CASE STUDY OF A MONTH-LONG COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECT: THE POTTER BASEBALL TOUR

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by
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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to collect, present, and examine the perceptions and attitudes of 12-17 years-old adolescents, as well as the adult mentors and coaches working with them of a month-long service project incorporating acts of community service as they traveled through three states over 31 days in rural Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. The theoretical framework of service learning from Giles & Eyler (1994) and Robertson (1990) served as the theoretical lens to examine the adolescents’ motivations, experiences, and outcomes, as well as the adult mentors’ roles and how the Potter Baseball Tour influenced service-learning in which young people contribute to their communities. Further, a literature review of community service and service learning informed this study. The study sought to answer the following questions: (1) What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches? and (2) How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end? A case study approach was used to explore and describe, as perceived by the participants, mentors, and coaches/chaperones using their experiences. The identification and analysis of these themes: community service through service learning, life lessons, and baseball foster a deeper understanding into resources to improve participants outcomes.

Keywords: community service, service learning, life lessons, baseball
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# Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. 2

Acknowledgements .................................................................................................................. 3

Chapter I: Introduction ........................................................................................................... 9
  Statement of the Problem ...................................................................................................... 11
  Significance of Research Problem ...................................................................................... 18
  Purpose ................................................................................................................................. 19
  Positionality Statement ....................................................................................................... 20
  Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................................... 22

Chapter II. Literature Review ............................................................................................... 27
  Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 27
  Adolescence: A Major Life Event ...................................................................................... 28
  Community Service ........................................................................................................... 32
  How Community Service Works ....................................................................................... 35
  The Importance of Reflection ............................................................................................ 38
  Frequency ............................................................................................................................. 39
  Quality and Context ............................................................................................................ 40
  Benefits of Community Service ......................................................................................... 43
  Summary ............................................................................................................................... 46

Chapter III: Research Design ............................................................................................... 48
Chapter IV: Research Findings

History of the Potter Baseball Summer Tour

How a Player is Selected

The Purpose of the Potter Baseball Tour

Interviews

Data Collection and Analysis

Research Question 1: What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?
Research Question 2: How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end? ...................... 84

Summary ........................................................................................................................................ 90

Chapter V: Discussion of the Findings .......................................................... 93

Revisiting the Problem of Practice ................................................................. 93

Review the Methodology .............................................................................. 94

Discussion of Major Findings ....................................................................... 96

Discussion of Findings in relationship to the Theoretical Framework ........... 101

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature Review ....................... 103

Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 105

Significance of the Study .............................................................................. 107

Recommendations ......................................................................................... 108

Validity of the Study .................................................................................... 111

Limitations of the Study ............................................................................... 111

Future Research Considerations .................................................................. 112

Personal Comments ..................................................................................... 113

What Has Changed In Me? ........................................................................... 115

References .................................................................................................... 116

Appendix A- IRB Approval ........................................................................... 123

Appendix B .................................................................................................... 124
Appendix C .............................................................................................................................. 126
Appendix D .............................................................................................................................. 127
Appendix E .............................................................................................................................. 128
Appendix F .............................................................................................................................. 131
Appendix G .............................................................................................................................. 134
Appendix H .............................................................................................................................. 135
Appendix I .............................................................................................................................. 136
Appendix J .............................................................................................................................. 138
Chapter I: Introduction

The Potter Baseball Tour is an opportunity for boys, between the ages of thirteen and fifteen, to travel for thirty-one days throughout a four-state area, combining community service and charity work with the fun of playing baseball and other sports. The entire emphasis of the tour is based upon working hard, making new friends, and learning life lessons. The expectations of the tour are to give back to the community and have fun with fellow teammates.

The Potter Baseball Tour started in 2008 with the emphasis being on baseball and a hint of community service during the first couple of years. My first introduction to the Potter Baseball Tour was the inaugural season. The tour came to my home town and the Potter Baseball boys played a lot of baseball. During the tour stop, the boys had a question and answer session with several local baseball coaches and officials to try to understand what the game had become and how the game of baseball had changed over the years. Since then, the tour has changed to be a good mix of community service projects and charity events with baseball and other sports.

Four pillars lead the tour: respect, hard work, passion, and selflessness. Life lessons experienced on the tour come in many forms. Players learn how to cook for the first time. Some players volunteer to be leaders, while working in a community service setting, or by being a leader in situations that are presented. It has been my observation that volunteering to be a leader in new and entirely unknown situations is a step that not many young boys are willing to do. Throughout the tour, most of the participants continue to be followers. Only a few participants truly step outside their zone of comfort and lead the group on the field and during service projects. These life lessons teach them that not everyone is a leader. Some followers learn how to lead from others, their peers, and then volunteer in the future.
The community service projects throughout the 2017 Potter Baseball tour varied from town to town for thirty-one days. The following is only a sample of the many projects completed:

- Yard clean ups after major storm damage,
- Helping with a walk-a-thon to raise money for two children with cancer,
- Working with a local library to bring young students to the library,
- Helping a not-for-profit working with the blind,
- A volleyball marathon to raise money for pediatric cancer,
- Volunteering at a recycling center,
- Clean up and paint dugouts at baseball fields on the tour,
- Reading workshop and crafts with participants, and
- Helped a family with yard maintenance, because their child had leukemia.

As these young men were preparing for their academic futures, the tour also visited The Naval Academy, York College of Pennsylvania, Clarion University of Pennsylvania, and Old Dominion University. There were also stops at historical locations, such as the Allegheny National Cemetery in Pittsburgh, and the Flight 93 Memorial in Shanksville, Pennsylvania.

Throughout the tour Coach Potter was the main person in charge, but two others served as chaperones and coaches. My role as a chaperone and coach was to establish a rapport with the participants, help them build skills to become young adults, treating everyone with respect, and being able to engage in intelligent and compassionate ways. During the service projects, coaches helped organize the players for the day’s events. Then, the players had to figure out ways to accomplish their daily goals: how it was going to be achieved, what their roles were within the group, and what additional help was needed.
The final piece of the Potter Baseball Tour is that of playing baseball. There were 21 baseball games played over the course of the month. The boys played against teams that ranged in ages from 12 to young college students. Games were played with a two-hour time limit and only five runs could be scored per inning, or three outs and then the sides switched. A continuous batting order was used, which means that all players got to bat, without playing in the field. One team rule was that players changed positions every inning, so each player could play all every position and not be locked into a single spot. It was a baseball tour, but a few of the participants did not play baseball and were traveling with the tour for the benefits of performing community service.

**Statement of the Problem**

Over the past century, the practices on how to teach young adolescents have changed, yet the concerns about well-being and growth have not. The public education system in the United States has experienced many challenges due to population growth and expansion of services that accommodate all students, regardless of race and physical or mental abilities (Juvonen, Le, Kaganoff, Augustine, & Constat, 2004). The rise in student assessments at every grade level has caused an alarming trend toward traditional curriculum that often promotes and rewards students for rote learning versus the development of critical thinking skills through conceptual learning (Kielsmeier, 2011). When these students enter college, many may not have the ability to make reasoned judgements, allowing them to sort through ambiguous or conflicting information and data.

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, there are growing concerns among educators regarding teaching for the test. State-wide assessments of reading, writing, and mathematics have been implemented to promote accountability among educators, more so than
student academic performance, which was the original intent of the Act that was backed by educational research. When time and money are also driving factors behind this trend, teachers are forced to teach to the test, because, in many states, their jobs depend upon students getting passing grades, regardless of their learning abilities, disabilities, or socio-economics and family life. Teaching to the test has detrimental effects that may prevent students’ access to a more inclusive, well-rounded education (Fluellen, 2011), because it promotes mnemonics versus conceptual learning, as well as linear reasoning versus critical thinking and creativity. The potential loss of critical thinking and individuality has become a greater concern throughout the United States (Fluellen, 2011; Higgins, Miller, & Wegmann, 2006).

Adding to these potential problems, yet extending beyond the classroom environment, are concerns about children losing their ability to learn social skills, because so much of their time is spent on electronic devices, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). There is a growing fear of a loss of interpersonal communication through direct contact, as opposed to the growing trend of communication through texting and instant messaging through social media websites (Drussell, 2012). Online communication has its benefits, but at what costs to the children caught in the ever-growing trend of digitally based communities, while they are living and learning in their physical communities.

Adolescents caught up in digital environments face risks to their safety and skill development (Drussell, 2012). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013), “the evidence is now clear that online environments can and do contribute substantially to many different risks and health problems that children and teenagers learn from, and may be negatively influenced by, the media” (p. 1). The problem for school aged adolescents may be two-fold: a
loss of critical thinking and lack of interpersonal skills. These skills are necessary for personal growth and their ability to thrive within the quickly evolving modern society.

**Research problem.** Young adolescents experience physical changes that affect their cognitive and interpersonal relationships at home and school. They become increasingly focused on their peers and are very concerned about social acceptance, as well as developing sexual relationships (Aikins, Bierman, & Parker, 2005; Wang & Brinkworth, 2015). The body increases hormonal outputs that advance the process of sexual development, as well as height and weight. This shift initiates physical changes affecting the entire body, while expanding cognition and social reach with interpersonal relationships going beyond the family circle.

Adolescence also represents a time for acquisition of strategies and solutions dealing with complex educational material, which also benefit societal pressures and increased everyday responsibilities. Moreover, there is a cultural awakening to the larger world around them, affecting their emotional and spiritual well-being. These powerful changes vary among individuals. Genetics, diet, nurturing, social and cultural contexts; all of these have an effect on when puberty begins, which can have an impact on how the individual copes with the stress of these changes (Juvonen et al., 2004). The need to feel socially and emotionally connected with peers and teachers builds the foundation for healthy attachments and sets the stage for positive growth and development.

The many physical changes in adolescents begin with the onset of puberty. These changes are mostly associated with an increase in sexual awareness and more intimate peer interactions (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999), which affect motivation and the ability to pay attention or follow rules. However, individuals experience the physical changes at different ages: girls between 10 and 14 years of age and boys between 12 and 16. “These
physical changes of puberty impact not only how adolescents view themselves, but also how others view their attractiveness and maturity” (Im, Hughes, Kwok, Puckett, & Cerdia, 2014, p. 3). Physical changes are a key factor in peer acceptance and healthy social interactions, and has a direct effect on psychological well-being.

Self-esteem is a foundational personality trait, one that contributes to positive interactions (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987) and adolescents’ healthy psychological well-being. High-quality experiences provide both physical and emotional situations, where young people can explore their independence and critical thinking skills, which contribute toward self-esteem growth, and significantly influence adjustments to the new stage in development and changes in environment (Aiken et al., 2005). Young adolescents without experiences that provide support through friendships and mentors may withdraw from social networks, arrest emotional development, and fail to build the scaffolding on which coping mechanisms are constructed (Schumacher, Irvin, & Irvin, 1992; Wang & Dishon, 2011). One consistent finding over decades of research has shown adolescents to be more susceptible to depressive mood swings, which correlates to a decline in self-esteem (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Shoshani & Slone, 2013). Motivation and interpersonal relationships are also negatively affected by lower self-esteem (Shoshani & Slone, 2013). Without positive interpersonal interactions and challenging physical and cognitive exercises, adolescents may not develop one of the key personality traits, self-esteem, that can help them cope with the problems of the modern world and thrive in increasingly changing environments.

**Justification for the research problem.** Young adolescents experience changes in school cultures, physical surroundings, academic demands, and social pressures, all of which can be very difficult to navigate (Tileczek, 2007) and detrimental to their self-esteem. Lower self-
esteem can lead to a lack of motivation, often linked to academic performance and persistence (Grolnick, Raftery-helmer, Flamm, Marbell, & Cardemil, 2014). Social and academic problems can develop as a result of lowered self-esteem and have a snowball effect on young adolescents, who are unable to gain the motivation to succeed. Therefore, it is imperative to address these concerns, instead of exacerbating them through poor choices in curriculum and inorganic learning environments.

Students are motivated to change and grow when their homes and schools offer positive and healthy stimulation. A developmentally appropriate environment, such as the social and physical situations found in service-learning projects, can facilitate positive perceptions of self, building self-esteem while practicing independent and critical thinking (Furco & Root, 2010). Decades of research on service-learning and critical pedagogy have shown how students can grow through a variety of situations engaging with civic and community groups (Furco & Root, 2010; Kielsmeier, 2011).

**Deficiencies in the evidence.** A large body of research on the efficacy and outcomes of service-learning projects was performed during the late 80s and into the turn of the turn of the century (Eyler, 2002; Furco & Root, 2010; Yorio & Ye, 2012). The findings from the research show that participants in service-learning projects experience more autonomy (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008) and learn strategies to tackle complex problems (Eyler, 2002). They also experience personal growth and development, including self-esteem and confidence in building interpersonal relationships (Giles & Eyler, 1998). Yet, much has changed for adolescents since these studies took place, primarily due to the expansion and ease of access to the Internet and standardized testing.
Today, adolescents experience a very different world compared to their parents and their parents’ parents. The environmental context has changed greatly for adolescents in the past ten years, therefore research on service-learning should be updated. Nearly all adolescents between the age of 12 – 18 own cellphones and use text messages (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). They are constantly in touch with their close circle of friends, or can be almost instantly. Moreover, social networks have quickly replaced physical and in-person interactions (Drussell, 2012). Without guidance or a better understanding of how these social networks affect adolescents, they may develop without the skills to effectively communicate, or find resolutions to common problems, therefore developing adverse conflicts through simple misunderstandings (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). These consequences may lead to aberrant behavior and the inability to develop positive or meaningful relationships (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013: Drussell, 2012).

According to Kielsmeier (2011), the percentage of middle and high schools with service-learning projects incorporated into their curriculum has dropped substantially, due to standardized testing. Due to standardized testing, adolescents may form negative feelings about learning, which can lead feelings of alienation within their schools, as well as with the civic leaders, especially those who put the testing in place (Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012). Curriculum for standardized tests are not aligned with research that describes how students form affective relationships with the subject matter through participation, often grounded within their own experiences (Eyler, 2002; Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012). Research is needed to understand the effects of standardized instruction, where students are rewarded for regurgitation of facts, figures, and formulas versus reflection upon the foundational concepts and individualistic ways of learning (Eyler, 2002).
Another need is for research on service-learning that takes place outside universities or the public educational system. Many community-based, service-learning projects resemble school-based service-learning projects or have many of the same components, such as civic interactions, independent problem solving, and reflection upon concepts. There is a dearth of research investigating and describing how service-learning outside of the education system can affect adolescents’ personal growth and academic achievement.

**Relating the discussion to audiences.** Service-learning projects are primarily implemented through K-12 public and private schools and universities. There are also religious organizations that perform similar projects, yet tend to consider their work as primarily community service. This researcher would argue that the students involved in either program, religiously based or through educational institutions, are actively learning, therefore they will be the primary beneficiaries of this study.

Teachers and school administrators will also benefit from this study from their ability to understand and implement service-learning projects of their own, geared toward educational development and maturity, which allows students to become motivated and engaged with their personal growth. The findings from this research study will contribute to the greater body of service-learning research and provide fact-based analysis of techniques, as well as projected student outcomes when extrapolating the findings onto similar populations and demographics.

Community and civic leaders can benefit from this evidence-based research to direct future projects and create long-term programs through resource allocation and budgeting. Active civil engagement can become motivated perpetually through positive reinforcement and acceptance of the efficacy of service-learning projects. Thomas Jefferson is famously quoted for the following, “The qualifications of self-government are not innate. They are the result of habit
and long training” (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013, p. 419). Continuously pulling service-learning away from schools and communities disempowers and disillusions the citizenry and undermines the democratic process.

Significance of Research Problem

The shift in educational policy away from service-learning based curriculum has been justified through standardized instruction on basic skills testing. Unfortunately, this move takes away from the positive gains service-learning has brought to schools throughout the country. Decades of research support the positive impacts on student learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 1998; Furco & Root, 2012), yet the shifts in policy strive to find accountability in a system dominated by social stratification through socio-economics and privilege.

Without support in educational institutions, service-learning programs will need to originate from community-based organizations and civic minded leaders. Therefore, this research study will examine the distinct learning outcomes of a group of adolescent boys who participated in a month-long baseball exposition trip integrated with opportunities for giving back to communities (service learning). Several of the adolescents and the adult participants were interviewed to provide a rich portrait of the different ways service-learning in this context made an impact on the participating adolescents. The findings of this research study may offer guidance for other researchers, community organizers, teachers, school administrators, and civic leaders as to how to integrate specific learning moments within their programs, and aligning their work with appropriate learning objectives.

Finally, this study will examine the roadblocks and or hurdles to implementation in providing such a service-learning opportunity that took place outside any particular educational
institution while providing guidance on how to properly plan, recruit, and potentially implement such a program.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study was to collect, present, and examine the perceptions and attitudes of 12-17 years-old adolescents, as well as the adult mentors and coaches working with them of a month-long service project incorporating acts of community service as they traveled through three states over 31 days in rural Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. The examination of an adolescent’s experience is to gain an understanding of their cognitive growth and development of interpersonal communication skills through their experience, as observed and perceived by them and others. This research explored the coach’s perspective of program development, implementation, and how the participants successfully navigate the challenges placed before them. Through this sample of adolescents and adult mentors, this study investigated the emotional and psychological skills needed to lead or be lead during each of the activities. This study will promote a more comprehensive understanding of developmental potential growth for adolescents, while gaining a deeper insight into civic issues that may affect them directly in the near future.

Research Questions

This study will present the experiences and perspectives of six to seven adolescents and three coaches involved with the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball Tour based out of Odenton, Maryland. The research questions guiding this study were as follows:

1. What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through
those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

2. How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?

**Positionality Statement**

I have been a music educator for over 23 years and have personally witnessed every year the stress and emotional struggle young adolescents endure when studying for standardized exams. Over these years as both educator and researcher, I am reflecting on what I can do for these students, especially the ones who are not achieving their fullest potential. My perspective is unique among other researchers and teachers, because I interact with a variety of ages from elementary school to junior high. I get to know the students a little better than other teachers and try to help and support them as they make adjust to the difficulty of finding motivation and purpose behind standardized testing. I do have the pleasure of having some of them twice, as they have the option to take an elective that I teach, as well.

I teach music in a small, rural school system. I have a long history with each student I interact with, which allows me to have a historical or longitudinal perspective regarding each student’s development and academic progress. Students move on to the middle school between their sixth and seventh grades. As an educator and researcher, I understand that they do struggle, and, while most succeed, others fail to maintain their progress, leading to disciplinary problems and dropping out. I am concerned with all of the students, and feel that more attention should be given to adolescents and their overall success. I have a sincere interest in helping all students achieve their highest potential, and not continually struggle with the adverse changes in standardized education. They have the ability to do more than simply survive within the current
education system. They can become motivated to learn more and achieve higher success than ever before, especially when allowed to do so. Through this research, I want to do more for them, because I believe service-based projects benefit the community in many ways.

In October of 2016, my son and I were talking about baseball and Coach Potter’s name came up. We talked about the Potter Baseball Tour and thought it would be a great idea to bring them back to Clarion. I immediately emailed Coach and asked if he was still doing the tour. He responded that the program was still going strong and had been stopping in a neighboring town for years. In November of 2016, Coach Potter met with me at my house, where we caught up on many things, such as how life has changed since we grew up, our families, and, of course, baseball. I was shocked that he wanted to come back to the area, but knew we would have a great opportunity within our community. The Potter Team returned to Clarion.

After a few weeks of our family discussing the 2017 tour, I volunteered for the tour as a coach and chaperone. I would do whatever he needed me to do, anything from driving the van, cooking food, and coaching the team when needed. This is how my involvement began with the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball Tour.

