Teachers' Experiences Using Service-Learning in the High School Classroom

A Doctoral Thesis

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Abstract

Teachers are looking for meaningful ways to connect with students and instill in them an understanding and appreciation for academic content that will extend beyond the classroom. Service-learning is a teaching pedagogy that connects classroom content with real-world problems that allow students to practice applying knowledge and skills while making an impact on the issue. Service-Learning theory and service-learning history guided this interpretive phenomenological analysis, in which four educators who utilized service-learning in the high school classroom were interviewed to understand their lived experiences with service-learning. Through data analysis, three salient superordinate themes emerged: personal impacts of service-learning, student impacts of service-learning, and challenges to service-learning. Participants explored their feelings of pride, their relationships with students, connectedness between peers and family, and increased number of strategies within a teacher toolbox as the main personal impacts to implementing service-learning. Student impacts included being forever changed, breaking down misconceptions and preconceived notions, influencing decisions after high school, and developing increased buy-in and engagement. Participants felt time and money were the greatest challenges to implementing service-learning. The data supported existing literature on service-learning, but suggested that additional work in the area of educators' experiences and secondary service-learning are warranted. Findings are relevant for high school educators and administrators who can develop programs and projects utilizing service-learning at the high school level.

Key Words: service-learning, high school, K-12, teacher motivation, interpretive phenomenological analysis
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of Problem and Significance

From the earliest establishment of this country, political leaders like Thomas Jefferson and educational leaders like Horace Mann thought one purpose of public education should be to instill a sense of civic obligation in the lives of its citizens (Fife, 2013). People continue to argue that the purpose of education extends beyond book learning and that education is a required component to the advancement of democracy (Armstrong, 2006; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Print & Lange, 2012). Teachers teach, in part, because of a sense of moral purpose, a belief that learning improves the lives of their students, and by extension, society as a whole (Fullan, 1993, 1995). To that end, service-learning is a decades-old practice that links active participation in service-minded education to the centuries-old concept of civic involvement and democratic preservation (Furco & Root, 2010, p. 10). Service-learning offers students a genuine means of learning and growth and a greater contribution to society in the process (Dymond, Renzaglia, & Chun, E., 2007).

Teachers are always looking to generate interest and excitement in their students and often seek approaches that can deliver high impact as a means to educate students. One of the more challenging aspects of education is for teachers to impart students with the knowledge, skills, and values to become engaged, lifelong learners (Print & Lange, 2012). Students need to learn autonomy and display ownership over their learning, further developing their voices and learning how to use those voices within their communities (Wood, 2001). It is argued that the capability of a teacher is a combination of the capacity to engage students as informed and active citizens and to understand the range of social factors impacting and influencing student learning.
These are very real issues that teachers confront when trying to deliver a meaningful curriculum that extends beyond basic content area knowledge.

Service-learning connects traditional classroom instruction with practical application in community service projects. While students become engaged in hands-on, real-life issues, they are given opportunities to apply content-area skills in a wide variety of ways. Students often come away from these experiences with heightened awareness of current issues, civic duty, academic engagement, and self-esteem (Billig, 2000). Despite its well-documented benefits for students (Alt, 1997; Johnson, 1996; Keister, Kinsley, & Resnik, 1994, and Kezar, 2002), the number of teachers enacting service-learning projects in the classroom is relatively small.

Teachers are seeking methods and development opportunities to cross the boundaries of classroom content to make personal connections that will impact students (Butcher, et al., 2003). They are constantly seeking to expand their professional toolboxes to facilitate meaningful exchanges with students while considering the social, organizational and intellectual contexts for teaching and learning (Cochran-Smith, 2001). Teachers are looking for ways to excite students with challenging content that will motivate them to link their academic experience to outside events and to impart the lasting value of their subject area upon their students. Service-learning is an underutilized means to this end (Dymond, et al., 2007; Mündel & Schugurensky, 2008; and Swaminathan, 2007), yet research has shown that educators in schools with strong service-learning programs report a more positive school climate as a result of feeling a greater connectedness to the school, as well as decreased teacher turnover and increased teacher collegiality (Billig, 2000).

Service-learning can not only increase the self-efficacy of students; it can also help teachers across school subjects and levels increase their own feelings of efficiency in the
classroom (Krebs, 2009). While curriculum is generally prescribed through standards and frameworks, teaching is still a craft, and the delivery of those lessons varies greatly from teacher to teacher. Such is the case with service-learning; some teachers are well-versed in service-learning as a teaching pedagogy and display a continued commitment to employing it in the classroom, while others have no preparation or experience in the teaching strategy. The percentage of high schools in the United States reporting service-learning activities has declined from 46% in 1999 to 35% in 2008; in addition, the number of teachers and students within a school who participate in service-learning varies by program (Spring, Grimm, & Dietz, 2008). Those skilled in service-learning tend to persist in the practice, and it is a permanent fixture in their professional toolboxes.

There is extensive research on the benefits of service-learning for K-12 students and on the benefits of service-learning at the undergraduate level across disciplines, as well as the post-secondary commitment to the practice; for example, service-learning opportunities are offered in 71% of all community colleges and on at least one-third of all undergraduate campuses, with a growing number adding service-learning opportunities yearly (Prentice, Robinson, & McPhee, 2003). In contrast, there is little research to be found on practitioners who utilize the teaching pedagogy. More research is needed on the professional experiences of educators who utilize service-learning to understand how it relates to their professional self-efficacy to fully understand why one would consider studying and practicing service-learning as a teacher.

**Practical and Intellectual Goals**

The primary intellectual goal of the study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers using service-learning as a teaching pedagogy. The researcher has experienced ongoing satisfaction, having implemented service-learning projects with high school students over her
eleven years working in a high school. This satisfaction exists on many levels: connecting with students by allowing for increased student voice and choice within the classroom; creating an opportunity to allow students to practice civic skills as well as real-world application of academic concepts; and a personal effectiveness as an educator. It seems as if those who employ service-learning do so with a continued commitment to the practice, as they understand and have experienced its value. The researcher contends that those who practice service-learning do so because of similar experiences, and is interested in learning the individual lived experiences with service-learning of her peers. The secondary intellectual goal is to add to the existing literature on service-learning from the practitioner's perspective, an area currently lacking depth in current research. This contribution can help all practitioners consider the value of service-learning as an educational tool.

The practical goal of the study was to answer the question, "What can service-learning do for me as a teacher?" for other educators, who might not otherwise consider the strategy as a means to engage students, feel self-efficacious, and meet student learning outcomes. With such strong research indicating the positive outcomes for K-12 and undergraduate students alike, practitioners need additional evidence of peer educators' experiences working with service-learning.

**Research Question**

The primary question for this study was: What are the experiences of teachers who utilize service-learning in their high school classrooms? For the purpose of this study, service-learning (SL) was defined as a teaching pedagogy that enables students to address the school curriculum through service to the community (Dymond, et al., 2008).
Conceptual Framework

The service-learning conceptual framework provides a lens for framing this study, as a means to understand the teaching pedagogy that has developed across education for teachers to link academic content with a service-based application. The roots of service-learning theory appear most directly in the work of John Dewey's theory of experience, in which he believed every subject has an opportunity for cross connections between the subject matter and the direct experiences of everyday life (1916). In his *Democracy and Education* (1900/2001), Dewey presents an experiential model that originally developed and connected the ideas of reflection, discovery, real life skills and knowledge. Dewey's situational learning argues that knowledge acquisition and application are linked to its context, and that to be able recall and apply this knowledge to new experiences, one has to experience a situation that allows for reflection between the original learning and the experience (Eyler & Giles, 1994).

Based on Dewey's model, Eyler and Giles (1994) first explored and questioned the following tenets of service-learning theory: 1. The continuity of the experience, or the degree to which service-learning can be tailored to a developmentally appropriate educational program; 2. the principle of interaction, the idea that different service-learning experiences have different impacts because of its particular connections; 3. inquiry, the practice that service-learning can inspire further study; 4. reflective activity, the notion that reflection creates learning by linking experience and education; 5. truly educative projects, or those projects that meet Dewey's criteria that a project must generate interest, be intrinsically worthwhile, present problems that awaken curiosity and need for information, and must foster development over time; 6. concrete and abstract knowledge, the idea that a participant develop both concrete and abstract knowledge and be able to transfer both to various projects; 7. the great community, the goal that service-learning
promotes community involvement; 8. citizenship, the hope that service-learning develops a social intelligence and civic responsibility; and 9. democracy, the desire for service-learning to have long-term positive effects on democracy. In *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning* (1999), Eyler and Giles expand upon their earlier work to describe five essential elements of service-learning. They include *placement quality*, defined as selecting a context in which participants can exercise initiative, take responsibility, and work as peers with practitioners and community members; *application*, the degree to which students can link what they are doing in the classroom to what they are experiencing in the community and vice versa; *reflection*, which involves being able to step back and be thoughtful about experience, and to monitor one's own reactions and thinking processes; *diversity*, which can lead to greater tolerance and understanding within the present status quo, or a social transformation, allowing contributions of different cultural perspectives to change the status quo; and *community voice*, which involves meeting the needs identified by members of the community in meaningful service.

Service-learning theory is critical to the research as the researcher will seek to understand the lived experiences of practitioners with the phenomenon of service-learning. It will be a critical lens through which to analyze participants' experiences of service-learning.
Chapter II: Literature Review

Using Northeastern's Scholar One Source, the following databases were searched for this literature review: Academic One File, Academic Search Premier, American Periodicals Series Online, eBook Collection, Education Journals, Education Research Complete, Educator's Reference Complete, ERIC (EBSCOhost and ProQuest), and JSTOR. Keyword searches were conducted using service-learning and various combinations of the following terms: high school, secondary education, post-secondary, history, college, teacher education, faculty, education, incentives, and deterrents. The Campus Compact and the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse websites were visited, and the researcher reviewed titles and abstracts in particular of the Michigan Journal of Service-Learning and the Journal of Service Learning in Higher Education.

The review of literature demonstrated how service-learning has developed as a teaching pedagogy over the past twenty-five years, with earlier roots in both the historic acts of philanthropists such as Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Dorothy Day, followed by legislative acts such as the Morrill Act of 1862 and National Community Service Act of 1990. First emerging as a post-secondary means to give college students hands-on experience and application of theory, service-learning made its way into K-12 education, with funding and political support for both educational environments. Teachers in both arenas became actively involved in service-learning, but gaps in literature suggest gaps in practice, as well. The literature review defined service-learning and its historic development and identified areas of strength and concern for service-learning, including its documented benefits for teachers, students, and community as well as the challenges of implementing service-learning, including teacher preparation, buy-in, and other restraints, such as time and funding. It was shown that
there is considerable information on the history of service-learning, its use in post-secondary education, benefits to pre-service education majors, and benefits to high school students; however, there was little to show teachers' experiences of service-learning.

Service-Learning Defined

Service-learning (SL), sometimes called community service learning (CSL), links academic classroom learning to a community-based application in which students apply their learning to impact a need. In 1990, the Corporation for National and Community Service conception said that service-learning promotes learning through active participation in service experiences, provides structured time for students to reflect by thinking, discussing and/or writing about their service experience, provides an opportunity for students to use skills and knowledge in real-life situations, extends learning beyond the classroom and into the community and fosters a sense of caring for others (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse).

The Corporation also notes that service-learning is not an episodic volunteer program, an add-on to an existing school or college curriculum, or the logging of a preset number of community service hours in order to graduate. Compensatory service assigned as a form of punishment by the courts or by school administrators also does not fulfill the requirements for service-learning. Service-learning is not limited to only high school or college students, and it is not one-sided, benefiting only students or only the community (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse).

There are twelve key elements of effective school-based service-learning programs presented by Dymond, et al. (2008): “authentic context; link to the curriculum; home, school, and community partnerships; programmatic support; frequency of instruction; planning and preparation; action; reflection; celebration; student assessment and program evaluation; student
participation and ownership, and teacher, adult, and community participation (p 232-35).” At the heart of the elements is the idea that service to the community and academic learning bear equal attention, and that reflection plays a significant role in the process of learning; Eyler and Giles (1999) contend that while many programs may consider a one-time service project service-learning, or a regular volunteer opportunity service-learning, without the reflection and tie to academics, it is just community service. The connection between service and learning is rooted in the work of historic pioneers who used community-based activities to learn more about the pressing needs of society, and who developed means to address them. Jane Addams, John Dewey, and Dorothy Day are three historic figures who impacted service-learning as it is understood today.

**Historic Roots to Service**

Jane Addams opened Hull House in Chicago in the 1890s as a means to support those who struggled, especially immigrants, as industrialization grew in strength and created a disparity in economics, and through her service, "She contributed to the establishment of the profession of social work, helped to define the new field of sociology, introduced scientific method into philanthropy, and invented a model of what would become the modern nonprofit human service organization" (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011, p. 57). Her work was considered one of the earliest exemplars of someone who served, and who wished to be at the center of that experience, not through a donation or other removed action, but by connecting with struggling individuals and experiencing their suffering while learning their stories as a way to change the outcome of individuals' places within society (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). This is one example of early service, in which service-learning takes place not just in the educational setting, but in the community (Daynes & Longo, 2004). Some specific issues that arise in service-
learning can be traced back to Addams' work, including time, which acknowledges the limitations of a term or semester that may constrain students to limit their service, to which Addams urged an emphasis on the quality of events over the length of service; space and place, for which Addams believed places could determine specific needs and space could make or break collaboration and service; and service vs. activism, to which Addams believed one could be involved in both in meaningful ways; and finally the problem of service, for which Addams believed was an obligation of citizenship, and should not be reserved for those with particular expertise or in certain stations (Daynes & Longo, 2004). Addams' early model of service has become part of the service-learning concept today.

