Service-Learning and the Enhancement of Employability Skills in Undergraduate Kinesiology Students

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

By

Rebecca Ann Pena

August 2020
The dissertation of Rebecca Pena is approved:

______________________________    ____________________
Jake Hinkel-Lipsker, Ph.D.           Date

______________________________    ____________________
Joyce H. Burstein, Ed.D.            Date

______________________________    ____________________
Sloane Burke-Winkelman, Ph.D., Chair Date
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my dissertation chair, Dr. Sloane Burke-Winkelman, for your expertise, professionalism, patience, and dedication to this research. Over the past three years, I have developed a long-lasting relationship with you, which has allowed me to grow both personally and professionally. Our laughter, deep conversations, and late-night texts and e-mails kept me going through this process. I truly would not have finished this dissertation if it weren’t for your unwavering enthusiasm for my research. Thank you for truly understanding what this research means to me on a personal level, and for reminding me of that along the way. You have taught me more than I could ever mention here, and I hope to continue to learn from you for years to come.

My appreciation also extends to Dr. Jake Hinkel-Lipsker and Dr. Joyce Burstein. I am extremely grateful for your assistance and suggestions throughout my dissertation. Your guidance, efficiency, and overall positive attitudes have helped made this journey a positive experience for me. Jake, your early insights launched my dissertation, and it was an honor to have someone from kinesiology on my committee. Thank you for letting me ask non-stop questions in your office when I would walk by. Joyce, your thoughtful edits were instrumental in completing my final draft, and I enjoyed getting to know someone outside of my discipline. I look forward to maintaining a relationship with both of you in the future, and hope to collaborate together one day.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Jennifer Romack. You were the one who encouraged me to pursue this journey of higher education, and I thank you for pushing me farther than I ever thought I could go. Although you are no longer in this world, your memory continues to motivate me, and you have remained my mentor and inspiration throughout this process. Your passion for service-learning inspired me to do this research, and as a consequence, we now know that your service-learning program has even more positive impacts on the students than you thought! You have been calling me Dr. Pena since before I earned my Master’s degree as a way to motivate me to get my doctorate. Now that name will be official, and it is all because of you.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature Page</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgments</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1: Introduction</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Problem Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Purpose</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Research Questions</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Theoretical Framework</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Overview of Methodology</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Limitations</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Delimitations</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Organization of Dissertation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 2: Review of Literature</strong></td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Introduction</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Service-Learning</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Benefits of Service-Learning</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> High-Impact Practices</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Community-Based Learning</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Employability Skills in College Graduates</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td> Employability Skills Competencies</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contents</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Policy and Practice</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding Statement</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Research Invitation</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B: Interview Guide</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C: Informed Consent</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D: Motor Behavior Service-Learning Syllabus</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E: The Experiential Learning Cycle</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures

Figure 1: Axial Coding Paradigm 81
Figure 2: Theoretical Model 82
ABSTRACT

Service-Learning and the Enhancement of Employability Skills in Undergraduate Kinesiology Students

By

Rebecca Pena

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

One of the primary goals of higher education is to prepare students for the workforce. However, acquiring content-specific knowledge is not enough to be successful in the workplace. In order for college graduates to be successful, they also need to have non-academic skills, or employability skills, which could be utilized in a variety of occupational environments. Unfortunately, the majority of employers feel that recent college graduates are not well prepared for their careers due to a lack of employability skills possessed by them. This highlights a shortcoming in higher education and their lack of educational practices that prepare students for workplace success. The purpose of this grounded theory case study was to understand the influence of service-learning on the enhancement of career-readiness competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology at a large public university.

One-one-one interviews were conducted with 15 kinesiology students who previously participated in the motor behavior service-learning program at California State University, Northridge. These interviews focused on what specific employability competencies were enhanced as a result of participation in the service-learning program, as well as what factors of
the program helped to enhance those skills. Results showed that all nine employability competencies under investigation were enhanced as a result of the student’s participation in service-learning. Those competencies were problem-solving, professionalism, verbal communication, written communication, teamwork, leadership, career management, adaptability, and the ability to analyze information. Additionally, 12 themes were identified as factors that facilitated the enhancement of the employability skills. Those themes were careful planning, established paradigm, community responsibility, active participation, intellectual engagement, unexpected challenges, not going according to plan, knowledge transfer, adaptability, appropriate assistance, positive outcomes for children, and employability skills. Another recurring theme that emerged during the interviews was the real-world experience from working with children, causing real-world experience to emerge as the central phenomena. All of these themes are displayed in a graphical conceptual model that represents how factors within a service-learning program enhance employability competencies in undergraduate students.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

One of the primary goals of higher education is to prepare students for the workforce, supporting them to become contributing members of society (Chan, 2016; Miller, Rocconi, & Dumford, 2018). Traditionally, the role of a university, in preparing students for a career, has been to advance and increase students’ content knowledge in their chosen professional field (Rateau, Kaufman, & Cletzer, 2015). Unfortunately, acquiring content-specific knowledge is not enough for college graduates to be successful in the workplace, since it is only a part of the skillset that they will ultimately need for workplace success (Rateau & Kaufman, 2009). Many employers feel a curriculum that extends beyond job training and provides students with soft-skills, such as leadership, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability, would better prepare students to transition into the workforce (Jaschik, 2015).

In order for college graduates to be successful, they need to also have non-academic skills, or employability skills, which could be utilized in a variety of occupational environments (Chamorro-Premuzic, Arteche, Bremner, Greven, & Furnham, 2010). For example, research has found that employers are more satisfied with college graduates who display skills such as teamwork, critical thinking, and leadership skills, than those who only possess skills specific to their profession (Paranto & Kelkar, 2000). In fact, an increasing amount of research has found that the most valuable set of capabilities a new college graduate can bring with them to the workforce are employability skills, such as written and verbal communication, teamwork, leadership, the ability to analyze information and data, using research to make informed decisions, presentation skills, and work ethic (Achieve, 2018; Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013). These skills allow recent college graduates to operate professionally within a
work environment (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2014). This evidence suggests that college graduates who possess these skills and competencies would have a competitive edge when entering the workforce.

Unfortunately, the majority of employers feel, upon completion of an undergraduate degree, that recent college graduates are not well prepared for their careers (Jaschik, 2015). Critical-thinking, and written and oral communication, are all cited as skills frequently missing in college graduates, with fewer than three in 10 employers feeling college graduates are prepared in those areas (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2015). Ultimately, despite this current consensus, there remains a workforce-readiness gap in college graduates, which perhaps indicates inadequate career preparation for students in higher education (Finch et al., 2013; Rateau et al., 2015; Soares & Perna, 2014). This apparent gap signals a need for universities to more effectively prepare students with the expanded skills needed to be successful in their career after college (Rateau & Kaufman, 2009).