My bias during this study was that I was an active participant during the Potter Baseball Tour. I saw how hard they worked to overcome their challenges and extend the boundaries of their understanding. I also saw their progress academically, and their frustration and behavior within the schools that I teach. Prior to gathering data, I positioned myself to be open to all of the findings that emerged. I also attempted to avoid asking leading questions and listen closely to my participants so that I could ask questions that expanded upon certain topics. This allowed the data to be more robust and the account be a more expansive investigation into the experiences these adolescents, administrators, and coaches had during the tour.
Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provided a foundation for more concrete predictive factors within empirically based research. The theory also organized the study’s constructs and acts as a guide for the research questions and interpretation of the findings. This section begins with a general overview of experiential pedagogy through service-learning as a theory grounded in decades of research. Learning from experience, the guiding construct within service-learning, will be described in the next section, followed by another key construct: service, community and citizenship. The final section describes the application of service-learning within the confines of this research study.

Overview. For some researchers, service-learning is defined as a pedagogy (Kenworthy-U’Ren, 2003; Roodin, Brown & Shedlock, 2013), while others believe it is a teaching strategy (Abernathy & Obenchain, 2001) that provides students with meaningful instruction through community service projects (Kielsmeier, 2012). Giles and Eyler (1994) described service-learning as a theoretical framework for experiential pedagogy, rooted in the philosophy of experiential education that can be traced back to the early writings of John Dewey, an American education reformer and philosopher (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Kenworthy-U’Ren, 2003; Robertson, 1990; Roodin, Brown, & Shedlock, 2013). Dewey understood how students were motivated to learn through personal experience, causing greater engagement with their educational material. The intrinsic motivations emerged from being challenged with novel and interesting coursework within a community-based project. He believed in the students’ perception of value in their processing and learning, which lead to personal development, increased self-esteem, and increased social awareness.
Decades of service-learning projects were implemented and studied through empirical research, all showing positive gains for the participants and community (Abernathy & Obenchain, 2001; Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Conner, 2010; Eyler, 2002; Eyler, Giles, Root, & Price, 1997; Furco & Root, 2010; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Holsapple, 2015; McClam, Diambra, Burton, Fuss, & Fudge, 2008; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008; Roodin, Brown, & Shedlock, 2013; Scott & Graham, 2015; Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012). These findings led to legislative support, when, in 1990 and 1993, presidents Bush and Clinton signed the National and Community Service Act and National and Community Service Trust Act, respectively, into law. These acts of Congress formed the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). The fervor surrounding these acts has diminished greatly over time. Unfortunately, many of the programs initiated by the CNCS have been discontinued or remain greatly underfunded. Consequently, the service-learning programs in schools have also been reduced by 50% across the country.

**Definition.** Through service-learning, students actively engage with community organizations and civic leaders to address the community’s needs, which teaches them civic responsibility, while strengthening the community where they serve (Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012). Service-learning projects are primarily conducted through schools, community organizations, and civic institutions. When service-learning projects are implemented from schools, the service objectives are combined with curriculum and grade-level appropriate learning objectives. Learning is also a focus for community and civic organizations that implement service-learning projects, but there is typically no extrinsic reward system in place, such as grades. “In other settings, such as afterschool programs or youth organizations, service-learning leaders might
focus on personal development goals, academic enrichment, or community- and character-building goals” (Kielsmeier, 2012, p. 4).

The intent for any service-learning program is for participants to receive a deeper, more meaningful learning experience. During the project, students reflect upon their experiences in order to enrich their learning experience through reinforcement of concepts and social interactions (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Reflection is a key element for participants to process their experiences with the adult educators and organizers, helping understand novel concepts and gaining insight into social situations, which prepares them for similar situations in future interactions (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008).

**Learning from experience.** Adolescents receive most of their formal education within the classroom environment. However, participants within a service-learning project experience opportunity to learn outside of the classroom, where they are immersed in learning activities that focus on serving the community in which the participants live. This provides them with valuable lessons through the application of higher-thinking principles on real-life situations. Dewey described how students build upon their previous experiences along a continuum of experience (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Dewey also showed the importance of interactions during learning situations, because these interactions guided by key objectives aid in the recall of information, further processing the experience into a meaningful learning event (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

One assumption of service-learning is that students’ or participants’ may have limited experience with their community’s needs, due to their level of maturity and family’s engagement within the community. With each situation, their experiences reconstruct, reconfigure, or eliminate preconceived notions about social stereotypes and prejudices. For adolescents, these
experiences expand beyond their micro-environments of family and school, creating a more
global understanding of the world around them.

While they encounter different situations, they may experience novel situations and learn how to engage with the community and resolve problems, building upon and incorporating their experiences to address other situations that arise (Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013). This requires thoughtful investigation and reflection upon past experiences. Reflective thinking is a term Dewey used to describe processing of information, a form of situational analysis after the fact (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Reasoning upon reflection is a key component of service-learning, and the main catalyst for higher-thinking.

**Community and citizenship.** Service-learning is based upon involvement with community issues. Dewey described community as the locus for democracy, where social, moral, and intellectual aspects of life are lived (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Robertson, 1990). The process of serving the community creates a well-informed citizen, who is more apt to understand the needs of their neighbors and base their decisions upon experience, instead of ignorance, hearsay, or prejudice.

Service-learning brings students out of the confines of their classroom and into real-world situations to exercise their mental fortitude within complex situations that are often times fluid and dynamic in nature, because participants are dealing with complex human behaviors (Kielsmeier, 2011). A high-quality service-learning project directs students into collaborative situations to solve real-world problems found within their own community. These lead to the development of complex cognitive skills that are important for transition into universities, corporations, or entrepreneurial endeavors. In addition to personal cognitive gains, participants
develop interpersonal connections across social strata and feel a general sense of positive well-being through helping others (Kielsmeier, 2011).

**Application to study.** Despite the challenges within the classrooms, service-learning projects that take place outside of the auspices of a school have enormous benefits for participant’s growth and development. The exploration of adolescents’ experience within a service-learning project will contribute to my understanding on how engagement with their community develops their cognitive and interpersonal social skills, while creating a broader sense of community and their bonds with others. These insights will help me understand the process of engagement, social situations that best fit age-related situations, and decisions made by students and coaches during the process. Through the lens of experiential pedagogy and service-learning, I will understand how participants use critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration to benefit their community through positive interactions and outcomes. Another aspect of service-learning is the administration of these programs, because thoughtful design and implementation contribute to its success. Each project should follow one or more of the prescribed tenants above, including experience, interaction, reflection, and instruction, in order to achieve the desired effect for the participants.
Chapter II. Literature Review

Introduction

During elementary school, children in the United States take part in social studies classes to learn more about American history and culture. Social studies is a broad category of learning that also includes information about other countries and ancient civilizations, and geography. More importantly, elementary age children receive a primer on civics, or how the government began and continues to work for the people it serves.

The transition into adolescence marks a period of physical, social, and psychological growth. Because of these growing capacities to learn more about the world around them, school districts throughout the United States have curriculum requirements for civics instruction, primarily reserved for students in middle and high school (Godsay, Henderson, Levine, Littenberg-Tobias, 2012). When students reach middle school, the changes in social studies curriculum begin to focus on civics and the agencies and institutions within government. These are remedial introductions to the mechanisms of a democracy that provide a brief insight into how the governance of American society works. Other than classroom instruction and possible contact through media sources, students have little-to-no personal experience of how the government works in their community, and the programs in place that affect their lives every day, unless they are within low-income or highly impoverished communities, but then their perceptions of these resources may be negatively biased (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008).

Since the 1960s, there has been extensive research to investigate the effects of getting adolescents out of the classrooms and into the community (Celio, Durlak & Dymnicki, 2011; Giles & Eyler, 1994; van Goethem, van Hoof, de Castro, Van Aken, & Hart, 2014). Researchers
van Goethem et al. (2014) were able to find 164 studies to fit their meta-analysis criteria spanning 1980 to 2012, while Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) found 62 service-learning studies that fit their criteria for a meta-analysis on service learning, as well. These studies and several other meta-analyses indicated the need for more research and a better understanding of the outcomes for adolescents participating in community service or a service-learning program (van Goethem et al., 2014).

This literature review will examine the scientific research pertaining to community service and service learning programs. The participants in this research study and much of the research literature focuses on adolescents, which is a major developmental period for children to transition into adulthood. The opening sections will describe the unique nature of puberty, as well as the challenges adolescents face when physically and mentally developing during this period. Following the sections on development will be a thorough definition and description of research on community service. This will be followed by a section on the definition and outcomes of service learning. The Potter Baseball Tour is not a service-learning project, but it does utilize many of the service learning constructs. Finally, this review will describe the outcomes of community service and service-learning projects, and how they affect the participants going into their adulthood.

Adolescence: A Major Life Event

A major developmental shift occurs between childhood and adolescence. Nearly everyone experiences the physical and psychological changes associated with puberty (Bandura, 1977; Chung, Elias, & Schneider, 1998; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles et al., 1993; Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Holas & Huston, 2012; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Midgley & Edelin, 1998;
The physical changes affect the entire body, such as increases in height and weight, while changes in hormones advance sexual development.

These powerful changes vary among individuals. Genetics, diet, nurturing, social and cultural contexts all have an effect on when puberty begins, which can have an impact on how the individual copes with the stress of these changes (Juvonen, Le, Kaganoff, Augustine, & Constant, 2004). Many of the coping mechanisms and strategies developed throughout elementary school become more important to a successful transition into adulthood. Moreover, adolescents experience more advanced concepts through cognition and social interactions, therefore developing their interpersonal relationships beyond the immediate family circle (Goethem, van Hoof, de Castro, Van Aken, & Hart, 2014). Early adolescence represents a time for acquisition of strategies and solutions dealing with complex social issues, which determine how these growing and developing young people handle societal pressures and increased everyday responsibilities (Goethem et al., 2014). This is a period of cultural awakening to the larger world around them, affecting their emotional and spiritual well-being.

**Physical and psychological changes.** Individuals experience the physical changes of puberty during adolescence at different ages: girls between 10 and 14 years of age and boys between 12 and 16. “These physical changes of puberty impact not only how adolescents view themselves, but also how others view their attractiveness and maturity” (Im, Hughes, Kwok, Puckett, & Cerdia, 2014, p. 3). Physical changes are a key factor in peer acceptance and healthy social interactions, which has a direct effect on psychological well-being. These changes are mostly associated with an increase in sexual awareness and more intimate peer interactions (Simons-Morton, Crump, Haynie, & Saylor, 1999), affecting their motivation and the ability to pay attention or follow rules.
**Self-esteem.** Defined as an individual’s feelings about himself or herself, self-esteem continues to develop through cognitive milestones and physical changes throughout adolescence (Bandura, 1977). During adolescence, individuals evaluate themselves and others through more complex and expanded social networks. Concern for adolescent’s self-esteem regarding their adjustments to changing environments have been studied for several decades (Eccles & Midgley, 1989), especially in schools, where they spend a majority of their day. Motivation and interpersonal relationships negatively affect adolescents’ self-esteem (Shoshani & Slone, 2013; Wang, Brinkworth, & Eccles, 2013). This may cause a decline in academic achievement, as well as pose psychological challenges, such as depression and anxiety (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012). Conversely, students may experience increased self-esteem and develop positive self-images while engaged in activities that encourage participation in political and social engagement (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012), as well as extracurricular activities (Wang & Eccles, 2012).

Because of the availability of technology, students often become victims of cyberbullying, which causes a decrease in self-esteem (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015). With the advances in technology and interconnectedness of the Internet of Things, modern students have become digital citizens, making connections with their peers through multiple platforms versus simple face-to-face interactions. Digital devices, such as cellphones and tablet PC’s, are frequently used in the classrooms and on campus (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015). Changes in peer interactions may signal a need to continue investigations regarding self-esteem, because these changes can equate to lowered school outcomes and behavioral problems (Brewer & Kerslake, 2015; Yoon, Barton, & Taiariol, 2004).

**Depression.** Students have reported elevated levels of depression during adolescence, which is often correlated with the physical and psychological changes by puberty (Wang et al.,
Accompanied with the feelings of depression are feelings of loneliness (Atkinson, 2010) that can exacerbate psychological distress. Mental health challenges, such as depression, can lead to student withdrawal, apathy, and negative academic outcomes (Wang et al., 2013). Depression may be debilitating enough for students to affect their physical and cognitive abilities to process information or have energy to concentrate or stay awake.

**Anxiety.** Simply defined as a state of internal turmoil, anxiety affects behavior, the ability to concentrate, especially staying on task, and emotional responses during social interactions (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Grills-Taquechel, Norton, & Ollendick, 2010). Adolescents become more self-aware of their physicality, abilities, and expectations, causing a general nervousness or anxiety about their competency with school subjects, which may undermine their efforts to do well, and motivation to succeed (Ryan & Patrick, 2001). Furthermore, individuals experiencing physical changes may develop anxiety, because they feel different about themselves and others, resulting in social withdrawal (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010).

Much of the cognitive turmoil adolescents experience leads to anxiety, because they lack the proper coping methods to overcome it. Coupled with wide-sweeping changes in their environment, adolescents can become overwhelmed with the flood of new experiences, which affects their ability to interact with peers and academic performance (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010). Unfortunately, anxiety can have short- or long-term debilitating effects, possibly continuing throughout adulthood without proper interventions and support.

Adolescents experiencing new and challenging, learning situations can grow their self-esteem, subsequently decreasing their anxiety (Bandura, 1977). Parents, educators and civic leaders are often confronted with the challenge of fostering these young minds with positive experiences to guide and accentuate their development in a healthy and meaningful way. One
viable option for positive mental growth is community service. The next section will define community service programs and describe the history and types of programs.

Community Service

There are many governmental agencies at the local, state, and national level that contribute to the health and well-being of its citizenry. These agencies provide financial, mechanical, and physical resources to build and maintain infrastructures to provide solid foundations upon which health and thriving communities depend. However, the government often leaves gaps in assistance and areas where support is needed for people who cannot help themselves. Communities with depressed economies and deep-seeded cycles of poverty often struggle with the implications of governmental policy decisions (Flanagan et al., 2014).

Healthy communities depend upon the support of the people to address issues affecting quality-of-life and basic access to services. Community service does more than address the needs of the community, it also makes the citizens aware of civic and social issues. According to Horn (2012), “Community service has been postulated to promote prosocial development in several ways, such as by cultivating a sense of civic self-identity and a rational-affective understanding of social problems” (p. 949). Furthermore, people engaged in community-based projects learn about prosocial ideals, instilling them within their sense of self and contributing to their self-awareness. However, in order to understand community service’s effects upon the participants, the concepts need to be defined to give a more complete understanding of what community service does for everyone involved.

Definition. It is important to note the provisions and definitions set forth by the National and Community Service Act of 1990 and then refined in the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993. This legislation provides specific language on definitions of community
service and has guided organizations, institutions, communities, and scientific research. In 1993, the United States Congress committed in writing the definition of community service for many types of organizations with the goal to address “unmet human, educational, environmental, or public safety needs” (NCSA, 1993, p. 6). This piece of legislation goes on to describe the promotion of community unity through organized activities with participants from all social and economic strata. The NCSA (1993) also describes how community service projects are to be “meaningful service projects with visible public benefits, including natural resources, urban renovation, or human services” (NCSA, 1993, p. 7).

From the scientific literature, community service is a form of civic engagement, where people with common interests come together and work as a group (Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012) to engage in meaningful activities (Goethem et al., 2014). According to Horn (2012), community service is “planned and sustained activities performed without monetary compensation that are intended to benefit another person, group, or organization” (p. 949). The unpaid organizing and contributions of these groups, often called volunteering, benefit the individuals participating in these activities, developing feelings of self-fulfillment, and multiple aspects of society, such as the environment, education, and charity (Goethem et al., 2014).

Service-learning is also a term interchangeably used with community service, because the main tenets focus on bringing a group of individuals together, typically adolescents in the case of service learning, for the purpose of civic engagement (Goethem et al., 2014). However, according to Kenworthy-U’Ren (2003), “Service-learning is not volunteering; rather, it requires a deliberate integration of course concepts and service activities” (p. 3). The difference between them is service-learning’s function as an educational tool versus volunteering as simply a medium for self-fulfillment (Chung & McBride, 2015). The differentiation between volunteering
and community service can be separated by frequency and type, because volunteering can be episodic and more random than community service (Chung & McBride, 2015).

**Compulsory versus voluntary service.** The motivational factors, such as initiative and commitment, that support volunteering one’s time and energy may allude to a stronger engagement during service activities, as well as more positive outcomes. However, when a person makes an active decision to become engaged, the only guaranteed outcome is their initial interests and early participation. According to Chung and McBride (2015), past research has shown both compulsory and voluntary service to have equal outcomes and benefits.

For compulsory, or mandated community service, adolescents are required to participate in a community service activity, which may be part of their curriculum (Benson, Leffert, Scales, & Blyth, 2012; Chung & McBride, 2015; Wang & Eccles, 2012) or punishment for bad behavior (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). Either category, school mandate or legal action, research has found that only the motivation may be lacking to engage in community service (Chung & McBride, 2015; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008).

When at-risk and troubled teens were committed to compulsory community service activities through their school, they responded in a positive way to complex situations with multidimensional constructs, taking ownership of their projects, learning from their participation, and carrying that knowledge into future interactions (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). An important aspect of Nelson and Eckstein’s (2008) study was that the adolescents were guided by adults, who had been trained with service-learning techniques. These educators were actively involved to prevent escalation of conflicts, engage in reflection upon actions, and understanding of the overall goals of their actions while working with their differences, such as aptitude and work ethic, as opposed to against them (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008). Compulsory community service
through service-learning gave adolescents the chance to “feel connected” (p. 235) to their school and community.

Adolescents who volunteer for community service are exercising their independence through choices that bring them outside their daily routines and immediate circle of family and friends. They are also exercising their psychological need for autonomy when volunteering (Horn, 2012). Adolescents who volunteer utilize their own sense of self to adopt a conscious interest in how to define, enhance, and grow their feelings of self-determination (Horn, 2012).

Outcomes are still dependent upon the community service program, regardless of the adolescents’ reasons or motivation for taking part in the activities (Chung & McBride, 2015; Horn, 2012). The quality of the service program is the major determinant of outcomes (Chung & McBride, 2015; Horn, 2012) is contingent upon many factors, and many of them preclude the participants motivation. When a program is not created or implemented properly, the participants become disenfranchised with the overall goals (Chung & McBride, 2015).

**How Community Service Works**

Community service offers adolescents a unique venue, one that lies just outside of their school and homes, yet remains in their neighborhood or city. Understanding of the physical and social world expands from the home and school environments during childhood development (Im et al., 2014). In early adolescence, children learn about their friend’s homes, where there may be cultural differences, go on field trips to various public and private facilities they had never heard of, and follow what is happening in the news. They are experiencing an awakening to the community around them. Through community service, they are presented with more opportunities to learn and engage with the institutions and organizations that influence them.
**Novel Situations.** Because the situations and context are novel, community service provides adolescents with an opportunity to explore their expanded boundaries and sense of self (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012; Drussel, 2012; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Goethem et al., 2014). Simply entering new physical environments, places outside their classrooms and homes, presents a visual sense of space. Adolescents are able to directly experience these novel places (Giles & Eyler, 1994), then juxtapose their judgements about them with their past experience to develop new judgements about their physical presence within their community.

Novel situations allow adolescents to test the fundamental skills that they have acquired over the years (Goethem et al., 2014). During elementary school, children learn foundational social skills, such as cooperation and sharing, to complete tasks, as well as make new friends. Community service places adolescents in new situations where they encounter social issues that have varying degrees of behaviors, values, and issues (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012; Goethem et al., 2014). They develop new skills and enhance old ones through direct experiences with others. This also provides them an opportunity to embrace the social skills that work and eliminate bad habits. Through exploration of novel situations, they are able to experience psychological growth that coincides with their developmental milestones (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012).