A contemporary of Addams, John Dewey was also interested in the welfare of humanity. Dewey argued it was the role of the government to support the needs of individuals, and the work of citizens to ensure their government met this need (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). While Addams used Hull House as office, school, and church, Dewey believed that education could lead to social reform, as schools were the social center for local communities. Dewey's work with schools may not have been specifically termed "community service-learning," but his framework developed five areas relevant to service-learning: "(1) linking education to experience, (2) democratic community, (3) social service, (4) reflective inquiry, and (5) education for social transformation. Together, these contributions form the basis of a cultural and political critique and reconceptualized pedagogy aimed at the development of democratic values and critical citizenship" (Saltmarsh J & Zlotkowski, E., 2001, p. 42). Dewey's work informs service-learning in two distinct areas: the importance and impact of experiential learning, which includes experience, inquiry, and reflection, along with the need for members of
a community to learn social intelligence in schools as a means to secure democracy as informed, active citizens (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

Operating just after Addams and Dewey, Dorothy Day worked within faith-based organizations to serve the poor, specifically through the Catholic Worker Movement. Day, in contrast to Addams and Dewey, wanted to serve the poor in their own environments, including building hospitality houses in the poorest sections of New York and on rural farms (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Day's definition of service encompassed practicing hospitality as a commitment to faith and personal integrity, and not coincidentally a protest against the values of capitalism (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

For all three pioneers, service was a crisis of community, in which the practice of charity was redefined through their work, and became the early roots of service in the United States. While historic charity included pressing the character ideals of the middle class upon dependent individuals or families, service took on a different connotation, and associated charity with social justice, or a democratic ideal based on strong community, human dignity, and social equality (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). As capitalism widened the gap between rich and poor, each were concerned with service as a class-based act that helped the rich secure a philanthropic absolution for the state of the poor, furthering the social divisions among classes. All three saw service as a response to the crisis of community in their time, an act that needed to transcend social, economic, and political factors. Their lasting contributions to this crisis include justification for the welfare state and need for citizens to solve community problems from Dewey, the professionalization of social work and rise of social service nonprofits from Addams, and the alternative faith-based multiservice organizations from Day (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Through different means, by mid-twentieth century, all three individuals had been
One of the earliest legislative acts supporting service-learning was the Morrill Act of 1862, which called for land grants to be donated to colleges for Agricultural and Mechanic studies, opening higher education opportunities to the working class (NA, 1862, Morrill Act). This act opened the door for colleges to practice project-based applications of learning, a precursor to service-learning. Ward (2002) suggests that the cooperative extension of the university begun with the land grants created the infrastructure for connecting campuses and their communities, which have since shifted the cooperative extension to include new areas outside agriculture and mechanics. A second legislative development that operated from 1933-1942 included the "Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) Act, also known as the Civilian Conservation Corps, a public relief program brought about by Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal to connect unemployed young men with unskilled manual labor jobs related to the development of the country's natural resources (Titlebaum, et al., 2004). This program was one of the first formal governmental programs that helped both individuals gain employability skills as well as the nation in civic activism. It was later followed by John F. Kennedy's organization of the Peace Corps legislation in 1961, which made government policy to promote world peace and friendship through volunteers who would offer technical assistance for social and economic development in other countries, and experience a cultural exchange during the two-year service term (Titlebaum, et al., 2004). This development of public service across the globe offered new graduates the opportunity to practice recently learned skills while developing leadership and future career experience. In tandem with the Peace Corps, Kennedy also developed the AmeriCorps VISTA program, through which volunteers undertake a yearlong commitment to
work in the United States' poorest areas with a nonprofit or public agency to build organizational, administrative, and financial capacity within these organizations (Titlebaum, et al., 2004). In 1990, the National and Community Service Act authorized citizens to volunteer in projects against illiteracy, poverty, environmental issues, and to bolster job-related and education-related skills (National and Community Service Act, 1990). This Act also provided $16 million in grant funding support for educational institutions that offered community service programs between 1992 and 1993 (Andrus, 1996). From this legislation, President Bush also started the Learn and Serve America program, which has provided federal funding for K-12 schools to develop service-learning programs (Dymond, et al., 2008). The National Service Trust Act of 1993 of the Clinton Administration also offered financial assistance to students who participate in service and are at least sixteen years old (Andrus, 1996). President Obama most recently reauthorized the National Service Trust Act of 1993 through the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, including $1.1 billion to create new community-service programs aimed at engaging primary through post-secondary school-aged children and young adults (Zehr, 2015). The Act also intends to increase the number of Americans serving in AmeriCorps and similar programs by 2017 (Zehr, 2015). Legislation continues to promote, and at times, fund, further service-learning endeavors around the country.

**Collegiate Developments to Service-Learning**

Service-learning impacts college students' personal, academic, and social experiences, as well as personal behavior and civic engagement (Eyler, 2010). Progress to post-secondary SL programs has been supported through the development and growth of the Campus Compact, which began in 1986 with 102 institutions focusing on community service learning, and has grown to 1,100 member institutions by 2014. College-level students are experiencing service-
learning across these institutions as part of programs across disciplines, from dentistry and engineering, ("Division of dental hygiene..., 2005; Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Lima, 2005) to foreign language, communications, human services, and psychology (Darby, Longmire, Chenault & Haglund, 2013).

In particular, in service-learning programs for teacher preparation, students use SL to "overcome preconceived notions, reject social stereotypes, move away from racist views, and develop greater empathy and sensitivity" (O'Connor, 2010, p.1170) toward future students. Aspiring teachers who experience service-learning leverage the experience as a way to understand students' community values, family dynamics and similar contexts that cannot be understood from within the confines of the college classroom (Butcher, et al., 2003).

A theme that has emerged is that service-learning programs increase student engagement and motivation, increase academic achievement, and help students become more successful by participating in what colleges call high-impact programming (Brownell, & Swaner, 2009; “Division of Dental Hygiene…”, 2005; Ropers-Huilman, et al., 2005). For students to gain access to service-learning experiences in post-secondary education, professors must be willing and able to incorporate service-learning opportunities within curricula; currently, professors are the ultimate gatekeepers to service-learning as they have the ultimate control over course structures.

According to the Campus Compact's 2014 Member Survey, 54% of institutions provided faculty with grants to support curriculum redesign, 46% provided community engagement orientation to new faculty; 41% reported that search and recruitment policies encouraged the hiring of faculty with expertise in and commitment to community engagement; 36% allowed sabbaticals for service-learning research, scholarship, and program development; and 22% had
faculty governance committees with responsibilities for community engagement (Campus Compact, 2014). Each procedural support for faculty service-learning interactions helps to bolster attitudes and actions in favor of service-learning.

Abes, Jackson, and Jones (2002), who surveyed over five hundred Ohio college faculty members regarding their motivators and deterrents to service-learning, learned that faculty are most encouraged by peer faculty members, with 60% of respondents receiving encouragement from faculty in other departments, and a close 56% receiving encouragement from a member of their own department. Fifty-two percent of respondents to their survey received encouragement from students to engage in service-learning. For those who use service-learning, faculty cited student learning outcomes as the strongest motivation for incorporating service-learning into their classes (Abes, et al., 2002). The data of this study is supported by Ward's work (2002), which cites relationships as a major influence on the decision to utilize SL, as interpersonal connections are viewed as a motivator for service-learning practitioners.

The two most common factors that might deter those who do utilize service-learning were time, or the time it takes to balance a service-learning course component with other professional responsibilities (38.9%) and difficulty coordinating community service (25.4%) (Abes, et al., 2002). In contrast, those faculty who did not utilize service learning identified their strongest deterrents as: "anticipate having logistical problems coordinating the community service aspect of the course, do not know how to use service-learning effectively, is not relevant to the courses I teach, and have not been given or do not anticipate being given release time to develop a service-learning course" (Abes, et al., 2002, p. 11). According to survey responses, these service-learning non-practitioners indicated that they needed to learn more about service-learning, and required assistance in the logistics of service-learning to consider its application.
Ward (2002) argues that the challenge of collegiate service-learning exists in viewing service-learning as a means to integrate teaching, research, and service, and rewarding those who practice this pedagogical strategy accordingly. Ward (2002) also suggests that utilizing service-learning helps faculty to fulfill both personal and professional goals, especially targeting the stated aims of their institutions' missions, thus necessitating the need for institutions to support faculty work, through SL professional development opportunities, tenure-track positions for SL practitioners, and recognition for those meeting the mission through SL practice.

Just as post-secondary students experience benefit from service-learning experiences and faculty drive these opportunities for students, service-learning can also support K-12 education if the teaching staff is motivated to utilize SL as a teaching pedagogy.

**K-12 Service-Learning**

Service-learning can not only increase the self-efficacy of students, it can also help teachers across high school subjects and levels increase their own feelings of competence in the classroom (Alt, 1997; Billig, 2000), for there is no greater accomplishment than for teachers to leave lasting impressions on students regarding the value of their content and its practical application in the world outside the school house (Fullan, 1993).

SL is currently functioning at 46% of all US high schools (Dymond, et al., 2007); however, Furco and Root (2010) state that service-learning has been practiced for over thirty years, it is found in less than 30% of K-12 schools in the United States. Billig (2000) writes that "from 1984 to 1997, the number of K-12 students involved in service programs rose from 900,000 to 12,605,750, and the percentage of high school students participating in service-learning nationwide increased from 2% to 25%." According to the Massachusetts Service-Learning Advisory Council (2006), under the Learn and Serve America legislation,
approximately $43 million in federal funding has been made available in grants to Massachusetts public schools, community-based agencies, and higher education institutions to promote the involvement of students in service-learning, and funding continues to be made available through federal legislation (Zehr, 2015). At the high school level, research can be found to support the inclusion of SL across all disciplines, including core content, special education, electives, including career education ("ASCD creates..." 2002; Cartwright, 2010; Coulter-Kern, et al., 2013; Graff, 2001; Payne, & Edwards, 2010; Spivey, & Reising, 2005).

The benefits of service-learning are noted for all students, with particular emphasis on its success in supporting at-risk students and dropout prevention (Nelson, 2008; Payne, & Edwards, 2010). Academically, studies have shown that students in service-learning classes outperformed other students in reading and language arts portions of the California Test of Basic Skills, and also reported they learned more in their SL classes than in non-service-learning classes (Weiler, LaGoy, Crane & Rovner, 1998). Eyler and Giles (1999), however, contend that traditional measurements, especially of factual knowledge and other learning goals, might not adequately capture service-learning’s most significant contributions to students’ academic development. SL opportunities, for example, can help students provide employers and future educators evidence of students’ learning, experiences, and work-readiness qualifications through the documentation of the SL project (Bonnette, 2006).

One concern with K-12 service-learning data and research includes the fact that updated numbers on participation and funding are unavailable. Internet and database searches did not yield recent results. In addition, in contrast to post-secondary research, which resulted in multiple resources citing service-learning from the student and faculty perspective, there is extensive research on the benefits of SL for high school students, yet there are few discussing SL
and the secondary educator. Krebs (1999) notes the gap in K-12 teacher SL research, as he explored teacher motivations for service-learning in a phenomenological study that interviewed seven teachers; teachers cited connections with multiple stakeholders, personal beliefs of the teacher, and alignment with a teacher's philosophy and style as motivations for utilizing SL.

The second study found included novice teachers' experiences of SL through a survey of 300 early career teachers, and interviews with 30 of them. In this research study, 64% of surveyed teachers were actively involved in service in their secondary years and 79% had SL experiences in post-secondary teacher education programs, considerably positive experiences (Wade, et al., 1999). Despite their prior experiences supporting SL and majority of novice teachers in support of service-learning, only 30% had implemented a service-learning project in their new careers, citing time, logistics, and lack of support as the main reasons for avoiding SL (Wade, et al., 1999). Of those who did engage students in SL projects, they cited real-world, engaging curriculum and positive benefits for students as their main motivators and lack of time as their main concern (Wade, et al., 1999).

**Benefits and Challenges to Service-Learning**

Evidence suggests that the benefits to students from CSL include real-world preparation, which often includes time management, relationship building, learning about different cultures, and positive student work habits; self-discovery and self-reflection; and meaningful connection with partners outside the classroom (Dymond, et al., 2007; National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, What is Service-Learning section, para 1; Mündel and Schugurensky, 2008; Swaminathan, 2007). While students become engaged in hands-on, real-life issues, they are given opportunities to apply content-area skills in a wide variety of ways. Students often come away from these experiences with heightened awareness of current issues, civic duty, academic
engagement and self-esteem (Zaff & Lerner, 2010); according to a report by the Community Service-Learning Advisory Council to the Massachusetts Board of Education (2006), service learning is most often encouraged to enhance students’ awareness of civic responsibility. Experts argue that through SL, students learn how to make choices, assume responsibility for others who are in need, gain a stake in their own education, challenge themselves, learn how to apply and test new knowledge and skills, negotiate, work cooperatively, take on leadership roles, and facilitate their own learning (Brandell & Hinck, 1997; Des Maris, Yang & Farzanehkia, 2000; Dymond, et al., 2007; Johnson, 1996; Keister et al., 1994; Keilsmeier, 1996; Shumer, 1997). Eyler and Giles (1999) contend that service-learning allows learning from experience, such as the principles of Dewey's experiential learning theory link action and reflection, that it links personal and interpersonal development with academic and cognitive development, that it allows for social problem solving and by extension, builds students' capacity for citizenship through civic and social responsibility, problem solving and action.

Swaminathan (2007) warns against competing agendas of SL site supervisors, suggesting that a lack of communication between community sponsors and teachers of SL can lead to issues of how these supervisors carry out their roles with students. Without proper alignment of SL goals, supervisors can undermine teachers’ goals or curriculum; therefore, communication is key. Despite the potential risk in working with outside partners, there are several benefits and strengths of SL site supervisors. The most significant asset to supervisors is the real world preparation, which often includes time management, relationship building, learning about different cultures, and positive student work habits. Some supervisors use the project time as an opportunity to introduce students to prominent members of the community, in hopes of
enhancing students’ connections and life experiences. Supervisors often feel the desire to empower their student workers, a derivative of quality service-learning projects.