A major reason that college students are not attaining such skills is because of how material is traditionally taught in a college classroom (Committee on a Leadership Summit to Effect Change in Teaching, 2009). In a college classroom, the educational process predominately focuses on the development of content knowledge. For example, the majority of lecture courses have traditionally been allocated to providing theoretical content of a subject matter with little room for practical application. Additionally, lectures typically consist of one-way communication that rely heavily on passive learning strategies (Bonesso, Gerli, & Pizzi, 2015). Usually, students are not often provided the opportunity to apply the information they learned in class into a real-world situation. Consequently, it has been found that students have a weak
ability to apply the knowledge they learned in a classroom to new situations (Wendlandt & Rochlen, 2008).

In order for students to be better prepared, educators must utilize instructional methods, and create learning environments that allow students to transfer what they are learning in the classroom to appropriate and challenging contexts (Eyler, 2009). When students have the opportunity to do this, they also enhance their development of the previously mentioned professional skills (Bonesso, Gerli, & Pizzi, 2015). This pedagogical method is commonly referred to as experiential education, and encompasses several different strategies, which simultaneously enable students to develop and enhance their employability competencies.

Experiential learning is a form of education in which students develop knowledge and skills from experiences outside of a traditional classroom (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning allows students to acquire content knowledge from both theoretical and practical standpoints, and provides a richer and more meaningful understanding of theories by understanding how they operate in the real world. Dewey’s (1938) research advocated the use of this type of learning, since what a student learns in the classroom should ultimately extend into the community they will work with. As Dewey (1938) suggested, real life provides the most fertile ground for education.

While Dewey focused on elementary education, Kolb (1984) brought this concept to post-secondary education through suggesting that there should be a connection between the classroom and the future work for which the classroom is supposedly preparing the learner for. He asserted the need to transform conceptual ideas into practical applications of the real-life that students will encounter in their future careers. Kolb’s intent on bringing the experiential education model to higher education was to fill the apparent gap between instruction and college-
related skills, since he believed that college graduates were not fully prepared for optimal success in their occupation. Therefore, he acknowledges the need for students to have practical and applied experiences to better link a graduate to the real world.

One set of experiential learning strategies are identified as high-impact practices by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU, 2007). Examples of these type of practices include internships, capstone courses, service-learning, and undergraduate research. All of these educational strategies have been researched extensively, and shown to have a positive impact on students (Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). Additionally, participation in high-impact practices help students integrate experiences from their involvement in these practices into their career-readiness (Miller et al., 2018). Although each individual high-impact practice will vary on how, and to what extent it facilitates career-readiness, as a whole, there does appear to be a link between high-impact practices and employability skills (Miller et al., 2018).

Another experiential learning strategy is known as community-based learning. Community-based learning is an educational strategy that combines service to the community with academic learning (Ibrahim, 2010), and examples include community service and service-learning. In community-based learning, students provide service to the community, while simultaneously applying subject matter knowledge and skills during their service (Diab & Flack, 2013). Research has shown that when students participate in this type of learning, they increase their capacity for teamwork, collaborative learning, leadership skills, and self-empowerment (Crebert et al., 2004; Ibrahim, 2010; Larson et al., 2005; Smith, et al., 2010). All of these skills have been identified as skills employers seek in college graduates (Paranto & Kelkar, 2000).
Not only is service-learning an example of both classifications of experiential learning discussed above, it has grown dramatically over the past two decades, and is now a common occurrence in higher education (Butin, 2006; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Fisher, Sharp, & Bradley, 2017; McReynolds, 2014). Service-learning is seen as a bridge between formal, didactic education and experiential learning. It is a pedagogy grounded in the belief that students learn by doing. Service-learning is defined as:

A course-based, credit-bearing education experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh, 2006, p. 12).

Service-learning is influenced by educational reform philosophies that encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning, and is inspired by the belief that the academy has a fundamental responsibility to prepare students for lives of active citizenship (Salmani & Nodoushan, 2016). Service-learning projects can be life changing for students because they contain one major difference from other forms of service in that it provides a reciprocal relationship between the benefits students receive and the benefits received by the community partners (Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh, 2006). Service-learning has two goals; service to the community and student learning while using critical reflection to connect those two things.

Lastly, service-learning contributes to professional preparation, as a well-designed service-learning project will allow students to enhance professional skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication skills, critical thinking and leadership skills (Bowen, 2007). All
of these skills are vital for workplace success. Additionally, service-learning provides students with marketable experience, potentially giving them an edge over other employee prospects. When upperclassmen engage in service-learning, it should allow them to more easily make the college-work transition (Bowen, 2007).

**Problem statement**

The career readiness of college graduates is an important issue in higher education for student competency preparation and success measures, and university reputation (Finch et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2018; Sleap & Read, 2006). Yet, college graduates often enter the workforce unprepared to meet the needs of their employer. This highlights a shortcoming in higher education and their lack of educational practices at the college level that prepare students for workplace success. Although the specific, teachable abilities, known as hard skills, are important for workplace success, employers also seek employees that possess soft skills, such as critical thinking, leadership, and teamwork, over job specific skills (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013).

This need has been amplified by current research that describes how college graduates believe that more emphasis should be placed on the development of soft skills during their undergraduate work (Sleap & Reed, 2006). Although prior work experience has been found to be a crucial factor in potential job employment, the traditional full-time student has limited time to find relevant work, whether it be paid or un-paid due to the time demands of getting a college education (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Perrone & Vickers, 2003). Although internships could help students gain work experience with the various time constraints placed on them, fewer than 10% of college students have the opportunity to complete an internship during their undergraduate program (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2015). Service-learning could be the
solution to both of these problems since it allows students the opportunity to develop the career competencies desired by employers, while also giving them experience in their career field, all while earning a college degree.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this grounded theory case study was to understand the influence of service-learning on the enhancement of career-readiness competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology at a large public university. The ultimate goal of this study was to assess undergraduate kinesiology student’s readiness to enter their career field through participation in a service-learning program. Employability competencies are generally defined as “soft skills”, or non-technical abilities, such as oral and written communication, leadership, teamwork, adaptability, problem-solving, and professionalism.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the learned employability skills of undergraduate kinesiology students participating in a service-learning project?
2. What factors of the service-learning project shape the development of employability skills?