**Social and civic issues.** Classrooms are controlled environments, built and refined through scientific research. Instruction of social and civic structures comes through textbooks and the teacher’s personal experience. High schools expand upon the instruction through implementation and support of student-body governments. However, these remain curriculum-based systems within closed environments, where teachers, administrators, governing school
boards, and parents maintain control. Adolescents engaged in community service are able to step outside the confines of these boundaries and interact within larger social and civic systems.

Throughout the course of childhood, children approach the world with an egocentric psyche (Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987). They base their judgements and assumptions upon their experiences with immediate influences, such as family and friends (Scott & Graham, 2015). This sense of self is developing the foundations to understand the world when they reach adolescence, where more diverse experiences make them aware of their community needs. Adolescents can learn how cultural differences, social consciousness and responsibility shape their lives (Rockenbach, Hudson, & Tuchmayer, 2014). They already understand what matters most to them; however, when they project their belief systems upon others, they subsequently receive feedback on those values. What may be important to them, may not be important to others, therefore in need of rethinking.

Community service directly engages organizations involved with meeting the needs of the less fortunate or those in need of immediate help. Adolescents who have these experiences are exposed to moral and political questions (Seider, Gilmor, & Rabinowicz, 2012), because these organizations often rely on the governmental institutions to subsidize or fully fund their operations. Also contributing to these civic concerns are laws that contribute to the complexity of social issues. Community service becomes a way to test their political and social ideologies, so that they can reject or refine them to fit within their new experiences (Seider et al., 2012).

As described above, reflection upon their experiences and issues confronted during community service is a major component of growth and learning for adolescents (Goethem et al., 2014). Community service provides novel situations for them to test and evaluate their notions of
social and civic structures. The next section describes the importance of reflection and how it can improve the results of community-based learning.

**The Importance of Reflection.**

Knowledge comes naturally through a conscious process of constructing comparisons through personal experiences that combine with other learned concepts to build an understanding of the world (Eyler, 2002). The skill of reflective thinking is like other forms of thinking that need to be taught and practiced in order to understand and refine its use (Qualters, 2010). Especially for adolescents, their cognitive growth depends upon understanding the world around them. Their physical changes coincide with their need for social interactions and autonomy, and transition into new learning environments.

**Definition.** In order to better process their experiences, participants in service-learning projects are required to reflect upon time engaging in community-based activities (Eyler, 2002). Reflection is a personal “analysis about oneself and one’s relationship to society” (Kielsmeier, 2011, p. 6). Judgements are made about personal values, morals, and conduct within the community. Reflection allows participants to recall and evaluate the interactions with other people, especially the ones they are helping, through thoughtful consideration of what they are doing for their community (Goethem et al., 2014). Through reflection, participants change their value and belief systems according to their personal experiences.

As a core component of service-learning, structured reflection is a mechanism for students to examine their perceptions during community service activities (Chen et al., 2012; Eyler, 2002). Adolescents participating in service-learning activities are often required to maintain a written journal of their thoughts, participate in group discussions, and reflect upon their actions and the actions of others while performing tasks (Qualters, 2010). Teachers,
mentors, and coaches are facilitators during these activities, providing structure and insight for a more global understanding of the events that affect everyone involved (Qualters, 2010).

Upon completion of their community-service activity, reflection provides students with the ability to evaluate the activity and the program that implements it (Chung & McBride, 2015). It is important for the participants to be involved in the planning and development of these programs in order to adapt and evolve to the changing needs of the community (Chung & McBride, 2015). This feedback is integral to the efficacy of any program, whether it be successful or a failure in serving the community’s needs, because participation and novel experiences are the goal (Chung & McBride, 2015).

**Frequency**

Another key component for positive outcomes during community service activities is the frequency of engagement (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Goethem et al., 2014; Horn, 2012; Kahne, Crow, & Lee, 2013). Often calculated in hours of service, frequency indicates the number of times a participant engages in a community-service activity, engages with other participants, and reflection (Horn, 2012). Frequency is also calculated through number of days spent during a given week, month, or year, regardless of the exact amount of time (Flanagan, Kim, Collura, & Kopish, 2014). The frequency was determined over an extended period of time, due to the variability in the nature of the activities, for example, one activity taking 15 minutes, while another may take several hours (Flanagan et al., 2014).

Because some portions of an activity are behind-the-scenes and do not directly engage the people who are the target of the activity, using the term of frequency may be misleading. Bringle et al. (2009) found that planning and communication stimulated relationship building and motivation to engage prior to the activity and after completion. Bringle et al. (2009) also
found that the diversity of frequent interactions was a determining factor in positive outcomes. According to Goethem et al. (2014) and Horn (2012), the frequency of direct interactions with the people involved in an activity contributed to positive outcomes. Therefore, when performed frequently, the activities during community service have a positive impact upon the participants. Each stage of the activity has its own importance, as much as its role, and the more frequently it is performed, the more impactful it becomes.

It is important to point out that this researcher did not find any research on community service programs that could be described as immersive. The community service and service-learning programs are frequent, to be sure; however, they do not describe within their methods about the programs with continuous and extended periods of service activities. This research study provides insight into the gap within the research on immersive community-service programs.

**Quality and Context**

The situational context within a community service program describes the external and internal forces and how these forces exert pressure upon the participants, acting as controlling factors of their experience (Eyler, Giles, Root, & Price, 1997; Ramey & Rose-Krasnor, 2012). Context and quality of experience are guided by external and internal factors (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2013; Horn, 2012; Littlepage, Gazley, & Bennett, 2012). External factors that may affect the quality of a community service are: program design, community environment, political climate, and social engagement (Horn, 2012). Internal factors include: socioeconomics, motivation, and self-esteem (Henderson et al., 2013). The quality of a community service program is a subjective experience contingent upon the context of the program (Henderson et al.,
Context creates a picture of the learning environment, while quality describes the participant outcomes.

Henderson et al. (2013) examined the quality of experience within a community service program for both compulsory and volunteer participants. The authors used an eight-item scale that investigated the following: interpersonal relationships, meaningful and interesting work, collegiality, new skills, potential career opportunities, and enjoyment. Analysis of all participant responses found that the quality of experience was very significant for all of the items, except career opportunities. Henderson et al. (2013) also found that mandatory participation had a slightly lesser outcome for quality of experience. Through qualitative analysis, they concluded that the frequency and duration of the program had an effect on quality of experience, and suggested longer periods of frequent service would increase the outcomes.

As seen in Henderson et al. (2013), the quality of a program is perceived by the participants through multiple variables that provide deeper connections with their peers and community, while engaging with self-development. Quality was also found within the frequency and type of service, whether it provided meaningful benefits to the community or not (Henderson et al., 2013). These aspects of a program are built and maintained through the programs.

Quality of experience also hinges on the program design and implementation (Billig, 2011). Program design incorporates frequency and duration, as well as the types of interactions and periods of reflection. According to Billig (2011), the quality of interactions is more important than frequency, yet the interactions must be frequent enough to make deep and lasting impressions. Therefore, meaningful interactions and service preclude the quality of experience. Program design guides the quality of experiences through incorporating the following:

- Age appropriate interactions,
- All service activities bear relevance to the participants,
- Service that is interesting and engaging,
- Encourage an understanding of social and civil issues, and
- Visible outcomes (Billig, 2011).

Experiences within a community service activity can be enhanced through program design, as well as organizational context (Horn, 2012).

Horn (2012) sought to fill the gap in community service research through describing the organizational context within the program design. To begin, Horn (2012) described two organizational contexts that were different because they focused on different prime objectives for the organizations receiving the help. The two contexts were humanitarian versus utilitarian. Humanitarian organizations focus on “caring for people in need, promoting social justice, and improving collective welfare” (p. 949). These are typically health care, religious, and social service organizations. Utilitarian organizations focus on personal achievement or group status. These can be politically based organizations, education, and sports. The distinction is important, because of the moral implications found within humanitarian activities, while the utilitarian programs are based on individual achievement and may cause limited “understanding of public problems, and the human condition” (p. 950). Horn (2012) found that only participation in humanitarian organizations led to prosocial values, and concluded that organizational context was a key factor in the creation of community service activities to promote social and civic issues.

According to Horn (2012) and Henderson et al. (2013), quality of experience is dependent upon the context of the community service activity. Moreover, community service projects benefiting humanitarian organizations differs greatly from extracurricular activities
(Flanagan et al., 2014) and utilitarian organizations (Horn, 2011). The other aspects of a community service program, such as design and implementation, contribute to the context and have a direct effect upon the quality of experience (Billig, 2011). These important constructs provide benefits to the individuals participating in community service projects, as well as the people and organizations receiving the energy of their actions.

**Benefits of Community Service**

Community service projects and service-learning have been encouraged, promoted, and supported for many decades by the United States government, as well as non-profit and for-profit organizations. Despite continued skepticism and defunding of community service and service-learning programs, research continually shows that involvement provides many benefits for the individual participants and community groups (Furco & Root, 2010). Benefits vary among individuals and organizations; however, there is significant evidence of key ideas and strong themes. Both societal and individual benefits will be described below.

**Individual gains from community service.** Adolescents taking part in positive civic engagement have shown an increase in self-esteem and self-concept (Celio et al., 2011; Furco & Root, 2010; Goethem et al., 2014). When adolescents encountered new and unique situations, they build confidence through exercising their social skills and developing relationships with others (Giles & Eyler, 1998; Furco & Root, 2010). One of the causes for this stems from learner-centered instruction, when adolescents take part in collaborative and interactive social contexts, which lead to higher cognitive thinking through reflection (Willems & Gonzalez-Dehass, 2012). Increases in self-esteem and self-efficacy lead to positive and healthy transitions through puberty and into adulthood (Kielsmeier, 2011). Furthermore, adolescents’ understanding of their personal
capabilities may lead to an increased perception of leadership abilities and persistence (Yorio & Ye, 2012).

According to Bruce-Davis and Chancey (2012), past research showed positive outcomes for individuals participating in community service projects that were part of a service-learning curriculum. Increases were found “knowledge, grades, cognitive processes, and academic motivation” (p. 716). Academic persistence toward graduation was also found to be greater in adolescents that participated in community-service based, service-learning projects. Through civic engagement within community projects, students gained deeper insights into how school can contribute to their personal and professional development, and therefore increased their commitments to their classwork (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012). The researchers concluded that students involved in service-learning can “go beyond basic curriculum and skills to encourage and inspire” (p. 722).

Adolescents participating in community service are introduced to the civic issues of those who are less fortunate, which leads to a greater sense of the issues and concerns within their community (Bringle et al., 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1998; Furco & Root, 2010; Henderson et al., 2013; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Rockenbach, Hudson, & Tuchmayer, 2014). Participation within community service projects promotes values and morals, and contributes toward positive behaviors toward good citizenship (Furco & Root, 2010; Rockenbach et al., 2014). Individual contributions have a cumulative effect with other of help and compassion to contribute to the greater good of the community. Rockenbach et al. (2014) found that “becoming a more compassionate and socially aware persona as a result of service work is intimately and positively linked to committing oneself to a meaningful life marked by helping others” (p. 331). Moreover, continued service builds experience enough to develop novel initiatives that can create new
avenues of assistance where there were none, which fills the gaps in assistance and strengthens community bonds.

**Societal benefits of community service.** Adolescents engaged in community service projects help others who are in need of special assistance, and the reasons for those needs vary greatly. Not all governmental assistance programs cover the basic human needs for individuals who are less fortunate due to disability or financial reasons. Service projects have a direct impact on those in need of help and bring about knowledge of the underserved populations within a community (Holsapple, 2015). The social commitment and ethics of helping others combats indifference and apathy, which are detrimental to a democratic society (Eyler & Giles, 1998; Iverson & James, 2013).

Benson et al. (2012) and Jahromi, Crocetti, and Buchanan (2012) described the growing civic disengagement of youth within the United States as a problem that affects the healthy working of a democratic society. Rising social mistrust, apathy, and selfishness lead to low voter turnout and suppression of civic engagement (Benson et al., 2012). To combat this trend, participants in community service projects become informed citizens because they understand their responsibilities, such as voting, and learn how civic organizations work through tax funded dollars. Wurr and Hamilton (2012) found that adult college students engaged with community service can develop leadership skills necessary for lasting social changes within their communities. Wurr and Hamilton (2012) concluded that exposing students to community service projects throughout their time in school may have a positive effect on their development as leaders in government and other community-based organizations, because adolescents who participate in community service projects build their social capital, “deepen and expand their networks of community relationships” (Flanagan et al., 2014, p. 305).
Summary

The current review of literature provides insight into the deep and profound work of many years of research into the especially vexing quandary of social connection, academic achievement, and civic involvement during adolescence. These complex issues reside outside of standardized testing scores, classroom assessments, and current classroom environments.

Adolescents experience many physical, social, and psychological changes (Bandura, 1977; Chung et al., 1998; Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Eccles et al., 1993; Hirsch & Rapkin, 1987; Holas & Huston, 2012; Mac Iver & Epstein, 1991; Midgley & Edelin, 1998; Wentzel et al., 2010). These changes affect how they see the world and interact with peers, teachers, adults, and leaders (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Through community service, they get a better understanding about how they fit-in, outside of relatively small confines of their home and school, and where they belong within society. This fulfills their basic need for autonomy, independence, and cognitive growth (Furco & Root, 2010). Individual growth through novel experiences within community service programs also leads to greater academic achievement, motivation, and persistence toward graduation (Furco & Root, 2010).

According to Rockenbach et al. (2014), civic values and commitments begin to weaken after adolescence, because “individuals become less involved in community service with each educational transition” (p. 313). The disappearance of civic engagement has produced voter apathy through social mistrust (Benson et al., 2012). Therefore, it is imperative that the government backed Community Service Act of 1990 and many other service-based organizations be supported to maintain quality programming and meaningful experiences.

Quality of experience within a community service program was dependent upon reflection and context. Program design was key to providing a positive experience for
participants, as well as follow-through on implementation and achievement of project goals. Adolescents were able to reflect upon their work and how they made a difference in the lives of others.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods of research were found on community service and service-learning; however, the need for more qualitative research was needed to examine the complex nature of community service programs. This study will use the qualitative case study design to delve deeper into the many aspects of community service programs. The next chapter describes how the qualitative case study design will allow the researcher to perform a robust examination of a community service program through 31 days of a baseball tour throughout Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.
Chapter III: Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative case study design to examine a month-long community service program located that took place as a baseball team traveled over 31 days through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The qualitative design allowed the researcher to examine a unique community service program that was part of a traveling baseball team’s travel through communities across three states. A case study provides a framework to investigate the case of adolescent and adult mentor perceptions and experiences regarding their time spent engaged in the program as part of their baseball journey. Service-learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Robertson, 1990) served as the theoretical lens for the researcher to examine the adolescents’ motivations, experiences, and outcomes, as well as the adult mentors’ roles.

The research questions guiding and informing the study are as follows:

1. What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

2. How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?

Knowledge gained from this study may provide civic leaders and community organizations with insight into community service program designs, and how “contemporary models of civic engagement is mutually-beneficial collaboration, in which all persons contribute knowledge, skills, and experience in determining the issues to be addressed” (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009, p. 1). Because of the extensive positivist research performed in this area of concern (Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Goethem, van Hoof, DeCastro, Van Aken, & Hart,
it is essential that the depth and complexity of adolescent and mentor experiences be evaluated (Henderson, Pancer, & Brown, 2013). According to Goethem et al. (2014), their meta-analysis of the quantitative studies fitting their criteria lacked the ability to gain more insight into the “effective ingredients of community service” (p. 2127). Quantitative design also relies on self-reporting, which can be influenced by social pressures to perceive the work performed as having a great societal value (Goethem et al., 2014). Through a qualitative design, more objective measures, such as direct observations, may counterbalance this effect. This provided a more contextual analysis of the environment and reveal adolescent behaviors within a community service program to delve deeper into the complexities of their interactions with their community. Moreover, the Potter Baseball Tour conducted a variety of community service activities. The qualitative design isolated the most effect activities and examined how they were successful, as perceived by its participants, while others may have failed to engage the adolescents’ interest or energies.

**Research Design**

The research design used was a qualitative case study of a month-long community service program that was part of a month-long, three state traveling baseball tour. Qualitative case study design allowed the researcher to ask “what” or “how” (Creswell, 2013) adolescents are affected by their engagement in a month-long community service program, traveling throughout rural Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, as well as the perceptions of adult mentors, some of which are trained in the areas of childhood development. The aim of this case study was to closely examine the phenomenon that occurred as well as potentially suggest specific strategies that could be used to inform other community service programs as the one studies.
Several sources of qualitative data were collected in pursuit of validity and rigor of analysis. A set of semi-structured interviews with the adult mentors were used for those who participated within the program. These interviews were supported by extensive field notes to include the environments, descriptions of the participants, and other supporting documentation fitting the criteria of a credible source as outlined by Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2009). The case study design was used to analyze the data collected and find the themes that best described how adolescents engaged with their community service activities and any outcomes from their participation. The research questions reflect the objective of this design to describe how the adolescents engaged with the activities, reflected upon their work, and any outcomes from their participation. Therefore, this study is a descriptive case study, where the data is used to describe the phenomenon and context (Baxter & Jack, 2008) in which the adolescents and adult mentors frequently engaged within various community service projects over a month-long period while traveling to different communities.

**Research Tradition**

**Background.** The qualitative case study design is based upon a constructivist paradigm that is “relating to truth as relative and is dependent on one’s perspective” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 545). This claim of truth emerges through personal experience and subjective interpretation of meaning that is dependent upon a person’s perspective gained from experience. The nature of subjectivity within a case study does not set aside objectivity, because of the pluralistic approach regarding the collection of data. Qualitative data collected through interviews, personal narratives, or by other means is not the focus of a case study. Depending upon the case, the case study may, in fact, gather more quantitative than qualitative data to be analyzed. Each case has a
context that determines the types of data to be collected and the lens through which it should be analyzed.

Researchers have performed case studies using only one of the following types of qualitative data: interviews, narratives, personal journals, or observations (Baxter & Jack, 2008). There are researchers who also performed case studies using only quantitative data (Yin, 1981). These are not examples of inflexibility with regard to the use and rigor of a case study, specifically pointing to the relativism of a case study design, but show the pluralistic nature of a case study design. The flexibility of a case study allows the researcher to use a single source or multiple sources of data as the lens for analyzing the context of the case.

**Case study approach.** According to Yin (2003) and Creswell (2014), case study design should address at least one of the following four possible scenarios:

- To answer “how” and “why” a phenomenon occurs,
- To understand the context relevant to the phenomenon,
- The behavior of participants cannot be manipulated, and
- No clear or distinct boundaries between the phenomenon and the context.

Through the proposed research questions, the researcher followed three of the four possible criteria, excluding only the manipulation of participants, because the interview process was considered a form of manipulation outside the context where the phenomenon occurs.

With a clear need for the case study design, the researcher defined a specific case in order to formulate the research questions. The determination of the unit of analysis falls within the context. Participants would not be the ones to be analyzed, nor was the specific program or comparison between programs. The case will be an analysis of the process of adolescent engagement with community service activities and their perceptions prior to those activities and
following the activities. What affects the adolescents is the focus of the research questions.

There are levels of complexity needed of in-depth examination for adolescents engaged in community service. An important feature of case study design is the direct observation of events by the researcher without controlling the variables or participants (Kohlbacher, 2006). The case study design allowed for the unimprinted investigation of combinations of characteristics of the participants and the services (Kohlbacher, 2006). The research design then becomes one of several different types of case studies.