Mündel and Schugurensky (2008) build upon Swaminathan’s study with regard to the benefits of students working with outside placements and also support the proposition that volunteers in community based learning programs develop more than just academic skills. In this case, individuals were able to refute their own prejudices and challenge their stereotypes by working with various people in their community placements. This transformative learning, or shifting a frame of reference, changed how they interacted with different people. The researchers describe the process as “experiencing a disorienting dilemma, engaging in a critical assessment of one’s assumptions, exploring new roles and relationships, building confidence in those new roles and relationships, and reintegrating one’s life experiences into the new perspective” (p. 55). This amendment to one’s own beliefs and actions is a result that regularly occurs with SL participants, through the nature of the experience working in unfamiliar projects to benefit other, often marginalized, populations.

Dymond (2007) et al. argue that teachers have concerns with the meaning of service-learning for students who participate, but wait until the last minute to complete the service requirements, or who do not make personal choices about their levels of engagement with the project. In order for the practice of SL to be beneficial, students must have their own connection and investment to the projects.

In addition to concerns with student connection, teachers are also interested in maintaining the appropriate links to curriculum with SL. The research of five participant schools completed by Dymond et al. (2007) recommends the need for a curriculum that includes communication skills, appropriate behavior, etiquette and manner, appreciation of diversity,
safety and hygiene, and life skills, which all are just as important as state standards. There should be a tie to both academic and life skills. Often, programs only focus on one or the other with little crossover.

Not only do teachers hesitate to connect SL to anything other than a state-mandated academic curriculum, they also show reluctance to assess service-learning with alternate approaches. Kezar (2002) contends that traditional classroom learning focuses on writing, computational skills, subject matter competency and critical thinking, but this focus on cognitive outcomes could diminish the significance of service-learning. Kezar cites various studies that show minimal impact on cognitive development, course grades, or GPA, or self-perception of analytical and problem-solving skills. The key impact to SL deals with life skills and civic participation. In contrast to traditional skills, “service-learning was correlated with increased citizenship skills, including values, knowledge, skills, efficacy, and commitment to social responsibility” (p. 16) and showed correlation with tolerance and breaking down stereotypes, interpersonal development, personal development (Eyler & Giles, 1999). These results support the studies proposed by Mündel and Schugurensky with regard to student growth, as well as Dymond et al. (2007) in expressing similar impacts for student participation in SL.

An additional problem Dymond et al. (2007) present has to do with the trepidation over investing resources into SL, which stems from concerns over continued funding. In an interview with a school principal, the questionable long-term support for SL was discussed:

We’ve always gotten the grant. If we don’t get the grant, is the school district still [going to] continue to support this program? That’s the question we have yet to answer. We want to, but finances in schools being what they are and supported the way they are, that’s the question floating in the back of our minds… That’s a
question that we have yet to answer, as far as how important is it in the community. We’ll find out when our grant runs out if it is something that the district itself will support (p. 236).

According to the Service-Learning Advisory Council (2006), while service-learning is practiced in many districts in Massachusetts, the percentage of teachers and students who participate in service-learning is small. Of the schools surveyed that employed CSL, 93% of the high schools, 61% of the middle schools, and 49% of the elementary schools were involved. Less than 10% of districts reported that all teachers or students are involved in service-learning. Sixty-three percent of districts report that less than 20% of their teachers are involved in service-learning, and 46% report that less than 20% of their students are involved. In addition, only 34% of districts provided professional development on service-learning in the year previous to the survey conducted by the council. They estimated that only 13% of their teachers participated and that 22% had participated in service-learning professional development in the past five years. These numbers imply a barrier to involving more teachers in the SL programming within a school, and suggest one reason why some teachers do not get involved in SL. This data supports the claim that that CSL is limited to a small number of a school’s educators.

Butcher et al. (2003) supports other studies demonstrating limits to SL participation, such as those done by Dymond et al. (2007 and 2008). This study echoes the recommendation of The Service-Learning Advisory Council by arguing that with all the demands put on teachers, current teacher preparation programs need to place an emphasis on service learning with their own students as a way to prepare future teachers for dealing with this type of programming. Not only do student teachers who engage in a service-learning community experience increase their knowledge of service learning in general, a secondary benefit emerges. Student teachers
“learned how a living was made in each community, what affected children’s attitudes toward school, how children spent their out of school time, reactions to various forms of discipline, and what long range goals were feasible for children in each community” (p. 112, as cited in Duesterberg, 1998). The idea of preparing student-teachers on SL pedagogy prior to entering the classroom could be a method for increasing participation in SL in their careers as teachers.

It is argued that the capability of a teacher is a combination of “a rich capacity to engage in informed and active citizenship, and to appreciate and understand the range of social imparts which act on and influence school students’ learning” (Cochran-Smith, 2001, p. 113). To prepare teachers fully to be SL practitioners, this article reveals an important issue: should teacher training require the use of SL methodology, since SL is an increasingly popular practice in today’s schools? There are numerous studies that demonstrate the benefit of teacher training service-learning direct instruction and practice, including challenging personal beliefs, teaching diverse students, and building personal teaching self-efficacy (Butcher, J. et al., 2003; Duckenfield & Swick, Eds., 2002; Shih-pei, Anagnostopoulos, & Omae, 2011). Wade et al. (1999) argue that new teachers who experienced post-secondary SL are in support of incorporating SL in their classes, while those who had direct responsibility to incorporate a SL project in their pre-practicum or student teaching were most apt to initiate a SL project in their first few years of teaching.

Summary

Many researchers agree that SL is a worthwhile endeavor used to make real-world, meaningful connections between students and traditional content- and standards-based curricula (Billig, 2000; Des Marais, et al., 2000; Dymond, et al., 2008; Johnson, 1996) . There are numerous undisputed benefits to SL projects. Some benefits may not even be fully assessed at
this time given the predisposition toward standardized testing and cognitive gains. SL is being utilized across Massachusetts, The United States and in fact, the world as a positive influence in education (Community Service-Learning Advisory Council, 2006; Eyler, and Giles, 1999; Kielsmeier, 1996). Nonetheless, there are serious concerns among teachers about the sustainability of this practice, reflected in the low numbers of teachers who actually participate in SL, the trepidation over continued federal funding, and the varied support of other stakeholders in the SL paradigm (Dymond et al., 2007; Kezar, 2002).

There are multiple barriers for teachers looking to engage in SL within their classrooms, and while the tremendous profits gained are both academic and individualistic in nature, sometimes the limits of time, development, and support overshadow the expected results. Research indicates that there are still many questions to be answered about how to best maintain and expand SL programs, especially when it comes to supporting teachers who may be interested in pursuing SL as an instructional goal. Particularly, there is limited research which highlights the experiences and thoughts of practitioners, themselves, who could make the strongest case for or against SL based on experience. This study aims to make a contribution to the gap of qualitative research focused on the experiences of teachers using service-learning.
Chapter III: Research Design

Research Question

The problem of practice for this study was to understand the experiences of high school teachers who use service learning in their classes. To respond to this problem, the researcher investigated teachers' experiences who regularly implement service-learning projects. The primary research question was

What are the experiences of teachers who utilize service-learning in their high school classrooms?

Methodology

A qualitative design was proposed for this study. A phenomenological study “…describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or phenomenon” (Creswell, 2007, p. 57). Phenomenology allows the researcher to use the actual words of the research participants to better understand the experience of a phenomenon. This method is mainly derived from the philosophical work of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994; Smith, et al., 2009; Sokolowski, 2000). As Sokolowski (2000) defines it from the philosophical standpoint, “phenomenology is the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience” (p. 2). In particular, an interpretive phenomenological analysis is “…a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 1). As this study sought to understand the lived experiences of participants who use service-learning, an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was used. The researcher was seeking the common meaning and connections across these experiences, as the participants
engaged in "a considerable amount of reflecting, thinking, and feeling as they work through what it means" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3), which was a unique process to each person.

**Site and Participants**

The study site was ABC High School on the South Shore of Massachusetts. This site was chosen for a number of reasons. First, access to research participants was unrestricted and supported by administration, as the researcher has worked in the school for eleven years. Due to a professional link between the researcher and the institution, access to the participants for interviewing was permitted subsequent to an institutional review board application. Second, the high school had a history of implementing rich service-learning projects over the past decade, and served as a mentoring district in service-learning through a MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education grant several years ago. The researcher had personally participated in service-learning for the duration of her tenure at the high school and worked with educators across the district, coordinating service-learning efforts with teachers from all seven schools in the district. She had been recognized by the state and awarded a service-learning teacher leader award in 2009.

In order to select a representative group of participants for this study, purposeful sampling was used. Purposeful sampling is a method that allows the researcher to select a sample population based on prior information (Fraenkel et al., 2012). This prior knowledge means that participants are selected based on their representativeness of traits able to purposefully inform the central research theme (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel et al., 2012; Maxwell, 2005). The obvious advantage of this method was that it increased the confidence for which conclusions can be made, representative of typical members of this particular group (Maxwell, 2005).
The researcher selected four faculty members identified through purposeful and criterion sampling. Creswell (2007) argued that criterion sampling works well when the participants studied represent people who have a shared experience with a phenomenon. The sample was also a homogeneous sample meaning that all of the participants had utilized service-learning in their roles of high school teachers in this particular school. The sample consisted of teachers who have each worked in the high school for at least six years and have implemented a number of service-learning projects in this time.

Upon university IRB approval, the researcher recruited and interviewed each of the participants. In order to gain greater contextual understanding of the participant findings presented in chapter four, a fundamental element of phenomenological research, an introduction to each participant will be presented. In adherence to Informed Consent IRB guidelines, all participant names were changed to culturally germane pseudonyms. Additionally, any names or titles proffered by participants that detailed identifiable information were removed to protect third parties.

The research site was a regional high school of approximately 1,150 students in a suburban district of southeastern Massachusetts. The high school houses grades 9 through 12, with a majority of its freshman students transitioning from the each of the two town's middle schools. Each school in the district, elementary through high school, has teachers implementing service-learning projects each year. This site was selected because it is the high school where the researcher worked, and one of the practical goals in doing this research was to offer the district staff a perspective on service-learning as experienced by their peers. It was the researcher's hope that this work would directly impact the presumptions and interest of faculty in the district.
The purpose of a phenomenological study is to study a particular phenomenon, which means the sample must be made up of people who are experiencing or have experienced the phenomenon in question (Creswell, 2007). Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) remind the novice researcher that “…samples are selected purposively (rather than through probability methods) because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience” (p. 48). The research sample needed to be purposely selected from a pool of faculty members who utilized service-learning. In a phenomenological study, the sample represents a perspective on the phenomenon rather than having to reflect a whole population (Smith et al., 2009). In fact, Smith et al. (2009) recommended developing a fairly homogeneous sample to be able to form a more reliable picture of the phenomenon as it is experienced. With this in mind, four teachers who have implemented multiple service-learning projects over the past ten years were selected.

Through an introductory letter and informed consent document, the researcher introduced herself and the project, and included Creswell’s (2007) recommended information. She also included contact information for herself, her academic advisor and Northeastern University’s Institution Review Board (IRB). The IRB recommended the researcher offer potential participants the choice to either “opt in” or “opt out,” each choice with a specific box to check to be certain that the potential participant was actively accepting or declining involvement with the study. The signature of each participant was also required to further ensure that the choice reflected the desires of the potential participant.

**Data Collection**

IPA as acknowledged by Smith et al. (2009) necessitated the use of methods that permitted participants to share rich narrative accounts of their experiences, in which a semi-structured interview schedule allowed flexibility and participant investment. Interviews
provided an opportunity for participants to explore in detail their experiences specific to a certain phenomenon, while generating sufficient amounts of rich data for the study (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). As detailed earlier, IPA uses an iterative approach to data analysis, though unlike many other research paradigms, is not necessarily concerned with an explanation of causation, but instead attempts to examine and comprehend meanings of phenomena as perceived by individuals (Smith et al., 2009).

The study's central questions were answered through the use of semi-structured interviews. Seidman's (2006) three-interview series model was used as a framework to collect data. This model featured an interview protocol that sought to gather data in context, allowing participant behavior to become “meaningful and understandable” (p. 16). Seidman (2006) indicated that context was essential to the interpretation of a participants life experiences. The first interview focused on collecting information about the participants' personal and academic lives prior to entering postsecondary education. This interview created context, and included questions relating to family/peer attributes, prior educational experiences, and socioeconomic environment. The second interview was dedicated to gathering information about each participant's experiences as an educator using service-learning.

The researcher used a digital recorder application on an iPhone 6s during the interviews. Reflective handwritten notes were taken after the interview process, consisting of personal thoughts, such as feelings, impressions, and additional questions brought about by participant discourse (Creswell, 2009). Interview and participant data was collected and kept on a secure, password-encrypted computer and telephone. All efforts were made to ensure that participant anonymity and data remained secure throughout the research process. To protect anonymity, all participant names were changed to neutral and culturally germane pseudonyms.
The researcher contacted these candidates through email to invite them to participate in the study. The email invitation explained the purpose of the research and provided details about the interview protocols. Four candidates for participation were contacted and upon agreement, a face-to-face meeting was scheduled. At the arranged time the researcher reviewed the study’s purpose with the participants, explained the consent form, and described how the researcher would work to protect their confidentiality. The participants were given the ability to withdraw from the interview at any point. Each participant was asked to sign the consent form.

The participants were given access to their transcripts two weeks after the interviews were conducted. This is an accepted phenomenological research practice known as member checking (Creswell, 2007). The participants were given a week to read and analyze the transcripts in order to provide more information or to supplement their responses by clarifying their statements. The researcher also gave them permission to retract any statements they did not feel comfortable revealing publically.

Interviews were recorded using an Apple 6s iPhone application known as iTalk Recorder which is a full-featured recording application with an intuitive user interface that allowed the researcher to choose different levels of recording quality and easily manage the recordings for transcription. The mobile application is also chosen over a digital recorder because the researcher’s iPhone is secured by a password whereas the digital recorder she owned was not. Storing the recordings digitally in a secure environment was a priority for the researcher.

The researcher utilized a set of predetermined open-ended questions focused on the participant's experiences, perceptions, definitions, and interpretations. The researcher utilized open-ended questions to guide, narrow, and focus the responses of the participants. Such semi-
structured interviews are useful for providing an understanding of the issues because the researcher is able to clarify responses through guided follow up questions (Creswell, 2007).

