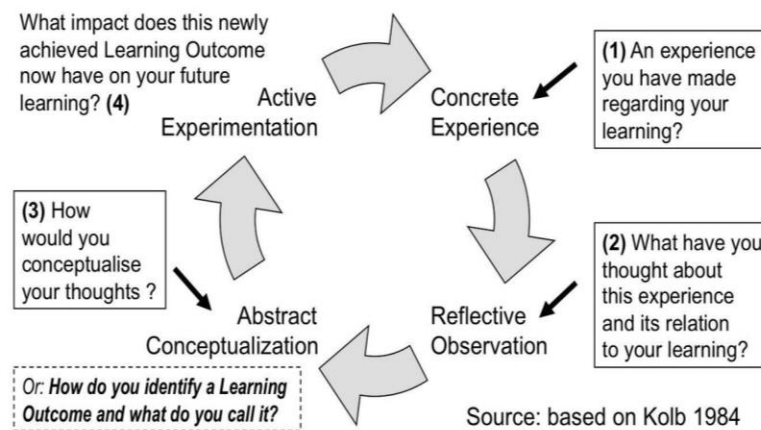


Figure 1. Kolb's Model for the Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984).

Beaudin (1995) describes Kolb's module process as a *conical helix* - explaining that wherever the learner begins, the instructor guides as the learner moves up and expands their knowledge. The Kolb model in experiential learning is best suited as a framework for the research of this study. Learners will engage in a service-learning project and then reflect on their experience while linking back to past historical experiences. Hocking (2008) explains Kolb's non-linear model as that of a continuous cycle of learning, allowing learners in the first two stages to solve problems in real-life settings and reflect upon their perceptions of the experience. In the third stage, learners were solving problems and, in the final stage, uses the solutions in the same or new settings testing for viability. Aiding learners in their journey of experience will be their own human emotions and feelings. Burnard (1989) explains that the humanistic approach focuses on the emotional part of the individual's experience. Beaudin (1995) states, "Experiential learning stresses humanistic values in emphasizing that feelings are part of the learning process, as well as cognition" (p. 11).

In addition to a humanistic approach, experiential learning theory incorporates the components of both action and reflection. Brookfield (1986) looks at action and reflection as a process of exploration of a problem and supports Kolb's theory of continuous learning through a spiral of activity and reflection. He states, "this notion of praxis (action and reflection) as alternating and continuous engagements by teachers and learners in exploration, action, and reflection is central to adult learning" (p. 15).

In a study where students were asked to undergo a service-learning experience while choosing an area of history and then finding a connection between the two, experiential learning theory with a humanistic approach is a logical fit. The foundation of experiential learning theory is these two components – action and reflection. The first makes the participant an active part of the learning process, while the latter facilitates learning with special consideration given to the emotional impact the learner experiences.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in the study and are defined below:

- *Authentic learning* – situations involving a real-world experience that instructors present to learners (Rule, 2006).
- *Civic responsibility* – the responsibility of citizenship through active participation in society or public life. The focus is on the common good of all in society.
- *Core course (or core curriculum)* - universities add core classes to their curriculum as students are then able to know more than one discipline. The idea of the college graduate is that of a person who has a well-rounded education. Guthrie and Callahan (2016) note this type of worldview allows

for critical thinking, the build-up of communication skills, and cross-cultural understanding as well as civic engagement.

- *Online course* – in the context of this study, an online course is one where course materials are delivered through a learning management system, both synchronously and asynchronously. The instructor and students access the online course via the internet.
- *Service-learning* – a method of teaching, whereby learning in an academic setting is linked to personal growth and civic responsibility. This technique is a collaborative effort where the service provider and the recipient both benefit. Swick (1999) adds that service-learning transforms the teaching-learning process into an experiential and reflective/analytic structure. Schneider-Cline (2018) notes that a critical component of service-learning is journaling, as journal writing allows students to personalize their experience and make connections to class content.

Significance of the Study

The learning of history as a discipline, at times, has had a bad reputation (Trei, 2004). Some students believe that learning history merely is learning names, dates, and events. These preconceived notions lead some to believe that history is boring and has no use in a modern world. The researcher of this study has been a social studies educator for over a decade, in the face-to-face classroom, online, and in both K-12 education and higher education. From this anecdotal experience, the researcher has identified teaching challenges that have been found in previous research; student disinterest in history content and the expectation that the class will consist of a lecture, notetaking, and a test.

Because students generally view core history courses as simply a necessity, or in some cases an obstacle, to completing a degree, they are merely “checking off a box” that will get them closer to their degree. The researcher utilized experiential learning strategies within the course to address these attitudes of disinterest. Initially, the instructor assigned the service-learning project as a project in the civic responsibility unit of U.S. history. Completion of the course’s U.S. citizen civic responsibility component required students to perform service-learning hours with an organization of their choice. The response of this project from students was overwhelmingly positive. They appreciated being able to get credit for an assignment that required them to do a service where they gave back to the community. The feedback from students showed that volunteering made students feel good about themselves. In addition, through the duration of the semester, the instructor noticed a change in student interest and participation in class. Students no longer wanted a PowerPoint presentation lecture to record notes; instead, they were interested in more active learning activities during class time. At test time, students enthusiastically replied to a short-answer question writing about their involvement in service-learning and how the experience connected to civic responsibility. Not only did students understand the concept behind civic duty, but they also discovered specific talents and desires about themselves.

The researcher’s motivation and the perceived significance for conducting this study were two-fold. First, to say learning history is unimportant would be remiss, as philosopher George Santayana’s famous quote aptly explains, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2020). However, who, other than historians, really cares about that? Young people who

are idealistic may need to be convinced that studying what happened 200 or more years ago is worthwhile. Students may acknowledge the value in knowing about historical events at holidays, but they are hard pressed to find a connection between the mindset of leaders in history and the strategies that were used in the past to solve problems and their lives in the present day. One critical challenge for the history instructor is to make history relevant to student lives. The researcher sees an additional point of significance in the most recent voting statistics. Most young, voting-age people sit out of elections because they fail to see how their votes can make a difference (Hartsoe, 2018). Many of these individuals cannot see the value in learning about traits of people who lived in the past and how they overcame challenges – often the same challenges facing young people today. History does not only teach about names, dates, and events. History is a useful guide that aids in navigating the future if the various factors of the past are understood.

Secondly, this study was about discovery. There is a significant transformation that builds when students look inward and discover personal traits about themselves. Personal attributes, such as the ability to lead, work with a team, communicate, problem solve, be flexible and adapt, establish a work ethic, and interpersonal skills enable individuals to interact effectively with other people (LaFrance, 2009). Educators prepare students for the future. Employers often complain that many young people enter the workforce with their attributes, or soft skills, underdeveloped. Engaging in experience type activities, such as service-learning, allows one to recognize and hone the attributes that enable individuals to interact with others and allows students to discover traits about themselves that lead to self-awareness and the development of soft skills. By performing service-learning and connecting the experience to concepts learned in U.S. history core

course, students were not only able to transfer skills learned into the workplace, but also to learn history. Through this process, the student could benefit as they become self-fulfilled and better prepared for their future, and society could benefit, as citizens are involved and have demonstrated skills that allow for the harmonious interaction with people.

Research Questions

1. How does self-identified alignment with service-learning and course objectives impact student learning of U.S. history content?
2. How are student beliefs about learning U.S. history changed or different as a result of performing service-learning?

Methodology Overview

The design of inquiry for this study was an explanatory qualitative case study of recruited students from an online core U.S. history course. The researcher selected the case study method because the study participants are bounded by a specific time, one semester, and activity, a service-learning project. As part of the data collection strategy, the researcher triangulated the data to provide a detailed description of the case study (Burns, 2000; Dooley, 2002; Eisenhardt, 1989; Ridder, 2017; Stake, 2005). The researcher chose an explanatory case study because this research was seeking to explore that the link between real-life interventions (service-learning) in a U.S. history course and student engagement in learning history (Yin, 2003). The collected data allowed for detailed analysis of individuals as they performed a service-learning project and used a variety of data collection procedures to include interviews, journaling, and focus groups via virtual discussion questions and observation through images of the students

performing the service-learning project. For example, the service-learning project required a presentation of the service-learning experience with media that may have included images, video, and commentary.

A case study is an appropriate fit for this research. Ridder (2017) defines the explanatory case study design as an investigation into real-life phenomenon in-depth within its environmental context. Furthermore, the researcher can form the case study with participants who are a group of people, an organization, an event, a problem, or an individual (Burawoy, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014). Stake (2005) describes a critical element in case study design as one in which the conditions are not controlled but are instead a part of the investigation. Stake further posits that the researcher chose the case because of its interest to the researcher.

Based on the problem of student learning and disengagement in core history courses and the examination of relevant studies of service-learning in the classroom, the researcher formulated research questions to address the gaps in the review of the literature. The first research question asks, how does self-identified-alignment with service-learning and course objectives impact student learning with U.S. history content? According to Eyler and Giles (1999), there are two components, action and reflection, needed for service-learning to be effective. This question allowed the students to report their learning as a result of service-learning. The researcher derived the second question from research that states key course outcomes should have a primary focus when assessing student learning from service-learning (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). Results from this question show how service-learning experiences affect specific course objectives or how outcomes are lacking (Hecht, 2003; Lambright & Lu, 2009; Novak,

Markey, & Allen, 2007). This gap informed the last research question: How are student beliefs about learning U.S. history changed or different as a result of performing service-learning?

This research study used an experiential learning theoretical framework to design a case study from a constructivist paradigm approach. Kolb's experiential learning theory and learning cycle used to structure the study. Kolb (1984) states, "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38). In this context, a constructivist paradigm approach and case study are a good fit. Constructivists believe that people construct their reality and develop their perception of learning (Baxter & Jack, 2008). A case study is appropriate for this research because this study sought to know student perceptions of service-learning in a U.S. history class and factors that lead to learning and engagement in the course. According to Yin (2003), a case study design is appropriate when a researcher needs to ask "how" questions, when the experiment cannot manipulate the behavior of the participants, and when the researcher has little control over events.

The study used a sampling of participants from two online core U.S. history courses, which included 11 students. The students were both male and female and of different ethnicities. The expectation was that most student participants were Caucasian or African American, and a lesser number of Hispanic, Asian, and other, which reflected the general student population at the university. All students were undergraduate students taking U.S. history as part of their core curriculum for credit. There may have been some students who are repeating the course for credit. This study took place in a live course where the service-learning project was a graded assignment, and a third-party recruiter

selected the student participants. While conducting the study, the names of the student participants was unknown to the researcher. The names were not available to the researcher until the course has concluded.

The researcher collected data for this study after the semester concluded. All students in the class, whether they were a study participant or not, completed the same service-learning project assignments. The sources of data collection were journals that document the planning, preparing, engaging, and reflection of the service-learning project, focus groups through the use of the online learning management system discussion board forum, and a short-answer question that measures content knowledge and requires synthesis of information.

An analysis of the data sources provided insight into the research questions for this study. The project was set up with three groups related to topics covered in U.S. history, including culture club, civic responsibility, and reformers. Based on the students' interest, they chose to be a part of one of these groups. Instructor tied each group to a course objective in the U.S. history core course. There were also motivational statements attached to each group to help students clarify why someone might choose that group. The idea was that a student would choose a group based on their interests. The journaling recorded the process by which the student selected their student learning experiences, their motivations for selecting it, and how the experience was related to U.S. history. Through journaling, the researcher was able to determine how the student viewed the experience as important or influential.

To determine how student beliefs about learning U.S. history changed or were different as a result of performing the service-learning project, which was the first

research question, a series of discussion forums were set up throughout the semester during which students discussed the service-learning project and its connection to history. The discussion questions were filtered to the groups, so students discussed the connection of history and service-learning with their like-minded group members.

Lastly, in a series of virtual discussion questions, students answered a short-answer questions related to their service-learning experiences. The questions asked the students to expand or provide a scenario in an attempt to synthesize their explanations of the question. Answers provided on this short-answer question corresponded to the second research question.