**Theoretical Framework**

The researcher used Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory to interpret the results of the study. Experiential learning is defined as “a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 41), and is based on the idea that students learn by experiencing the information first-hand in a practical setting. Ultimately, the purpose of experiential learning is to take what a student has learned in the classroom and increase their
knowledge by giving them the opportunity to put those principles into action. Through experiential education, learners test their understanding of principles and procedures, and can experiment and adapt their practice to achieve the best outcome. Once different outcomes have been achieved, the learner can better apply these competencies when needed.

Service-learning, which is a form of experiential learning, was the focus of this research. Service-learning provides many of the previously established benefits of experiential education, such as the building of social skills, work ethic, practical expertise, and a deeper understanding of course material (Brail, 2013; Gallini & Moely, 2003). Additionally, it can be used as a way to facilitate the transition of students from the university to the workplace. Although the classroom works well for transmitting knowledge to students, it is not as conducive to facilitating the soft-skills college graduates need to succeed in their careers (McManus, 2005; Noel & Qenani, 2013). To better develop such skills, students need to be able to apply their content knowledge to real-life situations, and practice working with individuals. This is the essence of experiential education, and using experiential learning theory, helped guide the research by looking at how experiential education, in the form of service-learning, helps to prepare college graduates with the skills needed to be successful in their future careers. In this way, experiential education would provide students with the opportunity to take their education to the real world, and actually practice and enhance skills they would need in the workplace once they graduate and attain a career.

With experiential learning as a framework, the researcher analyzed the data collected during fifteen one-on-one interviews to assess how students’ involvement in a form of experiential learning enhanced their development of employability skills. Furthermore, the
researcher examined how different aspects of experiential learning affected the development of those skills.

**Overview of Methodology**

In this qualitative study, the researcher used a grounded theory case study design to understand how a motor behavior service-learning program enhanced the development of employability skills in undergraduate kinesiology students at a large public university. The researcher used the descriptive information gathered from participant interviews to develop a theoretical model that explains how factors of a service-learning program enhanced employability skills in students. The researcher identified potential participants for this study through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was applied by only recruiting students who took the motor behavior service-learning course with instructors who had taught the course for five or more years. Additionally, the researcher only recruited students who took the course during Fall 2018, Spring 2019, and Fall 2019 semesters. After the participants were recruited, the researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 15 students, which is when saturation was reached. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to assess the research questions by asking pre-determined questions formulated from the literature review and conceptual framework, but also allowed participants the opportunity to respond to the questions in a way that was meaningful to them (Durdella, 2019).

Transcription of the interviews took place within two weeks after each interview was conducted, and initial coding of the transcripts began. The researcher also used a constant comparative method throughout data collection and data analysis to compare codes amongst transcripts. Data analysis was conducted using a progressive coding system that went from open coding, to axial coding, and concluding with selective coding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The
final stage of the data analysis was interpretation, which was the phase in which the researcher made sense of the data that was collected. Ultimately, the data analysis allowed the researcher to develop a theoretical model and descriptive explanation of how service-learning led to the enhancement of employability skills in undergraduate students. Lastly, the researcher translated the results into a discussion where she interpreted the meaning of the results, connected them to the work of others, and provided recommendations for practice, policy, and future research.

Limitations

Limitations are conditions and factors that, for the most part, are beyond the control of the researcher, and limit the study in some way (Glesne, 2016). The limitations in this study stem from its methodological design. For example, since this study is a qualitative case study, the results are not generalizable to a population, but rather can only be transferred to other groups in similar contexts (Durdella, 2019). Additionally, since the data for this research was self-reported by the participants, it could skew the results since students have a varying ability to reflect on and analyze their experience. Lastly, there was a time delay of several months between the student’s participation in the service-learning program and being interviewed. The length of this time period could cause gaps in student recollections, or allow for potential biases about the experience to surface.

Other limitations come from the researcher’s role in conducting interviews with participants. Since the researcher is a professor in the department, and coordinator of the service-learning program under investigation in this study, the participants’ willingness to fully share and describe their experiences in the service-learning program could impact the overall results of the study. The researcher also holds certain biases, such as the belief that service-learning programs always provide positive experiences for students and provide many types of benefits to them.
However, triangulation was used to increase the credibility of the study. The researcher used triangulation by collecting data multiple, independent source, and compared it to existing literature. The researcher also used confirmatory analysis to ensure her biases were not creating themes that are unfounded or not in the raw data.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations differ from limitations in that they are aspects of the study that the researcher attempts to control for research specificity and project manageability, in essence, delimitations set the research boundaries (Glesne, 2016). This study does address everything associated with service-learning programs across all populations. It does not, for example, focus on all types of skills enhanced by participation in service-learning programs, nor does it include students from a variety of different areas of study. Instead, it examined the role of a specific service-learning program, taken exclusively by undergraduate students majoring in kinesiology, in enhancing the development of employability skills. As a result of these boundaries, the ability to apply the conclusions obtained from this case study to a setting with dissimilar characteristics will be limited. Ultimately, the results of this study may be different if the study was conducted with students in a different major. However, this delimitation does not negate the potential value of this study.

**Organization of Dissertation**

This dissertation is organized into five chapters. In chapter one the researcher introduced the study through a concise overview of the topics of service-learning and the current lack of employability skills attained by college graduates. Chapter one also provided a synopsis of the importance of this study, including the problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, methodological overview, and the limitations and
delimitations. Chapter two is the literature review where the researcher presents research on designing service-learning courses, evaluates established research that focused on the benefits of service-learning and other high-impact educational practices, and discusses how service-learning makes unique contributions compared to other high-impact practices. Research is also presented on the lack of employability skills attained by college graduates, and concludes with presenting research on how service-learning has been found to impact certain employability competencies. Chapter three presents the methodology used to address the research questions posed by this study, including the research setting, the data sources and research sample, the data collection instrument and procedures, data analysis, and concludes with the role of the researcher. Chapter four will present the results of the research, including a theoretical model that was developed from the data attained through participant interviews. Lastly, chapter five provides conclusions and a discussion that summarizes and interprets the findings of the study, including the implications for this study, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this review of literature was to identify scholarly research that will describe, synthesize, and critique research on service-learning and employability skills. This chapter is organized into four sections. First, a comprehensive background on service learning is provided by defining what it is, describing how to create a successful service-learning program from start to finish, and lastly by providing examples of successful projects that have been carried out. Next, research that demonstrates the abundant academic and civic benefits service learning provides to students is presented. In the third section, an overview of literature on high-impact practices and community-based learning, and the individual contributions the different practices within them have on meeting one or more goals of higher education is shared. Lastly, literature on employability skills that college graduates lack upon entering the career field, and how service-learning ameliorates skill deficits is provided. Since the goal of this study is to examine how service-learning enhances employability skills in kinesiology students, this review identifies visible gaps in understanding how service-learning enhances the development of employability skills and competencies in college students.