Smith & Osborn (2007) have written that with semi-structured interviews the researcher has a set of questions and an interview schedule, but the questions and structure are simply a guide and do not dictate what occurs in the interview. These interviews remain non-directive so that the participant talks and the researcher listens. Semi-structured interviews have the following dimensions:

1. There is an attempt to establish rapport with the participant.
2. The ordering of questions is less important.
3. The interviewer is free to probe interesting areas that arise.
4. The interview can follow the participant’s interests or concerns (Smith & Osborne, 2007, p. 58).

**Data Analysis**

Smith & Osborn (2007) have written that the “assumption in IPA is that the analyst is interested in learning something about the respondent’s psychological world” (p. 66). This usually involves describing beliefs and constructs that emerge or are suggested by the participant’s answer. It also may be the case that the analyst determines that the respondent’s story can itself represent a piece of respondent’s identity. In any case, what is important is holding meaning central. The goal is to always attempt to comprehend the complexity of these meanings rather than just to measure their frequency. The researcher is therefore “in an interpretative relationship with the transcript” (p. 66).

Interpretation in IPA is concentrated on the meaning of data, and the relation between the detailed particular analysis of one experience and how the experiential phenomena is understood
from a grouping of particular people (Smith et al., 2009). Smith & Osborn (2007) have written that “a detailed IPA analysis can also involve asking critical questions of the participants, such as the following: What is the person trying to achieve here? Is something leaking out here that wasn’t intended? Do I have a sense of something going on here that maybe the participants themselves are less aware of?” (p. 53). The researcher is tasked with a double hermeneutic perspective, making sense of the participant's experience, while the participant is also attempting to make sense of a phenomenon for himself or herself (Smith et al., 2009).

Because IPA is relation bound, data is interpreted using an iterative process (Smith et al., 2009). This means data was analyzed by looking at the relationships between both the body of data and individual lines of data, moving back and forth around each part in a somewhat cyclical process using different perspectives (Smith et al., 2009). An additional and pertinent aspect of IPA is its belief that presuppositions cannot be completely eliminated (Smith et al., 2009). Heidegger suggests that interpretation will be founded upon the researcher's preconception and that one cannot analyze the encounter without relying on one's own prior experience (Smith et al., 2009). Rather, the researcher remains acutely aware of these assumptions, how they might affect the study, and that the primary focus must be given to the new information, rather than the preconceptions (Smith et al., 2009).

The transcripts of the interviews were coded and analyzed for common themes. Smith, et al. (2009) describe IPA as “a set of common processes and principles which are applied flexibly, according to an analytic task” (p. 79). The analysis is inductive and iterative. For first time IPA researchers Smith, et al. (2009) have recommended the consideration of the following strategies for analysis and as a result the researcher for this study followed them closely:

1. The close line-by-line analysis of the experiential claims, concerns, and perceptions
of each participant.

2. The identification of emergent patterns that emphasize convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance.

3. The development of a “dialogue” between the researcher, the coded data, and his knowledge of the subject.

4. The organization of this material in a format that allows for analyzed data to be traced through the entire process, from initial comments on the transcript, through initial clustering and thematic development, into the final structure of themes.

5. The development of a narrative evidenced by a detailed commentary on data extracts.

6. Reflection on one’s own perceptions, conceptions and process (pp. 79-80).

A second aspect of IPA is hermeneutics, or the interpretation of data (Smith et al., 2009).

Validity and Credibility

According to Creswell (1998) sound models of phenomenological research can show academic thoroughness and rigor. Stones (1985) has written that phenomenological research “is strictly scientific, but concentrates on meaning rather than measurement and it treats the data rigorously without doing violence to it” (p. 108). In order to capture participants' unique and subjective experiences the researcher is required to attempt to “eliminate everything that represents a presupposition” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 27). A major challenge of any phenomenological study is to describe the essence of an individual experience, as it exists, and not how the researcher perceives it to exist. Researcher interference and bias are threats to the validity and reliability of this phenomenological study. The researcher collected and analyzed the data in accordance with the established procedures for IPA research. These protocols are intended to reduce researcher influence on the findings and the participants. However, the
specific method of IPA research makes allowances for the role of the researcher in the analysis and interpretation of the data. IPA recognizes that in most qualitative studies, absolute objectivity is impossible and that qualitative studies consist of a two-stage interpretation process where the participants are making sense of their world while the researcher is “trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world” (Smith & Osborn, 2007).

Smith et al. (2009) also believe that qualitative work should not be assessed in exactly the same way as quantitative data. Instead the process should take into account the special features of qualitative research (Smith et al., 2009). The authors recommend using Yardley’s (2000) criteria for assessing quality (Smith et al., 2009). There are four attributes proposed by Yardley: sensitivity to context, commitment and rigour, transparency and coherence, and impact and importance” (quoted in Smith et al., 2009, p. 180-183). These are useful for assessing the quality of an IPA study because they emphasize how to be careful and thoughtful when working very interactively with research participants and their words.

Yin (1989) suggests that one way of checking the validity of one's research report is to file all the data in such a way that somebody could follow the chain of evidence that leads from initial documentation through to the final report. The trail might consist of initial notes on the research question, the research proposal, an interview schedule, audio tapes, annotated transcripts, tables of themes and other devices, draft reports, and the final report (as cited in Smith et al., 2009). An independent audit of the research can be conducted by the researcher's supervisor or another third party to ensure that the account produced is not the only credible option, but a credible option given the evidence (Smith et al., 2009).

**Limitations**

Sample size is usually regarded as a limitation within phenomenological studies. The
sample size of the study, four participants, is regarded as small and poses a limitation in its ability to be generalized to other populations. In phenomenological research there are no rules for sample size (Patton, 1990). The sample size of four participants is influenced by the writings of scholars in the field of IPA research. Smith & Osborn (2007) have recommended that doctoral students conducting an IPA study for the first time limit their sample size to three participants, while Smith et al. (2009) recommend between three and six participants. This allows the student sufficient time to engage each individual case while also allowing for a detailed analysis of “similarity and difference, convergence and divergence” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 57). They also caution that a newcomer to IPA may become overwhelmed by the vast amounts of data resulting from such a study and not be able to produce a “sufficiently penetrating analysis” (p. 57). Smith & Osborn (2007) have written that phenomenological “studies have been published with samples of one, four, nine, fifteen and more.” Patton (1990) has argued, “The insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with the information richness of the cases selected and the observational/analytical capabilities of the researcher than the sample size” (p. 245). Smith et al. (2009) have suggested one look at IPA in terms of "theoretical transferability rather than empirical generalizability" (p. 51). The reader must make his or her own links between the analysis of an IPA study, their own personal and professional experience, and claims of existing literature, enabling the reader to evaluate the transferability to personas in contexts which are more or less similar.

Protection of Human Subjects

The guiding principle was to avoid any harm to the involved participants as emphasized by Smith et al. (2009). The authors remind the qualitative researcher that “ethical research practice is a dynamic process which needs to be monitored throughout data collection and
Willig (2001) has outlined the basic ethical considerations for research that involves human subjects:

1. **Informed consent.** The researcher should ensure that participants are fully informed about the research procedure and give their consent to participate in the research before data collection begins.

2. **No deception.** Deception of participants should be avoided altogether.

3. **Right to withdraw.** The researcher should ensure that participants feel free to withdraw from participation in the study without fear of being penalized.

4. **Debriefing.** The researcher should ensure that, after data collection, participants are informed about the full aims of the research and access to any publications arising from the study.

5. **Confidentiality.** The researcher should maintain complete confidentiality regarding all information about participants acquired during the research process (p. 18).
Chapter IV: Findings

Introduction

The primary goal of the study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers using service-learning as a teaching pedagogy. The researcher wanted to understand what it was about those practitioners who utilized service-learning in the classroom that fostered their commitment to the practice, as well as how their experiences shaped their opinions and choices surrounding the use of service-learning in a high school setting. It was hoped that the data could answer why the participants wanted to learn about and incorporate service-learning in their classrooms. Peer educators using service-learning shared their own experiences, detailing how it impacted both themselves and their students, and also what challenges arose in their attempts to implement service-learning in their classrooms.

Participant Profiles

Grace. Grace was a career changer who worked for ten years as an English teacher in the district of her childhood education. High school was a very positive time for her, as she was involved in the school through National Honor Society, history club, band, and chorus, while prioritizing academics with the goal to graduate at the top of the class. She also worked at Shaw's Supermarket for her last two years of school and into college. While Grace was successful in earning her position as salutatorian at graduation, her true nurturing environment in adolescence was at the Congregational church. Grace described the church of her childhood as an idealistic place where she could be herself and where her entire family was enmeshed in the culture and the commitment of their faith. Grace juxtaposed her in-school experience with her out of school faith-based experience when she recalled, "I can remember being a teenager and speaking up at a church meeting, something I never would have done in high school, but I felt
the confidence to do it in church." She described, "It was a huge sense of community for me, and definitely shaped who I am today, because there I felt like I was loved no matter what went on in my life; it was a place that I felt very validated and loved, and I felt very comfortable and confident."

Grace's father was the son of two Hungarian immigrants, and his family did not speak English at home. In addition, her father was the second youngest of twelve, and he was largely ignored at home. Because of this, he struggled in school, but he received special nurturing from several of his female teachers. At least one of them bought him a book when he was little, and some gave him food, as he grew up during The Depression. This kindness touched Grace's father deeply, and he developed a very deep love and respect for teachers. Grace noticed, "This respect is evident in my first name. While my younger sister is named after my father, I am named after my father's first Sunday School teacher." She also recalled, "Because of the reverence my father felt for educators, he was very proud of me when I decided to become a teacher. He asked my mother to take a photo of him with me on my first day of teaching. Yep, I was forty years old, and my father wanted a first day of school photo with me."

Grace recalled that through a fundraiser in NHS in high school, "I knew my organizational skills were lacking, but that’s when it became painfully obvious." These skills were practiced and polished as a teacher, but Grace had to go outside her comfort zone, practicing communicating with adults and revising plans on the spot, to find success. Grace moved on to Colby College, where the burnout she felt from her laborious attention to her secondary schooling left her uncommitted to the same rigor post-high school. She chose to study English because the professors were charismatic but not indifferent to her love of history. Instead, the history professors were aloof, unengaging, and dull.
After college, Grace took on temporary work while trying to find a career utilizing her degree in English, settling in as a news writer for a regional newspaper, where she stayed for eighteen years. While working part-time after having children, Grace began editing a play for a friend, who became the mentor who encouraged her to become a teacher: "He said, ‘You would make a really good teacher,’ and I said, ‘Huh, you think so?’ and he said, ‘Yeah, you really, you really would. I think you’d be a really good teacher.’" Her mentor's validation and encouragement spurred the earliest thoughts of becoming an educator for her, as she worked in a field where she felt undervalued and unchallenged. For the first time, Grace felt she was valued for her work, and trusted that a transition to education could do that for her, as well, along with providing financial independence for herself and her daughters. When Grace was thinking about transitioning to teaching, her experience with her teenage niece and cousins helped solidify her interest in high school. She became animated when she described, "I find their humor funny. I love hearing like, what music they’re into now, I love to hear what movies they like now, etc. etc. I just like them."

Grace became a high school teacher because she loved teenagers. In her experience, "I really related to them. There was something about their innocence, but not their innocence, that I just found was so honest and just so fun to be so brutally honest and genuine, and none of this adult pretense and BS. You know, just cut right to it and talk about what's honest and true and how you really feel, and let's not pretend." It has been her experience that teaching has offered her that honesty and humor working with teens. She has felt valued in her position at the high school in a way she had never felt as a writer, and encountered both value and validation from being needed in the classroom for the past ten years.
**Evelyn.** Evelyn grew up in a traditional Italian household, with her mother and grandmother serving as constant role models. Her memories of her mother growing up offered her the first look at what it meant to serve, as she was constantly volunteering for anything she could be of assistance with, always with a kind and open heart. When asked about experiences that shaped her, Evelyn immediately focused on her mother: "Without even thinking, I have to say my mother... my mother, just baked and cooked and loved everybody in the house, and that's what I grew up with... she was by far, she volunteered for everything, she, she was the mother."

She went on to describe how even when others might have taken advantage of her good nature, Evelyn's mother made the best out of each situation, and always stood her ground, while assisting when she could.

Evelyn attended an all girls, Catholic high school, where she admitted she was protected from "a lot," but her participation in the Social Action Club brought her in contact with a local nursing home, a place that Evelyn appreciated, but knew wasn't for her: "It was sad, it was very sad, but I saw the need and we went to the Little Wanderers [the Home for Little Wanderers]. Now that was more up my alley," thus, beginning her interest to work for and with children. In describing the Home for Little Wanderers, she said, "I'm not sure why that touched me, but that was different... while it was sad that these kids were orphans, it was so much fun. It was a different experience." She also held a part-time job at the local grocery store.

In addition to attending Catholic high school, Evelyn's family was active in the Catholic Church, where she played the organ for the 4:00 o'clock mass each week. She did this for five or six years, saying it was fun. She admitted that for awhile growing up, she wanted to be a nun. She explained, "Saint Paul, the Daughters of Saint Paul, they do media, television, audio, all that stuff, and I, for some reason was intrigued by them, and I know it's because I went to a Catholic
school, but they were mean, some of the nuns, those weren't the nuns, but when we went to the Home for Little Wanderers, we met the Daughters of Saint Paul, they were really, really fun." It was later that her interest in religion became more of an interest in education, as she started working after high school, but faith, and more importantly, carrying out acts of kindness within that faith, have always been a strong factor in her upbringing.

After high school, Evelyn began working for 21-Inch Classroom, a precursor to Sesame Street as a television co-venture through WGBH and the Department of Education. Evelyn worked in several capacities at this organization, but soon realized that further advancement would require more education. She began her undergraduate education at Bentley, where she studied accounting and business education after meeting a dean who mentored and influenced her decision to become a teacher. She recalled,

I'm taking a long time ago, so this was like 1976, I can picture him putting his sandaled feet up on the desk and saying, 'You'd make a dynamite teacher.' And I'm like, 'What, are you crazy? I want to do business. I like what I'm doing in the office. I want to get better at that.' He's like 'No, everything you're saying to me involves working with people. You would make a great teacher, and you could teach the people about what you love,' and I'm like, wow, this guy was brilliant.