Limitations and Delimitations

One limitation of this study was that the researcher conducted the study in an online environment. The researcher did not meet face-to-face with the research participants. The online course was housed in a learning management system (LMS), meaning students submitted the service-learning data into an assignment dropbox. However, there were opportunities for the participants to meet with group members asynchronously through the discussions tool in the LMS throughout the study. Also, the course instructor categorized participant groups in the LMS as well as managed discussions among the groups in an online discussion forum. The U.S. history course was a course that was part of the core curriculum. Therefore, it was understood that participants in the study were taking this course as a requirement for graduation.

Another assumption that may affect the outcome of the study was that students were completing a service-learning project but have no interest in the perceived benefits of service-learning. The researcher believed that students would welcome the opportunity

to perform a service-learning project and would discover essential benefits about themselves and their knowledge of history. However, this belief very well may not have been the case. Some students may have come into the course with the preconceived notion that they were merely completing a requirement to graduate and were not open-minded to experiential strategies for learning. The possibility exists that students did not make a connection between service-learning and historical concepts.

This study contained delimitations as well. The selected university employed the researcher as an instructional designer and training specialist, as well as an adjunct instructor. The highly-qualified skill set of the researcher in the learning management system tools could have guided the participants as they used the system to complete the project. Also, the researcher had structured the service-learning project instructions in detail that illustrated how each group aligned with the course objectives.

Summary

As noted earlier, this study was about discovery. Students bring into classrooms their own experiences and notions about the world around them. Service-learning is an experiential teaching strategy that puts students in authentic learning situations and helps them to develop soft skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication. College students are required to take courses outside their areas of interest to make them academically well-rounded. History is one of these core courses, which some conclude only involves a bank of names, dates, and events. This study was conducted to engage students in history content and help develop soft skills that will serve students after college.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of the literature begins with a definition of core courses and then flows into a discussion on the instructional practices used to teach history in higher education. Three central areas make up the methods by which instructors teach history within higher education. They are traditional forms, active learning, and experiential learning. The review will then address experiential learning and service-learning. A more in-depth look at experiential learning will appear in the theoretical framework of this paper. However, service-learning will be further analyzed to show the benefits of using this strategy in a higher education course. The analysis will continue with a discussion of how instructors use service-learning and in what type of courses, addressing the academic reservations of some faculty to use service-learning as a pedagogy. The review will conclude with an analysis of research that studied the connection between service-learning and academic course learning outcomes and whether or not student achievement occurs.

During this final component of the review, the researcher will identify a gap in the recent literature and defend the need for this study. This study explored the alignment of service-learning and course objectives in a core U.S. history course to determine what level of student learning and engagement ensues as reported by the student and exposed in the data.

Methods for Teaching History in Higher Education

Traditional Forms

With traditional forms of learning, instructors relay historical information through lectures and seminars. Mazer and Hess (2017) defined the lecture as “an instructional communication between instructors and students where both communicate orally about course content” (p. 236). There are two schools of thought about lectures in higher education; either they are remembered fondly as the lecturer who enlivens their talk with passion and well thought out imagery and activity, or the lecture (and lecturer) are thought of as tedious, unimaginative, and bogged down endless notetaking (Coohill, 2006). Along these same lines, Sciuillo (2017) argues that the audience is a key feature of the lecture that should be recognized and engaged in order to be effective (p. 238). Kramer (2017) considers whether ineffective lecturers are any more effective using alternative methods of teaching, such as active learning or experiential learning, suggesting that the lecture itself may not be the problem. Controversial as it may be, the lecture format is a staple in higher education teaching methods; according to Meyer and Hunt (2017), when executed appropriately has student benefits, such as listening and notetaking skills, which are essential to academic success, as well as personal success.

In a history course, where factual information forms the basis of knowledge, the lecture format provides the foundation that students need. Waldeck and Weimer (2017) contend that the lecture format allows instructors to share their expertise and communicate with students. Bligh (2000) suggests that lecturing is an efficient way to transmit information, develop a basic understanding of complex ideas, respond to student confusion, engage students with foundational ideas in a new content area, and synthesize

content from a range of course activities. The most compelling argument for lecturing in history courses comes from the United Kingdom (UK) Quality Code for Higher Education, an independent non-profit body that sets and reviews standards in universities and colleges in the UK. This organization examines the current UK and European frameworks as a means for investigating the quality of standards. The literature from this organization identifies what is expected from universities and colleges in terms of academic standards (Quality Assurance Agency, n.d.). The subject-specific benchmark statement of history from this organization articulates the learning outcome expectations of graduates. The teaching and learning standards from the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (6.3) discusses lectures as opportunities for students to learn from instructors who individualize content as a result of their interpretative approach. Researchers conclude that lecturing provides a framework for the learning of themes and perspective of material and new material, to which in other settings the student would not be exposed (Quality Assurance Agency, n.d., p. 14). Also, the statement acknowledges that lectures are more appropriate to some modules than others but also sees the value in building specific skills, such as listening, notetaking, and reflection.

Active Learning

As much as lecturing can benefit students, learners are not often enthusiastic about the method. Incorporating active learning techniques allows students to engage with the material and to collaborate with peers while taking control of their learning. Dotolo (2010) used this technique by permitting students to draft exam questions based on lectures given in the course. This student-centered activity showed positive results not only in exam scores but also in students who during the lecture were passive and not

active. As Dotolo explained, the results were noticeable, “students who had not been participating actively began to share insights with peers and, in general, assumed greater ownership over their learning” (p. 65). Often, history survey courses are large in numbers, and the idea of breaking students into small groups can be effective in not only student learning but also socialization. Srole, Endy, and Pflieger (2017) encountered the challenge of a large (i.e., 100 students) history survey course. In this class, the researchers used active learning through in-class peer mentoring groups that utilized class activities to teach academic skills, such as notetaking, and used upper division students to facilitate small groups. This method of active learning reduced the number of below passing grades, and there was an increase in improved of academic skills to include historical thinking and interpretation. Active learning does not always mean working in a group or collaborating with other people. When a student engages with the content or in learning activities, active learning is present. For example, Peterson and Graham (2015) implemented creative writing assignments in history courses as a mechanism to enhance students’ critical thinking and analytical skills. Their study used two models. First, centripetal asked the students to creatively write as they moved inward to become part of what they were studying by entering a specific place, author, or text. The second model was centrifugal and asked the students to use the text, time, or specific concern or issue as a starting point but then allowed the students to cast a wider connection that shared issues between the past and the present. Their results indicated that students benefitted from this approach by improving their critical thinking skills, and they engaged with the subject matter.

Higher education administrators and faculty agree that students are more likely to succeed with instruction that appeals to and reaches a broad spectrum of students (Abdul-Alim, 2011). Experiential learning is a valuable experience for students and instructors. The instructor and student may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking, and uncertainty because of their inability to predict the outcomes of the experience (The University of Texas, Austin, n.d.). A common definition for experiential learning is any learning that supports students in applying their knowledge and conceptual understanding to real-world problems or situations where the instructor directs and facilitates learning (University of Tennessee Knoxville, n.d.). Kolb and Kolb (2005) based experiential learning on fundamental ideas that they described as an ongoing process, integrated with prior knowledge and holistic endeavors that add to the process of creating knowledge.

In short, experiential learning is learning by doing. Students are given particular learning experiences inside and outside the classroom, such as apprenticeships, clinical experiences, internships, fieldwork, and service-learning (University of Texas, Austin, n.d.). These types of activities meet the instructional goal of learning by being an active process of constructing rather than acquiring knowledge. (George Mason University, n.d.). Education occurs as learners construct knowledge from experience. Also, learning is a personal interpretation of the world (Mergel, 1998).

Experiential learning theory is set apart from other learning theories because the focus is on the experience of learning (Northern Illinois University, 2012). Kolb (1984) explains that learning is created by way of a transformation through experience and that the blend of understanding and transforming experience results in knowledge.

The specific benefits of experiential learning to students include building social skills, work ethic, and practical expertise. This type of education can also lead to more powerful academic learning (Eyler, 2009). At an institution of higher learning, instructors can use experiential practices across many disciplines. Studies suggest that experiential learning is a necessary and appropriate instructional component in higher education, which leads to student success and preparedness (Cantor, 1995). The success of experiential learning lies in the real-world applicability that students take away from the course (Ma, 2015).

Students who attend classes where experiential learning is a component are more likely to improve their learning. Also, students are more likely to apply previous knowledge and skills, obtain new knowledge and skill, and reflect upon their learning afterward (Tran, 2016). Students look for classes that will help them with professional skills and abilities as well as an advantage that will set them apart in a competitive job marketplace or help them in career advancement (Humphreys, 2005). Authentic learning, a form of experiential learning, helps accomplish this goal. Students who learn authentically can connect task performance to the solving of current and future problems and situations (Woolfolk, 2001). Through experience and authenticity, learning occurs as tasks and activities are meaningful and not trivial or useless (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993).

Service-Learning

Experiential learning approaches are many; however, service-learning is an experiential learning strategy that purposefully allows the student to develop skills and experience by providing a service to others (Lin, Kim, Qiu, & Ren, 2017). Strait and

Sauer (2004) define the roles of students and general format of the service-learning model.

- Students are participating in community service as part of their academic work.
- Students are reflecting the community context in which they provide the service.
- Students are developing an understanding of the connection between the service and their academic work.

Service-learning, when incorporated into academic classes, works well. Tinto (1998) states that “students who are actively involved in learning activities and spend more time on task, especially with others, are more likely to learn and in turn, more likely to stay” (p. 168). Service-learning is considered an influential pedagogy that uniquely combines what is being taught in the course and community service to gain a relevant and worthwhile course outcome (Cecil, 2012). The experiential learning strategy of service-learning, as opposed to passive learning, benefits students by activating knowledge that builds communication, teamwork, and problem-solving skills (Aldridge, Williamson, & Harris, 2011). Also, service-learning provides opportunities for students to reflect on their values of citizenship, resolving real-life community issues along with human and environmental needs (O’Halloran & Deale, 2004).

Connecting Student Learning to Service-Learning

Service-learning is a high-impact educational practice that allows students to engage with course content actively. In disciplines where service fits closely with the student’s acquired skills, a service-learning pedagogy makes sense. Long (2016) took a

group of nursing students on a service-learning medical experience abroad to Belize, Central America. The students engaged in 44 hours of volunteer service in three remote villages shadowing local nurses. The topics studied include medical Spanish, cultural competence, folk medicine, tropical diseases, Mayan medicine, assessment and triage, and community health nursing. As cultural competence training was a part of the nursing school curriculum, the purpose of the study was to measure the impact of service-learning on nursing students' self-efficacy towards cultural competency (Long, 2016).

Service-learning in academia and civic education has a long history. Hepburn (1997) explains that studying the community by being involved in the community is found in literature since the turn of the century. Also, courses that promote citizenship education are political science, political education, civic education, and social studies courses. However, instructors in multiple disciplines use service-learning as a pedagogy, including health sciences (Roofe, Brinegar, & Seymour, 2015), English (Lupton, 2008), technical writing (Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999), philosophy (Bernacki & Jaeger, 2008), and sociology (Basu & Heuser, 2003; Mobley, 2007). Instructors have used service-learning history courses as well (Greenberg, 2008; Kayser, 2017; Wild, 2015). The conceptual analysis chart below (Table 1) further explains these studies and the association between academics and service-learning.

Table 1

Conceptual Analysis Chart

Subject Area: Health Sciences			
Roofe, N., Brinegar, J., & Seymour, G. (2015). Service-learning in higher education: Focus on eating disorder prevention. <i>Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences</i> , 107(2), 41-48.			
Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
Eating disorder prevention; assess any change in eating	Would participation in a service-learning project to increase	Completed an Eating Attitudes Test before and after the study;	The nutrition majors in this study did not demonstrate a

attitudes of senior nutrition majors.	awareness of body image issues in elementary students have an impact on the eating attitudes of college students involved in the project?	assisted with the delivery of an eating disorder awareness dance performance in local elementary schools; reflections on experiences.	significant change in their eating habits.
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Subject Area: English

Lupton, R. J. (2008). Philadelphia dreaming: Discovering citizenship between the university and the schools. *Antipode*, 40(3), 396–403. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8330.2008.00606.x.

Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
Outreach efforts for the School of Humanities in the form of an educational partnership between local schools and the University of California at Irvine for university-community engagement.	How will a humanities outreach project impact local schools?	A graduate student leads a group of undergraduates in local schools where they execute a content-rich sequence of humanities exercises (active reading, writing, and discussion); the project expands to theatrical performances, temporary installations and developing curricula for English and History classrooms with a focus on “citizenship”.	The result of this study was a transition from the beginning of the project.

Subject Area: Technical Writing

Matthews, C., & Zimmerman, B. B. (1999). Integrating service-learning and technical communication: Benefits and challenges. *Technical Communication Quarterly*, 8(4), 383–404. doi:10.1080/10572259909364676

Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
The purpose of this study was to help students make a transition to the workplace and educate community organizations about the role of technical communicators.	What happens when service-learning is implemented in a field such as technical communication, which traditionally assists the student in obtaining job-related skills rather than discussing societal problems? What might prevent students in technical communication from obtaining the presumed benefits of service-learning? What problems occur in integrating service-learning and technical	Students were divided into writing teams. Teams were able to select their projects from a list of non-profit organizations who submitted technical writing project ideas. Teams were required to read and discuss articles about service-learning; individuals were required to keep reflection journals.	Some students benefit in developing civic values, improving academic learning, and accepting responsibility for their education. Other students struggled to see the connection between technical communication and service-learning, felt frustrated with nonacademic writing, and experienced team conflict. (p. 383)

communication? (p. 384)

Subject Area: Philosophy

Bernacki, M. L., & Jaeger, E. (2008). Exploring the impact of service-learning on moral development and moral orientation. *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, 1*, 5-15.

Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
Examine the service-learning context in which moral development was evaluated as an outcome and to expand the definition of moral development to include the dimension of moral orientation. (p. 5)	Does service-learning promote moral development above and beyond comparable courses with no service-learning project? What is the moral impact of service-learning across disciplines? Will service-learning students report positive changes in themselves as a result of their experience?	Students were given the Defining Issues Test, Moral Justification Scale, and SL Outcome Scale as a pre and posttest. Scores did not change significantly. However, students reported an increase in compassion, sensitivity, and having a greater understanding of social problems.	The impact of service-learning on students' moral development is mixed.

Subject Area: Sociology

Basu, S., & Heuser, S. (2003). Using service-learning in death education. *Death Studies, 27*, 901-927.

Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
To allow students the opportunity to be exposed to the course objectives related to death education outside of classroom study.	Will authentic experiences relating to course objectives in death education change students' views concerning death?	Students voluntarily accepted the service-learning components of the course; the project was not mandatory. Participating students were assigned a mentor. Participants and mentors worked with community agencies as volunteers. Written assignments were tied to academic content, and reflective journals were kept.	Service-learning was highly effective in death education courses.

Subject Area: Sociology

Mobley, C. (2007). Breaking ground: Engaging undergraduates in social change through service-learning. *Teaching Sociology, 35*(2), 125-137. doi:10.1177/0092055X0703500202.

Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
To change students' perceptions of persons who are homeless and to increase students' sense of efficacy for engaging in social advocacy. (p. 125)	How do student perceptions of homelessness change by participating in a service-learning project?	Pre-tests and Post-tests to assess changes in students' beliefs about social justice, self-efficacy, and perceptions of the homeless. (p. 125)	When compared to students who took the same class, but did not participate in a service-learning project, those students who did participate experienced significant changes in

			their perceptions of homeless individuals.
Subject Area: History			
Greenberg, D. J. (2008). Teaching global citizenship, social change, and economic development in a history course: A course model in Latin American travel/service-learning. <i>Society for History Education, 41</i> (3), 283-304.			
Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
To help eliminate the barrier of global privilege when teaching concepts of global citizenship, social change, and under-development.	Will students see a connection between First World wealth and privilege and Third World poverty and underdevelopment by participating in a travel/service-learning project?	A rotating venue of travel/service-learning to Argentina, Peru, and Brazil	The pedagogy of travel/service-learning can effectively teach concepts of world citizenship, economic development, and social change. (p. 299)
Subject Area: English/History			
Kayser, C. (2017). 'Not the stereotypical view of the South': An oral history service-learning project in a southern women's literature course. <i>Project Muse, 17</i> (3), 397-422.			
Purpose	Research Questions	Method	Results
To expand the discussion of how using service-learning in a course which is focused on oral history, gender, and the American South might be implemented in the classroom.	Will students gain a better understanding of women's lived experiences in literature by using an oral history service-learning project?	The course activities analyzed texts in various genres to show the complex dynamics of gender, race, sexuality, and class. The service-learning component paired students with female residents at an assisted living home where students collected oral histories.	Students were able to connect the conversations to the class readings, which resulted in students engaging more deeply with the complexities of race, class, and gender.
Subject Area: History			
Wild, M. (2015). Incorporating service-learning into a general education history course: An analogical model. <i>History Teacher, 48</i> (4), 641-666.			
Purpose	Research Question	Method	Results
The purpose is to incorporate an analogical course structure in a general education course to assess student learning.	Will an analogical model of service-learning in a general education history course adequately address the challenges of using service-learning in other courses?	Used Donald Schon's concepts of reflective practice	Students found the analogical model more challenging and appealing than did students who were taught under a different model. (p. 652)

McCrea (as cited in Madden, Davis, & Cronley, 2013), laid out a set of criteria for conducting service-learning in courses that has the following components: (a) the service-learning project meets a community need, (b) the student learning must be integrated with

the course objectives, (c) students reflect on their experience, and (d) the relationship between the student and the community are mutually beneficial. The void in the existing literature about serving-learning in academic coursework lies in McCrea's second criterion - student learning should be integrated within the course objectives.

The extent to which students met the course objectives as a result of service-learning is sometimes called into question. The concern is that service-learning has a connection to course objectives and is not only added course activity with no connection to the course. Wild (2015) explains that "...the indeterminacy, from the teacher's perspective, of service-learning, can create a disjuncture between the service and academic components of the course, resulting in the frequent complaint that service-learning grafts awkwardly onto course curricula" (p. 643).

A study conducted by Kinkead and Curtis (2018) provided an example where service-learning took the front seat in a course, and the course content was secondary. The researchers conducted a study of student projects produced by honor students enrolled in a series of cross-disciplinary courses. The courses were upper-level honors courses that focused on science, social studies, and arts and humanities. The projects sought to increase sustainable, organic, local, and ethically produced food on the Utah State University campus. The project required students to gather data that informed problem solving by designing projects with a focus on dining services and food sources, including recycling, food waste, food recovery, and local sourcing. The study concluded that the students involved gained skills in teamwork and real-world applications, and the skills learned in class were applied to meet community needs (p. 14). The researchers stated that students met their desired learning outcomes through service-learning. In this

study, service-learning was the focus. Researchers assumed that students met the academic course objectives, but they do not explicitly state this assumption. Most likely, there was a mutual benefit in this study, where the students learned or met an academic course objective as a result of the service-learning project, or perhaps made a connection. However, that benefit was not the focus of the service-learning project or the study.

Faculty are hesitant to use service-learning as a means to help students learn academic content, as they are not convinced that course objectives are met through service-learning; however, faculty praise the citizenship development and soft-skills that students acquire from service-learning projects. Steinke and Buresh (2005) state that the most convincing evidence of students learning from service-learning was self-reported, yet they also report that this type is the “least persuasive measures to faculty” (p. 5). Faculty are looking to find whether or not a student is learning their course content; the supplementary learning brought about through classroom activities, such as service-learning, are added benefits, but not the focus. If service-learning provides the cognitive or intellectual outcomes of what the instructor has taught, then faculty will embrace service-learning. Eyler and Giles (1999) put the idea this way: “although faculty might agree that community service contributes to students’ personal and social development and that it makes them better citizens, many are dubious about its value in the academic program, where the most important goal is learning subject matter” (pp. 57-58).

Understandably, rigor and intellectual content in courses are paramount for any instructor. History courses require time to cover content, and some faculty may reason that incorporating a service-learning project in a course lowers the intellectual content or takes time away from the quantity of information that needs to be covered. However,

Donovan (2000) argues that learning history is about solving real-world problems and that service-learning connects the idea of problem-focused teaching and scholarship in that “service-learning offers intellectual benefits for teaching, and that students are more engaged in learning through connecting their lives outside the classroom with the course material” (p. 11).

The research on how service-learning affects student academic achievement is mixed, where some studies find that service-learning contributes to moral development, and others find there is no difference. Also, in courses where service-learning was used as a strategy and student academic learning as measured by course grades or grade point average, some findings indicated that service-learning had a positive impact. Other study findings indicated no differences between service-learning control groups in academic learning (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Prentice & Robinson, 2010). When it comes to measuring the objective learning outcomes of a course, service-learning plays less of a role in contributing (Stuteville & Ikerd, 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (1996) found that using service-learning as a way to achieve course objectives can be accomplished if the course objectives are designed to fit the service-learning activities. Barreneche (2011) reiterated this point in his work with foreign language courses and service-learning, noting that the course objective must have a direct correlation to the service-learning task. Building on this idea of directly matching service-learning activities to course objectives, Bettencourt (2015) found that students needed a guiding structure to “specifically recognize, analyze, and discuss certain aspects of their service experience” (p. 486). Studies that link the experiences gained through service-learning to course content or course objectives are scarce (Ngai, Chan, & Kwan, 2018). Even though there has been

well-documented successes of the connection between service-learning and student learning, Prentice and Robinson (2010) state, “what is needed in the current assessment climate are additional studies that explore the connection between the attainment of specific learning outcomes and service-learning” (p. 2). These findings thus reveal a gap in the literature that supports the purpose of this study.

Summary

Service-learning is a teaching strategy rooted in experience. Eyler and Giles (1999) explain that learning does not happen by experience alone, rather through a combination of “action and reflection” (p. 8). The current research on linking service-learning to course objectives documents mixed results when looking at the achievement of engagement with or learning of course content. The idea of service-learning as a means for student learning is supported. Furco (1996) states that service-learning offers similar benefits to the person providing the service and the recipient of the community service. Service-learning as a pedagogy has a positive impact on student learning as students gain skills that may not be obtained solely through classroom instruction, such as improving interpersonal skills and communication skills, effective values, and critical thinking skills (Smith, 2014). However, result of previous studies indicate that the gains made in learning content as a result of service-learning have traditionally been self-reported by the student (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999; Kendrick, 1996; Lambright & Lu, 2009; Phillips, 2011). This study sought to address the gap in the literature by conducting a study that asks if student learning was reached by adding objective learning outcomes in a core U.S. history course through a service-learning project.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study intended to add to the scholarship of teaching and learning by investigating the problem of student disengagement in a higher education core history course. The idea of requiring students to complete core, or general, education courses has benefits that serve the student beyond the classroom. However, students are less likely to be interested in a course that does not fit their major. Interest in the course materials is an important component of student learning in higher education (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). When designing and delivering general education coursework, a common challenge is overcoming the lack of interest in the course that many students express, particularly if the students' majors differ from the course content (Boyer, 1987).

Researchers estimate that 95% of four-year colleges and universities in the United States require a general education curriculum (Aloi, Gardner, & Lusher, 2003). General education emphasizes learning methods as opposed to specific content, and the core curriculum is a type of general education emphasizing specific core courses, or core courses that are believed to help students have a well-rounded education, providing specific learning skills that can be applied to different content area disciplines. The goals of general education can be ambitious. Schneider and Schoenberg (1998) describe these goals as “acquiring intellectual capacities and understanding multiple modes of inquiry, civic knowledge, and values” (p. 7).