This review of literature begins by formally defining and discussing service-learning. Since service-learning is the main topic of this dissertation, it is essential for the reader to have a clear and thorough understanding of what exactly service-learning is, how to implement the pedagogy, as well as examples of well-researched, and successful, evidence-based service-learning programs. It is important to fully understand this instructional method before going on to read about the researched benefits of this practice to better see why these benefits are
practical. Additionally, since service-learning is considered both a high-impact practice and a form of community-based learning, it is imperative for the reader to gain a clear understanding of service-learning in order to more easily compare it to these other highly effective teaching and learning practices. These teaching and learning strategies, which are discussed in the second part of the literature review, all possess inherent challenges and limitations. Once the reader has a clear understanding of service-learning, they will understand how it is an important, applied, and beneficial instructional method choice.

**Service-Learning**

Service-learning is defined as “A course-based, credit-bearing education experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility” (Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh, 2006, p. 12). Service-learning, along with many other forms of experiential learning, was recognized as a relevant practice in higher education, and began to grow on several college campuses during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Jacoby, 2015). The more modern service-learning movement has typically been credited to the National Society for Experiential Education (NSSE), which began in 1978 (AACU, 2007). Since then, service-learning has grown dramatically, and is now a common occurrence in higher education, with exponential growth occurring over the past two decades (Butin, 2006). Tens of thousands of faculty and millions of college students, are involved in some form of service-learning each year, which is continuing to grow every year through federal funding (Butin, 2006). Service-learning is now considered to be a permanent establishment in higher education (O’Meara, 2011).
Although the original emphasis of service-learning was to do public good, it is now used as a means to address needs identified in the surrounding community, as well as a way to meet educational goals (Jacoby, 2015). In addition to academic goals, higher education began to focus on goals related civic learning and engagement during the early 2000s, and service-learning was identified as a way to meet both types of goals (McReynolds, 2014). Additionally, preparing students for employability after college is a fundamental role of higher education, and another goal that may be facilitated by service-learning.

**Designing Service-Learning**

One thing instructors of service-learning courses need to be especially mindful of is making sure their service-learning project is actually considered service-learning. It has been found that some courses never move the experience past community-service, to what would be considered service-learning (Hollis, 2002). A key element that differentiates service-learning from other forms of community-based work, such as community-service, is the merging of academic curriculum with structured learning activities that meet community needs, while providing time for student preparation and reflections on the various dimensions of the project (Eyler, 2009).

Additionally, it is important to note that simply meeting the definition of service-learning does not mean a service-learning program will be successful. Just like many of the high-impact practices and community-based learning practices presented, we see a wide range of effectiveness in service-learning. Due to the variation of effectiveness in service-learning, yet the large potential it has to impact students, there has been numerous articles written about best practices in service learning. Ultimately, research has been compiled to create a framework for using service-learning as a successful instructional strategy. This framework is presented as a
Stage One: Preparation. The preparation phase consists of many different activities and will require the most amount of effort from the instructors and community partners. These activities include identifying an established community need, creating a goal or objective for the project, identifying the skills needed by students to successfully carry out the project, deciding on what resources will be needed during the project, as well as what activities will be carried out. Additionally, once all of this has been determined, it is essential for the instructor to create a clear course description of the project, place it in the syllabus, and create course objectives that directly connect to the service-learning project.

As stated in the definition of service-learning, these programs are meant to provide service that meet an identified community need. Projects that go out into the community that do not target an established community need will not be as successful, since there will not be as much buy-in from the community partner. Next, once the need has been identified, the community partner and service-learning coordinator should create a goal or an objective for the project. For best results, this objective should encompass both a goal of service to the community partners, and to academic and civic outcomes (Berle, 2006). Once the objective for the project has been established, both sides should also decide on what knowledge and skills would be needed by the students to successfully carry out the project. This needs to be done so the instructor of the course can ensure their students have the required competencies prior to carrying out the service-learning project. Additionally, the instructor needs to ensure there is adequate and appropriate integration of course content into the service the students are providing, while meeting the predetermined goals of the project (Wright, 2000). Lastly, a discussion about
resources should be made prior to the semester begins to make sure the project can be carried out as intended. This includes resources at both the community agency and ones that are expected to be provided by the students or course instructor.

Overall, in planning a service-learning project, the project should be thoroughly and thoughtfully planned between both the service-learning coordinator and the community agency. Both parties in the project should be in constant contact with one another by identifying a point of contact person. This could be the service-learning coordinator or instructor, and the director of the community organization one is working with. Regardless of who the community contact is, consistent communication with one another throughout the project will be key in successfully carrying out the program during the semester.

Two additional aspects of planning and preparing the project that has been shown to increases the successfulness of a project is when the students have a choice, or some sort of control over the project (Jenkins & Sheehy, 2012; Werner & McVaugh, 2000) and when the students attend an orientation prior to providing service. Providing students with a choice in the project increases the quality of the service provided, and the learning achieved by students. For example, instructors can provide students a choice of what specific community agency they would like to provide service to, they could choose the actual demographic, or age group they work with, or even have a choice of the type of activity they provide.

Also, prior to beginning the service-learning project, the students should participate in a formal orientation at the community agency they will provide service at. While at the orientation, the students should be introduced to the organization’s structure, goals, and terms of service (Hollis, 2002). Additionally, providing an orientation allows all parties involved to meet each other ahead of time, and become more familiar with the specific population they will be working
with. This allows both parties an opportunity to become acquainted with one another, and opens the lines of communication. In this author’s personal experience, this has been extremely beneficial in reducing the number of incidents occurring at the sites, since both parties feel much more comfortable, and clear about expectations going into this project. Additionally, this orientation allows students to have exposure to their work environment, which helps put students at ease about their participation and helps clear up some of the apprehensions they have prior to their participation.

**Stage Two: Implementation.** Before students go out into the community to provide service to the community to, it is important for the instructor to present a foundation for service-learning as an instructional strategy, which clearly emphasizes the mutual benefits of service-learning between students and the community members receiving their service (Jenkins & Sheehy, 2012). Assigning readings about service-learning has been helpful with having students gain a better standing about the theory and pedagogy behind it. Also, providing examples of successful projects helps students better understand what they will be doing, and the community impact they can have (Berle, 2006). Throughout the service-learning project, instructors should make sure to support students providing them with feedback, helping them solve problems as they arise, and encouraging reflection throughout the project.