**Type of case study.** There are several types of case studies that best describe the overall purpose of the study. These types are differentiated by the specific case, the analysis of the case, amount of study sites, and the personal relationship between the researcher and the case. Below is a table with definitions of the types of case studies.
Table 1

*Definitions and Examples of Different Types of Case Studies* (Baxter & Jack, 2008)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study Type</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explanatory</td>
<td>This type of case study would be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exploratory</td>
<td>This type of case study is used to explore those situation in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
<td>This type of case study is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple-case studies</td>
<td>A multiple case study enables the researcher to explore differences within and between cases. The goal is to replicate findings across cases. Because comparisons will be drawn, it is imperative that the cases are chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>This type suggests that researchers who have a genuine interest in the case should use this approach when the intent is to better understand the case. It is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest. The purpose is NOT to come to understand some abstract construct or generic phenomenon. The purpose is NOT to build theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>This type of case is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. The case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, and because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>Collective case studies are similar in nature and description to multiple case studies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The descriptive type of case study fits best for this research study. The extensive research on community service, spanning several decades (Abernathy & Obenchain, 2001; Celio, Durlak,
& Dymnicki, 2011; Conner, 2010; Eyler, 2002; Eyler, Giles, Root, & Price, 1997; Furco & Root, 2010; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Holsapple, 2015; McClam, Diambra, Burton, Fuss, & Fudge, 2008; Nelson & Eckstein, 2008; Roodin, Brown, & Shedlock, 2013; Scott & Graham, 2015; Stenhouse & Jarrett, 2012), does concur with the positive outcomes and conclusions, yet posits the need for more in-depth research on the “how” and “what” that make community service important for the healthy development of active and knowledgeable citizens. The practice of service-learning has led to the development of teaching strategies to overcome academic achievement gaps (Nelson & Eckstein, 2008); however, the lack of connection and understanding of simple community functions and processes remains significant among adolescents transitioning into adulthood, all of which requires more analysis from qualitative research. A description of the context is needed to investigate the possible causes or links for adolescents discovery of learning, as well as their developmental needs.

**Participants**

In order to collect the data to fulfill the requirements for a descriptive case study, a purposeful sampling strategy was used to interview six (6), participants, two mentors, and two coaches/chaperones that participated on the Potter Baseball Tour, they have taken part in the program for at least one year. These participants are based upon pre-selected criteria formed through the research questions and represented a critical case sampling. This was a small, single case with a small sample population to choose from. Another aspect of the critical case sampling will be the decisive aspect of the population being investigated. From the extensive review of the literature, the researcher found that adolescents’ participation in community service has a significant effect upon their developmental growth as citizens and compassionate members of the community (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Moreover, the participants have experiences that can
formulate logical generalizations across other similar populations. However, once the discussion of the findings from this study have been exhausted the researcher will make any generalizations very carefully.

This study included participants that lived throughout a rural community. The number of participants available to interview may create limitations for the external validity of the study findings. Participants and adult mentors may have moved away from the community and live in other areas. This may pose as a sampling limitation due to the number of possible participants, as well as access to them.

**Recruitment and Access**

The practical purpose of this study was to investigate adolescents taking part in a month-long community service program and understand the complexity of this process that may affect their short- and long-term views of how to engage with their community and schools. The researcher was a coach and mentor during the month-long activity and had personal and professional contact with all of the possible study participants. Therefore, the researcher had access to the participants and other coaches through interpersonal interactions and several forms of correspondence.

**Recruitment and selection of participants.** All participants were invited through an email to participate. There was a waiting period of one week for all responses to be turned in and acknowledged. Another email was sent, one week after the initial email, to follow up with the potential participants. This was repeated until the base-line number of six (6) has been reached.

The number of participants interviewed were a total of ten (10). If more than ten (10) participants responded to the request for interviews, then the names of those responded would have been randomly chosen for participation, equaling ten (10).
Data Collection

For this case study design, multiple types of data was collected: semi-structured interviews, email correspondence, phone interviews, researcher observations and notes. These are meant to provide the necessary rigor to explore how adolescents perceive and understand the process of community service and the meaning it brings for them. These types of data informed the degree to which they engaged with this process and any skills or strategies employed for future benefit to their community, family, or friends.

Interview overview and protocols. Conducting in-depth, semi-structured interviews provided the bulk of the data collected and transcribed for this study. As Jacob & Furgerson (2012) state, “Researchers may use many different techniques, but at the heart of qualitative research is the desire to expose the human part of the story” (p. 1). From these interviews, the researcher obtained descriptive data regarding the case being studied. The interviews were conducted around familiar surroundings, participants had a level of comfort and ease, while engaging in a relaxed dialogue with the researcher (Creswell, 2013). There was one interview per participant. Each interview was one hour in length and recorded with digital audio equipment, allowing the files to be saved to the researcher’s personal computer for analysis. Interviews where accompanied by the researcher’s personal notes regarding the environment and reactions to the interview that would otherwise not be conveyed within the transcription of only the answers. Details of the interview experience allowed the researcher to reflect upon the relationship with the participant and positive or negative interactions provided assistance for future interviews yet to be performed.

The semi-structured interview protocols is comprised of several open-ended questions that allowed participants the opportunity to relay their recollection of event and perspectives on
outcomes which conforms with the goal of uncovering as much information about the participants, context, and the case being studied. A brief discussion about participants’ background to ensure their direct engagement with transitioning students and extent of experience with them. Other background information will include any professional development courses pertaining to student transitions, especially into middle school. Personal experiences as a student will not be relevant, due to changes in curriculum that have occurred over the past two decades, corresponding with federal legislation.

**Email surveys.** For participants not taking part in the interview process, they were offered the chance to convey their experiences with the Potter Baseball Tour. Those extra participants did not respond back to any correspondence and where therefore not included in the study.

**Data Storage**

All audio files, interview transcripts, and files from online surveys were stored using password-protected personal accounts, where only the researcher had access and know the passwords. Online information was stored in a password protected cloud storage server, where the data will be encrypted using the latest and most advanced software available to the public. Interview audio files was be imported manually from the digital recording device to the researcher’s personal computer. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym for the protection of their identities.

Interview transcriptions were created through the services of Rev.com and some transcribed by the researcher. Once the transcription process was complete, the researcher destroyed all audio files. All documents were kept within a locked filing cabinet with only the researcher having access.
**Data Analysis**

**Overview.** Developed in tandem during the iterative process, data analysis begins at the same time as data collection (Kohlbacher, 2006). Data analysis was the search for patterns directed through the theoretical lens of service-learning, therefore it will be examined, categorized, tabulated, or recombined with other data collected during the data collection process. Data was categorized during collection in order to organize it around topics that emerge as key themes to the research questions. This allowed for the examination of how data fit within the categories or fail to do so. It became necessary for the researcher to rely on the literature reviewed in chapter 2 of this thesis, as well as the literature directly relating to the theoretical framework.

**General analytic strategy.** According to Yin (2003), a general analytic strategy will guide the researcher during their decision-making process. Currently, there are five possible strategies to analyze qualitative case study designs: pattern matching, explanation building, time-series analysis, logic models, and cross-case synthesis. Of the five possible strategies for analyzing a case study (Kohlbacher, 2006: Tellis, 1997), explanation building will best exemplify the necessary touch points to guide this study.

Explanation building uses pattern matching to formulate a description of the phenomenon and context of the case. Explanation building relies on theory to guide the description of a case, while interposing research literature related to the case. The explanation will determine the meaning of the phenomenon occurring and describe the themes according to the data collected. Therefore, the role of the researcher will be to construct the meaning found within the data, as well as the perceptions and emotional content found in within the researcher’s notes. Qualitative analysis also incorporates the data that does not appear within the transcripts or surveys.
Together, these will build the context while recognizing the significance of the themes that emerge.

**Coding Process**. Coding of the data will be done in two cycles for added structure of the analysis process. The first cycle used In-Vivo coding, to allow the researcher to collect the participants words. The second cycle of coding used pattern coding. Pattern coding allowed the researcher to develop themes in between the data.

**Protection of Human Subjects**

All ethical issues were identified prior to the study taking place in order to protect the human subjects who are the focal point of this study (Creswell, 2013). Initial steps were taken for the request for approval by the program administrators of the Potter Baseball Tour for access and interaction to the participants. This entailed in-person meetings or correspondence to answer any questions or concerns the administrators and supporters may have. This ensured that all of the people directly and indirectly affected by the study understand the ramifications of the study’s findings, if any.

All participant identities are protected through every effort made by the researcher. True confidentiality or anonymity was possible within the rural setting, the research will mask participants’ identities. One method to safeguard the name of the participants is to mask them with pseudonyms that are not related to the person in any way, yet may be indicative of a particular gender. The protection of these identities ensured that their answers to interview or survey questions cannot be identified by the program administrators or others within the program, past and present. Keeping participants’ anonymity is essential to protect their position and status without repercussions for their answers. To keep the integrity of these protections in place, the written thesis does not contain the real names of the participants.
Prior to the study’s initiation, a complete written disclosure form was provided to each participant in order to obtain written consent through each individual’s signature. A copy of the form was provided to each participant and explained in greater detail before interviews are conducted. The researcher’s phone number and email address was available for anyone with questions or concerns regarding the study, participation criteria, subject matter, and questions. Participants are not beholden to this process and can leave at any time, therefore removing their real name, pseudonym, and all other identifiers, as well as answers to any questions.

**Trustworthiness**

**Validity.** Capturing multiple forms of data will add to the rigor and validity of this descriptive case study. Briefly defined as the accurate account and representation of participants’ experience within the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013), validity provides meaningful insight into the researcher’s assurances of professional conduct and correctness. In order to maintain the validity of this study, the researcher followed all procedures listed within the chapter on methodology, as well as conducted himself in a professional and ethical manner, so as to not corrupt, hamper, or harm the process of data collection and analysis. Validity is a term that extends beyond researcher authenticity and professional conduct.

The researcher employed member checking for descriptive validity to improve the accuracy and appropriateness of the data collected. Member checking is simply the reflection of information gathered during the interviewing process, to allow the researcher and participant time to process the answers given, as well as clarify any ambiguities that may arise. This may also entail summarizing or further questioning of the participant’s answers to determine their accuracy and validity. Moreover, this method provides a way for participants to be critical of
their own comments, or the line of questioning coming from the researcher. Hence, the participants affirm the completeness and validity of the data.

**Researcher bias.** As stated in the Positionality Statement in Chapter 1 of this proposal, the researcher has had extensive experience as a coach within the Potter Baseball Tour. The researcher is also teacher, who interacts with adolescents on a professional basis. After years of experience, the analysis of adolescent behaviors and attitudes may be biased. In order to lessen the biases associated with this experience, the researcher will write a researcher identity memo, which will help the researcher to identify the personal biases posed to interfere with this case study. Once the memo is completed, the researcher will be able to explain these biases, where they come from, and how to subvert them during the data collection and analysis process.

**Conclusion**

The descriptive case study design is the chosen qualitative methodology for this study. This design allowed the researcher to gain a more complete understanding of the community service performed during the Potter Baseball Tour and the phenomenon that affects adolescents’ attitudes toward their communities and civic organizations. Multiple forms of data were collected to provide the rigor and validity of this study. Many steps were taken to ensure the, and anonymity of the participants, and their privacy and security of their personal information and responses in order to maintain the validity of the data, and trust with regard to the research. Service-learning was the overarching theory that will guide the analysis of the data, therefore reducing the researcher’s preconceived notions about the phenomenon, as well as meliorating any biases.
Chapter IV: Research Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present and describe the key factors that contributed to students’ experience in the Potter Baseball Summer Tour 2017. This chapter summarizes the perceptions of the Potter Baseball Summer Tour 2017 and what youth gained from their participation in the Tour through interviewees (Coaches/Chaperones, Mentors, and Players). The stories from these individuals will contribute to a presentation of what stakeholders gained through their participation in the Potter Baseball Summer Tour 2017. This story (case study) will be told through the interviews and perspectives of the Players, Mentors, and Coaches/Chaperones. Additional information was gathered from the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour videos and pictures.

The two questions guiding the analysis of data were:

1. What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

2. How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?

This chapter summarizes the demographics of the participants interviewed, examines the perceptions of the mentors and coaches, and reveals collected data, and outlines the themes emerged.

History of the Potter Baseball Summer Tour

The original Potter Baseball Tour started out in 2010 as a barnstorming idea to take a team around playing baseball. From this original idea, the tour has transformed into community
service, charity work and playing baseball all while learning life lessons and bringing communities together. The development of the tour came from Coach Potter seeing kids no longer having fun playing baseball. He wanted kids to once again enjoy the sport and play for the love of the game and not because there was some type of trophy to be won.

The Potter Baseball Tour brings individuals together to travel for a month throughout a four-state area of Virginia, Maryland, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Baseball is the bond that they all have and brings them together, but there are many other sports played while on the tour, along with community service and charity work. Coach Potter states, “The tour is about - Learning through life lessons, having fun, and making new friends.”

Jeff Potter is the founder of Potter Baseball. Jeff is a 1972 graduate of Elwood City High School, located in Elwood City Pennsylvania. He was drafted as a left-handed relief pitcher by the Detroit Tigers in the 1972 Major League Baseball June Amateur Draft. As he started coaching his sons’ baseball teams, he became frustrated and tired of hearing about the negative side of youth sports from community members, families, and friends. He decided to write a book, which eventually came to life entitled, “Whatever Happened to Baseball.” His idea was to tell people what baseball was really about, life lessons and how they prepare you for the future. He wanted to be able to teach kids, as he was taught, to do the right thing, no matter how difficult it is. The book was well received and close friends encouraged him to take the book on the road, promoting baseball and community service.

The first years of the Potter Baseball Tour, consisted of a twenty-one (21) day tour with a group of boys going around and playing baseball. There was a lot of baseball being played and they completed a little community service. As the tour progressed over a couple of years, the baseball continued and the community service became a larger and larger part of the program.
The tour has now become a baseball tour, with a lot of community service and baseball as the secondary component. Coach Potter has continued to define the tour each year, as each year gets bigger, with more community service and baseball. He spends several months on the road working with local community members planning the events for the month, as well as spending time as a motivational speaker to organizations and schools.

During the first years of the tours, they were twenty-one days of hard corps playing baseball with a very baseball-oriented group of young men and doing some community service. The tour then developed into two (2) tours of twenty-one days each and has now progressed into the entire month of July, with as many as twenty participants on the tour at once. In recent years, the tour has become more community service based and baseball is the bonus for the boys. The 2017 tour consisted of serval community service projects, such as: baseball clinics, yard clean ups from major storm damages, helping with a walk to raise money for two children with cancer, working with a local library to bring young students to the library to learn about sports, car washes, helping with the blind association, and participating with the Miracle League for baseball. The tour also participated on approximately 20 baseball games. These are only a few highlights from the Potter Baseball Tour 2017.

The Potter Baseball Tour is truly about building skills to help those participating to become young men, living everyday through the four Potter Tenants - Passion, Hard Work, Selflessness, and Respect. These four tenants are a constant reminder to Potter Baseball participants and families, to be doing the right thing and giving back, as you expect nothing in return. Life lessons are taught throughout the tour as the participants are put into the situations of having to make decisions not just for themselves, but also for their team and others involved of how to solve problems, how to build things, how to take charge and be leaders. All while,
making sure to use manners and be respectful to everyone. The tour participants run the tour once it starts, the coaches/chaperones are there to make sure everything works in the big picture and guide the participants in times of need.

The Potter Baseball Tour is the entire month of July. There are no hotels to stay in, everyone involved stays with host families. Throughout the tour these families open their homes to the entire team. Some all in one house, but usually throughout a couple of homes. The host families provide a place to sleep and shower, as well as some snacks, after all they are growing young boys and a breakfast in the morning. There is not a lot of time truly spent at the host families, because it is mainly just to sleep as the schedule keeps everyone busy from 8:00 a.m. to almost 10:00 p.m. daily.

The 2017 Potter Baseball tour encompassed thirty cities in thirty-one days, throughout the states of Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Several hundred hours of community service were completed, while helping to give back to communities that the participants had no connection with. As the Potter Baseball Tour has grown over the years, communities continue to ask the tour to come back again the following year, as well as how much more the community can become involved. This is what builds the tour for the following year!

**How a Player is Selected**

Players are selected on a “first come-first serve” basis. The most important requirement is that they are an individual who loves and respects the game of baseball and believes in “giving back”, in terms of community service and charity. Players can be recommended to Coach Potter from baseball coaches, former tour participants, current tour participants, current coaches, and current families involved with the tour. Once a participant wants to participate, they are put into contact with Coach Potter. Coach Potter then does an extensive interview with the player and the
family. Not all players interviewed are asked to be a part of the program. Coach Potter is very selective on players and families that are invited into the program. He makes sure they are a good fit for the Potter Baseball Summer Tour.

**The Purpose of the Potter Baseball Tour**

The Potter Baseball Tour is about bringing together a group of individuals to travel for over three weeks throughout a four-state area, combining the fun of playing baseball and other sports, with community service and charity work. The tour places emphasis on learning life lessons, while having lots of fun and making new friends.

**Interviews**

The researcher conducted interviews with individuals who had participated on the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball in some way, to understand a variety of perspectives of the tour. For this purpose, two mentors, six tour participants, and two Coaches/Chaperones, and the founder of the program Coach Potter, were interviewed. Their perceptions and stories have developed into key insight into the Potter Baseball Program.

The mentors have a combined eleven (11) years on the tour. The tour participants a combined thirteen (13) years of participation. And the chaperones/coaches have a combined fived (5) years of time on the tour. The coaches/Chaperones for this study have been involved for longer than five years with the Potter Baseball but have not participated on the tour more than five years. See Table 2 for an overview of participants’ time on the Tour.
Table 2

*Study participants time on the Tour*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Age on the 2017 tour</th>
<th>Years on the tour</th>
<th>Residence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M1</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M2</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pennsylvania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Virginia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2+</td>
<td>Maryland</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Collection and Analysis**

**Coding and thematic analysis.** Interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded, and analyzed for common themes to identify participants’ perspectives on the Potter Baseball Summer Tour, as described in Chapter 3.

**Document review and supporting evidence.** In addition to the collection of data through interviews, the researcher used evidence collected from the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour of pictures and video to interpret the stories and the interviews of those that participated. The researcher used these supporting documents to support the triangulation of the data along with the interview data.
Research Question 1: What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

Players perspectives Most of the players stated that they learned a great deal through their community service through baseball in the form of clinics and playing games, giving back to the younger players and playing against the older kids. As one player stated, “There always seemed to be a structure of what was to be done.” The end result and how the team got to the end, was a combination of everyone working together with a team attitude.

When not playing baseball, there was a community member involved giving the goal of the day. The players had to figure out a way to get to the end of the goal. For example, when doing community service for CureSearch they played in a volleyball tournament with Butler Volleyball (an all-day event,) and the Cure Search Hike (North Park) to raise money. The volleyball tournaments have always done well and the hike of ten (10) miles continues to help raise funds. Several teams participated in both of these projects from the local area. The purpose of the tour players was to help raise additional funds for CureSearch and to help with the volleyball tournaments to ensure that the day continued to the time schedule. The team was also able to play volleyball for the events, and the players said this was more fun as most of the teams were “high school girls” and stated that they always like to play on their teams.