Motivating students in general education courses is difficult when students are not challenged, when coursework content fails to pique their interest, and when students cannot see a connection between what they are learning and their personal goals (Glunn, Aultman, & Owens, 2005). The challenge for general education instructors in higher education is to stimulate student interest and draw students into the course regardless of their personal interests (Pregitzer & Clements, 2013).

According to Owen and Dunne (2013), discussing student engagement gives a broad definition of the concept of student engagement:

Student engagement is not a strategy where learners are passive and filled with information, rather where students are actively and deliberately engaged with their formal and informal learning; the delivery and presentation of academic learning; the relationships between instructors and fellow classmates in the context of their learning environments; and in the interaction and obligation within their own communities and elsewhere. (p. 16)

Trowler and Trowler (2010) assert that an engaged student is likely to be a successful student. Fredin, Fuchsteiner, and Portz (2015) state that student success in college is rooted in the opportunities a student receives to engage with coursework.

Pedagogical strategies that engage students were developed using the theory and ideas of John Dewey. He promoted hands-on learning and classrooms that are representative of real-life situations. This type of learning allows students to participate in learning activities as they were applied to situations outside the classroom (Dewey, 1938; Gutek, 2014). Common learner-centered instructional strategies include authentic learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993; Woolfolk, 2001), active learning (Dotolo, 2010),

and experiential learning (Beaudin, 1995; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1994; Lewis & Williams, 1994).

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of the service-learning project in a general education course, specifically a core U.S. history class, and the contribution of this project to student engagement and learning of U.S. history content. The study, using a case study design, sought to know the degree to which the participants' affective, social, and educational factors were impacted as a result of performing a service-learning project in a U.S. history course.

This chapter will lay out the methodology by which this research was conducted. In the pages that follow, the research questions will be stated along with the design of the study. There will be a description of the role of the researcher, as well as a thorough account of the research participants. The instrumentation will identify each data collection measure, provide information about the pilot study, and include all measures used. The data collection methods will be explained in detail and include the recruitment procedures, informed consent letter, administration of measures, debriefing and follow-up procedures, and the IRB protocol.

Research Design

Two significant problems guide the research questions for this study. The first question, how does self-identified alignment with service-learning and course objectives impact student learning of U.S. history content, addresses the components of learning as a result of participating in a service-learning project. Through documentation and reflection on service experiences, students can self-identify their learning of academic content (Strait & Sauer, 2004). The second question, how are student beliefs about learning U.S.

history changed or different as a result of performing service-learning, seeks to find identify the relations between course objectives and the student experiences of service learning.

This study used a qualitative paradigm with an ontological approach, which assumes the reality is the subjective and multiple (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). To further clarify this concept, the qualitative paradigm involves individuals in the research where they construct reality (subjective), and (multiple) realities are constructed by the participants, the researcher, and the reader (Creswell, 1994). Furthermore, general assumptions related to qualitative research that fit well with this study are taken from some of the examples provided in Merriam (1988).

- Qualitative researchers are interested in meaning - how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and structures of the world.
- Qualitative research is descriptive in that the research is interested in the process, meaning, and understanding through words and pictures.
- The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis - data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines.
- The process of qualitative research is inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, and theories from details. (pp. 19-20)

The nature of qualitative research is exploratory. Creswell (1994) suggests that qualitative research is appropriate when the variables and theory base are unknown.

Creswell (2013) states “the constructivist world view aligns with this study, as the goal of this research is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation being

studied” (p. 8). For this study and the problem under investigation, the use of service-learning in a core U.S. history class is unknown to have an impact on student learning or student engagement with the content; thus, the researcher explored this phenomenon and reported the findings as they were revealed.

The qualitative research design type utilized for this study is a case study. With case study research, an entity is bounded by time and activity, and the researcher collects detailed information using different methods of data collection during a specific period (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989). A qualitative case study approach is particularly suited to this investigation of the experience of service-learning in a naturalistic setting is where questions of “how” and “why” guide the inquiry (Yin, 1994). During the service-learning experience and while working within the U.S. history course, multiple and interacting variables (i.e., students) are potentially significant in explaining the process and contexts of student learning and engagement with U.S. history content. A case study approach allows for flexibility in examining different aspects of the service-learning topic, incorporating multiple student perspectives, and allowing new areas of discovery related to service-learning in core history courses. The design of this research fits with the definition of instrumental case study proposed by Stake (1995) because it seeks to “provide insight into a specific issue or redraw a generalization” (p. 44).

In this study, the purpose was to develop an understanding of how students use the experience of service-learning to relate to U.S. history content. The student participants of this study were members of an online U.S. history course and performed a service-learning project as part of the course learning activities. A visual for the design of this study is shown in Figure 2.

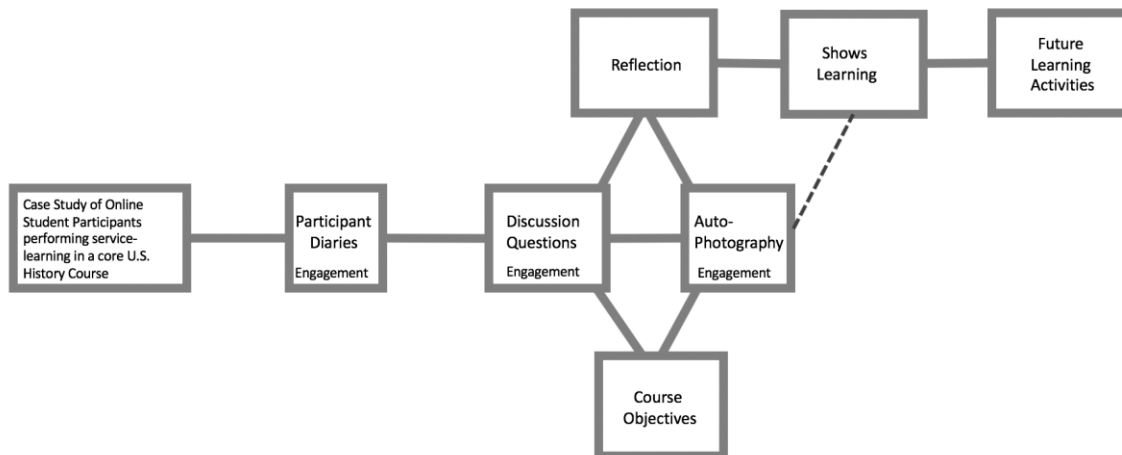


Figure 2. Visual Design for the Study.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher was the instructor of record of the case study under investigation. For this reason, the researcher was a participant and an observer. The researcher has been an adjunct instructor of U.S. history in the History and Geography Department at the Southeastern University for five years. For eight semesters, the researcher/instructor taught U.S. History to 1865 in the face-to-face classroom, and, for four semesters, the researcher has taught the course online. The researcher/instructor has incorporated a service-learning project as part of the learning activities for the U.S. History to 1865 course for six semesters. The setting was an online classroom in the D2L Brightspace learning management platform. This site was chosen because the tools and features of the LMS provided a means for collecting and storing the data for this study. As the course was taught, the researcher was a participant in the research in the role of instructor. However, the study participants were recruited by a third-party recruiter with the names of the study participants kept unknown to the researcher/instructor. Once the course was

completed, and grades for the course were posted, the researcher was given the names of the study participants and analyzed the data from the study.

Participants

The participants in this study were students from a southeastern public university who were enrolled in the online U.S. history course. These students were selected because they were actively learning U.S. history and performing the service-learning project. The setting was an online class at the southeastern university during the last half of the fall semester 2019. The online class was held on the university's D2L Brightspace LMS named CougarVIEW. As the instructor of record, the researcher had full access to the online class in CougarVIEW.

The sampling technique for this qualitative study was purposive and was chosen by the researcher, as the online U.S. history student participants in this study were able to provide maximum insight and knowledge about their experiences of service-learning while in an online U.S. history class. Therefore, the variation of this purposive sampling was typical of a case sampling. Through this typical case sampling, the participants were considered typical of the phenomenon being studied (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 2002).

The inclusion criteria for the sampling were that the participants be enrolled students in the online class. The characteristics of the sample included male and female students of various ages. The selected majors of the student sample were varied as well. The sample included 11 participants from two different sections of the course. The sample participants were made aware of the service-learning project through the syllabus on the first day of class.

Before mid-term of the semester, a required synchronous session was held to inform students and describe the requirements of the service-learning project by the instructor/researcher. The synchronous session was recorded for students who cannot attend. During the session, the purpose of the study was explained, and students were informed about the details study.

Participation in the study was open to all students in the class. Students were also told to expect an email from a third-party recruiter who sent an email to recruit the study participants. Students were also told that the names of the student participants would be kept confidential by the recruiter until after the course had ended and grades have been posted for the semester.

Recruitment

A third-party recruiter was retained to inform students about the study and as a means to reduce bias. The recruiter had no connection to the course or the researcher. The recruiter independently reached out to students during a synchronous session to ask for their participation in the study. The recruiter corresponded with the students in the course, reminding them through email to sign the informed consent form. The recruiter was responsible for collecting the signed informed consent forms and putting the forms in a Google Docs folder on a secured Google Drive as the forms were submitted. Once the study was completed, the recruiter gave the names of the study participants to the researcher along with access to the Google Drive folder.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed data measures for this study. The service-learning project in the U.S. history course is titled Connecting to History Through Service-

Learning Project. The first step in the project was that students chose a group based on their interest, which related to course themes and objectives. Appendix A is the project overview form that students completed, which introduced them to the project. Figure 3 shows the groups, course themes, and course objectives. This chart gave information to students and clarified the meaning of each group and service-learning experience.

Connecting to History Through Service-Learning		
Groups		
Culture Club	Civic Responsibility	Reformers
<i>Why would someone choose this group?</i> Do you have an interest in working with people who are different from you? As we learn about the interactions among Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans, we discover different cultural influences that helped shape the United States.	<i>Why would someone choose this group?</i> An interest in maintaining a quality society, and a desire to put into action the responsibilities of citizenship as outlined in the U.S. Constitution.	<i>Why would someone choose this group?</i> Similar to the Reformers of the 1800s who sought to change American society in ways that upheld American values and ideals, participants in this group will look for areas in society need improvement.
Course Theme: Cultural Influences Shape America Connection to course objective: Unit 1 Three Worlds Meet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the components of American society today that includes elements of Native American, European and African Cultures 	Course Theme: The Constitution is Central to American life and ideals Connection to course objective: Unit 2 Creating a Nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate that The Constitution is central to American life and ideals, and that participation in a democratic society involves certain duties and responsibilities 	Course Theme: Continuity and Change Connection to course objective: Unit 3 Growth and Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show that individuals have power and that the reform movements during the early and mid-1800s sought to change American society, but in ways that upheld American values and ideals
Motivation: Try something new or help a culture of people who are different from you.	Motivation: Make the community a better place	Motivation: Help those who are less fortunate.
Service Learning Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer to help bring awareness to students by posting flyers that advertise Hispanic Heritage Month event at CSU Volunteer to work at an interfaith festival 	Service Learning Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk dogs at PAWS Teach a small group of people a skill 	Service Learning Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer at homeless shelter Volunteer at a mental health facility

Figure 3. Groups, Course Theme, and Course Objectives.

Three data sources were used to collect data to answer the research questions; they were participant diaries, virtual discussions, and media presentations. Participant diaries in qualitative research provide insight into the lives, experiences, and motivations of people (Turner, 2016). Diaries are useful; as Creswell (1994) notes, diaries “represent data that are thoughtful in that informants have given attention to compiling” (p. 151). With diaries, participants have the freedom to share what they want (Meth, 2003). The participant diary shown in Appendix B was given to students to document their service-learning experience. Within this documentation, a series of guiding questions written by

the researcher and adapted from the *Service-Learning Manual for Faculty* (University of Michigan, 2013) helped guide the student as they recorded their service-learning experience.