This was the first time that Evelyn learned she could put her love of business, including accounting, computers, and more, with teaching, and it has impacted her work ever since.

Evelyn's experience as a teacher began as an instructor in night school classes and teaching computer courses for adult education as an adjunct professor at local college extension campuses. As she transitioned to the high school traditional classroom, she attributed her success teaching business education to all her prior work experience, which gave her real-world
experiences that she can bring into the classroom. Evelyn has worked in this high school for eleven years.

**Donna.** Donna's early memories of family include being influenced by her father, a local business owner who worked hard to build his own dental practice in the community, and her mother, who worked while her husband pursued his dream, supporting him to achieve his goals before she pursued her own of becoming a teacher. Her mother traveled with her father when he was stationed in different countries while in the Army, then she worked to support his dream of owning a dental practice; only later, when he had become successful, did she return to school, herself, attending college when Donna attended college. Donna described how

My father is self-employed, has built his own business, and that's very inspirational to see, to watch, and he's very proud of the business that he built, and he was businessman of the year one year in the town of Hanover, you know, so he's been very successful at it, but he's also taught us as young kids and I even say this to students in the classroom, support your local businesses.

This lesson about supporting local has stayed with Donna, as she decided to work in the town where her family lived and her children attended school, and has impacted how she wove the themes of community and local first into her lessons with students. Her own pride in her parents was very apparent in the interview as she shared her mother's dedication to school later in life, and how her parents shared reciprocal support for one another.

Donna was an average student at a private college preparatory high school, where she knew education was important to move forward in life. A professed "daddy's girl," Donna recalled his influence in selecting her particular high school, and influencing her choice to attend
his alma mater, Springfield College. In high school, Donna was active in drama, played tennis, and worked at the Gap at the local mall.

At Springfield College, Donna cared for kids after school, picking them up from the school bus, bringing them to their dance and other classes, and helping them with their homework. Later in college, she became a bank teller, which allowed her contact with a variety of people each day. Donna studied marketing, with a minor concentration in math, and also spent time volunteering for the school's YMCA partnership in basketball, the oldest basketball program in the nation, as the sport was invented at Springfield College. Volunteering was important to Donna, especially in relation to the school's motto, "Spirit, Mind, and Body”, and recalled that volunteering was easy to fit into her schedule with work, while other extracurricular pursuits often came into conflict with her schedule.

Donna grew up Catholic but did not attend church every week, although her grandmother and father did. She was raised with the message of being a good person and always tried to be that person: "I believe that God hears me no matter where I am. My husband and I have brought up our children Catholic as well. We hope they get the message about being good and kind and helping others from their faith, but also from us. I think it is part of what drives me to want to help others, doing something selfless and good."

After college, Donna worked in the catalog industry in marketing with two large companies, and then moved to a small nonprofit catalog. As her attention to parenting came into conflict with the demands of dedicating herself to a career in business, she began thinking of a career change. Donna, who first considered education, but was hesitant to make that career change, relied on a teacher friend, who helped her research teaching requirements, thereby opening the door to business education, for which she was qualified. She said, "I never even
knew there was such a thing, so I was super excited for that." Donna wavered for some time to leave the financial certainty to which she had become accustomed.

Donna did make the move when a position opened up in the district where she lived, and has worked at the high school for almost eleven years. She felt great pride in being able to teach subject matter that interests students and make connections for them that than last far beyond high school. She admitted she has loved every job she has ever had, but she "loves being a teacher" because of the relationship-building and connections that develop over the course of a student's high school experience, whether it's in a class or through an extracurricular activity.

**Caroline.** Caroline attended a high school with a service requirement for graduation, which prompted her to volunteer for over one hundred hours over her four years. She was an average student with a love for history and she was a year-round varsity athlete who worked at her family's ice cream store as a junior and senior. Not only did Caroline gain an affinity for volunteerism through school, she was also influenced by her parents, and her earliest experiences of volunteering came from them: "My dad always encouraged my sister and I to give back and to volunteer, so we were raised in that kind of, environment, so volunteering, I remember going with my family to serve a meal at a homeless shelter, I remember doing that when I was in high school, so, it was just something I was raised with." A sense of commitment to those in need became a value to Caroline because of her family.

Caroline competed in pageants, which helped fund her schooling. Her platform for the pageants was the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation, a cause dear to her heart having grown up with a cousin with the disease; as a result, Caroline volunteered at Massachusetts Hospital School every day one summer, and she also worked as a volunteer at an equine therapy camp,
assisting kids in wheelchairs to ride horses. Caroline described the therapy camp as one of her favorite volunteer experiences throughout her life.

Caroline grew up begrudgingly participating in her parents' Catholic faith, and recalled, "my parents always dragged me to church every Sunday, kicking and screaming, and I hated it, but now I appreciate it, not only historical-wise, I understand the Bible for history and stuff, but I definitely appreciate it now that I'm older." As important as it was to attend and participate in Church, the lasting impact on Caroline has been to serve those in need, as she did through her church in trips to West Virginia to Nazareth Farm, where she volunteered in high school and in college. The message of serving those in need impacted Caroline as a teacher and advisor at the high school.

Caroline attended Southern New Hampshire University, where she studied to become a history teacher, and continued her volunteerism through Special Olympics on campus, and by continuing with her church's trips to West Virginia with high school students, now as a leader. Caroline had an influential mentor in college, a history professor who believed that any student could learn about and handle primary sources, teaching Caroline the enduring belief that there is always a way to get students of varying abilities and backgrounds to be able to access, comprehend, and understand the curriculum of a history classroom.

Caroline became a high school teacher because of her passion for history and her empathy for the age group of students. Caroline was effusive when describing her choice to work with teens. She illustrated the significance of working with kids when she said, "Specifically, I love the kids. I love coming in and even today, I'm sick, I'm not feeling good, they say something silly or quirky, and they just make the day great and they put life in perspective, and I like when I'm able to help them and they help me, it's filled with so many
positive warm and fuzzies that just make life great." She felt it was not only her role to support high-schoolers, but that she had an opportunity to help ease the path for those who come into her classes. She believed her own high school experiences, including the self-inflicted pressure to succeed and range of adolescent emotions, helps her relate to kids and support them through this complex time of life. Caroline has taught at the high school for eight years.

Themes

The primary research question was *What are the experiences of teachers who utilize service-learning in their high school classrooms?* Personal impact, student impact, and challenges were the super-ordinate themes to emerge in the data. Table 1 shows the super-ordinate and subordinate themes that emerged.

Three super-ordinate themes were identified from the data: personal impact, student impact, and challenges. Within the three themes that were identified, subthemes were developed from the codes, as patterns emerged across participants. An outline was created to connect emergent themes and corresponding participant responses during the interviews. Table 1 shows the super-ordinate and subordinate themes that emerged.
Table 1

**Emergent Themes**

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<th>Super-Ordinate Themes</th>
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**Personal Impact.** Utilizing service-learning in the classroom has impacted each of the participants on a personal level; four subthemes emerged within the frame of personal impact: pride, relationship with students, connectedness, and teacher toolbox.

**Pride.** Participants felt personal pride or satisfaction when teaching their service learning projects and courses.

When recounting her experiences using service-learning, Grace explained her feelings of pride over the course of several projects when she described the experience as "Outstanding. Definitely one of the highlights of my teaching experience. I wish that we had a service-learning component to our classes every single trimester." She went on to explain that it was "Fabulous, the sense of accomplishment was like nothing I've ever experienced here as a teacher" except for that of Freshman First Night, which she runs in the summer for incoming freshmen. She shared that she felt "a feeling of pride, a feeling of accomplishment, knowing that you were part of a project that was doing good for others. Cliché, but knowing that you probably made a difference"
and not only was it important to have those feelings personally, but to have a project recognized by others was just as impactful as a source of pride, as she shared, "it was very touching, years later, for Mr. Hogan, to remember what we had done, and he wrote, a letter to you, or had written a letter to the superintendent and mentioned you and me, and just to get that public recognition and the pat on the back, it's... it's nice. Not going to lie."

Evelyn shared that her source of pride stems from "making a difference, and I know that sounds corny, but well, you know, when we reach that one kid, I mean I get excited when someone gets into it. I get excited." Donna, on the other hand, shared that seeing a project through to completion builds a sense of pride in a job well done:

I mean, it can be a lot of work doing all the little steps that lead up to something, but when the project goes over, and suddenly, you see the success of it. But then when it was all said and done, and you're packing up these coats and you bring them to somebody, and they're just so thankful, so appreciative that you did this, you think, then it's all worth it. That's when you go, you feel good.

Caroline agreed with Donna's sentiments when she said it feels absolutely great to finish a project, and added that her pride is built on the completion of a project that is driven by student participation.

Relationships with students. Participants concurred that relationships with students were fostered and strengthened though the experience of participating in a service-learning project.

Grace's reflection of one group of students encapsulated so many aspects of building relationships with students in service-learning:

The students, that was the class of 2010, in my ten years of teaching, they remain one of my top two favorite classes, and reflecting on it, I wonder if it was because we spent so
much time outside of the classroom working on a real life issue. They were just a really special group of kids. I still remember their names, their faces, how they reacted when Mr. Hogan was speaking to them at the food pantry. One of the girls who turned out to be one of the leaders, who evolved into one of the leaders, I went to her wedding last summer. One of the other leaders of the program, I regularly get together with her and we have drinks and chat. So the relationships, the bonds that I forged with those students were truly unique, and unusually special.

She shared that during one trip in the project, "I remember that bus ride back, and they were kind of a tough group of kids, and I remember they really opened up to me, and were really honest and said, “This was awesome.” It had broken down a wall between us."

Evelyn agreed that working with students in service-learning projects helped build strong relationships: "I think it does because the kids see firsthand what I'm saying isn't just BS, right?"

She recounted a story of her students volunteering and seeing a man in a suit at the shelter receiving a meal, and how it prompted a discussion about working poor. She reflected, capital "To me, it gives me confidence because the kids can trust me, they don't question that I'm telling them the truth, which is nice." She shared how the service-learning groups will almost always stop for coffee and debrief after volunteering and how "it makes you have a really cool relationship with the kids, because I think they see you as real? When you're in the classroom, sometimes I think you have to have a persona, but when you're outside and you're doing stuff, you're a human being. And that does make a difference." Donna also felt that relationships are more authentic with students as a result of service-learning, because, "I get to see some kids outside of school, and you see, like a whole other, it's like, they're a whole different person, just
like they don't realize we're a person out of the classroom, you know, they are, too. It's really a
great opportunity to get to do that."

Caroline had a different experience with relationships having worked a summer service-
learning program for incoming freshmen:

I'm reaping dividends from that program because I have some of those kids in class and I
know them, and it's nice to know them ahead of time, and know them on a personal level,
because it makes the interactions in the classroom go much easier. I have a really
difficult student right now, who I first met in that program, and I know how to handle
him, not to push him, what to do, what not to do. When he came in, I knew his
background, so it gave me the opportunity to know him.

In Caroline's experience, knowing some of the students and building relationships with them
impacted the classroom environment for everyone, in that she already had trust built and can
continue building this trust with new students, while maintaining it with returners.

**Connectedness.** Participants felt that service-learning increased their connectedness with
peers who worked together on service-learning projects, as well as an increased connectedness
between the issues at hand and their willingness to impact that issue, whether it was at school
with students or at home, with their families.

Evelyn shared that when carrying out a service-learning project, she felt like her job
mattered and that "there's more to do than just the paperwork, which is never our favorite part,
right? It makes me feel like my own kids, my personal family, learns from that." She believed
that service-learning connected the learning that took place with her personal commitment to
service, which then extended outside her professional life to her family. Donna also felt like
service-learning made teachers more connected, because as she learned more about a particular
issue or topic in class, it was inevitable that she would share that information elsewhere because of that knowledge and her personal drive to help others.

In addition to connecting service-learning to one's family, participants also felt it helped connect them to their peers at the high school. On one project, Grace reflected,

Definitely my confidence grew because we worked as a team to plan outside of the classroom, I feel like I had really good role models in my teachers, seeing how to plan, seeing how to execute ideas, not just have ideas, but execute them. I think that was a great experience. It built my confidence. It made me realize that I, too, can have ideas, and I, too, can execute and make things happen. It was a definite confidence booster, no doubt about it.

Grace strongly agreed that working with her peers helped connect her to the goals of the project and even the mission of the high school. Grace shared the importance of working with colleagues from other departments on an interdisciplinary project, saying there was "so much thoughtful dialogue" with teachers from math, physical education, computer apps, and that "never do we get that opportunity for collegial brainstorming and planning, and it was the way teaching should be." Donna was also impacted by her teacher mentor, who taught the community service-learning internship class and coordinated the district's service-learning program. Donna was able to observe her mentor teaching service-learning, and it helped connect them as colleagues working on projects together. Donna was trained by her mentor in service-learning, and it became a natural part of her teaching because "she's such a firm believer in it [service-learning] and she was really great to learn from;" together with her colleagues now, Donna continues to incorporate service-learning into her coursework and club activities because of those initial experiences. She shared that she loves to work on a project with a colleague,
"because then you can bring more kids into it, too, their pool of students, and you've got my pool of students, and maybe you can do a really bigger, better job."

**Teacher Toolbox.** Teachers are always looking to reach students in a way that makes teaching and learning meaningful. One benefit of utilizing service-learning for participants was building skills and strategies within their professional toolboxes of classroom teaching.

Evelyn noted that service-learning worked because there had to be that learning component; otherwise, it was just volunteerism. She thought that was what made it a great teaching strategy, because "you'll have the lessons on poverty, or you'll have social concerns, social issues that you can talk about, and you can try to make the kids aware of discrimination, or whatever, in the classroom...so then you can take that learning and move it into some sort of project. That's how it's going to work." Donna also said that researching topics in service-learning projects encouraged the service component and learning specific data made for a sense of urgency: "And it makes you say, oh my God, I've got to get myself to that food pantry and help people in my town. It makes you say, I've got to do something. I think it's made me, I can't say a better person, but I do think it has helped me in that way."