The Potter Baseball Summer Tour is designed to put the team into situations that the players have to figure things out. Community Service, events, clinics, and work sessions (etc.) are established a year in advance with a goal of completing all of the tasks assigned. Once the group arrives at the location, the goal is announced to the team. Such as today, we are going to
be working at the library where the following events need to take place: reading to the kids, games outside, prizes awarded, and then a clean-up of the area. The team is then asked how they would approach all of these things to do. They are then tasked with assigning duties, volunteering, and figuring out how to make it all happen.

The community service that was completed was always for someone with some type of ties to Coach Potter, or someone he knew or an organization that has been involved with the tour. An example of this is working at Mrs. Potter’s – Mother’s house – redoing yard work from overgrowth, cleaning up some junk piles just left in the yard, and mowing the grass. In Butler – as one group of the team cleaned up a community park, another group of the team went to clean up a school secretary’s yard who had been stricken with some type of disease and wasn’t able to do things for herself. The team took out dead shrubs and replanted new ones, cleaned up the walkways and removed dying trees and branches that overtook the yard because of a flood a few weeks earlier. These are not the only examples; more examples will follow throughout this section.

Players confirmed that they got to meet many different people from many different walks of life, they were all different ages and different situations have led to all of them needing some help. There was always a structure to what was to be happening with the community service, even if the players didn’t understand that structure on a daily basis. Players were put in charge of the mission for the day and challenged with the idea of being outside the box, with each of them contributing to the finer details that were always needed.

The structure of the tour is built upon daily travel, community service, and baseball. As one player stated, “There was a structure, but we were kind of put in charge of how to really do the finer details.” The 2017 tour encompassed thirty (30) days on the road, sleeping in a different
bed most nights, working as hard as possible, being tired, playing some type of baseball and then
going to bed and doing the same thing the next day. Coach Potter does an amazing job at
organizing the entire tour and utilizing his contacts. The full month of July 2017 and locations.

Table 3

*Locations and dates of work during the Summer 2017 Potter Baseball Tour*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>State</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-Jul</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Broadneck</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>16-Jul</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Natrona Heights</td>
<td>PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-Jul</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>MD</td>
<td>17-Jul</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-Jul</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>York</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>18-Jul</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Beaver Falls</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-Jul</td>
<td>Tuesday</td>
<td>Plowville</td>
<td>PA</td>
<td>19-Jul</td>
<td>Wednesday</td>
<td>Beaver Falls</td>
<td>PA</td>
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<td>5-Jul</td>
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<td>Clearfield</td>
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<td>Thursday</td>
<td>Oil City</td>
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</tr>
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<td>PA</td>
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<td>OH</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Butler</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-Jul</td>
<td>Friday</td>
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<td>OH</td>
<td>23-Jul</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Shanksville</td>
<td>PA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>OH</td>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>Monday</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-Jul</td>
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<td>New Castle</td>
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<td>Tuesday</td>
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<td>PA</td>
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<td>Wednesday</td>
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<td>12-Jul</td>
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<td>MD</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Thursday</td>
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<td>Saturday</td>
<td>Chesapeake</td>
<td>VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Sunday</td>
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<td>VA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31-Jul</td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>Virginia Beach</td>
<td>VA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**What did they learn from the experiences?** Players were not able to just sit around and be spectators of the service that was taking place. When a player who is a leader would notice someone not working, they would try to pick them up and help to encourage them to get back into action and make a difference for someone else. There was a continuous effort to work hard and give back to others.

Leadership skills developed for the players throughout the month. In particular, one experience to be a leader is through a player’s responsibility of acting as the captain for the day. The captain of the day is a unique form of leadership on the tour. The captain is the go-to person, as to what is going to happen on the particular day. This person assigns duties to the team, makes the baseball line-up for any games that would be played, and reinforces the four tenants of the Potter Baseball Tour: Passion, Hard-Work, Respect, Selflessness. The new captain is picked by the previous days captain. The captain is in charge of the team until the next one is picked. The captain’s responsibility (as well as participating) is to be the leader of the day and to make sure it’s all coming together.

All of the players had to talk through how to make it work, including who was going to do each task (for example, someone might be a great narrator and someone might be a great game organizer). As the boys quickly assigned themselves to what they would be doing, they would quickly step into action. As the team would start a project for the day there would be some introductions of the Potter Baseball Team and where the boys are from. The team would then jump into action.

As one player described the effect of the community service on the tour:
Everyone has these days when they don't want to do it, especially in a month of doing it every day. So, some kids slack for a day and then ... But the kids that are leaders, I guess you could say, they try to pick them up.

What was gained through their community service work was summarized by one player as follows: “Working and giving back to people that don't have as much or ... pretty much giving back to people.” Another player stated:

I felt [like] it got us to meet a lot of different people and we got to really be able to talk to people one on one to see what they were going through. I'm trying to sum this up and we really understood what other people were doing. We learned more about what we can do as people.

Players were often taken into a variety of community settings, for example churches, parks, backyards, food cupboards, and neighborhoods to make a difference through the activity or event of the day, yielding a great deal of learning in the real world. As one player stated:

The Tour became basically a learning facility for me and a great place to meet lifelong friends that I still keep in touch with, even after two years, and really a place to learn good manners and habits in your everyday life.

Community Service on the tour helped the participants grow and how to give to others. As one player commented, “It gives you a purpose of what to do each day. Helps to manage time and not just play baseball every day.” Another player defines the community service as, “helping kids with mental disabilities with their baseball league games.” This was in reference to the Miracle League in Medina, Ohio. The benefits for the tour stops outweigh not getting help with many projects, as one player describes, “In some places, it's inspired the residents there to get
involved in the community. They’ll reach out and try to have us back so we can help them more.”

One mentor stated,

I feel like the community service brings the team closer together because instead of just traveling around and baseball, we're doing things that you wouldn't normally do with a group of friends.

Community service brought the entire team closer together and furthered everyone’s bond beyond just baseball, but of outstanding work that these young men could do in communities. One player says, “community service brings the team closer together because instead of just traveling around and baseball, we're doing things that you wouldn't normally do with a group of friends.” Community service also brought communities closer together, when they see all these kids from outside of the area giving back. It made more and more people come out and start to help in the following years.

*Life lessons.* When interviewed the participants told their story too and life lessons were a resounding response. As the researcher continued to ask for examples, many participants couldn’t pin point one particular lesson, but tried to describe life lessons from the tour the best they could.

One player described it as life lessons happen every day and you have to decide how you pick the ones to use. As he said, “Life lessons are kind of on you to learn from. So, life lessons happen everywhere, so it's kind of your job to pick them out and learn from them, even if there's not someone to tell you it's happening.”

His example was that of having manners while on the tour and using “yes sir” and “no sir” and that he wasn’t very considerate of people’s feelings. As he continued,
I guess before I wasn't as considerate of people's feelings, but now since the last two years there's been incidents, even if I'm not involved, I'll still try to help people get through their incidents, what would be the right word? More effectively or in a healthier way. Instead of just not talking to that person I would try to help them work it out.

One of the four tenants for Potter Baseball is that of Respect. Players are expected to be respectful at all times, not just on the tour but as players return to their homes and head back into what they refer to as “normal life.” The respect for Coach Potter and the coaches/chaperones is an unbelievable accomplishment. These young boys who become young men while on the tour, are continuously trying to do the right thing all the time. No matter where they are and who they are with, this example holds true with how this player tries to make a difference away from the tour. As one player stated,

It's important to Coach Potter. It's emphasized every day I guess, by saying sir, and ma'am. Just saying thank you for stuff that you wouldn't usually say thank you for. Just smiling at people, just doing the small stuff I guess.

Another player described a life lesson as learning to be focused and contribute along with others. The encouragement from the coaches is to make sure that everyone is participating in all that is happening. Encouraging everyone, sometimes just individuals to get back on track and refocused is a huge push. One must remember, there are young men, but when they are being pushed to work hard for eight to ten hours in a day, they sometimes lose focus. That subtle reminder is all they usually need to get them back on task and accomplishing the goals.

Life lessons helped participants to work with not only strangers, but also other participants that they might not get along with. The tour is a very long process and as you spend thirty-one days with twenty other young people, driving from location to location in a van and
living with them. It’s not always great relationships that come out of it. Another player describes life lessons as follows: “You kinda have to get use to people if you’re gonna be put with people you don’t like and can’t just deal with.” The expectation is that players and those involved are not going to be sitting around waiting for directions. Regarding life lessons, the same player said, “(You) had to do things - not really just sit around and wait for someone else to do it. I kinda get up and do it right away.” Therefore, not waiting for someone else to be the leader, but for this player to be setting the example of what the others should be doing.

This player also talked about respect towards others as a life lesson he gained from the 2017 tour. As he said:

Respect for people, and that you don't know what other people are going through. They should always just try their best to be friends with them. You don't even need to be best friends with them, just get to know them see what they are about.”

Time management skills were also a big lesson.

Another player talked the about the value of managing one’s time in order to do the work and be successful. As he said,

Time management in that everything has to be done in a decent amount of time. Waking up early gets the most done and that's really helpful. It's important to help other people because it's something that can affect you and help you to grow yourself into who you'll be in the future.

Other examples are also illustrative of the numerous life lessons gained through the tour as all of the participants played an active role with everything that happened. For example, a life lesson for one player was wanting to be more empathetic and helpful with others that he came in contact with. As he stated:
Life lessons taught me that people come in all different shapes and sizes and personalities, and to never judge a person by the way they appear or the way they act, because I met several people, who were just fascinating, especially with the Miracle League that we did. That was one of the best experiences that I had during the tour, just meeting all those people and seeing how baseball could unite all of them, with all of their differences and different appearances. It doesn't matter. We're all still people. We're all still a community, and we can all come together and enjoy the things in life.”

Another player emphasizes how easy it is to be respectful to someone with a “yes sir” or “yes mam,” as well as, “how to shake someone’s hand and always look them in the eye.” This has allowed the player to be more respectful not only to those on the tour, but to all the people that he comes into contact with. He also explained that he knows how to talk to people in general, young and old and how to keep a conversation going. While on the tour, this helps with many daily encounters, but more so when dealing with little kids and working in clinics. Continuous lessons of how to communicate with others, are life lessons that so many of the players are thankful for.

**Coach and chaperone perspectives.** As one coach stated,

There was a lot more community service than you would originally expect, and then as the years have gone on, it's just become more and more community service and less focused on baseball. Every day you're going to be ... On the tour, you're doing some form of community service and not every day you're playing baseball anymore.

The tour experience has changed for these individuals, as the community service has continued to grow. They continue to do community service at more and more locations and areas and for more people. Community service has consisted of yard work, cleaning up at a nursery as
they picked weeds and did painting. One story was told of how they redid a baseball field. This field had several years of neglect, graffiti on the dugouts, grass was several feet high, and you couldn’t even see the infield. They completed everything possible, as one mentor looks back on this experience,

I realized I felt like I helped the community because we were told that kids there said they would go to the field and play baseball, but they didn't want to because of things like all the profanity spray painted on the dugouts and the needles there because people would do drugs in the dugouts. I was like, ‘I did this and now these kids that wanted to go baseball, but were too scared to because they didn't like the condition of the field, they'll now be doing that, and they'll be able to use this and have fun,” and a lot better inside.

Another mentor had this to say about redoing the field:

We trimmed the field around the edges. We mowed the grass. We filled dirt in at the mound, and just taken a field in a matter of two days from being completely wasted to able to play on. That was a big thing to do.

As community service is ongoing, both coaches enjoy engaging with the players and doing the community service. They were both very cautious in their stories, as at first the players didn’t want to be doing any of the community service. The chaperons seemed to really step it up and just get right to work. This comes from their experience on the tour of “knowing what to do” and when. The younger tour players, had no idea of what they were to do. Those that had done the tour prior 2017, always followed the older participants. Now, these participants were the older kids.

The mentors see a bigger effect of the community service on the tour, as they have now seen several types of community service throughout the years. They were consistent in their
stories, that the community service is what helps bring people together for the good of many. They have now witnessed service projects for The Willing Warriors project, to a food pantry, a river walk, and for CureSearch, to name a few. All of these projects, get more people involved as the participants continue to grow as individuals and as the communities see thirteen to fifteen-year old’s out there, doing something that no one else is doing in their own home town. The Potter Baseball Tour makes a pretty big statement, of giving back to communities.

As one mentor stated the following about community service and what it does for the communities.

> The community has a better idea of what it is because they see all the work that we're doing in the community to help them. In some places, it's inspired the residents there to get involved in the community. They'll reach out and try to have us back so we can help them more.

And as another mentor stated,

> I think it does a great thing for the tour. It gets the community ... It gives the community a reason to help with the tour, and be more involved, say like, they'll make us lunch and whatever, and provide some place to stay for the weekend, and we redo their field, or we help paint.

The perspective of the coaches/chaperones during tour grows daily upon what they see and hear. This next section will represent the coaches/chaperones perspective on the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour, reflecting on community service, life lessons, and baseball. Community service is something that continues to grow each and every day on the Potter Baseball Tour. As many participants on the tour try to “show off” or be an immediate “pleaser” towards the adults and team mates, the adults do not get excited. They do not get excited, as this show off mode falls
very quickly, and as all the chaperones say, “True colors of participants come out over time” and “you will see who the real people are as you spend more time on the tour and observe what happens.” As stated previously, community service on the Potter Baseball Tour is a daily outing. It is hard work, there is a lot of sweat involved, emotions get the best of everyone, and projects are accomplished. This just doesn’t happen overnight, but as coaches/chaperones/participants watch and listen to people they learn a lot about them.

The 2017 Potter Baseball Tour was no different from years past, community service continued to become better with more people involved, working with new organizations, and making a difference when a project was complete. The following are the stories and perceptions from the coaches/chaperones from the 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour in reference to community service.

When asked what they saw in the community service of what the participants were actually doing, they all saw great things happening. Not only with the community, but also with the participants growing as individuals and as a team. One of many things that many participants come away with from the tour is leadership. Leadership comes in many forms, one example on the tour is when someone steps up and becomes the leader on a project and is followed by the rest of the team. As one mentor states, there is always some natural leadership skills coming through and there are opportunities for these players to show their work and leadership through different ways.

The captain of the day is one of the leadership roles that all of the participants like to try to step up and be. It is typically rotated throughout the tour, “so every player has the opportunity to be in charge” for at least one day. This allows for each player to, “showcase their skills and traits.” Without the leadership and initiative from the players, the tour would not work. As it is
designed for the players to be in charge and taking control, as they make decisions about projects and events for successful completion.

As this coach/chaperone describes his perspectives of community service, “The boys are supposed to do most of the work, so I would just watch.” Maybe they'd need a little push here, or a push there and I would help to lead them in the right direction. Not on everything, but more “on things they may not have been doing exactly quite right.” Coaches/Chaperones had to be more than observers at time, sometimes to just help, but at other times to help the boys us a tool correctly. “I was simply there to kind of facilitate and help the process.”

Watching what these young men do is really impressive. A highlight for this coach was seeing the rebirth of the Willing Warriors Project in Hay Market. The boys help out many different people. One of his most memorial experiences is cleaning up this area. As the overgrown area wasn’t able to be used, it was hard to believe there was even a pond there. The kids jumped into action and cleaned this area which had been an area for people to come and visit and just enjoy the peacefulness. They were not able to do this, but when the boys were finished, it was pretty amazing. The boys also built a bench for the area.

To see something like that transform, it was, I mean, you couldn't even walk through parts of that. And they clean it up, and they had a nice place to sit and meditate, or whatever they wanted to do.

As the tour continued, “the change they make from day one to day thirty-one, is amazing.” “We saw kids, who couldn’t speak to adults or anyone else, kids who acted like knuckleheads, and they “turn into pretty good kids.” They get what the right thing is to do now, they show the for tenants of potter baseball, Passion, Hard-Work, Respect, and Selflessness. That’s what was amazing to this coach. “To see them change.” Some of those that participate are
the outcasts at times, but as we move toward the end, “they were accepted more than when we started.” The progress that is observed and the dynamics of how they interact with each other is truly a sign of the progress that is made.

**Life lessons.** As coaches and chaperones shared their perceptions about the players, the following stories became illustrative of what participants of the Potter Baseball Tour gained. One must remember, the tour is about not only growth as a team, but growth as an individual. Preparing these young boys, who become young men through the Potter Baseball Tour, to be passionate about everything they do, and to be respectful, hardworking, and selfless. As they stated, the tour has helped many participants become better people throughout the years.

One such example was shared through the story is of a player who was being picked on a lot his first year of the tour. This player didn’t even notice he was being picked on until Coach Potter asked him what he was doing. The player said, “I’m getting water for the guys.” What he didn’t realize was that he was doing a lot of the work the players could do for themselves. When coach brought this to his attention, he finally realized what was going on. He was really being bullied, picked on, and being made to do unnecessary things for others. Even though getting the water was a good thing, it was how the team was treating him and making him do things. At the end of this conversation the Coach asked, “How much longer are you going to let them do this to you?” This conversation resulted in his decision to take a stand for himself and not let it happen any more in any part of his life. An outcome of this, as he personally shared, was that throughout the rest of his high school career and on the tour, he was no longer bullied.

TF, was on the tour for a couple of years. This is a kid that was a pleaser in many ways. He tried and wanted to be a leader, but didn't have the personality to attract people to his leadership style and so oftentimes early in the tour, “he struggled to get other kids
to respect him.” TF was a very good spirited kid and maybe just lacked some personal skills on how to get people to go along with things. And not a lot of emotion in his personality. “I think he learned over the course of the tour over a couple of years to channel that emotion and earn the respect of some of the other players.”

TF made quite an emotional speech at the end on his last day of the tour when he finally left, that I think a lot of the other players respected. “He's a good example of somebody who is different that comes into the tour and kind of has to find a niche in order to figure out how you fit in, and at the same time, you don't fit in just to- you don't fit in in a way that's - that's you just simply conform to the group.” Participants use their strengths to fit into the tour. This coach/chaperone clearly pointed out:

You fit in using your strengths, and eventually- it might be tough at first- because everybody's different. It might be tough at first to fit in and for people to respect you, but over time, if you open yourself properly, become a little vulnerable and develop that trust, the comradery with each other, you do gain that respect.

JD is a very small kid compared to other kids his age in the group, as you look at him, overall thoughts are: he's small and he's not going to make a big impact in the group. “He was a quiet kid, unassuming and very humble for a younger boy.” This coach/chaperone saw him, “gradually take a stronger leadership role, not just vocal leadership, but through his personality but by quiet leading by example.” JD has become one of the true leaders on the tour. As of the 2017 tour, “he was becoming definitely an important staple on the Potter Tour and I'd say that he had a contribution to make.”

There’s LB a player who this coach/chaperone was totally shocked to learn that he was not even a baseball player. His brother was on the tour, so he decides to join the tour as well. The
one thing he is good at is he's in the Boy Scouts. LB is a very confident young man, with his leadership skills from the Scouts, “he made quite an impact on the service projects during the tour.” Baseball was not his forte in life, but he did play in a couple of games, giving it a try to help out. You know, kids respected him immensely. And I think he walked away gaining confidence that hey even though I don't know a thing about baseball, or don't know very much about baseball, I can still make an impact.

Summarizing this coach/chaperones perspective of the Potter Baseball Summer tour:
Life is intimidating when you don't know much about a subject but putting yourself out there and getting yourself involved, taking that risk, I think that was a big theme for all these players. It's something that is a valuable life lesson: that that's how you make an impact- you have to take a risk. Sometimes you fail. Sometimes others are going to look at you like you're funny or you don't know what you're doing, but all of these players experienced that feeling in some way shape or form. It's definitely a personality builder and something that you learn leadership skills and working together and that's all part of the goal I think that Jeff has in mind.