The second data source was a focus group used through a virtual discussion board in the learning management system where the online course was housed. Khan and Manderson (1992) gave a general definition of focus groups, “the primary aim of describing and understanding perceptions, interpretations, and beliefs of a select population to gain understanding of a particular issue from the perspective of the group’s participants” (p. 57). Krueger set criteria for components of a focus group:

- Focus groups involve people.
- Focus groups are conducted in a series.
- Participants are reasonably homogeneous and familiar with each other.
- Focus groups are a data collection procedures.
- Focus groups make use of qualitative data.
- Focus groups constitute a focused discussion. (p. 7)

Using virtual discussion board questions is an appropriate and effective type of data collection for qualitative research and falls in line with Krueger (Turney & Pocknee, 2005). Participant reflective practices are crucial to understanding the effects of service-learning (Harkavy & Donovan, 2000). The virtual discussion questions used in this study align with the objective, reflective, interpretational, and decisional model, which is a structure for reflection that assists in taking participants through the experiential process in a logical manner and is based on Kolb’s Experiential Learning Mode (Spencer, 1989; Stanfield, 2000).

The virtual discussion questions are shown in Appendix C. These questions were constructed by the researcher with some questions adapted from Indiana University's Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning Service-Learning Program (Indiana Service-Learning Program). Discussion Question 1 asked students to relate their experience to a course objective, Discussion Question 2, asked students about the impact of the service, and Discussion Question 3 asked about future findings. An item analysis chart is provided in Figure 4, which links the discussion questions to the research questions and critical components in the literature review.

Item Analysis Chart of Instrumentation

Item Discussion Question	Research from the Literature Review	Research Question	ORID Model
Discussion Question 1 - Connection to U.S. History 1A. How did your service-learning experience relate to class material? 1B. Did the experience contradict or reinforce class material? 1C. What aspects of your learning of the course objectives may have been due to your service-learning experience?	Cantor, 1996; Ma, 2015; Tinto 1998; Hepburn 1997	1, 2	Objective
Discussion Question 2 - Impact I want to know how this project affected you. 2A. Did you find this experience worthwhile? 2B. Discuss your thoughts on performing a service-learning project in a history course. 2C. Did this experience make an impact on you learning history? Explain.	Tran, 2016; Humphreys, 2005; Woolfolk, 2001	1, 2	Reflective, Interpretational
Discussion 3 - Future Share your thoughts about service-learning. 3A. Will you continue to perform volunteer services? Are there ways you can expand on this service? 3B. Will you try something different? 3C. What are your thoughts about learning history? Have they changed since completing this project?	Lin, Kim, Qiu & Ren, 2017; Strait & Sauer 2004;	2	Decisional

Figure 4. Item Analysis Chart.

Lastly, the student participants used media to document and present their experience (Appendix D). With this third data source, students were asked to provide pictures or a short video as forms of media in presentation software. The use of audiovisual materials, such as photographs and video, is appropriate because participants can share their reality creatively and capture attention (Creswell, 1994). Pain (2012) explains that visual methods are an effective and acceptable method for qualitative

research. Glaw, Inder, Kable, and Hazleton (2017) note that “visual methods enhance the richness of data by discovering additional layers of meaning, adding validity and depth, and creating knowledge” (p. 1). Auto-photography is a type of visual method where research participants take photographs of themselves, allowing the reader to look at the participants’ world through the participants’ eyes (Noland, 2006). This method is an essential step toward understanding what qualities of the environment are important to the study participant (Thomas, 2009). For this study and part of the project requirements, student-participants photographed or video recorded themselves undergoing their service-learning experience and then provided comments on their visual images in a presentation software, such as PowerPoint. To ensure dependability and validity, the data were triangulated through multiple methods. When using multiple methods of data sources, trustworthiness occurs as the experience is understood from different viewpoints (Ary et al., 2002).

Data Collection

Data were collected after the fall 2019 semester had ended, and grades were posted. The data setup was the project overview form where the student chose a group and discussed three possible sites to conduct their service-learning (Appendix A). Before mid-term of the semester, on October 1, 2019, a synchronous session was held by the instructor/researcher to inform students of the project requirements and the research study. The third-party recruiter sent an email with the informed consent form to all students asking for their participation in the study (see Appendix E). The students were required to complete 5 hours of service-learning, which could be performed anytime from October 7, 2019, through November 8, 2019. During the service-learning experience,

students kept a participant diary (Appendix B) and submitted the document to an assignment submission folder in CougarVIEW. The virtual discussion questions (Appendix C) were completed the week of November 11, 2019. The auto-photography presentation (Appendix D) was submitted to an assignment submission folder during the week of November 25, 2019. Once the semester had ended, and final course grades were posted, the names of the study participants were given to the researcher.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred through organizing and reducing the data through coding. The data from the data sources, participant diaries, virtual discussion questions, and comments from the presentations were categorized. Common words, phrases, sentences, and behavior patterns were classified. Similar ideas, concepts, activities, themes, and settings were established into coding categories. From categories, the coding emerged into themes and sub-themes. Once coding had been established, the codes and themes were used to answer the research questions.

Summary

The project that has driven this study, Connecting to History through Service-Learning, was an experiential learning activity conducted in a core U.S. history course during fall 2019. Students who were involved in this project were actively and deliberately engaged with the content of the U. S. history online course (Owen & Dunn, 2013). The data sources for this study were participant diaries, virtual focus groups, and auto-photography. These sources were constructed to align with the research questions, document the participant service-learning experience, and be used as reflective pieces. This study was a qualitative case study, and the participants were students in an online

U.S. history core course. The research questions were established to find out if participants could connect their service-learning experiences to a course objective and if undergoing a service-learning experience impacted their engagement with learning history.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The researcher conducted this study within two sections of an online U.S. History to 1865 course. The instructor/researcher assigned students in both sections a service-learning project as part of their course activities. The instructor assessed the service-learning projects as a portion of the final grade for the course. Though all students sections were required to complete the project as part of the class, a third-party recruiter asked students to volunteer their work for further analysis. The instructor/researcher introduced the research study during the first week of the 16-week semester when she introduced all other course requirements.

The instructor/researcher held a synchronous session during the first week of the semester as a way for students to interact with the instructor in real-time. The instructor also recorded the session and posted it in the online course LMS for the benefit of those students who could not attend the live session. The instructor/researcher continued to hold synchronous sessions each week throughout the semester and continued to make the recordings available via the course LMS.

This study intended to combine course objectives with a service-learning experience to engage students with U.S. history content. The instructor/researcher asked students to join one of three groups based on U.S. history course objectives, which included culture club, civic responsibility, and reformers. Within each group, the instructor/researcher directed each student to identify a service-learning opportunity

related to the group topic and to perform at least five hours of volunteer service in that area. The instructor/researcher intended to collect data in the form of student experience documentation (i.e., diary entry or auto-photography presentation). The instructor/researcher also collected data through the virtual discussion of a focus group through the course LMS.

The instructor/researcher, to avoid any semblance of bias, utilized a third-party recruiter to solicit volunteers for the study. As stated earlier, students learned about the service-learning component of the course through the syllabus review in the first week of the course. However, the instructor/researcher provided additional details about the project during the weekly synchronous session at the mid-term of the semester. During this session, the instructor/researcher invited the third-party recruiter to discuss with students the voluntary nature of their participation, explain the purpose and procedures of the study, and talk about the risks and benefits of study participation. The recruiter also spoke about how the researcher intended to protect student confidentiality. During this synchronous session, only the recruiter talked to the students; the instructor/researcher did not participate in the active recruitment of student volunteers. The instructor/researcher did notify those students who were unable to attend that a recording of the synchronous session was available through the course LMS. The recruiter sent follow-up emails to all students twice throughout the semester.

The third-party recruiter allowed all students to participate in the study. The instructor/researcher required each participant to sign an informed consent document. Through this consent, the instructor/researcher informed all participants that their work would not be collected or analyzed until after she posted final semester grades. After the

semester had ended, the recruiter provided the instructor/researcher with the participants' information. The third-party recruiter shared access for a secure Google Drive folder with the instructor/researcher that contained the participants' names and information. At this point, the researcher gathered participant data via diary entries, auto-photo presentations, and virtual discussion questions.

Participants

Participants for this study were drawn from two course sections of U.S. history to 1865. The instructor/researcher obtained detailed information about each participant from the class summary roster housed in the university's student information system. The instructor/researcher had access to this information based on her designation as the course instructor for both sections of the course. An audit of the detailed class summary showed that the participants of the study came from majors housed in all three of the southeastern public university's colleges (i.e., College of the Arts, College of Education and Health Professions, and College of Letters and Sciences). Additionally, the data showed that participants made up three academic classifications (i.e., freshman, sophomore, and junior). In total, 15 student volunteers signed up to participate in the study by completing and returning the informed consent form.

At the end of the semester, the third-party recruiter provided the instructor/researcher with the names of participants. The instructor/researcher assigned each participant a unique identifier to mask the student's identity, which included the course section. The researcher then identified each participant by his or her admission type. At this southeastern public university, the academic catalog designates student admission types as follows:

- *Traditional* – freshmen who have graduated from high school within the previous five years and meets institutionally defined essential criteria including minimum grade point average, minimum scores on basic skills tests, and a completed high school curriculum.
- *Limited* – freshmen who have graduated within the previous five years, but who do not meet the institutionally defined criteria and have been evaluated for learning support.
- *Non-traditional* – an entering freshman whose high school class graduated five or more years before the semester of application.
- *Transfer* – an entering student who is eligible to return to the last institution attended. Students are considered freshmen who have less than 30 semester hours of transferable credit and have satisfied all requirements for entering freshmen. Students are considered a classification other than freshman, who have more than 30 credit hours, have a minimum transfer grade point average of 2.0, and have completed any learning support requirements, as well as the required high school curriculum.
- *Dual enrollment* – students who are concurrently enrolled in high school and college-level courses (CSU Academic Catalog, 2020)

The instructor/researcher classified each student into four academic levels: freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior. The instructor/researcher classified students according to their academic level to help identify those students who may need to be excluded from the study (i.e., dual enrollment students who were under the age of 18).

Additionally, the instructor/researcher excluded one participant due to a failure to submit the required assignments.

Table 2 highlights the categories and classifications identified by the researcher during the initial participant analysis (i.e., unique identifier, admission type, course section number, where 1 is the first course section and 2 is the second course section, academic level, major, and inclusion/exclusion indicator).

Table 2

Participant Classification Data

Unique Identifier	Admission Type	Course Section Number	Academic Level Classification	Major	Included or Excluded
A2	Limited	2	Freshman	Middle Grades Education	Included
B1	Traditional	1	Sophomore	Nursing	Included
C2	Traditional	2	Junior	Core Curriculum	Excluded – Did not participate
D2	Limited	2	Freshman	Biology	Included
E1	Traditional	1	Freshman	Sociology	Included
F2	High School Dual Enrollment	2	NA	NA	Excluded
G2	Traditional	2	Sophomore	Sociology	Included
H2	Traditional	2	Freshman	Sociology	Included
I2	Traditional	2	Freshman	Middle Grades Education	Included
J2	Traditional	2	Junior	Music Choral	Included
K2	Traditional	2	Sophomore	Criminal Justice	Included
L2	Traditional	2	Freshman	Biology	Included
M1	High School Dual Enrollment	1	NA	NA	Excluded
N1	High School Dual Enrollment	1	NA	NA	Excluded
O1	Traditional	1	Sophomore	Theater	

Findings

Through this study, the instructor/researcher sought to investigate the experience of a student service-learning project in a core U.S. history course. The literature review

revealed problems with student learning as a result of disengagement in core history courses. The researcher also found a gap in the current literature about how service-learning improved learning and engagement when linked directly to course objectives.

The researcher framed this study with experiential learning theory (e.g., students in a core U.S. history course complete a service-learning project as part of their course activities) to address these problems. The researcher used the following research questions to guide the study:

1. How does self-identified alignment with service-learning and course objectives impact student learning of U.S. history content?
2. How are student beliefs about learning U.S. history changed or different as a result of performing service-learning?

The researcher used inductive coding to analyze the data. According to Thomas (2006), a general approach to inductive coding allows themes to emerge from raw data. The purpose of inductive coding was to condense raw data into a summary format, to establish clear links between the research objectives or questions and the findings from the data, and to develop a model or theory of the structure or experiences, which are evident in the raw data.