It has been found that service-learning is most effective when students provide 15-20 hours of service during a semester (Watson, Hueglin, Crandall, Eisenman, 2002). This should be verified with a time sheet where students document their time planning and implementing the project. Throughout the service hours, there should be strong connections to the academic material covered during the in-class portion of the course. Astin et al. (2000) found that it was the frequent connection of academic material and the service-learning project that actually
enhanced academic learning of the students, which in turn, also improved the service provided by the students.

**Stage Three: Reflection and Assessment.** Stage three consists of both reflections and assessments by the individuals involved in the service learning project. Reflections are considered the glue that connects service and learning together. There needs to be some sort of academic assignment(s) that requires the students to reflect on the service they provide in light of the objective they are trying to achieve. Ultimately, this reflection should connect the service and the learning together in a meaningful way. These reflections should be graded based on learning, not the service provided (Hollis, 2002). Instructors should also reflect on the service-learning project through their direct observations at the service site, and through student comments about their service-learning experience. This information should be considered during subsequent semesters to continually make the service project as good as possible.

Ideally, both the students and the community partners provide an assessment at the conclusion of the project. This can be a formal class assignment, or a link to an anonymous survey that the students complete (George & Sham, 2007). It is helpful to have both the community partner and students provide an assessment to find strengths and weaknesses from both perspectives, to better improve the project for both parties in future semesters.

**Stage Four: Demonstration and Celebration.** The fourth and final stage of successful execution of a service-learning project is to celebrate student achievement through project presentations. There should be class time provided for students to present what they accomplished during their service time, as well as what they learned from their experience. There can be a variety of different formats for this such as poster presentations, video presentations, displays, or written papers (Kay, 2004; Swick & Rowls, 2000), and community partners are
encouraged to also join. These presentations allow students to validate what they learned during the experience, while sharing it with peers and their instructors. Additionally, the instructor may share the results the students presented with other faculty in the department to encourage others to create their own service-learning projects.

**Examples of Service Learning Projects**

As service-learning has increased in popularity in higher education over the past 20 years, more examples of successful projects have been highlighted through research studies (Brail, 2016; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Strage, 2004). Service-learning is found to be successful in several different disciplines, across a variety of demographics of students. A few examples of successful service-learning projects are presented below, which all provide a connection to a local community while enhancing student learning.

**Balance and Mobility Training.** Undergraduate students in a motor development course at the University of North Carolina, Greensboro created and implemented a fall prevention program for older adults. The students provided an eight-week, home-based balance and mobility training program to reach goals set by the older adults they were working with (Williams & Kovacs, 2001).

**Free-Wheelers.** Kinesiology undergraduate students at California State University, Northridge implemented a program to promote self-mobility with wheelchair dependent older adults who were residents of a nursing home. The program focused on enhancing upper body strength, but also increased social interaction amongst the older adults, and facilitated meaningful participation (Romack, 2004).
Motor Skill Development Program. Undergraduate students at Texas Tech University provided transportation from a nearby elementary school, to the university, twice per week. The students provided the program so the elementary school children could attend a physical activity class that was implemented by the university students (Meaney, Griffin, & Bohler, 2009).

Campus Corps. College students from Colorado State University, served as mentors for children and adolescents between the ages of 10-18 years of age, who were considered at-risk for offending, or re-offending, and were referred to the program from probation departments. Students mentored their youth partners for a total of 12 weeks in order to reduce the likelihood of offence in the youth, which also strengthened community systems. The experience prepared the students to be human service professionals (Weiler, et al, 2013).

Feeding the Hungry. A cross-disciplinary project between natural science and chemistry at southeastern Georgia. A cohort of culinary arts students who were enrolled in an Introductory Chemistry class partnered with America’s Second Harvest, which was a local food bank, to create nutritious recipes from the food that had been donated to the food bank. The chemistry material they had learned in class came into play by enabling the students to count calories and other nutritional information from the meals they created (Wallace, 2015).

The Huskey Reads Program. Students from the University of Connecticut when in pairs of two undergraduate students, to visit waiting rooms of pediatric clinics. While there, the students played games with the kids while they waited to see the doctor, and read to the children, and shared information with the parents, information about nutrition and healthy eating habits (Poehlitz, Pierce, & Ferris, 2006).

Writing Partners. College students enrolled in four state universities wrote letters back and forth to elementary school students about their academic work and experiences. This helped
both sets of students understand what it is like to write for an audience, and this awareness changed their writing for the better (Hara, 2010).

**Benefits of Service-Learning**

The unique pedagogy of service learning has made it a commonly researched topic due to its application in higher education (Brail, 2016; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Mpofu, 2007; Prentice, 2007; Strage, 2004). With the widespread integration of service-learning into the curriculum in higher education, strong justification of this pedagogy is required. Service-learning has two goals; service to the community and student learning (Bringle, Hatcher, & McIntosh, 2006). Many benefits of its impact on students and the community have been researched since its inception in higher education (Brail, 2013; Brail, 2016; Casile, Hoover, & O’Neil, 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield; Morgan & Streb, 2001). In this section of the review of literature, research related to the benefits of service-learning is introduced, in order to gain a better understanding of the types of benefits students receive from their participation in service-learning programs.

Two bodies of research inform this section of the review of literature. The first addresses the benefits of service-learning on students’ academic achievement, and the second on how service-learning promotes civic development in students. Although these are two commonly researched benefits of service-learning (Brail, 2016; Casile, Hoover, & O’Neil, 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Meyers, 2009; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Mpofu, 2007; Strage, 2004), they are not the only two. It has been found that well-designed service-learning programs enable students to improve professional skills such as teamwork, problem-solving, communication skills, and leadership skills (Bowen, 2007). Nonetheless, scholarship that combines service-learning and employability skills is uncommon.
This connection is important since the skills learned in a college classroom are typically different than the skills required to be successful in a workplace (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013).

**Academic Benefits**

Of all the researched benefits of service-learning, the academic benefits of service-learning have received the most attention from researchers (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Brail, 2016; Casile, et al., 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Mpofu, 2007; Strage, 2004). Service-learning can help students understand course material more effectively by converting theoretical concepts into a practical application (Darby, Longmire-Avital, Chenault, & Haglund, 2013). Consequently, students taking a service-learning course are more likely to gain a deeper understanding of the course content than students experiencing classroom instruction alone (Brail, 2013; Casile, Hoover, & O’Neil, 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Mpofu, 2007).

Several studies have examined service-learning and found that it enriches students’ academic experience and learning (Brail, 2016; Casile, et al., 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Mpofu, 2007; Strage, 2004). This section of the literature review begins by discussing the research that demonstrates the impact of service learning on achieving a higher GPA. Next, I will discuss how service-learning helps students master course content, and lastly, I will review literature that explains how service-learning supports student retention and persistence throughout one’s academic career.