The life lessons on the tour are the bonus that seems to help these young boys to become young men. The tour does not teach them to be fearful of failing or to not attempt things, but does encourage them to learn from the mistakes they make. Coach pointed out how the tour makes them a better person:

They're allowed to make mistakes, and then the mistakes are pointed out to 'em. And then they're taught how to learn from their mistakes. I mean, you know ... bone head move, and talk about it and go from there. Grow from it and figure out not to do it again.”
The tour is about growth and what one does to become better at everyday life and giving back to the community. This growth is seen throughout the thirty days on tour. As participants grow from day one to the end, they hopefully “get it” by the end of the tour.

This coach also made this reference in relationship to LB.

He comes on the tour for the second year. He doesn't really play baseball. And both years, he's gone out on the field and played. He pitched the first time at East Butler. He stepped way out of the box on that one. He was way, way outside of the box on that one. That was, he was definitely out of his comfort zone. And that was, just to see that, just to see him do that, get out there and pitch, was something.

It gets even better, because he does it again on the 2017 tour. Coach has this to say about the 2017 appearances:

And you know, he did it again this year at, Oil City. He played the outfield, and did he hit? Yeah, he did hit the one time, I think. Yeah, to see him do that was pretty good too.”

**Research Question 2: How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?**

A careful review of the interviews with coaches and chaperones surfaced the following two themes as presented in Table 4 and discussed below.

Table 4

*Themes in response to research question 2*

| The service learning activities were designed so that the players would take responsibility for their individual and team effort |
| The coaches and chaperones acted as mentors with a focus on the players’ development, offering guidance and support when and where needed. |
The service learning activities were designed so that the players would take responsibility for their individual and team effort. The community service activities throughout the Baseball tour were designed so that the players would take responsibility for their individual and team work. Coach Potter designs all of the community service months in advance. Potter spends hours on the phone, using emails, and personal visits to all of the communities throughout the coming year. Through the use of a tour director for each tour stop, he spends numerous hours working through them to establish and design the community service for the following year.

As Coach Potter describes the community service component of the Potter Baseball Summer Tour,

The community work has evolved over the years. On the first years of the tour, we hinted at some community service on every tour stop, but as the tour has progressed, we have done more and more community service each year. Making a significant impact on the areas that we have been a part of.

The leading questions for designing of the community service that Coach Potter refers to are as follows:

1. Who are we doing the community service for?
2. What are we doing for the community service?
3. Who within the community can we get involved?
4. Does the community service proposed fit into our theme and goals for the month?
5. How do we bring the community together for this even?

Community service activities for the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour included:

- Yard clean ups after major storm damage,
- Helping with a walk-a-thon to raise money for two children with cancer,
- Working with a local library to bring young students to the library,
- Helping a not-for-profit working with the blind,
- A volleyball marathon to raise money for pediatric cancer,
- Volunteering at a recycling center,
- Clean up and paint dugouts at baseball fields on the tour,
- Reading workshop and crafts with participants, and
- Helped a family with yard maintenance, because their child had leukemia.

Coach Potter’s idea is that the boys have to take responsibility for the community service work and “figure it out” as they go, not unlike what they will have to do in life in many situations. Through their community service, it was expected that the players would end up “figuring it out” what needed to be done and take responsibility for that work, with guidance from the coaches and chaperones as needed. For example, the captain of the day was in charge of the team’s work on any particular day. The captain was mentioned several times throughout the interviews, making this person one that the team looks to every day. The captain helps to organize the team for the day and “lead the way of expectations and work” throughout the day, expecting others to follow.

As the team engaged in a variety of community service projects, challenges did not seem to halt the projects in anyway but served as opportunities for further learning. Each day the players were aggressive and wanting to achieve the goal for the day, as expectations for all involved are discussed at the site of the community service. And even when challenges were presented, players were expected to overcome them and carry on.
While the work was difficult at times, it was always able to be done and completed, with the mentors showing them how to use a tool or engage in an activity, for example, if they did not know how to do so. But from there the players were able to adjust very quickly and engage in the activity.

**The coaches and chaperones acted as mentors with a focus on the players’ development, offering guidance and support when and where needed.** As the Potter Baseball Tour’s engagement in community service continued to grow, the coaches and chaperones played a role in the growth of all involved. These individuals would help oversee the activity of the projects and offer insights and guidance when and where needed.

An example of such guidance is when the coaches and chaperones had to offer encouragement or redirection when needed. For instance, as some of the teenage boys would drift away from the project at hand, the coaches, chaperones, and mentors would have to step in and remind them of what was expected. As one coach stated, “Some players would find something to do, while others would wait for someone to tell them what to do. It’s all about initiative.” Interestingly, this would sometimes lead to some players feeling irritated with the others who did not “pull their weight” and about others who mysteriously disappeared for extended periods of time. Such things would then be brought up later in the day when recapping the day as a team.

Besides this guidance, the two coaches from the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour shared that they felt much more like teachers on the tour than adult supervisors. Being able to show the team how to use tools when needed, or offering suggestions of making sure to check and double check their work, had an impact on all of those involved. Continuing to lead by example and do the jobs they were assigned for the projects also helped to show the younger players that hard work
pays off. The 2017 Potter Baseball Team was, “great with getting work done and there were plenty of players that were able to step up and get others to do their work.”

This behavior then became an area of growth for individuals and the team. Over time, mentors observed the players really coming together. At the beginning, the players were slow at getting things done and really taking their time. But once the players realized the bigger picture and how they had to work as a team, their time and commitment improved. As one mentor said, “I still notice how as the month progressed the boys seemed to work together a lot better and normally try to get the work done quicker.”

Coach Potter’s way of engaging the students was by telling them that anything was possible, but that the boys have to want to make things better for others. This is also when the coaches and chaperones would remind the team to check the work before sharing it with others. As this mentor added, “At the end of it everyone was happy with the work the team did but at the same time they seemed more impressed when attention was payed to those small details.”

As is true with most work, plans did not always go as expected and sometimes the expectations were fairly high for teenage boys. They could do most of the work, but in some cases the work simply took them a little longer. If the boys struggled at all, it appeared to be out of a lack of understanding of what needed to be done. As one coach said,

The boys have to come up to speed to get the work done and sometimes the learning curve takes longer than expected. If the projects are something they have done or are familiar with, it will usually go as expected. The boys work hard in the beginning as would be expected. If the task is too much, then they tend to drop off much faster and slow down.
As one mentor stated, “when the projects were just busy work the boys seemed to float away from the project goal.” As the coach said, “Some of the projects are busy work and it's hard to keep them interested in what needs to be done.” Keeping the boys interested on the projects is a task. However,

If they can see that they are accomplishing something positive, then it makes it much easier to get them to do the necessary work to get the project done. For the most part, the boys are easy to guide in the right direction to get the work done.

Ultimately, the completion of the project is the ultimate victory. The players would see accomplishment at the end of the day. As one coach said:

The best part of the whole project work, is to see the reaction of the person or people that the project is intended to help. The projects that help kids are the best and most rewarding. They are usually the ones that the boys pick as their favorite days on the tour.

As this coach/chaperone describes his perspective, he describes the roles of the coaches and mentors is that of facilitating the process. The adults are always wanting to jump in and show the boys the proper way to do something. However, the mentors were always reminded by Coach Potter to put the onus on the players. As he said, “Coach Potter always encourages the other coaches and mentors to take a supportive role and facilitate the process, so sometimes it was difficult to let the process unfold and let the boys figure it out.”

This coach went on to describe the type of questioning used to help the boys make decisions while completing the community service. “Ask them questions so that they can discover the answer themselves,” he added. While pressed to help the players discover answers for themselves in the process, they also needed to offer guidance when and where needed to
make sure the work was done correctly and accurately, so that in the end they could be proud of
the work accomplished. As he added,

As we want youth to experience failure and take risks – even when it is
uncomfortable. With supportive adults around, peers that are trying to achieve the same
goal, and with a method of providing feedback and learning, the process leads to growth
and development while achieving a community service goal.

This coach summarized the community service as supporting the boys to “figure it out,”
even if it does take a little extra time. This is what the tour is all about, life lessons, and learning
how to work through issues or difficult decisions that are thrown at you. If everyone participates
and does as much as they can, the reward is more fulfilling. As he added, “It is a lot more
rewarding for everyone if they can do as much on their own as possible. They definitely learn
more that way.”

Summary

This study is a case study of a Month-Long Community Service Project: The Potter
Baseball Tour incorporating acts of community service. The researcher interviewed two coaches,
two mentors, and six participants of the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour. In addition, the researcher
evaluated pictures and video data from the 2017 summer tour.

The themes evolved from interviews from coaches/chaperones, mentors, and participants
of their perceptions of the tour. Community service (service learning), through the many projects
and giving back to help others through many different events, without expecting anything in
return for the work. Life lessons, were those lessons of being put into situations and having to
figure out how to make everything work, or “trying to figure it out.” The bonus theme was that
of baseball. Baseball was the glue that brought everyone together, as there were many baseball
games and clinics, which were used to teach additional leadership, responsibility, and team work.

To summarize these themes, the community service was an overall forte of the Potter
Summer Baseball Tour. Not all participants were baseball players, as some of the participants
only did the tour for the community service. Giving back to the communities, in which the
participants did not know anyone or belong to, led the tour to new levels of involvement.
Community service provided team work, meeting new people, and participants becoming leaders
for the future. The participants of the Potter Baseball Tour experienced the community service
and giving back to others through service learning, as they completed many events to help others
in need.

Life lessons were taught and learned through, working hard for a common goal, working
as an individual and working as a team. The individual growth of the participants allowed the
young boys to become young men. Following the four tenants of Potter Baseball: Passion, Hard-
Work, Respect, and Selflessness the participants came together as a team and accomplished
many projects over the month-long journey.

Baseball was the common bond bringing the participants together. Baseball helped them
to apply the knowledge and skills gained through the community service and the life lessons, to
be better people. Forms of leaders emerged as well: leaders, followers, and observers. All three
were working towards giving back and doing for others. Leaders emerged and followers and
observers maintained what they needed to do. In every situation, they all played a different role,
while maintaining the end prize as the ultimate goal of the day.

Community service (service learning), life lessons, and baseball were wrapped into a
month-long adventure, that changed lives every day. The continued support of all three themes
throughout the tour by many people, all working towards a common goal, The Potter Summer Baseball Tour 2017. The experiences described within this chapter, contributes only a small portion of what the experience was like for these young men and the rest of the team, as well as for the mentors and coaches. All of the themes and experiences presented the true understanding of the Potter Baseball Summer Tour and presented perspectives of those interviewed.
Chapter V: Discussion of the Findings

Revisiting the Problem of Practice

Over the past century, the practices on how to teach young adolescents have changed, yet the concerns about well-being and growth have not. The public education system in the United States has experienced many challenges due to population growth and expansion of services that accommodate all students, regardless of race and physical or mental abilities (Juvonen, Le, Kaganoff, Augustine, & Constat, 2004). The rise in student assessments at every grade level has caused an alarming trend toward traditional curriculum that often promotes and rewards students for rote learning versus the development of critical thinking skills through conceptual learning (Kielsmeier, 2011).

Since the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002, there are growing concerns among educators regarding teaching for the test. State-wide assessments of reading, writing, and mathematics have been implemented to promote accountability among educators, more so than student academic performance, which was the original intent of the Act that was backed by educational research. When time and money are also driving factors behind this trend, teachers are forced to teach to the test, because, in many states, their jobs depend upon students getting passing grades, regardless of their learning abilities, disabilities, or socio-economics and family life. Teaching to the test has detrimental effects that may prevent students’ access to a more inclusive, well-rounded education (Fluellen, 2011), because it promotes mnemonics versus conceptual learning, as well as linear reasoning versus critical thinking and creativity. The potential loss of critical thinking and individuality has become a greater concern throughout the United States (Fluellen, 2011; Higgins, Miller, & Wegmann, 2006).
Adding to these potential problems, yet extending beyond the classroom environment, are concerns about children losing their ability to learn social skills, because so much of their time is spent on electronic devices, such as computers, smartphones, and tablets (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). There is a growing fear of a loss of interpersonal communication through direct contact, as opposed to the growing trend of communication through texting and instant messaging through social media websites (Drussell, 2012). Online communication has its benefits, but at what costs to the children caught in the ever-growing trend of digitally based communities, while they are living and learning in their physical communities.

Adolescents caught up in digital environments face risks to their safety and skill development (Drussell, 2012). According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013), “the evidence is now clear that online environments can and do contribute substantially to many different risks and health problems that children and teenagers learn from, and may be negatively influenced by, the media” (p. 1). The problem for school aged adolescents may be two-fold: a loss of critical thinking and lack of interpersonal skills. These skills are necessary for personal growth and their ability to thrive within the quickly evolving modern society.

**Review the Methodology**

This case study examined a month-long Community Service Project: The Potter Baseball Tour. This study presented the experiences and perspectives of six to seven adolescents and three coaches involved with the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball Tour based out of Odenton, Maryland. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through
those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

2. How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?

As such, this research study investigated how coaches/chaperones, mentors, and participants (players) of the Potter Baseball Tour observed and perceived service learning through community service projects over a month-long tour.

The overarching goal of this study was to capture participants’ experience on the baseball tour and the perceived outcomes on student learning. The research design included interviews with coaches/chaperones, mentors, and players. The interviews allowed all interviewees to explain their experiences and perceptions of the Potter Baseball Tour. The additional evaluation of pictures and videos from the 2017 Potter Baseball Tour were used for additional triangulation of data. Through the interviews the participants were able to share their personal stories and perspectives of the Potter Baseball Tour 2017.

After conducting the interviews, the researcher analyzed the transcripts of participant interviews and focus groups looking for common and discrepant themes across participants. The researcher also reviewed pictures and videos from the 2017 Potter Baseball tour as well as the Potter Baseball website and promotional information to triangulate the data with information received from the interviews. The researcher employed in-vivo, descriptive, and pattern coding to develop themes aligned with each research question. Finally, after vigilant review and analysis, the researcher developed themes across participants by research question, as presented in Chapter IV.
In this chapter, the researcher presents a discussion of the major findings, a discussion of the findings in relationship to the theoretical framework, a discussion of findings in relationship to the literature review, a statement of the significance of the study, implications for practice, limitations, and considerations for future research.

**Discussion of Major Findings**

Through a deliberate analysis of the interviews and a review of pictures and video from several sources, themes emerged. From these themes the researcher identified three key findings of the study, as follows:

1. The Potter Baseball Summer Tour 2017 participants benefited through on-going Community Service projects daily, contributing to their understanding of doing for others, their understanding of team work and how it impacts others, and the understanding of life lessons and to use this knowledge in the future.

2. Life Lessons as presented on the Potter Baseball Tour by the mentors were reinforced by the various activities’ participants were engaged in throughout the tour.

3. The multiple clinics, baseball playing, and community service opportunities foregrounded targeted life skills, leadership skills, and participants’ ability to work with others.

The Potter Baseball Summer Tour 2017 participants benefited through on-going Community Service projects daily, contributing to their understanding of doing for others, their understanding of team work and how it impacts others, and the understanding of life lessons and to use this knowledge in the future. Participants understanding of doing for others consisted of several stories as told through interviews within chapter four. Participants were able to understand the concept of doing for others on a daily basis and not expecting anything in
The benefit of understanding team work and how it impacts others, contributed to successful projects. All of the projects were team oriented and as a team, the participants had to figure out how to do each project. Within each project, there were always leaders, followers, and others that tried to observe the process. As leaders emerged daily to lead the way and planned out what needed to be done, the total team effort was evident, as projects were completed with everyone’s involvement. All participants found roles within every project to help complete them. There was a job for everyone to do and all participants helped to make a difference. The impact on others from the projects was life changing and establishing a new sense of community for the project area.

The life lessons the participants learn through the experience helps them with future situations or challenges that they might face. As several examples were given in chapter four, the participants continued to expand on what it was like to learn about what to do and what not to do when working with people. They have learned how to shake hands, look people in the eyes when you talk to them, and how to show respect for all people they come into contact with. Some participants also recalled, how they were able to remember how to get through a situation from the tour, and apply this knowledge to their current situation. Without the life lessons or helping to make the participants become young men, the participants said they would not return to the tour. Participants believe that the life lessons will help them for their future endeavors.
All participants credited their learning to completing service projects as a team, giving back to each community while expecting nothing in return for the work. According to the participants, the tour is designed around giving to others and expecting nothing in return for their work. As you “Do the Right Thing” no matter how hard or unpopular it may be, the longer lasting results of helping others is more beneficial to all involved. Participants agreed that the community service projects at times were strenuous work and demanded a lot of physical labor. At other times, the work was not difficult, but still required a lot of work. The team became responsible for the entire project and how their efforts would affect others in the future.

The coaches, chaperones, and mentors also found this to be true, not only with the players, but for themselves as well. These individuals, as presented in chapter 4, were able to see growth in the participants of the month-long tour. They observed that the participants’ contribution to the projects helped players to appreciate “doing the right thing” above and beyond simply being a spectator and not helping to improve others’ lives. Through the guidance of the coaches/chaperones and mentors, true life lessons become prosperous and allowed for a successful journey.

**Life Lessons as presented on the Potter Baseball Tour by the mentors were reinforced by the various activities’ participants were engaged in throughout the tour.** The mentors throughout the Potter Baseball Tour continuously encourage and lead by example as life lessons are presented. The mentors work to help the participants of the tour in any way they can. While working on projects, the mentors will often just jump in and lead by example as they get their hands as dirty as the participants do. At the same time, the mentors will patiently watch and listen to what is happening and wait for the special moment to jump in and lend a hand. They are always trying to find a teaching moment, to allow the participants to build on the knowledge they
are gaining, and are able to use previous lessons taught to help them understand what to do and how to do it at that particular time or encourage the participants to remember the lesson and store the lesson away for them to use in their future.

All participants described the daily lessons and activities as learning experiences that contributed to one’s perspective. Participants readily stated that these lessons, although learned on the tour, were relevant to real life scenarios beyond the tour. Participants were able to reflect back on the tour and speak to how they or the team was able to handle a situation, and then use the experience to help them consider their current contexts. As life lessons evolved throughout the tour, participants describe them as something you learn, that benefits you for something in the future.

Throughout the tour participants were put into a variety of situations with many different people across several projects. These projects enabled several members of the tour to become leaders, followers, observers or a combination of the three. As the tour is designed to help participants to become all three of these, the participants recognized that they are sometimes not suited to be a leader and must be a follower. They might try to lead, but realize they are outside of their expertise and then they become a follower, while supporting the leaders within who have taken charge.

The participants had a sense of becoming a real person, learning to be more respectful and become more aware of the needs of other and how they could work to assist them regarding their situations. Learning to give back as they did, in short, “do the right thing,” has improved their being as a person and not expecting anything in return as they help others. Many participants add that they need to start doing more at home to help others and give back.
The multiple clinics, baseball playing, and community service opportunities foregrounded targeted life skills, leadership skills, and participants’ ability to work with others. The multiple clinics, baseball playing, and community service opportunities allowed the participants to understand the skills of life, leadership, and the ability to work with others. The baseball settings provided the opportunities for participants to be involved with the aforementioned skills. Within clinics, participants were able to be the leaders or a follower, but each participant was able to work with the entire team and all involved. The leadership skills of being in charge, assigning duties, telling the others how the clinic was working for said day, as well as making an effort to also be a student and learn from all of the youth that were involved for the day. As a leader, the participants had control of the clinics, as well as the design and implementation of skills. As followers, participants had to step it up and help to make sure things went according to the plan. When and if the plan wasn’t working, a mentor or chaperone would offer advice to get things back on track. Finally, the ability to work with others was an essential skill that was taught daily. Working through the service projects, clinics, or any other event, working with others came to the forefront of everything. As the participants had to make sure the goals for the day or the project that was taking place, was accomplished, working with others to create an atmosphere of a complete team helped to embody the end result.