During the first review of data sources, the researcher read the participant diaries and virtual focus group answers and viewed the auto-photography presentations to look for commonalities. During the second read-through, the researcher began to categorize like comments that had the same thought or relation and made notes about the auto-photography images. The researcher aimed to see how the student chose to show their service-learning experience. Keeping in mind the purpose of the study – to determine if

experiential learning engaged students – the researcher looked at the degree of attention the participants placed in their photos as well as the level of interest and passion shown while undergoing these experiences.

Through more in-depth analysis, these thoughts, ideas, and notes became general themes and then sub-themes. All of the eligible study participants provided all three data sources (i.e., participant diary, virtual discussion questions, and auto-photography presentation). However, not all participants made comments, responded, or provided images that the researcher ultimately used to make up the general themes and sub-themes. Conversely, the researcher used some comments, responses, and images in more than one general theme or sub-theme. Table 3 provides a matrix of the study participants and the data sources contributing to the makeup of the general themes and sub-themes.

Table 3

Matrix of Study Participants, Data Sources, and Occurrences

Unique Identifier	General Theme: Sense of Belonging		General Theme: Connection to U.S. History		General Theme: Project is Beneficial	
	Subtheme: Self-Discovery	Subtheme: Transformative Experience	Subtheme: Real-life Connection	Subtheme: Self-Efficacy	Subtheme: Real-World Problems	Subtheme: Active/Authentic Learning
A2	x x	x x			x	x
B1	x x		x			x
C2						
D2	x x				x	
E1	x x	x x	x	x	x	
F2						
G2	X				x	
H2	X	x x		x		
I2						x
J2			x			
K2		x x x	x	x	x	x
L2	X	x				x x
M1						
N1						
O1		x x				

One eligible study participant (C2) did not turn in the project assignments and, therefore, did not participate in the study. Three study participants (i.e., F2, M1, and N1) were dual enrollment students and therefore marked ineligible. Each occurrence of a comment, response, or image was denoted with an *x*. The researcher, in the process of reading and reviewing the data, color-coded commonalities from each data source while noting the study participant identifiers.

As the researcher examined the participant diaries, virtual focus groups, and auto-photo presentations, she color-coded frequently mentioned comments, responses, and images into categories and general themes. Table 4 displays the categorization of general themes.

Table 4

Categorization of General Themes

General Theme	Sample Quote	Number of Occurrences
Students Develop a Sense of Belonging	<i>"As I helped people through counseling and giving them advice on their next step in life; It dawned on me that I could do this as a professional career."</i>	23
Self-Identified Connection to U.S. History Content	<i>"I think my experience reinforced the class material as respecting other people's ideas and opinions while teaching was as important as giving my knowledge to them. And I think Civic responsibility is all about respecting other people's ideas, beliefs, or opinions."</i>	9
Students See the Project as Beneficial to Their Learning	<i>"...the project and it was vastly needed in a history course. To further elaborate, adding this project helps me grasp the material even more and apply these lessons to real life. I learned the duties as a reformer in history and how I can be one."</i>	10

Summarization of Data

An initial review of data revealed an overarching theme that showed that by performing the service-learning project, study participants had an autonomous motivation to learn U.S. history. Rodriguez-Keyes, Schneider, and Kenna (2013) explain that

"autonomous motivation is an internal experience of volition where a person identifies with the values of an activity and finds the activity consistent with their sense of self" (p. 786). The researcher further analyzed the three data sources and coded them into three themes. The first general theme emerged from quotes and images showing that students developed a sense of belonging, were comfortable in the place, and were connected to the work. Riley (2019) explains that having a sense of belonging involves feeling that you are in the right place, of being valued, and that you feel safe in your identity.

The initial stages of the service-learning project asked students to choose a group that was linked to a course objective in U.S. history (see Figure 3). Each group was tied to a specific course objective covered in the U.S. history course. The second general theme emerged as the participants referred to their chosen group when discussing their experiences. By referring to their chosen group, participants were self-aligning to a concept in history that was both of interest to the student and was an integral part of making the learning of U.S. history relevant.

The third general theme emerged as participants reflected on their experiences and found purpose within the service-learning project. Participant comments revealed that students found the project beneficial to their learning because of the authenticity of their actions while performing the service-learning project. What follows is a clustering of the general themes aggregated into sub-themes.

Clustering of Data

Students who performed a service-learning project as part of their U.S. history course found a sense of belonging. The data indicated that students gained an intuitive understanding of their character, needs, and wants. This self-discovery was evident in the

comments from participant diaries (i.e., “I like”, “I learned”, “I recognized”, “I was shocked”, and “It taught me”). The participant diaries chronicled a transformative experience for the participants. Paul (2014) explains that an experience is personally transformative if it changes a person's point of view, including core preferences. For example, the participants stated, “I made a difference”, “I have grown”, and “I am humbled”.

The auto-photography presentations also displayed a transformative experience through images depicting student engagement (Figure 5), interaction with the community (Figure 6), and interaction with technology (Figure 7). These findings answered the first research questions by indicating that there was an impact on learning.



Figure 5. Study participant demonstrating engagement.



Figure 6. Study participant demonstrating community engagement.

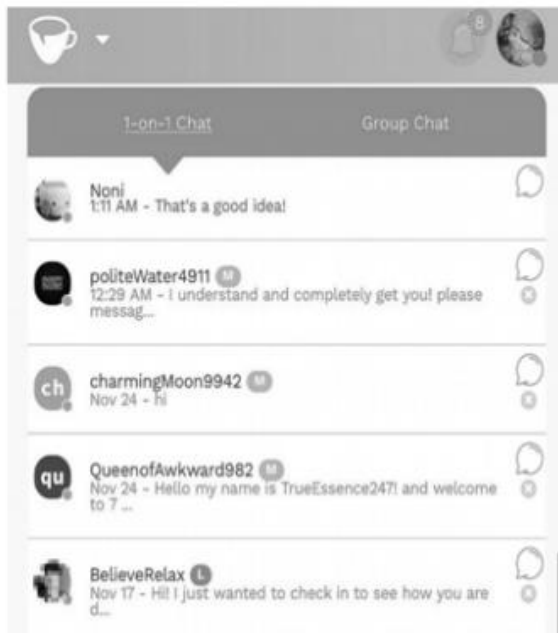


Figure 7. Study participant demonstrating engagement with technology.

Table 5 provides a sample of participant comments that shows the connection between service-learning and an increased impact on student learning.

Table 5

Sample Participant Comments – General Theme: Sense of Belonging

Sub-theme	Participant Comment	Unique Identifier
Self-Discovery	"...it makes me feel happier to see the actions of my work."	D2
	<i>"I realized I love math, which is part of my major, and I love to help kids with their schoolwork."</i>	A2
	<i>"I realized I like quiet spaces when helping others."</i>	E1
	<i>"I have a better understanding of children."</i>	H2
	<i>"My experience taught me to be grateful because anything can happen."</i>	I2
	<i>"This experience made me realize how much of an impact I had in these dogs' lives."</i>	O2
Transformative Experience	<i>"I didn't think I could work with students who had disabilities, but I proved myself wrong; I did excellent while working with them."</i>	A2
	<i>"I've made a difference in their lives in a short amount of time."</i>	H2
	<i>"I became strong and someone that could be relied upon."</i>	E1
	<i>"It was different seeing the world from a child's viewpoint."</i>	J2
	<i>"This prompted me to become more involved with my community."</i>	K2
	<i>"This project taught me to never take anything for granted and always to help others. You never know what someone is going through, so you should always treat people kindly. I would do this project all over again."</i>	L2

Choosing a group with which to self-align for this service-learning project allowed students to select a concept of history that was of interest to them. Identifying volunteer services that related to their group further allowed students to serve in an area of interest. Even though the instructor/researcher laid out these two areas for the students in the design of the project, they were still able to make discoveries about learning history. The data indicated that students connected their real-life experiences to what they were learning in history. This connection activated their knowledge and improved their self-efficacy in learning history. Within the context of the virtual discussion questions, students were able to demonstrate that they connected their experiences with the general

concepts of civic responsibility, the actions of reformers in the 1850s, and they were able to identify the benefit of experiencing cultures different from their own.

Table 6 provides a sampling of student comments collected from the virtual discussion questions. These virtual discussion questions addressed the first research question by asking how students were able to use the self-identified alignment with service-learning and course objectives to impact their learning of U.S. history. Students were able to show their knowledge of history and become more confident in what they know and how they will approach learning history in the future. By answering these virtual discussion questions regarding the connection of the students' service-learning experience to a course objective that was taught in U.S. History to 1865, students had an opportunity to discuss, in their own words, how they met the course objectives. Through their comments, students made real-life connections that helped with their learning of historical concepts. This evidence illustrated that the very nature of authentic and active learning promoted self-efficacy and confidence of the learner toward learning history.

Table 6

Sample Participant Comments – General Theme: Connection to U.S. History Content

Sub-theme	Participant Comment	Unique Identifier
Real-Life Connection	<i>"...respecting other people's ideas and opinions while teaching was as important as giving my knowledge to them. And I think Civic responsibility is all about other people's ideas, beliefs, or opinions."</i>	B1
	<i>"My service-learning project experience is related to class material because, in Chapter 13.3, it talks about "Reforms To Human Health," and I am a Reformer. To further elaborate, this chapter talks about how reform efforts were aimed at "perfecting the spiritual and social worlds of individuals" and ensuring that something gets done, and some antebellum reformers wanted to do that with healthcare!"</i>	E1

Sub-theme	Participant Comment	Unique Identifier
	<i>"My service-learning experience related to class material by helping me see the effects of people doing good for the community, which was the goal of the Civic Responsibility Group. The experiences reinforced the class material, because I could see the ability of citizens to take pride in America and to help one another. The obligations of American citizens in the Constitution emphasize this concept of doing good for America; learning how to contribute to America showed me this concept tangibly."</i>	J2
	<i>"This experience has had a bit of an effect on my learning history. I want to learn more. Studying history is not only about learning important cultural and historical milestones, but also about people's thinking."</i>	D2
	<i>"This project helped me feel more engaged because I've never been a huge fan of history classes, but I love project-based opportunities."</i>	O1
Activate Knowledge/ Self-Efficacy to Learn History	<i>"I am African American, and studying history used to upset me just to think about the oppression my ancestors faced, but this type of project makes me realize I can change the future."</i>	K2
	<i>"My thoughts about learning history has not change [sic] because knowing your history can allow us to understand our past, which in turn helps us understand our present."</i>	H2
	<i>"My thoughts on learning history are more broad and open. I must admit, prior to completing this project I had little to no interest (outside of academics) in doing research on founding fathers, reformations, civilization and more essential topics. Now, I feel more urged to do this daily in hopes to learn more about how the past shapes the future and overall how I can reform the past times in hopes of a better future for the next generation ahead."</i>	E1

Students who find purpose in what they are learning increase their capacity to learn (Johnson & Johnson, 2003). The last general theme emerged from the data as student comments indicated that students found the service-learning project worthwhile and beneficial to their learning. The data revealed that, as students underwent volunteer experiences, they were able to encounter and sometimes play a role in solving real-world problems. Students identified their experiences as meaningful and significant through comments, such as "I see the struggle" and "there are challenges in life". During their experiences, students were able to apply knowledge in real-life contexts and situations as

well. Students also described the time spent performing the service-learning project as beneficial and authentic to learning history. The authenticity of the experience allowed students to take ownership of their learning and identify connections to how they viewed the learning of history. Table 7 contains participants' comments about changes in their beliefs about learning U.S. history as a result of the service-learning project. These comments addressed the second research question and revealed a connection between what they learned in history was true in present day to some degree. Students, through their answers to the virtual discussion questions, indicated that they were enlightened to the problems of yesterday and today. This type of engagement with history and learning put the student in a situation to solve problems while relying on insight and information from the past. Therefore, the students were uniquely situated to learn about history and themselves authentically.