Service learning also helped fulfill the high school's mission of creating responsive citizens. Evelyn remarked on the opportunity service-learning allows teachers to impact this undertaking at the high school:

It helps make these students aware citizens when they leave the classroom. Because if nobody ever talks to them about poverty, if nobody ever talks to them about hunger, nobody ever encourages them to reach beyond their own little world, they're not going to. Families are so busy now, these kids are so busy. You know, every day, they have sports,
or whatever going on. They may not have the opportunity if we do not provide an opportunity for them to look beyond. So I think that's what I get out of it.

Donna agreed that it was a significant strategy to help build citizenship skills within students, but she also mentioned the high school's focus on offering service-learning opportunities to mostly seniors. She mused:

I would love to see our school make it a school-wide requirement for volunteering. Why should it just be senior year? Every year do something, so each kid can be involved in service-learning, volunteering, every single year, and really by the time they leave, they really will have a good understanding of it, and if you look up research on it, and I'm sure you have, you'll see that kids who do that are likely to continue to do that, so that's really important.

Not only does service-learning impact what the participants teach with students, but it impacted how they taught, as well. Grace reflected, "It’s made me focus much more on current events. For example, last year there was an opportunity for me to get a free subscription to the Wall Street Journal, and I jumped on it, just because of my experience with the service-learning project."

Evelyn agreed that service-learning impacted her teaching in that, "It makes me a better teacher. It gives me a variety in my day to day. I can bring in current events. It keeps it fresh." Donna noted that service-learning can sometimes be paired with the holidays or a season, but she said, "What about the rest of the year?" suggesting that attention to current events helped students create an awareness year round, helping to build a consistent attention to what issue needs attention and help.

Caroline also noted that in addition to driving what to teach, service-learning helped teachers discover how to teach, specifically how to connect with students. When she described
working with students over the summer, Caroline detailed how she tailored her teaching strategies to a difficult student, which then became helpful through the school year, when he was in her class. Because she had the time to develop a relationship with this particular student through a service-learning project, she felt confident she understood his needs, his triggers, and how to reach him. This modification of teaching strategy has helped her to reach this student successfully, and to push him in a positive way to be a better student.

The participants' experiences with service-learning have impacted each of them at a personal level, which has influenced their continued commitment to the teaching pedagogy.

**Student Impact.** The participants have all experienced personal impacts to utilizing service-learning, but they are also certain that students have been affected and influenced from the service-learning projects in which they participated. The superordinate theme of student impact was further divided into the subthemes: forever changed, breaking down misconceptions and preconceived notions, impact after high school, and buy-in and engagement.

**Forever changed.** Participants felt that students who participated in service-learning experienced impacts that forever changed their character or outlook of life. Once a student was exposed to the needs of others and had an opportunity to address those needs, it impacted their awareness and empathy moving forward.

Each participant was able to select to a specific student or group of students who had been forever changed through a service-learning project. Grace talked about a male junior athlete, of a popular group, who participated in a community hunger project. "I still remember seeing [his] face in the food pantry. Like, he was genuinely...’awestruck’ isn't the right word, but he was genuinely focused on the message and I remember him coming back to the classroom that day, speaking so passionately about wanting to help." This student used his popularity as
leverage in a school-wide food drive that became a class competition, building camaraderie and spirit in the building. He later attended to a service-learning conference and presented the results of the project to educators from across the state. This was "a big deal" for this student.

Evelyn described an experience one of her Tax-Aide students had, when filing taxes for the elderly and poor. The student had found almost a thousand dollars for a woman through the circuit breaker credit, and the trainer of the Tax-Aide program helped them go back and amend taxes from previous years, securing the client almost $5,000; "by the end of this session, the lady was crying and my student was crying. It was really something." Evelyn shared that many students, like this one, went on to continue working in the Tax Aide program in college. She reflected, “When we did the taxes, you know, that was providing a service, learning how to do the taxes, to have the skills, and it made a difference in the kid's life, too, and that's a part of it. They have to be forever changed when they do something like that. They have to be."

Evelyn and Donna both described a particular student who volunteered at a local women's shelter for domestic violence. Donna recalled, "She just loved going there because she was doing worthwhile work and it was just so important to her, and right now she's in her last year of law school, and she still finds time to go. It's become part of who she is, and I don't think she'll ever stop going there. She'll always have some connection to there." Evelyn echoed affirmation of the commitment this student experienced, as if the student had a calling to do this work:

She's in law school now, she's getting ready to graduate, and she has worked with domestic violence cases at the DAs office, helping what is it- a public defender, or assistant district attorney? This is what she was training for in her internship as she's
been at law school, so there. I mean, is that a beautiful path for volunteerism, for learning how to serve and then following through on that? That's perfect.

Evelyn went on to say, "and this kid, and in all of these kids' cases, their lives are altered. They decide what they like or they don't like, and they actually put their money where their mouth is, and they've done the deeds, which makes you feel proud."

Caroline, who is the advisor for the high school's Habitat for Humanity chapter, one of the few high school chapters in the state, experienced student change through participation in local builds. She thought, "It's awesome to see the build we went on a few weeks ago- the girls left the site with so much confidence, so much confidence in themselves, and what they can do, and handling tools and especially for females to be confident in handling tools and handling a chainsaw, it was great." An experience that builds a student's confidence changes them as they approach new endeavors in the future. Evelyn, who had also been on Habitat builds with the high school, told students, "If I can do it, you can do it," and although some students entered into the builds with trepidation, they left with increased self-efficacy and self-esteem, which impacted their personal growth and development.

**Breaking down misconceptions and preconceived notions.** Participants noted that students entered classes with preconceived notions of how the world works, or how a specific subject matter is understood, and often students exposed their misconceptions because of a lack of exposure to both the content matter and to life, in general.

Grace took a children's literature class to a soup kitchen as part of a project, and she remembered, "The kids on the ride back were so effusive, [they were saying,] 'this was great,' and 'I had no idea that... homeless people might look like that,' and 'people were saying thank you to me; it made me feel so good.' They reacted in a bigger and more profound way then I
expected them to." Evelyn echoed that students just don't know what they don't know, and by giving them the opportunity to observe in a new environment, or "even if it's just the five or ten minutes they interacted, they learned something, and to me that's a really good thing. Kids just have a misunderstanding of what causes so many issues."

Donna explained that incorporating service-learning into her curriculum helped break down misconceptions, whether it was self-esteem issues in marketing, or budgeting in financial literacy. When her class completed a budgeting exercise, they also discussed homelessness, working poor, and living wage, and then they were able to practice, "OK, budget everything you want, and OK, what are you going to do for a job? Well, guess what? This is how much money you're going to make, and suddenly we're trading in those cars, and everything's changing around quite a bit." She said the budgeting activity added a sense of realism into the unit as to what things cost, "because kids don't have any sense of what things cost, and they also don't have any sense of if you make $25,000 or $50,000, they really don't know what that buys them, what that means, so they have to get into the detail of it and get the numbers."

Evelyn described that every time students go to serve meals, inevitably, students would interact with the clients there, which truly helped to break down misconceptions about the poor. She pointed out a student passing by her classroom saying, "She [my student] was so surprised, she's a giver anyway, this little girl, but more often, than not, that's the reaction. They're normal people, they're humans; they just had something happen in their lives." Donna agreed that service-learning created awareness in students that can be missing otherwise, and that a project "helps you create awareness of what's going on around you, instead of living in your own little bubble. It just makes you realize that there are places that need help. There are people in the community that need help, and it's around us." Giving students the opportunity to experience
service-learning has been a target strategy for participants to break down preconceived notions about people in need.

Sometimes preconceived notions impacted an entire project. Grace recalled one time when moving from a town focus to the state level through a trip to the Greater Boston Food Bank, she thought, "Oh, wow, this is going to be great. This is Whitman times twenty-five, this is Boston! We're going to really see need, and we're really going to see how we can help." She was surprised when it backfired, because students felt that because they had so much food, supply, and support there, the Food Bank didn't need help. She said, "The immediacy of need in our own communities, the hunger that people experience in our own communities, was lost, so, it's best to stay local, I think." It's been her experience that without breaking down local misconceptions first, it was difficult to move to a larger focus with success, which has impacted the narrowness of her service-learning focus since that time.

**Impact after high school.** When students experienced service-learning in high school, participants felt it helped to influence their college and career interests, post-secondary extracurricular pursuits, and adult commitments to volunteerism.

Grace shared that she thought service-learning was "absolutely vital in the 21st century and in talking to kids, I know [service-learning] has been one of the most profound experiences of their education in high school." Being in touch with many students after high school, she was impressed with the numbers of students who pursued their career interests with confidence because they experienced a CSL internship their senior year, or how many students emerged as leaders or just even as doers when given the opportunity.

Evelyn shared that the high school certification for the Tax-Aide program was even higher than what was required at the college level, and at college, "they don't even have to certify
the way we did. So our kids were actually more proficient than some of the other college kids who were doing it, so it worked out very well" because many of them were able to continue in the program after high school with few adjustments.

Caroline echoed the importance of getting kids invested through service-learning because it would spur further action in their lives. One of the biggest draws to service-learning, in her opinion, has been "getting students interested and invested in problems in their community. Getting them to care about the world that they live in." Caroline felt strongly that:

service-learning should be in every school in the United States. I think it's a great way to get students to learn material, and learn information and facts across disciplines, while also giving them a chance to become lifelong learners because they love doing it. It's something that they actually enjoy doing, they see a point to it, there's a beginning, and end, and when they see that clear objective, they become invested in it.

Donna agreed that when you get a student to the right place, it made the right connection, and he or she would continue to have that connection. "It makes [their] experience that much better when you see the kids are getting something out of it" and that's what helped encourage their future habits of service.

**Buy-in and engagement.** One reason the participants felt that service-learning was powerful in the classroom had to do with boosting student interest and buy-in, which in turn, impacted engagement and initiative. Real world problems and issues generated an authentic learning experience for students, which directly impacted their buy-in for the project and engagement in learning activities.

Grace recalled, "I just remember being really surprised at how quickly our kids felt empathy and kinship with [the food pantry director,] Mr. Hogan. I was really, really touched at
how quickly they wanted to reach out and help." This energy and interest related back into classroom, academic tasks tied to the project. Caroline echoed that students performed when they were interested, and service-learning was a strategy to achieve that: "I feel like I don't have to worry about whether they're interested in it or not, and getting everyone on board, because it's a project to be solved, it's not just me standing up in front of the classroom lecturing, doing a PowerPoint, wondering if they're listening."

Donna shared that the interest extended beyond the classroom when students had buy-in. She shared that a project that interested students incited further discussion:

Because I live in the same town, I'll bump into parents of kids I have and 'Oh, little Johnny came home and told us about that budget exercise, and about the homeless," you know... and when kids do that, and when parents tell you a kid came and talked to them, you know I've done my job, because you know it's like pulling teeth. How was school today? Good. But guess what I did! You know, that's really great if they go home and they're talking about it, that means you were successful, you've reached some kid somewhere, and that's really important.

Just as service-learning has impacted students' buy-in and interest, it has been the participants' experience that when students were interested, their engagement and initiative also boosted.

Grace revealed a transformation that took place with her students once they were interested in a project; their engagement and initiative increased twofold. She admitted knowing they did not put the expected effort into previous assignments and she never would have predicted they would become leaders, "but I came to see I could rely on them." With the project at hand, "They were so dependable. I remember that we had to give a presentation one morning, at the last minute... and I called them at home, can you do this? They both came in early, they
were both here before school, like half an hour before school and they were just like, we've got this." Just like the student who used his clout to impact others, these two girls exceeded their teacher's expectations through the project, also joining their peer at the state conference to present their outcome.

Caroline noted that the engagement was often really one-on-one in a service-learning project, and required the student to get involved in a way that participation did not take effort. She also felt like when students worked in a service-learning project, they were developing relationships with adults and peers and talking in new and different ways, which prompted additional action, for example when working for Habitat for Humanity, "they're suddenly coming up with ways to help in other ways beyond just building, so it's so heartwarming to see wanting to give and work with one another." Donna did note that working with seniors was more difficult than with younger students, as they have competing interests that sometimes draw them away from the spirit of a service-learning project. It had been imperative that they have buy-in to increase their engagement in a project and stave off "senioritis," and service-learning was just one way to reach this audience.

The student impacts of service-learning witnessed by the participants were a driving motivation for them to continue with the practice of incorporating service-learning into their teaching.

**Challenges.** The greatest challenges for participants to integrating service-learning in the classroom were time and money, followed by curricular constraints and common planning, which also fall back to economic considerations.

Caroline shared that she had a great curriculum called Project Citizen, but that there was no place in the current plan for it. It fulfilled the requirements of service-learning in that it
"could just be that, they're coming up with problems and solutions to do in their class. I think we should do more like that, we should go more in depth with things like that, and not be so broad about the curriculum." To make changes like those needed in curriculum, Grace shared, "It really needs time out of the classroom, common planning time for teachers, and that's not economically feasible at this point." She also said teachers are hesitant to jump in for such changes because, "we're daunted by the magnitude of that. I also think that we are in an economic system where we are trying to do too much with too few people right now, so, if I can't even grade my summer reading essays, how am I going to help somebody that's hungry? And it just bums me out. It comes down to time and money, I guess."

Caroline confirmed that just as important as money is time. When asked what the biggest challenge to implementing service-learning was, she replied "time is. There's never enough time. Time, time time. “Evelyn narrowed the challenges down to the particular requirements of a project: "Time. Money. I think those are the big ones. If you go somewhere, you have to have a bus, or you have to have forty permissions every way to Sunday, um, you have to fit it in between their homework, and their sports or their clubs, and their work. These kids all work practically full time. Those are the big challenges, I think." She made the point that it's not just the school's challenge, but that students felt it as well with so many facets of the academic and social and other personal factors taking their time and attention. She also brought up that because not every teacher participated in service-learning, it fell to certain teachers, which became burdensome and time-consuming for the few. She admitted to giving up Tax-Aide because it was just her working in the program, even though other teachers had attended info sessions about the program, and were offered trainings to participate. She felt that some teachers were looking for monetary compensation for their time and effort, but that in service-learning,
not every teacher was going to make money for their work. Originally, Evelyn received a stipend as part of a grant-funded service-learning program, but when the grant went away, she continued to incorporate service-learning into her lessons. Grace also had the opportunity to create curriculum with peers as part of a grant, and was able to use that curriculum after the grant was gone. Despite their own continued use of service-learning, participants did feel that the lack of financial incentive was one possible reason why more teachers did not incorporate service-learning into their teaching.