All involved with the tour described baseball as the common ground bringing the participants together on the Tour. Through baseball clinics and games, participants were provided the opportunity to apply the skills they were developing while on the tour and become leaders. The baseball opportunities helped participants hone their skills in playing the game but also helped them to build their individual skills for dealing with people, talking to people, helping people, and how to be organized in the big picture of life. Life is not about baseball, but
the skills and lessons learned through the sport, with discipline, individual work, and team work, contributed to their own individual growth and how they can contribute to the lives of others and their communities.

Learning through baseball created a development of life skills giving the players the ability to be put into situations where they could be leaders. As tour participants worked with younger developing players in clinic settings, they were able to transfer the skills being taught from themselves to those just learning the game. They were able to help and develop proper technique or help a younger player become more successful using a new drill to develop consistency for building long term skills.

**Discussion of Findings in relationship to the Theoretical Framework**

The focus of this study was how community service in the context of a month-long baseball tour impacted students’ learning and perspectives through service learning projects and all that came with being part of a baseball learning tour. The Potter Baseball Tour, accomplished positive gains for the participants and communities involved. The theoretical framework from Giles & Eyler (1994) and Robertson (1990) served as the theoretical lens for the researcher to examine the adolescents’ motivations, experiences, and outcomes, as well as the adult mentors’ roles and how the Potter Baseball Tour influenced service-learning in which young people contribute to their communities. The Potter Baseball community, was large in size and covered the states of Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.

The young men who participated on the tour, continuously worked towards giving back to every community they visited. As the framework indicates, the Potter Baseball Tour actively gives back to the community through service, as there is no expectation of return. The tour, relates the concepts of what these young men have learned in school, to real life lessons, as they
actively are involved in several projects and events. The young men were able to accomplish, the goal of giving back over the month-long event to several communities as, what they did had no walls or barriers to restrict true learning from taking place.

As the learning takes place outside the classroom setting, the participants were taught valuable lesson using high-level thinking principles and real-life situations to learn how to work as an individual and with a team to make a difference for someone else. These projects and events allowed the participants to understand situations in life, giving back to others, and the process of working on a team for the greater good. When the participants become older, they will be able to reflect on these experiences and be able to make decisions for the right reasons and not to promote one’s self to be better than others.

Each participant was given the opportunity to be leaders, followers, and the option of getting out of the way. The tour teaches, in every way aspect of facing a challenge, there are always leaders who step up and come up with a plan of action. The followers help the leader to get to the end of the challenge, no matter what they have to do, and then there are the people who just need to get out of the way.

Participants continually used their critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration to benefit communities through positive interactions and outcomes. participants used these skills to be able to find solutions and strategies to set their agendas for the service they were doing, as well as with lessons learned they had the ability to create positive outcomes and learn for future endeavors. Participants described several times throughout the interview process, that the lessons learned from the tour, have helped them to be better people in their own communities. Showing more respect towards others, lending a helping hand when needed, and not being asked to help, they just jump in and do things now. Participants described the idea of being able to think outside
the box and make decisions, as they try to look at the big picture of life and not just in the moment.

Participants should continue to reflect on the accomplishments and the challenges faced throughout the Potter Baseball Tour and use the outcomes for their success outside of the tour in everyday life. Reflecting on the how and why of they were able to accomplish the many goals and projects, will allow them to use the knowledge gained through critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration skills to build many more positive outcomes. Individuals will always be leaders and followers, but how they use these newly acquired skills will help them to identify their involvement in their future endeavors. The use of service learning helped all in involved to see a greater picture of where help was needed for a greater cause and benefit for others.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to the Literature Review

The findings from the study have a strong connection with the literature presented in Chapter 2. The literature review focused on two main area of work.

1. Community service, and

2. Service Learning programs

Connections between the findings of this study to each these two areas are reviewed below.

Community service. The findings of this study were consistent with research and the literature review pertaining to community service and service learning. As stated in the literature review, community service provides adolescents with an opportunity to explore their expanded boundaries and sense of self (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012; Drussel, 2012; Giles & Eyler, 1994; Goethem et al., 2014). This was also true of the Potter Baseball tour, as all participants were working towards daily goals of giving back and not expecting anything in return for their work. This is one of the principles continuously spoken of throughout the tour. The community
service they have encounter throughout the tour placed them into situations where they encountered challenges. This allowed them to experience psychological growth that coincides with developmental milestones (Bruce-Davis & Chancey, 2012). In this venue, community service became a way to test their political and social ideologies, so that they could reject or refine them to fit within their new experiences across communities (Seider et al., 2012).

In addition, the gain of positive attributes through community service allowed participant to show an increase in self-esteem and self-concept (Celio et al., 2011; Furco & Root, 2010; Goethem et al., 2014). As the participants learned “outside of a classroom” and in real life situations, they learned about what others might be going through who may be less fortunate than them, which allowed for a greater sense of the issues and concerns across communities (Bringle et al., 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1998; Furco & Root, 2010; Henderson et al., 2013; Kirshner & Ginwright, 2012; Rockenbach, Hudson, & Tuchmayer, 2014). The Potter Baseball Community service projects supported participants to be better human beings, while promoting values and morals, and contributed toward positive engagement in citizenship (Furco & Root, 2010; Rockenbach et al., 2014).

Service-Learning programs. Learning through doing and giving back to others has a direct impact on those in need of help and brings about knowledge of the underserved populations within a community (Holsapple, 2015). Through the designed leadership opportunities, the participants were given opportunities to make choices to help others. Looking into the big picture, research continually shows that involvement in such activities provides many benefits for individual participants and community groups (Furco & Root, 2010).

Service learning can be a strategy to help others learn lifelong lessons that will guide them for future endeavors. As participants build on what they are doing, service learning is
active learning as participants contribute to their communities (Kielsmeier, 2011). To help participants learn and develop for the future, engaging them in opportunities to develop and exhibit their skills to others can greatly contribute to their development. Within the high-quality service completed, participants were using cognitive and academic skills to not only solve problems but design and implement solutions for community service projects presented to them on a daily basis.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of the Case Study was to understand the experiences and perspectives of six adolescents, two mentors, and two coaches involved with the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball Tour based out of Odenton, Maryland. The study sought out to understand these participants’ opportunities to help and design the future of the tour and to help to encourage more tour participants in the future. The research study used an instrumental single case study to understand the questions:

1. What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

2. How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?

To achieve the goals of the study, the researcher selected the Potter Baseball Summer Tour in its eighth year of existence. The researcher gathered data through interviews of the participants, the website, as well as analyzing 2017 summer tour pictures and videos. The researcher interviewed several participants of the baseball tour and engaged in multi-step coding process to develop
themes in relationship to the research questions. Finally, the researcher discussed the themes in relationship to the theoretical framework and review of the literature as presented in this study.

After analysis of the evidence and literature, three major findings emerged. First, Community Service and Social Learning Projects are a continuous way of giving back to help others through many different events, without expecting anything in return for the work. Participants gained value to the experience throughout the tour. Several projects were completed on a daily basis, participants were able to gain an understanding of doing for others, understanding of team work and how it impacts others, and the understanding of life lessons and to use this knowledge in the future. The experiences will never be the same, as the next team to be together will have different participants, different projects, and different community locations. Therefore, this once in a life team experience, becomes more special for everyone involved.

Secondly, engaging the participants in life lessons of being put into situations and having to figure out how to make everything work, or “trying to figure it out” is an example of a learning environment way bigger than that of a classroom. The experiences of being leaders and followers, helped to engage the participants in real life situations as they found solutions to the problem or project given to them. The continued growth of becoming stronger as a person and as a team member showed strength to all participants. No one was left behind, everyone was encouraged to work harder daily and to be a part of the team. The everyday battle of being away from home, not seeing your family, and being with strangers did take a toll on the participants. This is also part of the life lessons taught, as this helps you as a person become stronger and able to fight through adversity to better not only others, but yourself.

Finally, baseball is the sport that brings the participants together, but is used as a tool to teach leadership, responsibility, and team work. As not all of the participants were baseball
players, this did not stop them from getting out of their own bubbles and trying to become better each time they were on the field. As life lessons create better people, they started to understand that the challenges of being on a baseball field, were very similar to that of the month-long tour. They learned that challenges can be faced and with hard work and help from others, anything is possible to accomplish. These major findings address the research questions outlined above.

**Significance of the Study**

This research study investigated how coaches/chaperones, mentors, and participants (players) of the Potter Baseball Tour observed and perceived the outcomes of participants’ engagement in service learning through community service projects over a month-long summer baseball tour. In addition, this study examined roadblocks and hurdles to implementation in providing such a service-learning opportunity that took place outside any particular educational institution while providing guidance on how to properly plan, recruit, and potentially implement such a program.

The participants agreed the service learning projects were a life changing experience that they would all like to continue to do throughout their lives. Giving back to others, expecting nothing in return has helped them to see that by doing good, the reward far outweighs the materialistic things of today. Learning to understand other people and their situations of life, helped to build the participants understanding of those in need. The experiences they encountered and then shared have contributed to them growing into young men, able to make decisions based upon skills learned.

Through the projects, not only was the community service a focus, but many leadership skills learned and encountered to help them understand the challenges that one might have in this position. The benefit of leadership and giving back, not only will help them in life, but also in
their schooling and possible jobs for the future. This study also examined the support from the team and how they contributed to the overall success of the projects. The resilience of all participants, no matter what the challenge, to work towards the end results in several different roles, continued to show the impact of the participants on the many communities.

The final piece of the Potter Baseball Tour is BASEBALL. Baseball is the one thing that unites all of the participants together, to build a team that comes together as one to do so many amazing things. As baseball, is a game of lessons learned and how well you accomplish the small tasks to win the game, based on the ability to accomplish the fundamentals. The Potter Baseball Tour is like a game of baseball. The team shows up, not knowing anyone else involved and then accomplishes many projects throughout the month. They use all of the skills and life lessons they learn to make this all happen. Through the perseverance to complete many projects, completing the many different forms of hard work and not knowing how to do a job, but figuring it out, and the ability to become better a person all while leaving the communities in a better place the substantial gain of the Potter Baseball Tour.

**Recommendations**

After careful review of the research findings, the researcher offers the following recommendations for the Potter Baseball Tour to consider:

1. Create a plan to be able to measure the growth of the team.
2. Connect the learning of the tour to some type of document for continued evaluation of projects and experiences while on the tour.
3. Engaging more communication with families while on the tour.
4. This program needs to be on a bigger scale and helping more of our youth to become better humans.
5. Yearly evaluation of the program.

6. Participants should be completing some type of formal evaluation to really understand their growth from the beginning to the end.

7. Evaluate participants who completed the tour for several years.

8. Evaluate participants from each tour and follow up with them years down the road, to see how the tour impacted their lives.

Create a plan to be able to measure the growth of the team. Through the use of technology and/or google docs, create a baseline for all players at the beginning of the tour. Throughout the tour, continuously have players updating information, i.e. community service projects information, baseball clinics/games, people they have met and contact information. The possible idea of a physical fitness evaluation of each player as the tour begins, throughout the tour, they document what they are doing, at the end of the tour an evaluation of the body to understand the progress.

Connect the learning of the tour to some type of document for continued evaluation of projects and experiences while on the tour. The use of a Google Docs, for players to document their journey and what is happening to them while on the tour. This document could be then help to evaluate the success of each player individually and as a team in the end.

Engaging more communication with families while on the tour. Communication needs to be improved to keep everyone involved. Through the use of social media outlets, daily updates can be made by all involved, allowing the families to become more involved. The more communication that is offered, could lead to more involvement from families/friends, which could lead to the tour becoming even bigger. Possible options for this: captains in charge, participants designated daily, or an adult designated as part of their responsibilities.
This program needs to be on a bigger scale and helping more of our youth to become better humans. This program needs to be looked at from a bigger perspective and shared with more than just those involved now. This type of program is in demand for youth across the country. The possibilities of connecting with larger organizations to promote the program have to be investigated. As the program has now proven itself for eight years, contributing to young men becoming more successful from the lessons they learned on the tour, to helping with school projects and college entrance essays.

**Yearly evaluation of the program.** An evaluation of the program with participants, parents, and those helped completing some type of survey to really know how much the participants really get out of it. The participants talk about things, but don’t offer any concrete evidence of what they really did.

**Participants should be completing some type of formal evaluation to really understand their growth from the beginning to the end.** Creating an end of the tour survey to understand the growth of the participants. Knowing what was great and what they didn’t like, could help future tours in organizing events and projects.

**Evaluate participants who completed the tour for several years.** Several players have come back and repeated the tour for several years, evaluation of why they continue to return and do the tour is needed. This would help to find more ways to continue the relationships built on the tour. The mentors, are returning players – what is the drive to get them to come back and be with the younger participants?

**Evaluate participants from each tour and follow up with them years down the road, to see how the tour impacted their lives.** The use of technology can help with creation of where are they now type of document that needs to be posted. A small biography of the participants and
what they are doing now. They could also tell how the tour affected their decisions and helped them to become what they are today. This would allow for everyone to see what the past participants have become.

Validity of the Study

To add to the validity of this study, the researcher included participants with a broad range of time spent on the tour. Prior to the interviews, the researcher informed the participants of the study as well as reminded them of his positionality. He assured the participants anonymity. As the researcher had become a staff member of the Potter Baseball Program, the participants reported a comfort with their responses. Further, the researcher clarified his biases and outlined the research propositions before the start of the study. The researcher also followed researcher guides and questions to ensure the validity of the data collected.

Participants were selected to reflect the 2017 tour participants. Those selected, were first contacted by the founder of the Potter Baseball Tour, asked if they would be interested in the study and then replied to the researcher. The researcher took measures outlined to ensure the validity of the data and the findings of the study.

Limitations of the Study

The greatest limitation in this case study was that the case study was limited to one organization that does this service learning in a particular way. The researcher could not find any other program like the Potter Baseball Program, where participants were on the road, away from their own families, and staying in strangers’ homes for a month-long activity and doing service learning through community service and baseball. The Potter Baseball Program has successfully changed lives over the past eight years, while working with organizations in four states.
Additional research would need to be conducted to determine to what extent any of these factors translated into the program.

Given the small sample size of participants in this study, claims cannot be grossly generalized across all participants or across all those engaging in the Baseball Tours in previous years. All participants were members of the 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour. Those interviewed participants, mentors, and coaches/chaperones all volunteered for the study. The invitation to participate was sent to all thirty participants of the 2017 tour. The study is only compromised of those participants on the 2017 tour. Another limitation is that the researcher was a coach/chaperone on the 2017 tour. Being a participant of the tour, participants could have made sure it was the answers were politically correct.

**Future Research Considerations**

As this study investigates the overall perceptions and experiences of participants, future studies should be conducted with additional programs in keeping with the premise, structure, focus, and goals of similar programs. Studies should be conducted in other similar programs across the country, provided they can be found. Expanding this study to other programs would allow researchers to investigate findings across settings.

As this researcher conducted the study with a focus on those participants on the eighth year of the tour, future studies could include outcomes from across previous tours and future tours. This would also allow for researchers to understand how the tour helped participants to grow and the impact that it had on their future.

Future studies could include:

1. A case study of the parents of the participants that have participated on the Potter Baseball Tour and their perceptions of the tour and the impact on their child.
2. A case study of all the past participants of the Potter Baseball Tour and a comparison of the experiences and perceptions throughout each year, from transitioning from all baseball and some service to mostly service and some baseball.

3. A case study of college fraternities or sororities and the experience and perceptions of the students throughout their collegiate semester or years.

4. A case study of a mission’s trip to in the United States or to a foreign country to examine the perceptions and attitudes while working on service learning projects through community service

**Personal Comments**

I am amazed at what the Potter Baseball Summer Tour has become over the years. As my first involvement with the tour was just as a spectator to now being a coach/chaperone, I look forward to having committed to several more years of involvement and planning of the future of the tour. I have seen the program grow from primarily being a baseball development effort to that of being community service organization with baseball as a bonus. I was given the opportunity to witness this program first hand and I must say it truly is unbelievable. Witnessing the growth of participants from their participation the first day to the last day of the tour, is an amazing journey, life changing are the only words that I can find to describe it.

I have had the opportunity to try and find another program that replicates the Potter Baseball Summer Tour and the development of the youth that are involved. I have yet to find any program like this across the country. This program is monumental with building the young boys involved and helping them become young men, who are able to function in society. The participants come from all different types of backgrounds, different social statuses, and different communities. The hands-on approach of community service through getting out into the
communities and making something happen through service learning projects, helps these young men to become leaders, followers, and most importantly respectful young men who can talk to people while looking the in the eyes and shaking someone’s hand when they first meet you.

As I witnessed the 2017 tour, I believe that these young men have made admirable contributions to the communities in which service was completed. From building playgrounds, to working at food pantries, and running 5k’s, their impact was life changing on the people they came into contact with. I could not believe how all of them interacted with so many people and contributed to their communities.

The community service opportunities happened on a daily basis and were never the same, with everyone participating on the tour involved in some way. The leadership skills that are taught are by far some of the best examples for participants to truly understand what it is to be a leader and how the life lessons they are participating in will help them for the future. While the baseball opportunities existed as well, it was amazing to see how these players came together in so many settings and grow daily as individuals and as a team. The individual growth witnessed in each player was remarkable, but I believe the team bond was equally special as an outcome of their service to others too.

Several baseball opportunities are offered as well throughout the tour. The experiences with baseball have been just as climatic as that of the community service. Being able to see the lives of so many youths touched by baseball on the tour is one of the many highlights, but seeing the growth in the participants throughout the month-long journey is even more amazing. They really do come in as young boys and leave as young men. The bond that has been created by all participants, mentors, and coaches, is such an extended family. The experiences we have shared,
have been life changing and will never be matched. I hope the future tours can be just as amazing as 2017.

**What Has Changed In Me?**

Completing the dissertation phase of my degree has changed me as a person. The many challenges that one faces daily in life has taught me that perseverance is so much more than just getting things done on a daily basis. I have tried to plan for daily life happenings and how actions of others have affected those around me. I’ve gained knowledge that now allows me to continuously look at the bigger picture on a larger scale. I now see more of what others are doing and how their actions affect others. I also find myself observing more of how others perceive the actions of those around them and want to know more of what people think about a situation.

The joy of seeing the service learning come to life is truly more than I can describe. The joy I have witnessed in others from this service is something I want to experience more. I hope to implement this concept into my band program and other school programs, as well as the other programs I am involved with. I will continue to try to make a difference every day, leading by example and educating those I come into contact with about service-learning!
References


Appendix A - IRB Approval

NOTIFICATION OF IRB ACTION

Date: February 12, 2018
IRB #: CPS17-12-19

Principal Investigator(s):
Chris Unger
Scott M DiTullio

Department:
Doctor of Education Program
College of Professional Studies

Address:
20 Belvidere
Northeastern University

Title of Project:
Case Study of a Month-Long Community Service Project: The Potter Baseball Tour

Participating Sites:
*Potter Baseball Tour permission forthcoming*

DHHS Review Category:
Expedited #6, #7

Informed Consents:
One (1) signed parent/guardian consent and child assent form
One (1) signed consent for adults

Monitoring Interval:
12 months

APPROVAL EXPIRATION DATE: FEBRUARY 11, 2019

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

Nan C. Regina, Director
Human Subject Research Protection

Northeastern University FWA #4630
Appendix B
Request for Permission to undertake the Study by the
Potter Baseball Tour

DATE, February 2018

Dear Mr. Potter,

As you are aware, I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Northeastern University and am in the process of completing the dissertation stage of the program. I am focusing my research on the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. I am studying the examination of an adolescent’s experience is to gain an understanding of their cognitive growth and development of interpersonal communication skills through their experience, as observed and perceived by them and others. This research will also explore the coach’s perspective of program development, implementation, and how the participants successfully navigate the challenges placed before them.