**Academic Achievement.** Studies based on both individual classes, and courses taken after the completion of service-learning, indicate that achievement outcomes, as measured by grades, is positively influenced by service-learning (Brail, 2016; Mpofu, 2007; Strage, 2004).
Brail (2016) used four years of student data, and compared grades between students who chose the service-learning component of their Urban Studies course to those who did not. Results showed that in all graded assignments of the course, except the final exam, the students who participated in service-learning achieved higher grades. This resulted in statistically significant higher course grades in service-learning students compared to the non-service-learning group. Additionally, participation was measured at five random dates throughout the semester by having the students write a written response to a prompt. Again, the students in the service-learning group outperformed those students who were not in it, which showed service-learning also enhances subjective measures of achievement. These results support the findings of previous studies conducted across various disciplines that also found higher achievement for service-learning students (Mpufo, 2007; Strage, 2004).

Additionally,Mpofu (2007) examined the difference in academic outcomes between rehabilitation service majors who self-selected taking a medical aspects of disabilities course through service-learning or traditional classroom instruction. A comparative analysis was applied between scores on exams and case studies from the middle and end of the semester, to their baseline scores from the beginning of the semester. Results showed that grades on case studies were significantly higher in the service-learning group compared to the non-service-learning group during both the middle and end of the semester.

The differences in learning outcomes achieved through service-learning may vary according to the outcome measure used (Strage, 2004). For example, written work, like essay exams and case studies are more likely to show positive effects from service-learning than multiple-choice examinations, which require students to recall factual information (Mpuofu, 2005). Findings from Mpuofu (2007) exemplified this being that the students researched in this
study achieved higher grades on their case study analysis compared to their exam scores.

Not only do academic improvements occur while a student is enrolled in service-learning, but the improvements in their grades have also been found to persist throughout one’s academic career. Strage (2004) used quantitative methods to verify this by comparing the academic records of service-learning students to non-service-learning students as they progressed through their major. Results showed that the service-learning students outperformed non-service students in activity courses, practicum courses, and the capstone course, with a 2.4-4.8 percent higher grade in each type of course, demonstrating that the academic benefits were, in fact, long-standing. These results provided proof that academic gains attained from service-learning do persist throughout one’s academic career, ultimately showing that service-learning projects can provide a solid foundation in which students can progress through their college major.

**Mastery of Course Content.** Although numerous studies have found increased academic achievement through participation in service-learning, less is known about the effects of a service-learning experience on understanding course content, since it is a far less studied outcome measure (Casile et al., 2011). Nonetheless, the limited amount of research conducted in this area has shown that service-learning supports students in mastering course content (Brail, 2013; Casile et al., 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018).

For example, Brail (2013) found that participation in service-learning enabled undergraduate students to develop a deeper understanding of discipline-specific knowledge. Additionally, it was found that academic benefits of service-learning were most apparent when students wrote narratives about course content, as evidenced in the essay portion of their exams. Additionally, Casile et al. (2011) found that service-learning facilitated mastery of course content in upper division courses. In this study, survey research showed that students who participated in
service-learning understood course content better than those who did not take a service-learning course, and the students themselves indicated that the project helped them learn course content. The authors speculated that active engagement in the community setting, seeing the results of helping others, and active reflection on course content in a real-life setting led to overall stronger learning experiences.

In addition to academic records providing evidence for academic benefits of service-learning, students also self-report that service-learning offers academic advantages (Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018). Specifically, students indicated they were able to apply concepts from class to their service-learning experience, and key-terms and theories from their course served as reference points during their service-learning experience. Additionally, the students identified the service context as the place they experienced real learning as opposed to their classroom. Even though service-learning is found to increase student’s comprehension of course content (Brail, 2013; Casile et al., 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018), it is also important to understand if service-learning supports retention in college for students.

**Retention.** Although not much research has been published on the relationship between service-learning and college retention, the studies that have been conducted found a positive relationship between the two (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010; Gallini & Moely, 2003; Lockeman & Pelco, 2013). Specifically, using quantitative methods, Gallini and Moely (2003) found that the service-learning had an explicit influence on retention from first to second-year college students, where retention is a particularly important issue. Additionally, the researchers found that involvement in academic course content and the academic challenges posed by the service-learning course, were the two most significant predictors of retention. Since service-learning courses are more challenging than others, the researchers found that students spent more
time studying course material, which ultimately increased their academic engagement. Additionally, the researchers found that the service-learning course also increased their interpersonal engagement by allowing students to interact with new individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Bringle, Hatcher, and Muthiah (2010) also investigated the relationship between service-learning and first-year to second-year retention. The researchers used secondary data from a large survey given to first-year students, and found that surveys completed at the beginning of the semester showed students who were enrolled in service-learning courses were significantly more likely to re-enroll at the university the following year, compared to those students not enrolled in service-learning. Additionally, the surveys showed that pre-course intentions to graduate from the same campus were significantly different for service-learning students and non-service-learning students. Enrollment in service-learning was indicative of re-enrollment at the same university the following year, but post-course surveys showed that their intent to re-enroll was significantly mediated by the quality of the service-learning course; meaning the service-learning experience needed to be high quality to influence their decision to stay. Lastly, the researchers found post-course surveys showed a strong relationship between service-learning students and their intentions to return, compared to non-service-learning students.

Lastly, it has been found that undergraduate students who participate in service-learning are more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree, than students who do not participate in service-learning (Lockeman & Pelco, 2013). Of particular interest, is through this study, the researchers found that underrepresented minority and low-income students graduated at higher rates when they enrolled in service-learning courses, compared to underrepresented minority and low-income students who did not participate in service-learning. This provides evidence that
universities are able to implement practices to increase student completion, all while students are earning credits and experiencing deep learning.

Bringle et al. (2010), Gallini and Moely (2003) and Lockeman and Pelco (2013) who broadly examined how service-learning increased retention, provide evidence that service-learning provides high quality educational experiences, which influence student’s retention in subsequent semesters at the same university. Service-learning courses have the potential to make a great impact on students through peer and faculty -interaction, peer-learning, and course satisfaction, compared to other types of first year courses. According to these studies, high quality service-learning experiences could increase the retention of students, due to greater engagement with the academic content as well as fellow students and professors.