Between fitting a project into the scope and sequence of a curriculum, having the time to plan it, especially with colleagues, and the funds to support it, time and money became the greatest barriers to implementing service-learning.

**Conclusion**

The first super-ordinate theme explored teachers' personal experiences and impacts of utilizing service-learning in the classroom. Within these experiences, participants noted an increase of pride, the facilitation of improved relationships with students, a stronger connection to one's peers, and additional teaching resources for their professional toolboxes. The second super-ordinate theme, student impact, detailed participants' experiences in understanding how service-learning impacts their students. The subthemes of students being forever changed, using service-learning to break down misconceptions and preconceived notions, the impact of service-learning after high school, and increasing student buy-in and engagement through service-learning emerged. Finally, the super-ordinate theme of challenges to using service-learning emerged, which included the constant factors of time and money. The super-ordinate and subordinate themes represented the key experiences of the participants' encounters with service-learning in a high school classroom. They will be further discussed in the following section.
Chapter V: Discussion of Research Findings

This research study was guided by the central research question: *What are the experiences of teachers who employ service-learning in their high school classrooms?* For the purpose of this study, service-learning was defined as a teaching pedagogy that enables students to address the school curriculum through service to the community (Dymond, et al., 2008). This interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) was designed to allow teachers' experiences to be known, using their own words to reflect upon and describe their experiences with service-learning. Interpretation in IPA is focused on the meaning of experiences as perceived by both the participant and researcher (Smith et al., 2009). Thus, the findings of this study made explicit the meanings of phenomena as perceived by the research participants. Using teacher perspectives allowed for the detailed discovery of how participants made sense of service-learning, as well as the meaning they gave their experiences enacting it in the educational setting.

The data collected were analyzed to draw out the important themes regarding service-learning experiences. Three super-ordinate themes were elicited from the data: personal impact, student impact, and challenges, each with subordinate themes. These findings represent new information to the cache of literature because they describe the unique experiences of educational practitioners who implement service-learning in high school classrooms, a demographic which has not received significant research with regard to service-learning. The findings are presented first in connection to the theoretical framework of service-learning and then each theme is discussed with a focus on how they support and contribute to the corresponding research literature.
Discussion of Findings Related to Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of service-learning, itself, provided a lens through which to understand service-learning as a teaching pedagogy. The roots of service-learning theory appeared most directly in the work of John Dewey's theory of experience, in which he believed every subject had an opportunity for cross connections between the subject matter and the direct experiences of everyday life (1916). In his Democracy and Education (1900/2001), Dewey presents an experiential model that originally developed and connected the ideas of reflection, discovery, real life skills and knowledge. The participants each supported the idea that service-learning must be experiential in nature to have an impact with students, and that the real-life connection was significant to the teaching pedagogy. Caroline shared an impact when she recalled an all-female student group participating in a Habitat for Humanity build. She said, "The girls left the site with so much confidence, so much confidence in themselves, and what they can do...and especially for females to be confident in handling tools and handling a chainsaw, it was great." This was a real-world application after in-class lessons, giving this group real-life skills and knowledge. Participants discussed how students' experiences with discovery made for impactful learning, as when Grace recalled of a student, "he was genuinely focused on the message and I remember him coming back to the classroom that day, speaking so passionately about wanting to help." The participants also described times when they reflected with students, one of Dewey's tenants of experiential learning, and how it brought about some of the most honest responses from students of their careers.

In Where's the Learning in Service-Learning (1999), Eyler and Giles described five essential elements of service-learning. The first element included placement quality, or selecting a context in which participants can exercise initiative, take responsibility, and work as peers with
practitioners and community members. Participants confirmed how the context of a project allowed students to practice the softer skills of initiative and responsibility, and to work with adults throughout the project. Grace talked about two students who stepped up to become leaders, showing a responsibility and follow-through that was not evident in class prior to the service-learning project. Caroline talked about how the right project can help a teacher work one-on-one with a student. Donna and Evelyn spoke of a young woman whose education and career aspiration to become an attorney were directly impacted by the quality of her placement, which was such an ideal fit for her to practice both litigation support and social justice over the years, that she has remained a constant volunteer through high school, college, and into law school. As her knowledge and skills advanced through education, her ability to exercise initiative, take responsibility, and work with practitioners and community members expanded in her apprentice role as an advocate for those fighting domestic violence.

Eyler and Giles' (1999) second element of service-learning was application, or the degree to which students can link what they are doing in the classroom to what they are experiencing in the community and vice versa. Practitioners talked about students coming up with supplementary ways to help beyond their initial projects, taking their skills a step further by applying them to the issue after the project or in a new way during the project. A true example of this was when Evelyn described the experience of a student filing taxes for the poor and elderly, who came in contact with a woman who was in dire financial need, living with her daughter after her husband's death, who was able to receive back-taxes in the amount of almost $5,000. Learning about living wage and working poor were conceptual until this student came face to face with someone in such need, and to be able to apply her knowledge of the circuit-breaker tax law impacted the outcome in a substantial way.
Reflection, the next component of service-learning, which involved being able to step back and be thoughtful about experience, and to monitor one's own reactions and thinking processes (Eyler and Giles 1999), took place for both students involved in service-learning, and the teachers who led them in a project. Evelyn noted that she naturally built time into a project for students to debrief regarding their experiences, and that students were always willing to share their feelings and reactions to their experiences. Grace noted that she appreciated how honest students were about their feedback during their service-learning projects. Participants also noted that it wasn't just the students that were impacted. Grace and Caroline explained that reflecting on service-learning projects impacted not only what they taught, but how they taught it, whether it was through more student-led discovery, or through increased connection to current events. Donna and Evelyn both made the connection that their own reflection about service-learning project experience has made its way back to their own personal families and volunteerism. Both students and educators are able to think about and process their service-learning experiences.

Eyler and Giles (1999) noted that a project also needed to offer diversity, which can lead to greater tolerance and understanding within the present status quo, or a social transformation, allowing contributions of different cultural perspectives to change the status quo. Each of the participants discussed how service-learning projects helped to dismantle students' misconceptions about people in general and specifically, classroom content. Their preconceived notions were challenged through a service-learning project, especially when students came into contact with those they were trying to impact through the projects, and this left them forever changed. Students began to think differently and utilize the steps of service-learning activities to address and impact new dilemmas. This transformation from apprentice citizenship to exercising
their rights and responsibilities of citizenship left them capable of understanding differing perspectives and willing to challenge the status quo to make a problem better.

*Community voice*, which involved meeting the needs identified by members of the community in meaningful service, was the final component of meaningful service-learning (Eyler and Giles, 1999). Whether it was at a soup kitchen, the local food pantry, or at a Habitat build, participants confirmed that connecting with the community established a meaningful quality to a project for both teachers and students. Grace described the students who were so moved by meeting the director of the local food pantry, and who felt "empathy and kinship...they wanted to reach out and help." When the director shared the needs of the community with students, they returned to class with a genuine sense of necessity in and commitment to helping the pantry through their class activities. Evelyn shared that coming into contact with the recipients of student service at the soup kitchen drove home the needs that were articulated in class, but only able to be brought to life out in the community. Donna echoed that the community connection helped students identify what problems really needed their attention and time, and that the right connection to the community helped make students' experiences that much better. Hearing and seeing the needs firsthand through community members made these issues develop real-world significance for students, who might not have identified with the issues without the connections.

**Discussion of Themes Related to Relevant Literature**

**Personal impact.** Within the super-ordinate theme of personal impact, the subthemes of pride, relationship with students, connectedness, and teacher toolbox emerged. In addition to the subthemes, the participants' personal experiences leading up to becoming teachers each had similar encounters with family, faith, volunteerism, affinity for children, and support from
mentors. When Krebs (1999) explored teacher motivations for service-learning in a phenomenological study that interviewed seven teachers, the teachers cited connections with multiple stakeholders, personal beliefs of the teacher, and alignment with a teacher's philosophy and style as motivations for utilizing service-learning. Of particular importance were the beliefs of the teacher and alignment with a teacher's philosophy, as each of the four participants had very specific examples of how their parents' influences impacted their commitment to volunteering, and how their faith, regardless of creed, impressed upon them the need to help others. The participants of this study also cited connections with stakeholders, especially students and peers, but their similar background experiences and beliefs all seemed to factor into their motivation for utilizing service-learning.

In addition to personal background, the sense of pride that accompanied service-learning project completion impacted the participants. There are numerous studies that demonstrate the benefit of teacher training service-learning direct instruction and practice, including challenging personal beliefs, teaching diverse students, and building personal teaching self-efficacy (Butcher, J. et al., 2003; Duckenfield & Swick, Eds., 2002; Shih-pei, Anagnostopoulos, & Omae, 2011). Each of the participants learned about service-learning through opportunities within the district, and their experiences included challenging their own personal beliefs and building their own self-efficacy. Grace described the pride she felt when enacting service-learning in the classroom as "Outstanding. Definitely one of the highlights of my teaching experience. I wish that we had a service-learning component to our classes every single trimester." She went on to explain that it was "fabulous, the sense of accomplishment was like nothing I've ever experienced here as a teacher." Evelyn expanded upon her response to service-learning when she reflected "to me, it gives me confidence because the kids can trust me, they don't question that I'm telling them the
truth, which is nice." Both Donna and Evelyn noted that working with service-learning in the classroom impacted not only their professional lives, but their families, as well, when they inevitably shared what they have learned from a project back into their homes. Donna said that researching topics in service-learning projects encouraged the service component and learning specific data made for a sense of urgency: "And it makes you say, oh my God, I've got to get myself to that food pantry and help people in my town. It makes you say, I've got to do something. I think it's made me, I can't say a better person, but I do think it has helped me in that way." When she learned facts and data that increased her inclination to help on a personal level, Donna also felt that it made it easy to bring that information to students, in that she was living out what she was teaching, too.

At the college level, in service-learning programs for teacher preparation, students used service-learning to "overcome preconceived notions, reject social stereotypes, move away from racist views, and develop greater empathy and sensitivity" (O'Connor, 2010, p.1170) toward future students. In their high school roles, the participants also felt that service-learning gave them the opportunity to forge stronger relationships with students that were based on genuine qualities. Grace shared that during one trip in the project, "I remember that bus ride back, and they were kind of a tough group of kids, and I remember they really opened up to me, and were really honest and said, ‘This was awesome. This was awesome.’ And it had broken down a wall between us." This attitude confirmed the purpose of service-learning experiences in teacher preparation programs, that Grace was able to see her "tough" students as more than just that, as she said, "honest." Both Donna and Evelyn noted that this realness was felt by both students and teachers, because through service-learning, Evelyn shared, "When you're in the classroom, sometimes I think you have to have a persona, but when you're outside and you're doing stuff,
you're a human being. And that does make a difference." Carolyn also discussed that taking the time to know a particularly difficult student through a summer service-learning project helped her build the relationship needed to work with this student successfully through the following school year. In O'Connor's study (2010), pre-service teachers developed greater empathy and sensitivity, while participants in this study continued to form empathetic, sensitive relationships with new students each time they enacted a service-learning project.

In addition to connecting to students, service-learning helped participants expand their professional toolboxes with strategies and skills. This supported the claim that service-learning can not only increase the self-efficacy of students, it can also help teachers across high school subjects and levels increase their own feelings of efficacy in the classroom (Alt, 1997; Billig, 2000). Ward (2002) suggested that utilizing service-learning helped faculty to fulfill both personal and professional goals, especially targeting the stated aims of their institutions' missions. Evelyn directly confirmed Ward's assertion on the opportunity service-learning allows teachers to impact this undertaking at the high school when she reflected, "It helps make these students aware citizens when they leave the classroom. Because if nobody ever talks to them about poverty, if nobody ever talks to them about hunger, nobody ever encourages them to reach beyond their own little world, they're not going to." Service-learning gave the participants a means through which to target the school's mission of building responsible citizens. Each of the participants suggested that service-learning left students forever changed in a positive way that often included the action-oriented problem-solving it takes for active citizenry. Service-learning expanded the participants' professional toolboxes by adding a strategy through which to target the school's mission of creating active citizens of students. This not only impacted teachers, but it affected students, as well.
Student impact. One of the earliest contributors to service-learning, John Dewey, stressed the importance and impact of experiential learning, which includes experience, inquiry, and reflection, along with the need for members of a community to learn social intelligence in schools as a means to secure democracy as informed, active citizens (Giles & Eyler, 1994). As already noted, service-learning opportunities gave participants a means through which to offer students hands-on, real world applications to complement classroom theory, but it also offered students opportunities to practice the skills, such as confronting stereotypes, social awareness, and empathy toward others, the skills needed to participate in democracy, one of the earliest aims of public education (Armstrong, 2006; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Print & Lange, 2012). In one collegiate study on service-learning programs for teacher preparation, students used service-learning to "overcome preconceived notions, reject social stereotypes, move away from racist views, and develop greater empathy and sensitivity" (O'Connor, 2010, p.1170) toward future students. Students at the high school level also experienced the same benefits of service-learning, according to the participants. Grace and Evelyn both explained how the experience of carrying out a service-learning project encouraged students to question their own understandings of issues, with particular emphasis on how people come to experience hardships. Grace, for example, had students who felt such empathy for those who helped the hungry, that they were incensed with passion to carry out a project to support that cause. Donna also shared that service-learning gave students exposure to information and encouraged them to consider factors they wouldn't otherwise contemplate, such as the value of money and its buying power, or how individuals face issues all year long, not just at holidays, or in the winter, when these issues are normally highlighted. Each participant felt the value of students understanding a fair representation of an issue based on data, current events, primary sources, firsthand accounts, and
personal experience with the problem through service to the community. Cochran-Smith (2001) argued that the capability of a teacher is a combination of “a rich capacity to engage in informed and active citizenship, and to appreciate and understand the range of social imparts which act on and influence school students’ learning” (p. 113). The participants experiences supported this claim as they shared the impact of creating that informed and active citizenship through service-learning, while exposing them to a wider range of social imparts to broaden students' learning opportunities and supported the claim that students often come away from these experiences with heightened awareness of current issues, civic duty, academic engagement and self-esteem, as asserted in literature by Zaff and Lerner (2010).