Using a qualitative method approach specifically a retrospective case study, I will attempt to understand aspects of 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour, through the participants and the coach/chaperones. I am looking to interview the coaches/chaperones and 6 – 10 of the participants. Through their perceptions and stories about their experiences, I hope to be able to understand what elements of your program are most impactful from a service learning perspective. In addition, I hope to gain some insight on how participants perceive the impact of their experience in previous baseball tours. As part of the research process, I will design interview questions and research procedures, collect data, and develop themes informed by the analysis of the data. The themes will help discover the elements of the program that are most influential in the creation of service learning projects.

I firmly believe that this case study will benefit the Potter Baseball Program as well as similar programs contemplating or already implementing service learning projects. As such, as part of an additional research goal, I intend to describe how the implementation of the Potter Baseball Program might be replicable in other educational and sports settings.

There will be no pressure for anyone to participate. It will be made clear this study is voluntary. All potential participants will be told that neither you, nor any of your staff will know who did or did not participate in my study. I am respectfully asking for a list of potential participants, parental contacts, and coaches that might be willing to participate in this study. Please share my email, ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu with the list of participants so they can volunteer directly to me. I will then email them with an offer to answer any questions they may have as well as sending them the appropriate consent forms.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (814-229-9764 or ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu or my faculty advisor, Dr. Chris Unger at Northeastern University, (857) 272-8941. I look forward to hearing from you regarding this request for permission.

Sincerely,
Scott DiTullio
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Appendix C

Letter to Coaches/Chaperones

Dear [Coach/Chaperone],

My Name is Scott DiTullio, I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Northeastern University and am in the process of completing the dissertation stage of the program. I am in the dissertation phase and focusing my research on the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. I am studying the examination of an adolescent’s experience is to gain an understanding of their cognitive growth and development of interpersonal communication skills through their experience, as observed and perceived by them and others. This research will also explore the coaches perspective of program development, implementation, and how the participants successfully navigate the challenges placed before them. I will attempt to understand aspects of 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour, through the participants and the coach/chaperones.

I have identified the Potter Baseball Program as a research study because it is strong ties to service learning projects. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, we will meet through Skype, Google Hangout, or a phone interview. This interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at a time that is convenient within your schedule. Participating in the interview will not disrupt your work day.

I will maintain confidentiality at all times; I will assign each participant a pseudonym. All documents related to this study will include only the pseudonym. After the interviews are transcribed, I will provide you with the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcription.

I hope to include the coaches/chaperones and 6-10 of the participants from the 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour and 4-5 participants from previous tours. If you are interested in participating, please email me at ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu.

If you agree to participate, we will discuss the purpose of the study, participant expectations, and review and sign the informed consent form prior to the start of the interviews. There will be no pressure for anyone to participate and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you do not email me to participate in the study, I will not contact you again regarding this research. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (814-229-9764) or ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu.

Thank You,

Scott DiTullio
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Appendix D

Letter to Parents of Participants

Dear [Parent of Participants],

My Name is Scott DiTullio, I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Northeastern University and am in the process of completing the dissertation stage of the program. I am in the dissertation phase and focusing my research on the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. I am studying the examination of an adolescent’s experience to gain an understanding of their cognitive growth and development of interpersonal communication skills through their experience, as observed and perceived by them and others. This research will also explore the coaches’ perspective of program development, implementation, and how the participants successfully navigate the challenges placed before them. I will attempt to understand aspects of 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour, through the participants and the coach/chaperones.

I would like to invite your child to participate in this study because of his/her involvement with the various aspects of the program. If you agree to participate, we will meet through Skype, Google Hangout, or a phone interview. There will be an adult with me at all times. This interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at a time that is convenient within your schedule. Participating in the interview will not disrupt your work day.

I will maintain confidentiality at all times; I will give your child a pseudonym to be used on all documents related to this study. After the interviews are transcribed, I will provide you and your child with the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcription.

Please discuss this study with your child to decide if you both are interested in participating in this study. If you wish to volunteer your child to participate in this study, please have them email me at ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu and I will send consent forms to both of you. There will be no pressure for your child to participate. Provided you approve consent, your child may decide whether or not to participate. You and your child may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (814-229-9764) or ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu.

Thank You,

Scott DiTullio
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Appendix E

Signed Informed Consent Document (Coach/Chaperone)

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Investigator Name: Principal Investigator, Dr. Chris Unger, Student Researcher, Scott DiTullio
Title of Project: Case Study of a Month-Long Community Service Project: The Potter Baseball Tour

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?
You are being asked to participate in this study because of your experience with the Potter Baseball Tour as a coach/chaperone. Your unique experiences will help inform which elements of this innovative program may influence service learning projects.

Why is this research study being done?
The purpose of this case study is to understand and present the experiences and perspectives of six to seven adolescents and three coaches involved with the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball Tour, as they experienced life-lessons through a month-long service learning project. By understanding the specific pieces of these unique experience, we can make suggestions for other organizations looking to provide a more service learning environment with an eye towards doing the right thing.

What will I be asked to do?
I will ask participants to participate in an interview session that I will audiotape. In addition, I may ask you follow-up questions to clarify interview responses. Finally, I will provide you the opportunity to review the transcript from your interview to ensure that I captured your thoughts accurately.

Your participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time.

Where will this take place and how much time will it take?
The participant interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes, with potential opportunities for participation in follow-up questions, not to exceed 75 minutes combined.

Interviews will take place through: Skype, Google Hangout, and phone interviews.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?
There are no direct benefits to you. However, potential benefits in general include potentially improved social learning projects for the future. General benefits may also include a higher percentage of participants being more involved in future social learning projects.
Who will see the information about me?
Your part in the study will be completely confidential. I will use pseudonyms for all study participants. Only I, the researcher, will be aware of the participants' identities. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

Your participation in the interviews will be confidential. I will maintain the data and audio recordings and will not share any data or recordings with others. I will use only first names in the transcriptions. I will use pseudonyms in reports, and will destroy all audio tapes following transcription.

I will remove all personally identifiable information from any documents, which you elect to share.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study to ensure that this researcher follows proper research protocols and processes. I would only permit people authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information. I will never share identifying information with anyone with the Potter Baseball Tour.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
You are not required to take part in this study. Participation is voluntary. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to sign the consent form.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your participation or non-participation will not affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
Scott DiTullio
Phone # (814) 229-9764
E-mail: ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu

Chris Unger, Ed. D.
College of Professional Studies
360 Huntington Avenue (BV41)
Northeastern University, Boston
Cell # 857-272-8941
E-mail: c.unger@northeastern.edu

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University,
Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617-373-4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**
There is no cost to participate in this study.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

You must be at least 18 years old to participate unless your parent or guardian gives written permission.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. If selected, I agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

**I agree to take part in this research.**

______________________________________________
Signature of person agreeing to take part            Date

______________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Above                      Date
Appendix F

Signed Parent and Minor Consent Document (for minor)

Northeastern University, College of Professional Studies
Investigator Name: Principal Investigator, Dr. Chris Unger, Student Researcher, Scott DiTullio
Title of Project: Case Study of a Month-Long Community Service Project: The Potter Baseball Tour

Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study

**Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**
I’m asking your child to participate in this study because of their experience with the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. Your unique experiences will help inform which elements of this innovative program may influence service learning projects of the future.

**Why is this research study being done?**
The purpose of this case study is to understand and present the experiences and perspectives of six to seven adolescents involved with the 2017 Potter Summer Baseball Tour, as they experienced life-lessons through a month-long service learning project. By understanding the specific pieces of these unique experience, we can make suggestions for other organizations looking to provide a more service learning environment with an eye towards doing the right thing.

**What will my child be asked to do?**
I will ask your child to participate in an interview session that I will audiotape. In addition, I may ask you follow-up questions to clarify interview responses. Finally, I will provide you the opportunity to review the transcript from your interview to ensure that I captured your thoughts accurately.

Your child’s participation is voluntary, and you can opt out at any time.

**Where will this take place and how much time will it take?**
The participant interviews will last approximately 45-60 minutes, with potential opportunities for participation in follow-up questions, not to exceed 75 minutes combined.

Interviews will take place through: Skype, Google Hangout, and phone interviews.

**Will there be any risk or discomfort to my child?**
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

**Will my child benefit by being in this research?**
There are no direct benefits for your child. However, potential benefits in general include potentially improved social learning projects for the future. General benefits may also include a higher percentage of participants being more involved in future social learning projects.
Who will see the information about my child?
Your child’s part in the study will be completely confidential. I will use pseudonyms for all study participants. Only I, the researcher, will be aware of the participants' identities. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way.

Your participation in the interviews will be confidential. I will maintain the data and audio recordings and will not share any data or recordings with others. I will use only first names in the transcriptions. I will use pseudonyms in reports, and will destroy all audio tapes following transcription.

I will remove all personally identifiable information from any documents, which you elect to share.

In rare instances, authorized people may request to see research information about you and other people in this study to ensure that this researcher follows proper research protocols and processes. I would only permit people authorized by organizations such as Northeastern University Institutional Review Board to see this information. I will never share identifying information with anyone with the Potter Baseball Tour.

If I do not want my child to take part in the study, what choices do I have?
You are not required to take part in this study. Participation is voluntary. If you do not want to participate, you do not have to sign the consent form. Even if you sign this form, your child will ultimately decide whether or not to participate.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?
There are no significant risks involved in being a participant in this study.

Can I stop my participation in this study?
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child’s participation or non-participation will not affect other relationships (e.g., employer, school, etc.). You may discontinue your participation in this research program at any time without penalty or costs of any nature, character, or kind.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?
Scott DiTullio
Phone # (814) 229-9764
E-mail: ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu

Chris Unger, Ed. D.
College of Professional Studies
360 Huntington Avenue (BV41)
Northeastern University, Boston
Cell # 857-272-8941
E-mail: c.unger@northeastern.edu

Who can I contact about my child’s rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 490 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University,
Will my child be paid for my participation?
Your Child will receive a $20.00 gift card for participation.

Will it cost me anything to participate?
There is no cost to participate in this study.

Is there anything else I need to know?
You must be at least 18 years old to participate unless your parent or guardian gives written permission.

I have read, understood, and had the opportunity to ask questions regarding this consent form. I fully understand the nature and character of my child’s involvement in this research program as a participant and the potential risks. If selected, my child agree to participate in this study on a voluntary basis.

**I agree to allow my child** (name of child) ________________________________ **to take part in this research.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of parent/guardian of minor agreeing to minor’s participation</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Printed Name of Person Above</th>
<th>Date</th>
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**I agree to take part in this research (minor).**

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<tr>
<th>Signature of person/student agreeing to take part</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
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| Printed Name of Person Above | Date |
Appendix G

Email Invitation to Participate (Parent/Student)

Dear [Participant/Student and Parent/Guardian],

My Name is Scott DiTullio, I am currently enrolled in the doctoral program at Northeastern University and am in the process of completing the dissertation stage of the program. I am in the dissertation phase and focusing my research on the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. I am studying the examination of an adolescent’s experience is to gain an understanding of their cognitive growth and development of interpersonal communication skills through their experience, as observed and perceived by them and others. This research will also explore the coaches’ perspective of program development, implementation, and how the participants successfully navigate the challenges placed before them. I will attempt to understand aspects of 2017 Potter Baseball Summer Tour, through the participants and the coach/chaperones.

I would like to invite your child to participate in this study because of his/her involvement with the various aspects of the program. If you agree to participate, we will meet through Skype, Google Hangout, or a phone interview. There will be an adult with me at all times. This interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at a time that is convenient within your schedule. Participating in the interview will not disrupt your work day.

I will maintain confidentiality at all times; I will give your child a pseudonym to be used on all documents related to this study. After the interviews are transcribed, I will provide you and your child with the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the transcription.

Please discuss this study with your child to decide if you both are interested in participating in this study. If you wish to volunteer your child to participate in this study, please have them email me at ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu and I will send consent forms to both of you. There will be no pressure for your child to participate. Provided you approve consent, your child may decide whether or not to participate. You and your child may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (814-229-9764) or ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu.

Thank You,

Scott DiTullio
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Appendix H

Email invitation to participate (Coach/Chaperone)

Dear [Coach/Chaperone],

My name is Scott DiTullio and I am a doctoral student in Northeastern University’s Doctor of Education program. I am in the dissertation phase and studying the 2017 Summer Potter Baseball Tour. The purpose of this study will be to collect, present, and examine the perceptions and attitudes of the participants, as well as the adult mentors and coaches working with them of a month-long service project incorporating acts of community service and then be able to present these elements to help others benefit from the program.

I have identified the Potter Baseball Program as a research study because it is strong ties to service learning projects. I would like to invite you to participate in this study. If you choose to participate, we will meet through Skype, Google Hangout, or a phone interview. This interview will be audio-recorded and will take place at a time that is convenient within your schedule. Participating in the interview will not disrupt your work day.

If you agree to participate, we will discuss the purpose of the study, participant expectations, and review and sign the informed consent form prior to the start of the interviews. There will be no pressure for anyone to participate and you may withdraw from the study at any time.

If you do not email me to participate in the study, I will not contact you again regarding this research. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact me directly at (814-229-9764) or ditullio.s@husky.neu.edu.

Thank You,

Scott DiTullio
Doctoral Candidate, College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University, Boston, MA
Appendix I

Interview Protocol (Coach/Chaperone)

Coach/Chaperone (Name and years on Tour): ____________________________________________

Researcher: ______________________________________________________________________

Date: ____________________________________________________________________________

Location of Interview: ______________________________________________________________

Research question:

How did the coach and adult mentors design and engage these young adolescent boys in their service learning opportunities and to what end?

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes), to begin after signed informed consent is collected

Introductory Protocol

I want to thank you in advance for your time and your willingness to participate in this interview, I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University and this interview is part of the requirements for my doctoral dissertation. I have selected you to speak with me today because I identified you as someone with a valuable perspective about the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. My research project focuses on the experience of coaches/chaperones and participants with a particular interest in understanding how the benefits of service learning projects through life lessons, doing the right thing, and giving back to the community appears to make people better for the future and helping them achieve their goals. Through this study, I hope to gain more insight into your experience with the Potter Baseball. I hope that this will allow me to identify ways in which we can better the program and help to build similar programs in the future.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Thank You. I am turning on the recorder now.

I will also be taking written notes during the interview.

I can assure you that all responses will remain confidential and I will only use a pseudonym when quoting from the transcripts. I will be the only ones privy to the tapes, which I will eventually destroy after they are transcribed. To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me. To summarize what is in this document, it states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and
you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm.
Do you have any questions about the interview or this form?

We have planned this interview meeting to last about 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If, at any time, you are uncomfortable with a question or need me to re-phrase, please feel free to let me know.

First, I will begin asking you questions about your background.

1. Where are you from?
2. What is your background?
3. How did you become involved in the Potter Baseball Tour?
4. How long have you participated in community service?
5. How long have you participated on the Potter Baseball Tour?
6. What was/is your role on the tour?

I will now ask you some questions about the Potter Baseball Tour. I would like to hear about your experience in your own words.

7. In your own words, can you describe what you knew about the Potter Baseball Tour before participating? (what were your expectations?)
8. Can you describe the Tour after participating?
9. What was your role in community service projects that took place?
   a. How did the community service projects affect the tour?
10. On the tour there were several college visits – did you find these helpful for the tour participants and why?
11. Many baseball opportunities took place – can you describe your perception of them to me?
   a. And how the participants participated?
   b. Can you tell me more about how baseball affected the tour?
12. From your observations, how do you see these experiences as having had an impact on the participants?
   a. Can you tell more about that?
13. What observations did you see, that helped to make them a better person?
14. Can you talk about 2 or 3 of the participants and speak to how you saw their participation as having had an impact on them? And how? [ask for specific observations and stories]
15. The tour is a life changing event, how has it affected you as a person?
16. Participating on the tour is a commitment of 31 days, how were you able to make this happen as an adult?
17. Do you have any additional questions or comments that you would like to share?

Thank you for your participation today and for being willing to answer my questions. I will review the interview and my notes. If I have any follow-up questions or need clarification, may I reach out to you? If you have any further questions, please reach out to me.

Thank you for your participation in this important study. I am ending the recording now.
Appendix J

Interview Protocol Participant of tour

Participants (Name and years on Tour): ______________________________________

Researcher: _______________________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________

Location of Interview: _________________________________

Research question:
What were the experiences of adolescent boys participating in service learning opportunities as part of a traveling baseball team and what did they learn through those experiences, as perceived by them and as observed and perceived by their adult mentors and coaches?

Part I: Introductory Question Objectives (5-7 minutes), to begin after signed informed consent is collected

Introductory Protocol

I want to thank you in advance for your time and your willingness to participate in this interview, I am a doctoral student at Northeastern University and this interview is part of the requirements for my doctoral dissertation. I have selected you to speak with me today because I identified you as someone with a valuable perspective about the Potter Baseball Summer Tour. My research project focuses on the experience of coaches/chaperones and participants with a particular interest in understanding how the benefits of service learning projects through life lessons, doing the right thing, and giving back to the community appears to make people better for the future and helping them achieve their goals. Through this study, I hope to gain more insight into your experience with the Potter Baseball. I hope that this will allow me to identify ways in which we can better the program and help to build similar programs in the future.

Because your responses are important and I want to make sure to capture everything you say, I would like to audio tape our conversation today. Do I have your permission to record this interview?

Thank You. I am turning on the recorder now.

I will also be taking written notes during the interview.

I can assure you that all responses will remain confidential and I will only use a pseudonym when quoting from the transcripts. I will be the only ones privy to the tapes, which I will eventually destroy after they are transcribed. To meet our human subjects’ requirements at the university, you must sign the form I have with me. To summarize what is in this document, it states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time if you feel uncomfortable, and (3) we do not intend to inflict any harm. Do you have any questions about the interview or this form?
We have planned this interview meeting to last about 60 minutes. During this time, I have several questions that I would like to cover. If, at any time, you are uncomfortable with a question or need me to re-phrase, please feel free to let me know.

First, I will begin asking you questions about your background.

1. What is your age and Where are you from?
2. What grade are you in at school?
3. How long have you played baseball?
4. How long have you participated in community service?
5. How long have you participated on the Potter Baseball Tour?

I will now ask you some questions about the Potter Baseball Tour. I would like to hear about your experiences in your own words.

6. In your own words, can you describe what you knew about the Potter Baseball Tour before participating?
7. Can you describe the Tour after participating?
8. Can you describe the community service projects that took place?
9. How did the community service projects affect the tour?
10. On the tour there were several college visits – did you find these helpful for you and why?
11. Many baseball opportunities took place – can you describe your perception of them to me?
12. What did the tour teach you about life lessons? How has this impacted your life?
13. What has changed in you from doing the tour?
14. What have you gained from participating on the tour?
15. Favorite thing about the tour?
16. Will you encourage others to do the tour?
17. Will you be back for another tour in the future?
   a. If no – can you share why?
18. Least favorite thing about the tour?
19. If there is something you could change on the tour, what would it be and why?
20. Was there someone you met on the tour that changed your life or way of thinking?
21. If there is something you could change on the tour, what would it be and why?
22. Do you have any additional questions or comments that you would like to share?

Thank you for your participation today and for being willing to answer my questions. I will review the interview and my notes. If I have any follow-up questions or need clarification, may I reach out to you? If you have any further questions, please reach out to me.

Thank you for your participation in this important study. I am ending the recording now.