Overall, results from reviewing literature on the academic benefits of service-learning show a positive relationship between the two (Brail, 2016; Casile, Hoover, & O’Neil, 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Mpofu, 2007; Strage, 2004). However, the research doesn’t inform us of how service-learning can be beneficial beyond one’s academic career. Although the academic benefits of service-learning are well researched, teaching academic material is only one of the purposes of a university. Graduates entering the workforce for the first time often lack the skills required to perform their job at satisfactory levels (Fallows & Steven, 2000; Perrone & Vickers, 2003). This highlights a shortcoming in higher education and the lack of educational practices that prepare college graduates for workplace success through employability skills. Since we know that service-learning provides enhancement of academic skills, such as increasing content knowledge, development of employability skills, such as communication and teamwork, through service-learning may warrant further research.
Civic Development

In addition to academic achievement, the use of service-learning as an instructional method to promote citizenship in college students has also been well researched over the past 25 years (Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Meyers, 2009; Morgan & Streb, 2001). Higher education aims to create good citizens (Kezar, 2002); and several studies have examined service-learning and found that it had positive effects on a student’s civic development (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000). This section of the literature review will begin by evaluating research that investigated how participation in service-learning increases multicultural competence in college students. Next, it will discuss research that demonstrates the impact of service-learning on increasing civic action, which predominately focuses on students becoming actively involved in the community. Lastly, literature will be reviewed that discusses how participation in service-learning increases awareness of societal inequalities, and empowers students to promote social justice.

Increasing Multicultural Competence. Research on service-learning has consistently found that students increase their multicultural competence as a result of participating in these programs (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Morgan & Streb 2001). For example, Einfeld and Collins (2008) conducted a small qualitative study on AmeriCorps, a service-learning program which focuses on public safety and education, and community and economic development. The students who participated in this service-learning program provided service at a juvenile teen court program, a residential facility for “at-risk” teenagers, and a center for clients with disabilities. Interviews with students showed an increase in awareness and knowledge of multicultural issues through participation in the service-learning project. Race,
religion, and gender were all cited as dimensions of diversity that students increased their awareness of as a result of their participation.

Spending such a large number of hours (300 to 600) providing service at community agencies was a factor the researchers identified as contributing greatly to the development of students’ multicultural competence. The length of the service-learning program allowed them to create relationships with individuals that come from diverse backgrounds, which ultimately facilitated multicultural interactions. Although positive results were found in this study, the researchers did not investigate or discuss what specific factors of the service-learning program allowed students to increase their multicultural awareness. It is important to conduct research about how service-learning programs should be structured for students to receive such benefits, which is what my proposed research will do, so the results can better be transferred to other similar programs.

Additionally, Hawkins and Kaplan (2016) used mixed-methods to investigate how service-learning increased multicultural competence for incoming college freshmen. The service activities in this program involved things that caused the students to decenter themselves, for example, they took themselves out of their established center and focused on the experiences of someone else. This included planning events for refugees, tutoring them, helping the refugees adjust to life in the United States, creating documentaries about them, and organizing fundraisers to help the refugees. Overall, results showed the experience increased students’ multicultural competency by seeing obstacles that the refugees had to overcome. It made the students realize the privilege they had, themselves, while growing up without refugee status. The students also reported becoming more aware of global current events, such as immigration issues. Lastly, the researchers found that the more students interacted with the refugees, the more they were able to
decenter themselves. Although this study discussed that benefits received by students increased as time with refugees increased, it also failed to discuss how their interaction caused this enhancement. This current research study will better accomplish this by answering questions related to how service-learning should be structured a certain way to enhance employability skills instead of leaving the reader wondering why.

**Increasing Civic Engagement.** Service-learning has been used as an instructional method for a variety of educational purposes. For example, one objective of its implementation has been to produce college graduates who are civically engaged in their community (Prentice, 2007). Several studies have examined how participation in service-learning has increased students’ engagement in their community (Blankson, Rochester, & Waltkins, 2015; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Pentice, 2007; Weiler et al., 2013). For example, a large-scale survey study compared a group of students in a service-learning program that mentored at-risk youth, to a group of students who were not in service-learning, and found that there was a significant change in civic action and civic attitudes between the two groups (Weiler et al., 2013). Specifically, students reported that the service-learning experience made them feel more motivated and empowered to become engaged citizens within their community. The service-learning students also reported gaining greater awareness of issues facing their community, and expressed how the experience made them want to help with those matters.

Moeley, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, and Ilustre (2002) found that at the completion of a service-learning course, students had a change in their civic attitudes, had higher assessment of their own skills related to their ability to be engaged with the community, and expressed their future plans to be involved members of the community. It was thought that the service-learning
student’s interaction with individuals different than themselves accounted for these changes in attitudes, since they saw fist-hand issues with social classes and race barriers.

These findings have also been observed at the community college level, when using surveys to assess how service-learning impacted civic engagement. When comparing a group of service-learning students, to non-service-learning students, Prentice (2007) found that the students in the service-learning group had identified higher levels of civic engagement than the non-service-learning group. This suggests that the service-learning educational experience may have been responsible for the difference between the groups, since no significant differences were found between the two groups prior to the service-learning course. However, even though this researcher aimed to specifically address actual engagement in the community, only three of the 27 questions were action orientated, resulting in thoughts and feeling being predominately investigated, not actual actions the students contributed to the community.

Additionally, Blankson et al., (2015) conducted the first study that examined the association between service-learning and civic engagement at a minority serving institution. The researchers found that there was a significant effect between past and current upper division, service-learning students being actively involved in their community as self-reported by students. However, since both the pre and post surveys the students completed showed this effect, this result could just indicate that service-orientated students are more likely to choose to enroll in service-learning courses, compared to those that are not.

Lastly, Morgan and Streb (2001) used results from a five-state survey in which students completed a survey before and after their service-learning course, regardless of the type of service-learning experience they received. Morgan and Streb found that the student’s involvement in service-learning seemed to make them feel empowered. Additionally, their
political engagement also increased and the students understood how involvement in service could create positive change. The students reported that the service-learning program reduced their stereotyping and more positive feelings were produced towards diverse individuals. Overall the authors concluded that involvement in service learning projects had a significant impact on increases in self-concept, political engagement, and attitudes toward diverse groups of individuals.