Another theme that emerged in literature was that service-learning programs increased student engagement and motivation, increased academic achievement, and helped students become more successful by participating in what colleges call high-impact programming (Brownell, & Swaner, 2009; “Division of Dental Hygiene…”, 2005; Ropers-Huilman, et al., 2005). As the literature with a focus on post-secondary students suggested, so too did the experience of the participants support the notion that service-learning increased student engagement and motivation among high school students. Donna shared the tell-tale sign of engagement: when students went home talking to their parents about an issue with interest and sincerity. Her experiences living in town and hearing feedback from parents of students involved in service-learning helped her to know she was impacting students. Grace, on the other hand, witnessed her students' increase of engagement and motivation personally: "I came to see I could rely on them... They were so dependable" and they became leaders within the project experience. Caroline also suggested that students' increased engagement led to additional
activities within the project that could only have been initiated through students' advocacy and genuine interest.

While students almost always displayed increased buy-in and initiative through service-learning, some grades and classes lent themselves to a more positive experience for participants. Dymond (2007) et al. argued that teachers have concerns with the meaning of service-learning for students who participate, but wait until the last minute to complete the service requirements, or who do not make personal choices about their levels of engagement with the project. According to their study, in order for the practice of service-learning to be beneficial, students must have their own connection and investment to the projects. Donna especially felt this dilemma with seniors, who sometimes did not put forth the effort and sincere engagement with their service-learning responsibilities, when the privilege of release-time from class and the overarching senioritis and competing priorities sometimes kept them from the spirit of the activity. She felt that to limit the last-minute completion of course requirements or to increase the buy-in, service-learning should be introduced at a younger level, prior to senior year, and throughout high school, so that students can make the proper connections and build the kind of investment that leads to the best possible outcome with a project. Grace also had an experience where broadening the focus of a repeated project decreased the buy-in of students, and felt that students' connection was weakened by the scope of what they saw and experience within larger parameters. By staying local, she felt the project could have offered students more personal choice about their engagement in the project, since they missed the big picture of widening the lens of a formerly successful project. All participants concurred that the meaning must be clear for all students in order for the project to take on any significance in their lives, and that if it did
take on significance, students were more apt to follow or carry that connection past high school into college and career.

**Challenges.** Participants were in agreement that the greatest challenges to enacting service-learning in the classroom were time and money, two factors that were hard for the participants to differentiate from one another. For example, Grace shared, "It really needs time out of the classroom, common planning time for teachers, and that's not economically feasible at this point." She also said teachers are hesitant to jump in for such changes because, "we're daunted by the magnitude of that. I also think that we are in an economic system where we are trying to do too much with too few people right now, so, if I can't even grade my summer reading essays, how am I going to help somebody that's hungry? And it just bums me out. It comes down to time and money, I guess."

On the positive side, the literature showed that President Obama most recently reauthorized the National Service Trust Act of 1993 through the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, including $1.1 billion to create new community-service programs aimed at engaging primary through post-secondary school-aged children and young adults (Zehr, 2015); however, as Dymond's study (2007) pointed out, administrators are not fully committed to the program without supporting resources. As a principal in the study stated, "We’ve always gotten the grant. If we don’t get the grant, is the school district still [going to] continue to support this program? That’s the question we have yet to answer. We want to, but finances in schools being what they are and supported the way they are, that’s the question floating in the back of our minds…" Participants of the current study felt that as district grant funding of service-learning decreased, the outward support for projects and programs weakened, as well. Whether it was money for a field trip bus or compensation for leading a service-learning project, funding was
seen as an issue to the carrying out of service-learning projects for the participants, which supported the fears convey in Dymond's study (2007). Grace's sentiments about having too few people in district, after years of continued lay-offs and absorption of retirement positions without new hires had left the staff depleted and lacking the energy to put toward service-learning, also highlighted the concern that funding was of particular importance to the success of service-learning.

In addition to money, time was the second biggest challenge with regard to service-learning. Literature suggests that despite a majority of novice teachers support service-learning, only 30% had implemented a project in their careers, citing time as one of the main reasons for preventing them from incorporating service-learning in their classrooms (Wade, et al., 1999). In addition, according to the Service-Learning Advisory Council (2006), sixty-three percent of districts report that less than 20% of their teachers are involved in service-learning. In addition, only 34% of districts provided professional development on service-learning in the year previous to the survey conducted by the council. Both studies cited lack of time, whether it is enough daily project time or developmental time, as deterrents to service-learning, an idea supported by the participants of this study. Grace argued that there needs to be planning time for teachers to collaborate outside the classroom, yet she and other participants felt that this was not happening because of funding and lack of time. Evelyn personally felt the stress of working on a project alone, when peers would not support the cause, whether due to lack of time or superficial interest based on school-funded involvement in projects, and how it caused her to step away from a valuable project at the high school. The participants felt that those who participated in service-learning did so despite the challenges and because of their own conviction in service-learning, rather than their hope for another stipend or more time to plan and implement a project.
Overall, the participants' experiences echoed the literature about the value of service-learning to students, the positive impacts for teachers on a personal and professional level, and the challenges felt by those executing service-learning in their classes. It was also apparent that the results of service-learning benefits at the college level are also impacting students at the high school level according to participants.

Conclusion

This study identified three key themes and numerous subthemes to add to the qualitative literature and knowledge on the personal experiences of teachers using service-learning in the high school classroom: personal impact, student impact, and challenges. While most literature on service-learning currently focuses on the student outcomes of service-learning and mainly has to do with post-secondary service-learning programs, this study successfully looks at service-learning as it is understood by the practitioners who utilize it as a teaching pedagogy. This is a significant area for future study on service-learning, because it is those practitioners who continue to implement service-learning within an environment of challenge and uncertainty with regard to resources like time and funding. The participants of this study had similar experiences to share, just as they had similar backgrounds leading up to their teaching careers and use of service-learning as a teaching pedagogy. Further research will be able to clarify to what extent one's background and upbringing contribute to affinity for service, how available training within a district could impact involvement in service-learning, and whether other practitioners within post-secondary education have had similar experiences, feeling personal impacts, positive student impacts, and overcoming challenges in implementing service-learning at the high school level.
Limitations. This study described the experiences of four practitioners who utilize service-learning in their high school classrooms. The sample size was specific to the methodology to gain rich descriptions of each participant's experience, but also posed a limitation, as newer teachers were not selected, teachers of other grade levels, or even males within this particular high school. It was possible that the meaning given to service-learning might be experienced differently among different educators not represented in the sample.

In addition, because of the sample size and particular focus on four participants' experiences from one high school, the transferability of the study was limited, as their experiences could be specific to this particular school or district. Also, the participants detailed very similar experiences with family, religion, volunteerism, children, and mentors prior to becoming teachers, which could also impact their experiences working with service-learning.

Implications for Educational Practice. The primary intellectual goal of the study was to understand the lived experiences of teachers using service-learning as a teaching pedagogy. The analysis of interview transcripts for four participants yielded results in three primary themes, personal impact, student impact, and challenges to implementing service-learning. The lack of research on the personal impacts to teachers utilizing service-learning necessitates further research in this area. There is also an opportunity to delve more closely into more teachers' personal accounts with regard to service-learning; it was noteworthy that the participants had similar adolescent and collegial experiences leading up to their teaching careers, a topic which could be further researched. While student impact is a regularly researched topic, it is interesting to note that the participants related the impact to students with their own abilities to impact them through the use of service-learning, an area that is less researched than standalone student impacts. Finally, challenges to implementing service-learning are well-documented in research.
The practical goal of the study was to answer the question, "What can service-learning do for me as a teacher?" for other educators, who might not otherwise consider the strategy as a means to engage students, feel self-efficacious, and meet student learning outcomes. The findings are significant for educators, as the participants' experiences with service-learning did answer this question, especially within the theme of personal impact, in which participants felt pride in their work with service-learning, enhanced relationships with students who experience service-learning, connections with both their teaching peers and personal families when enacting a service-learning project, and new strategies for their teacher toolboxes that arose from completing service-learning experiences in the classroom. Even in discussing the challenges to service-learning, the participants helped to set the understanding for what it means to participate in service-learning. Having the main issues of time and money not deter them from their commitment to implementing service-learning when they can is encouraging for other practitioners. The study is significant for high school administrators, who should consider how educators learn about and implement service-learning in the classroom. Each of the participants were exposed to service-learning and training opportunities within the scope of their regular duties, and without those opportunities, might not have engaged in service-learning otherwise.
Personal Reflection

A large piece of my experience as an educator has been in working with students and teachers on service-learning projects, and while I did not want to impose my views on the study, from my experience, it is clear that service-learning is a powerful tool to connect with students and achieve one’s goals in the classroom.

Service-learning is more than a way to expand one’s classroom into the community. It’s a way to increase engagement and buy-in with all types of students, from the extremely motivated, academically high-achieving, to the disengaged, struggling learner, and everyone in between. I’ve worked with advanced placement classes in which students were charged to develop and enact a project after their exam, and it helped them develop an interest in researching, communicating with community leaders, and working together to make an impact on an issue; they certainly did not stop working in class after the AP test. I’ve also worked with students who were specifically struggling to pass one or more the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) tests, and utilized service-learning to give them a different perspective on content material and to prepare them with real-world examples to make curriculum meaningful and useful prior to testing.

Service-learning gave these students the opportunity to talk about their learning and to apply it in a genuine way, giving them the ownership as learners they needed to ask questions and clarify material in class, and the incentive to learn that material for more than just a test, as they applied it outside the classroom in an authentic community scenario. I’ve experienced a change in students who were floating through high school, who developed a sense of initiative and energy because a certain project interested them, whether it was in a freshman health class, a senior statistics class, or junior English class. Our summer programs designed for those students
in need of credit recovery, who are often reluctant to go above and beyond the school day, were eager to attend to participate in a project that had meaning for them, and were committed to seeing a project through to completion; they often remarked how the summer program was so different than traditional school, and it was—their commitment to mastering content was significantly impacted by their desires to be involved in the field tripping and project-based activities that supported the service component of the unit.

All of the students who participate in service-learning have developed skills in each of the content areas in order to make a difference, and the experience of completing a project, being a part of something, and being recognized for their efforts in and out of the classroom have consistently spurred continued commitment to the classroom beyond the duration of a project.

I have also encountered many teachers who view service-learning as a means to connect with students and motivate them to engage with the curriculum. This is apparent in the staff members, new and veteran alike, who work on service-learning projects in their classrooms, in after-school programs, or during the summer months. The commitment to service-learning is powerful in that it affirms and supports a teacher’s role as an educational guide, who is equally charged with developing a student’s content knowledge as well as building critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration and communication skills, and responsible citizenship. Teachers who utilize service-learning once continue to utilize it as a tool for teaching because it delivers a means through which to meet multiple goals within the classroom. Service-learning and those who implement it offer a strong strategy for delivering high-quality, high-impact curriculum to all students; certainly, something so powerful is worth further attention and time.
Appendix A: IRB Approval

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: August 24, 2015  IRB #: CPS15-08-02
Principal Investigator(s): Sara Ewell  
Lisa Maguire
Department:  
Doctor of Education Program  
College of Professional Studies
Address:  
20 Belvidere  
Northeastern University
Title of Project: Teachers' Experiences Using Service-Learning in the Classroom
Participating Sites: Whitman-Hanson Regional High School approval in file
DHHS Review Category: Expedited #6, #7
Informed Consents: One (1) signed consent form
Monitoring Interval: 12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: AUGUST 23, 2016

Investigator's Responsibilities:
1. The informed consent form bearing the IRB approval stamp must be used when recruiting participants into the study.
2. The investigator must notify IRB immediately of unexpected adverse reactions, or new information that may alter our perception of the benefit-risk ratio.
3. Study procedures and files are subject to audit any time.
4. Any modifications of the protocol or the informed consent as the study progresses must be reviewed and approved by this committee prior to being instituted.
5. Continuing Review Approval for the proposal should be requested at least one month prior to the expiration date above.
6. This approval applies to the protection of human subjects only. It does not apply to any other university approvals that may be necessary.

C. Randall Colvin, Ph.D., Chair  
Northeastern University Institutional Review Board

Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix B: Interview Questions

The following is a list of pre-prepared open-ended questions the researcher plans to ask to each the participants. In some of the interview sessions not all questions may be asked, or follow-up questions may be added based on the participant's responses.

Interview One:
What are some of the influences that shaped you during your adolescence and young adulthood?
What were your experiences as a student?
   Possible Prompts: In High School/In College, Type of Student Academically, Extra-curricular activities, Particularly important experiences
What else did you do during high school and college? (jobs, volunteering, religious, etc.)
Growing up, what did you think you wanted to do as a career, and how did that evolve over time?
Why do people become teachers? What made you decide to become a teacher?

Interview Two:
How would you describe your experience as a teacher?
How did you learn about SL? (Training, SL course, district PD, colleagues, etc.)
What is your understanding of service-learning?
Can you describe your experiences with service-learning in the classroom?
If you think back to a particular SL project, how did you feel as you implemented the project? (trace the thought process during the project)
How has it made you feel when you've completed SL projects with students?
Could you tell me about how you felt, in terms of your confidence as a teacher, after engaging your students in service learning?
What are the positive impacts/benefits you have experienced in using SL?
What are the challenges you have experienced with implementing SL?
What makes you decide if, when, and how to implement SL projects?
What is your overall opinion of SL as a teaching pedagogy?
References