Table 7

Sample Participant Comments – General Theme: Project Purpose

Sub-theme	Participant Comment	Unique Identifier
Solving Real-World Problems	<i>"I see some people struggle with life, and I can help them."</i>	E1
	<i>"There are challenges some people go through just to get their job done."</i>	A2
	<i>"I now see the world as complex and hard for those feeling down by the pressures of society."</i>	E1
	<i>"My favorite thing to do was getting to know people and hearing about their lives. I was able to encourage others."</i>	G2
	<i>"My service-learning project prompted me to become more active in my community to the point where I inquired about a position at the domestic violence shelter."</i>	I2
		K2
Beneficial to their Learning/ Authentic	<i>"I accept things and people no matter their religions, their differences, or different cultures with respect and consideration."</i>	A2
	<i>"I did not like history, but this experience was worthwhile."</i>	B2
	<i>"Contributing creates a more complete, happier society."</i>	D2

Sub-theme	Participant Comment	Unique Identifier
	<i>"I took on the role of a leader. I'm grateful for this project and this learning experience. The people I helped made a huge impact on me."</i>	L2
	<i>"I encountered situations that were unexpected, but I was able to work through them."</i>	I2
	<i>"I realized that learning history can be fun."</i>	B2

Summary

Data gathered in this study pointed to students learning not only about themselves but also learning and engaging with U.S. history content. Study participants revealed personal transformations and made discoveries that established a sense of belonging. Participants expressed a newfound knowledge that they were in a good place for themselves. Through these service-learning experiences, participants developed confidence in mastering the U.S. history course objectives based on group choice, and they found a connection to learning U.S. history. Equally important, study participants, through their comments and answers to the virtual discussion questions, disclosed that they were able to activate their learning and solve real-world problems through the experience of performing service-learning projects.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This study sought to address a problem in higher education regarding student engagement and learning core history courses. Research shows that most students find the study of history to be boring (Carlson, 2017). History is considered part of liberal arts education where content is learned for the sake of learning, and, for some, learning history is considered a waste of time (Leef, 2017). However, most colleges have a core set of required general education courses that make up their liberal arts education (Jiang, 2014). History is typically a core liberal arts course intended to broaden the education of the citizenry (Kirk, 2018). Another problem with many history courses in higher education is how they are taught, which are traditionally through lectures (Cutler, 2014). Pekrun (2006) found that the lecture and test method of teaching history left students feeling underwhelmed, unchallenged, and bored. An experiential learning method, however, can be used to engage students with course content. John Dewey (1916) referred to this type of teaching as “learning by doing”. The purpose of this study was to expand higher education pedagogy by adding experiential strategies to a core U.S. history course.

The researcher used experiential learning theory as the framework for this case study design. The case study design included a service-learning component in a discipline-specific course. One goal of this study was to address the gap in the literature that explored the impact on student engagement and student learning. The researcher

used service-learning as the experimental learning strategy in this study of a core U.S. history course at a southeastern public university entitled U.S. history to 1865. Using this strategy, students were exposed to real-world problems and interactions. Experiential theorists promote the use of classroom activities and linking them to authentic experiences outside the classroom (Kolb, 1984).

The significance of this study was the improvement of the scholarship of teaching and learning. This case study, through the experiential learning theory of service-learning, examined the level of engagement in students who were enrolled in a higher education core U.S. history course. Study results found that because of their service-learning experience, students were more engaged with learning U.S. history.

Analysis of the Findings

The researcher designed the study to understand the impact of service-learning on student engagement and learning in a higher education core U.S. history course. Through analysis of the participant data, which included the documented experiences, visual images, and virtual discussion questions about their service-learning projects, the researcher identified three general themes and several embedded sub-themes.

General Theme 1: Students Develop a Sense of Belonging

Students who participated in the service-learning project expressed a feeling that the experience took place at the right time and place and that the service they were performing was where they belonged. Data indicated that students had a sense that their involvement in this project and experience made them feel good about their actions. Participant comments showed that students were comfortable in their experiences and discovered new skills and knowledge because of the experience. Students were also able

to link their experiences and their feelings about the service project to new thoughts about future professional endeavors.

Self-discovery, as a result of the service-learning experiential learning strategy, helped students learn new aspects about themselves and provided them with insight when thinking about their future. Participants reported a desire to do more service-learning type work in the future. One participant expressed a desire to pursue a career within their area of service-learning. Additionally, students noted transformational awareness as a result of their experience. Both Tran (2016) and Humphreys (2005) supported this finding by speaking to the process of applying previous knowledge to new situations to discover new learning and using the newly learned skills that may serve to develop different characteristics in a person.

General Theme 2: Self-Identified Connection to U.S. History Content

The second aim of this study included assessing the impact of service-learning projects if students self-aligned with specific course objectives in U.S. history. Findings suggest that students made a connection to U.S. history by undertaking a service-learning volunteer experience. Responses to the virtual discussion questions included comments about historical people, such as the Reformers, and how these people looked at society, saw a need, and fulfilled it. Students then related their thoughts about today's society and the needs that they were attempting to meet through service-learning. Additionally, students were able to connect to historical ideas, such as civic responsibility.

Students demonstrated an understanding of the need to be a responsible citizen and for making their community a better place by acting on that feeling through service. Images from the auto-photography presentations reinforced these findings as students

chose images that helped them convey their perceived connections through engagement with real-life situations. Through several data sources, students indicated that they were motivated to learn by connecting what they were experiencing to what they were learning in the course. Mergel (1998) describes the process by asserting that the learners are constructing their knowledge from experience and that this learning is their interpretation of the world. Ma (2015) expands this notion by surmising that the real-world application in experiential learning experiences aids in how students engage and self-regulate what they learn from a course. Students are motivated to learn more about historical figures or ideas as they actively engage with history content by relating people in the past with people in the present through real-life situations. Taking control of one's learning, according to Dotolo (2010), shows confidence and promotes self-efficacy in learning history as the process moves from a learner-centered activity of simply doing a project to a learner-driven opportunity to learn more about themselves or the challenges they are addressing in society.

General Theme 3: Students see Service-Learning Projects as Beneficial to their Learning

The results of this study showed that by simply adding an experiential learning activity (i.e., service-learning project), students were able to find purpose in their learning through solving real-world problems and learning authentically. Donovan (2015) explains the connection between the study of history and the focus of service-learning by pointing out that by nature, service-learning focuses on real-world problems. For example, service-learning projects focus on poverty, homelessness, and urban crises – all of which are also historical problems. Data from this study supported the conclusion that students, through service-learning projects, created situations in which they were not only actively

learning about history but were also solving real-world problems. Current and future problems are shaped by history, and learning about history is, therefore, essential to the work of service-learning (Woolfolk, 2001).

For history students, the authentic learning aspect of a service-learning project added relevance that increased student motivation to learn about history. Newmann and Wehlage (1993) asserted that students are finding meaning when learning and tasks are authentic. The finding that authentic experiences increased student learning addressed the second research question. As a result of performing service-learning projects, students believed that the project was needed to help them feel engaged with learning about history.

Limitations of the Study

The instructor of the U.S. history course also served as the researcher for the study. The instructor required the students to complete the service-learning project as part of their semester course grade. Therefore, the instructor/researcher cannot know for certain if study participants were providing true answers or if they were only providing answers that they thought may earn them a good grade. Though a triangulation of the data addressed the validity, the fact that the service-learning project was a graded requirement might have influenced how students answered the questions.

During the analysis, the researcher noted some responses that lacked a depth of thought. These limited responses may have been a result of the overall study design. As a fully online U.S. history course, the opportunity for real-time conversations was not present and, therefore, may have led to missed opportunities to engage in deeper thought. Meeting face-to-face as a class may have afforded a richer conversation about student

service-learning experiences and learning history. There may be opportunities in the future to add synchronous sessions in an online class where students can meet in breakout rooms and discuss their experiences from service-learning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Results of this study point to several suggestions for future research. The first recommendation would be that the study takes place in a face-to-face course with no online component. By meeting with students face-to-face regularly, students may have asked more questions about the service-learning project and be more deeply invested in making connections to history. A hybrid class may even be an option as students and instructors would be able to meet face to face periodically and discuss the service-learning experience. A second recommendation would be for the instructor to include online volunteer opportunities for students. Several study participants brought up the idea of feeling more comfortable with virtual volunteer opportunities.

A final recommendation for future research would be the need to connect specific learning objectives to service-learning outcomes (Prentice & Robinson, 2010). This study narrowed a gap in the literature by introducing the idea of connecting a service-learning experience to specific learning objectives within a U.S. history course. The design of the study allowed students to choose a group tied to a course objective and then find a service-learning opportunity that fit that objective. This process provided students with an avenue to make the connection between their experience and learning history. Future studies may benefit from the inclusion of mini-course lessons that cover how the course objective is linked to service-learning and that address what students should know about

the U.S. history course objectives related to current issues. Providing these connections may help students learn more about U.S. history.

Researchers may also design a mixed methods research study using quantitative measures to determine if students met the course objectives. Researchers may use formative or summative assessments, such as multiple-choice or short-answer questions, to measure content apprehension and may use qualitative data sources (i.e., diaries or auto-photography journals) to provide detailed descriptions of the experiences.

Implications of the Study

The significance of the study was its ability to improve the scholarship of history education teaching and learning. The findings indicated that history students could benefit from using experiential learning strategies that involve them in historical work. Similarly, Bray and McClaskey (2016) found that students who are given a choice in what they studied took ownership of their learning and were more motivated to learn. Instructors could use this finding to build and promote student engagement in the classroom. Findings from this study addressed the original problem – that students taking compulsory history courses are bored by the traditional lecture method of teaching in the classroom. This study suggests that engaging history pedagogy can be found in unusual places, such as service-learning projects.

The nature of service-learning brings new insights as well as unexpected findings, and conclusions. History faculty tasked with teaching concepts of the good citizenry in a democratic society could benefit from using service-learning as a class activity in their courses. Service-learning experiences provide students with real-world problems that are rooted in history and shaped by past events and experiences (Donovan, 2000). Improved

student learning and increased engagement with history are additional benefits of service-learning projects.

The concept of service-learning can be a catalyst for future historical research. For example, there are opportunities for volunteering online to work with primary sources. The Smithsonian Institute hosts a digital-volunteer program that allows interested individuals to transcribe historical documents (Smithsonian, 2020). Following this example, a history instructor could design lessons and activities that require students to learn historical facts while bringing them into direct involvement with primary source documents at the Smithsonian Institute. These course activities make the act of learning more active and relevant by allowing students to engage instantly with history.

Dissemination of the Findings

The findings of this study would be of primary interest to history educators and service-learning leaders. As a teacher leader, my role in disseminating this information could be speaking at department meetings, presenting at higher education teaching and learning centers, as well as national and state conferences that are geared toward teaching pedagogy. For history educators who have traditionally relied on lectures, but would like to add an experiential learning strategy, the researcher suggests the following plan:

1. Start small. Focus the strategy or activity on a mini-lesson while being mindful of the number and mix of students in the course.
2. Determine the goals. What are the objectives of the lesson or content, and how do these content objectives align with the course objectives? What skills will students need to carry out? What skills or knowledge do you want students to build on or acquire as a result of using this strategy?

3. Align the strategy or activity with lesson goals. Choose an appropriate strategy or activity for the lesson.
4. Detail a plan for completing the activity. Anticipate movement, questions, and responses.
5. Link the mini-lesson and strategy or activity to both past and future content.
6. Have students reflect on their experiences.
7. Use formative or summative assessments to measure student learning.
8. Reflect on the strategy or activity and the successes as well as areas that could be improved.

The second group of stakeholders in the findings of this study are those individuals who are service-learning leaders within higher education. Service-learning has become a core value in the mission of many universities (Harward, 2007). Known as a high-impact practice for universities, service-learning applies to learning with real-world problems through community service (Kuh, 2008). Research suggests that using service-learning in various disciplines is beneficial to higher education students (Jarrett, Dunn, Tomchek, Reynolds, & Mercer, 2020). This study is an example of how service-learning could be used within a discipline-specific course. This study also demonstrates that there is student interest in exploring online volunteering. Because the area of online volunteering is relatively new (Cravens & Ellis, 2014) and may not be widely known to existing faculty, the researcher suggests that service-learning leaders promote online volunteering using the following plan:

1. Compile a list of online volunteer opportunities by discipline (Appendix F).
2. Request time during departmental meetings.

- a. Present discipline-specific opportunities to faculty.
 - b. Explain the core principles of service-learning.
 - c. Explain how students will benefit from service-learning.
 - d. Explain how faculty will benefit from service-learning.
3. Offer assistance with implementing service-learning as part of classroom activities.
 4. Organize learning communities to reflect on service-learning classroom experiences and share ideas.

Conclusion

The core mission of higher education is to “advance, preserve, and transmit knowledge as well as produce well-educated, cultured, and morally civic-minded individuals needed to develop and maintain an optimally democratic society” (Donovan, 2000, p. 13). Accomplishing this mission requires that educators think differently about how they practice pedagogy. Traditional lecture methods tend to bore students and lower the integrity of the course content. Lecturing in history courses is useful when used in conjunction with more active learning methods. Exclusively lecturing sends a message to the student that says, “You find out what is interesting about this content. You are on your own.” Students respond well to active learning; they like to be in control. As a history instructor and researcher, knowing that students are engaged with the teaching and learning of course content is satisfying. By implementing experiential learning, students who are learning about the complex problems that shape history can apply what they learn by involving themselves in real-life problems through service-learning, then allowing them to experience history. In John Dewey’s famous words, “the true starting point of history is always some present situation with its problems” (1916, p. 24).

The goal of this qualitative study was to investigate the degree to which students were engaged with and learned U.S. history after performing a service-learning project as part of their course objectives. The data indicated that the study participants self-reported that they had made a connection between their service-learning experience and the course objectives. The researcher had used service-learning projects in a U.S. history course for five years. In those years, students expressed overwhelming appreciation that the service-learning project was part of the course. Students were able to make possible career connections, learn new skills, make discoveries about themselves, and have a better understanding of history.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Project Overview Form

CONNECTING TO HISTORY THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT OVERVIEW**Project Rationale:**

The purpose of this project is to involve you in the community and help you relate historical course themes to events that are occurring today.

Complete this sheet by doing the following:

1. Decide your group. Review the different groups below, and choose one that closely matches your interests. Remember, this is an individual project, but you will be grouped with others who have the same interests as you.
Enroll in your chosen group by clicking on Groups under Communications in CougarVIEW and complete the Service Learning Intro Discussion Posting by making an initial post and responding to at least two classmates.
2. Research and document 3 potential organizations, events, or strategies in which you may be able to involve yourself to complete this project. Your research should include:
Organization, event or strategy
Potential dates (**Dates should fall between February 3, 2019 – April 14, 2019**)

YOUR ANSWERS:

1. **Name your group here (you must also enroll in the group by clicking on Groups under Communications in CougarVIEW and post to the Service Learning Intro Discussion Posting):**

2. **Organization, event or strategy and potential dates (You need 3 of these)**
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

Connecting to History Through Service-Learning		
Groups		
Culture Club	Civic Responsibility	Reformers
<i>Why would someone choose this group?</i> Do you have an interest in working with people who are different from you? As we learn about the interactions among Native Americans, Africans, and Europeans, we discover different cultural influences that helped shape the United States.	<i>Why would someone choose this group?</i> An interest in maintaining a quality society and a desire to put into action the responsibilities of citizenship as outlined in the U.S. Constitution.	<i>Why would someone choose this group?</i> Similar to the Reformers of the 1800s who sought to change American society in ways that upheld American values and ideals, participants in this group will look for areas in society need improvement.
Course Theme: <i>Cultural Influences Shape America</i> Connection to course objective: Unit 1 Three Worlds Meet <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze the components of American society today that includes elements of Native American, European and African Cultures 	Course Theme: <i>The Constitution is Central to American life and ideals</i> Connection to course objective: Unit 2 Creating a Nation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate that The Constitution is central to American life and ideals, and that participation in a democratic society involves certain duties and responsibilities 	Course Theme: <i>Continuity and Change</i> Connection to course objective: Unit 3 Growth and Division <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show that individuals have power and that the reform movements during the early and mid-1800s sought to change American society, but in ways that upheld American values and ideals
Motivation: Try something new or help a culture of people who are different from you.	Motivation: Make the community a better place	Motivation: Help those who are less fortunate.
Service Learning Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer to help bring awareness to students by posting flyers that advertise Hispanic Heritage Month event at CSU Volunteer to work at an interfaith festival 	Service Learning Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Walk dogs at PAWS Teach a small group of people a skill 	Service Learning Ideas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer at homeless shelter Volunteer at a mental health facility

Appendix B

Participant Diary

Service-Learning Participant Diary

Instructions

The Service-Learning Participant Diary is series to entries that will allow you to document on your service-learning experience. Please give a thoughtful answer to each question with a word count of 150-250 words for the whole diary. There are no right or wrong answers here. This is you telling me about your experience.

Service-Learning Experience

Group:

Name/Title of the Service-Learning Experience:

Preplanning – Explain how you preplanned your service-learning. Whom did you contact to set up the experience?

When did you complete the service (date or dates)?

Document your experience -

You should document the whole experience. Think about the who, what, when, where, and why of this experience. Use the questions below to guide your report:

What is your role at the community site?

What were your initial expectations? Have these expectations changed? How? Why?

What specific skills have you used at your community site?

Describe a person you've encountered in the community who made a strong impression on you, positive or negative.

What were the most difficult or satisfying parts of your work? Why?

Has your view of the population with whom you have been working changed? How?

Has the experience affected your worldview? How?

Appendix C

Virtual Discussion Questions

Discussion Question 1 - Connection to U.S. history - 150-200 Words

Thinking about why you chose your group (Culture Club, Civic Responsibility, Reformers,) I want to know if you are able to make a connection between the course objectives and the service-learning project.

Course Objectives:

Culture Club – Analyze the components of American society today that includes elements of Native American, European, and African Cultures.

Civic Responsibility – Explain how the Constitution is central to American life and ideals, and that participation in a democratic society involves certain duties and responsibilities.

Reformers – Show that individuals have power and that the reform movements during the early and mid-1800s sought to change American society, but in ways that upheld American values and ideals.

1A. How did your service-learning experience relate to class material?

1B. Did the experience contradict or reinforce class material?

1C. What aspects of your learning of the course objectives may have been due to your service-learning experience?

Discussion Question 2 - Impact - 150-200 Words

I want to know how this project affected you.

2A. Did you find this experience worthwhile?

2B. Discuss your thoughts on performing a service-learning project in a history course.

2C. Did this experience make an impact on your learning history? Explain.

Discussion 3 - Future - 150-200 Words

Share your thoughts about service-learning.

3A. Will you continue to perform volunteer services? Are there ways you can expand on this service?

3B. Will you try something different?

3C. What are your thoughts about learning history? Have they changed since completing this project?

Appendix D

Auto-Photography Presentation

Media Presentation of Service Learning Experience

In this assignment, you are asked to document your experience through media. You may take no less than five pictures, or record a 2-minute video (a combination of the two is also acceptable) that captures your service-learning experience. You will add the media to a PowerPoint presentation, or other presentation software of your choosing, and give a description. Tell me about the things, people, or actions in the photos and/or video. Your description should be in the range of a 150 -200-word count. Please submit your completed assignment to the appropriate dropbox.

Appendix E

Recruitment Email and Informed Consent Form

Hello HIST 2111 Students!

My name is Dawn, and I am requesting your participation in a research study about your history class and your service-learning project that is being conducted after the semester ends and grades have been posted. Being a part of the study means that your work, the Participant Diary, Service-learning Discussion Questions, and the Photo/Video Presentation will be used and analyzed. Should you decide that you want to be part of this study, the attached informed consent will need to be signed and returned to me. You may print off the consent form, sign it and then take a pic with your phone, and attach the pic to the return email. As a gift for your participation in this study, you will receive a \$5.00 gift card to Starbucks after the semester ends, and grades are posted, and I verify that your work has been collected.

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Ms. Kimberly Stokes, a faculty member (adjunct) in the History and Geography Department at Columbus State University. This study is being supervised by Dr. Salazar, faculty member from the College Of Education and Health Professions, Counseling, Foundations and Leadership.

I. Purpose:

The purpose of this project is to investigate the student experience of performing a service-learning project as part of a U.S. History class. This study is being conducted to improve teaching practices in higher education history courses by engaging students with history content.

II. Procedures:

Once you sign the informed consent form, you will proceed with participating in class with assignments, Your work will not be used for the study until your final grades have been posted for the course. In the class, you are expected to complete diary entries, virtual discussion postings, and an auto-photography presentation. Each diary entry may take an estimate of 30 minutes to complete, It will take you approximately 60 minutes to complete your each of the virtual discussion post and responses. The auto-photography presentation will take you approximately 60 to compile images and explanations of your service-learning experience. Your work will only be accessed by the PI. The PI will download the participant diary documents, the virtual discussion posts and replies, and the presentations to a Google Drive folder on a password-protected laptop. accessed only by the PI. The data will be discarded after 5 years. The data may be used for future research studies.

III. Possible Risks or Discomforts:

You may experience no more than minimal risk in this study. Your participation in this study will not affect your grade for the class. The researcher will not know your identity until after final grades have been submitted, and, therefore, your participation will not affect your grade in the course.

IV. Potential Benefits:

You will have the opportunity to participate in a research study, and the results from the study will benefit the History Department.

V. Costs and Compensation:

There is no cost for participating in this study. You will be compensated with a \$5.00 gift card to Starbuck's for participating in the study. You will receive the gift card once the PI has access to your submitted, which will be after the course has ended.

VI. Confidentiality:

Your identity will not be revealed or linked to your responses throughout the duration Of the study, especially during the dissemination of the findings. During the discussion of the study results, your identity will not be linked to your responses. The data will be stored through submission of the university's LMS CougarVIEW. No one other than the PI will have access to your responses. The data will be stored for 5 years in a Google Drive folder on a password-protected laptop, accessed only by the PI. The data will be discarded by electronic deletion after 5 years. The data may be used for future research studies.

VII. Withdrawal:

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and your withdrawal will not involve penalty or loss of benefits.

For additional information about this research project, you may contact the Principal Investigator, Kimberly Stokes at [REDACTED] or stokes kimberly@columbusstate.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Columbus State University Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu.

I have read this informed consent form. If I had any questions, they have been answered. By signing this form, I agree to participate in this research project, Participation in this study is open to all students who are 18 years or older and enrolled in HIST 2111 CRNs 80990 and 80991.

Signature of Participant

Date

Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter

From: CSU IRB <irb@columbusstate.edu>
Date: Thu, Aug 29, 2019 at 2:38 PM
Subject: Protocol 20-003 Exempt approval
To: Kimberly Stokes <stokes_kimberly@columbusstate.edu>, Victor Salazar
<Salazar_victor@columbusstate.edu>

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University

Date: 08/29/2019
Protocol Number: 20-003
Protocol Title: Connecting to History Through Service-Learning
Principal Investigator: Kimberly Stokes
Co-Principal Investigator: Victor Salazar

Dear Kimberly,

The Columbus State University Institutional Review Board or representative(s) has reviewed your research proposal identified above. It has been determined that the project is classified as exempt under 45 CFR 46.101(b) of the federal regulations and has been approved. You may begin your research project immediately.

Please note any changes to the protocol must be submitted in writing to the IRB before implementing the change(s). Any adverse events, unexpected problems, and/or incidents that involve risks to participants and/or others must be reported to the Institutional Review Board at irb@columbusstate.edu or (706) 507-8634.

If you have further questions, please feel free to contact the IRB.

Sincerely,

Manasa Mamidi, Graduate Assistant

Institutional Review Board
Columbus State University