Overall, increased amounts of civic engagement through service-learning has been well researched, and positive results have been shown at various level of post-secondary education, as well as within different demographics (Blankson, et al., 2015; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Prentice, 2007; Weiler et al., 2013). Although research has consistently found that service-learning increases civic engagement, many studies actually only found positive changes in the student’s attitude toward, or interest in, civic engagement, and not behavioral changes (Morgan & Streb, 2001; Prentice, 2007; Rochester, & Waltkins, 2015). In order to evaluate if civic engagement behaviors change as a result of service-learning, research would need to be conducted that assesses the level of involvement in their community. Furthermore, all the reviewed research consisted of survey research being conducted with quantitative data analysis. Using qualitative methods may provide a better assessment of how engaged students are in their community as a result of being a part of service-learning. However, regardless of attitudes being researched more predominately than behaviors, the strength of the previously reviewed research was that the authors chose to give both pre-service-learning surveys and post service-learning surveys, and also used a comparison group. These methods allowed for initial attitudes between the groups to be accounted for, to verify the difference in civic action was truly attributed to the service-learning participation.
Social Justice. Qualitative research confirmed that participation in service-learning can facilitate positive changes in students outlook on issues of social justice (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000). For example, Rockquemore and Schaffer (2000) analyzed surveys and reflective journals from predominately white students, who were enrolled in freshmen level service-learning courses. Activities in their service-learning courses included residential geriatric care, youth mentoring, public education, free health-care, and working at a juvenile detention facility. It was found that the student’s attitudes changed significantly, and in a positive way, toward social justice and equality of opportunity. Being that the majority of the participants were from affluent backgrounds, many of the students reported feeling shocked by what community challenges they were exposed to during their service-learning experience. The students reported experiencing disparity in the economic system, educational inequalities, job discrimination, and a lack of political power. As a consequence of the service-learning experience and spending time with disadvantaged individuals, the students began to identify the disadvantaged individuals more as equals and started to see the difference between them and their clients was a result of structural inequality rather than an individual attribute.

Additionally, Einfeld and Collins (2008) investigated how civic development impacted a sense of social justice for service-learning participants. Many of the students in their sample reported that as a result of their service-learning experience, they were able to recognize societal inequalities and explained their belief in equal rights ranging from broad, general examples to specific systematic inequalities. The second theme that emerged from interviews with students was empowerment, which the researcher cited as the second step to encourage students to make changes toward achieving societal equality. The students cited both personal and systematic
levels empowerment as a result of this project and were able to see how empowerment may lead to just one small action, yet the impact that change had could extend to several different levels.

Through this section of the review of literature, we have seen how service-learning helps to fulfill part of a purpose of colleges, to produce involved citizens. Even with all the benefits of service-learning, very little research has been conducted which connects service-learning to the development of employability skills. Since service-learning produces results that parallel the mission of universities, it is plausible that it would also produce positive results toward this mission; educating for workforce development. Additionally, there has been very limited research that looked at what factors of service learning promote the enhancement of employability skills. In this current study, the researcher will investigate what factors of a service-learning project enhance specific employability skills so those could be built into the curriculum to ensure the students are receiving as many benefits and mastering as many career competencies as possible. Different methodologies have been used in conducting research on service-learning and on college students being career ready. Nonetheless, scholarship that combines service-learning and employability skills is uncommon, and has only been documented in a few studies.

**High Impact Practices**

Several teaching and learning strategies in higher education have been shown to have positive results in college students (Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008; Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005). These strategies, identified as high-impact practices by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AACU, 2007), typically extend beyond the traditional classroom setting, and include internships, capstone courses, and undergraduate research (AACU, 2007). These high-impact practices are found to increase student involvement in their educational
experience, enhance personal development, provide profound learning experiences, and increase retention rates (Finley, 2011; Kilgo, Ezell-Sheets, & Pascarella, 2015; Kuh, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Zhao, et al., 2005). A benchmark of these practices is the application of knowledge by students, and student reflections of their experience to demonstrate learning, which ultimately increases metacognition, giving students the ability to transfer knowledge to a variety of contexts (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010).

These practices share several traits, which in turn, make them high-impact. Those traits include demanding substantial time and effort from students, opportunities that allow for learning to occur outside of the typical college classroom, require meaningful interactions with faculty and students, require students to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds, and provide frequent and significant feedback from faculty to the students (Kuh, 2008). A result of all of these characteristics is that students invest more effort in both the high-impact practice they are participating in, and their own university. This investment, in turn, translates to higher retention and graduations rates (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Specifically, the California State Universities, which is the largest four-year public university-system in the nation, shows a strong correlation between their graduation rates and student participation in multiple high impact practices (O’Donnell, Botelho, Brown, Gonzalez, & Head, 2015).

George Kuh, founding director of the well-established National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), recommends that all students should participate in at least two high-impact practices over the course of their college career. One of these experiences should be placed during their first-year at the institution, and the second should be taken within their major (NSSE, 2007). He further suggests that institutions should make every effort to get students to engage in high-impact practices, since the benefits are so far-reaching, with an overall positive
effect on student learning. These suggestions are supported by the AAC&amp;U’s advocacy for high-impact practices due to the educational benefits undergraduates receive.

It is also suggested that students who participate in high-impact practices may integrate such experiences into their career-readiness (Miller, Rocconi, & Dumford, 2018) and that high-impact practices may develop transferable skills sought after by employers (Kinzie, 2013; Lopatto, 2007; Sandeen, 2012). Although each individual high-impact practice will have its own unique way on how it facilitates career-readiness, as a whole, there does appear to be a link between high-impact practices and career-readiness skills (Miller et al., 2018). Kuh (2008) presented findings that showed the value that employers held for high-impact practices. Results showed that over 80 percent of employers felt it would be beneficial for students to complete an internship or community-based field project, which is further supported by accrediting agencies for undergraduate and graduate programs. The experiences should connect classroom learning to the real world, or complete a significant project that demonstrated their depth of knowledge within their major, as well as their communication and analytical skills.

**Internships**

Internships are one example of a high-impact practice (Kuh, 2008). They provide pre-professional experiences, which allow students to work in a career setting prior to entering their career field, and are usually stand-alone courses, rather than integrated within the curriculum (Ramson, 2014). Internships allow students to both explore career options, and gain experience in the field of work they wish to pursue (Marks, Haug, & Hu, 2018). Additionally, internships allow students to refine their skills in a real-world setting, establishes professional connections in their career field, and enhances their resume by giving students marketable experience (Miller et al., 2018).
There have been documented benefits of doing an internship for a future career (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010; Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Nance-Nash, 2007; Miller et al., 2018). For example, Gault et al. (2010) found that when students complete internships, they improve career skills that are useful in full-time employment. Doing an internship also better equips students with realities they will experience in the workforce (Knouse & Fontenot, 2008), and is related to quickly getting hired for work upon both the completion of the internship and college graduation (Knouse & Fontenot, 2008; Miller et al., 2018). Lastly, an increase in leaderships skills has also been self-reported by students (Soria & Johnson, 2017), which is a skill that employers report as lacking from recent college graduates (Paranto & Kelkar, 2000).

Other researched benefits that students receive from their participation in an internship include establishing a greater amount of cultural competency, as well as the ability for greater opportunity for civic engagement through working with members of the community (Simons et al., 2012). Bringle (2017) found through self-assessments, that students reported internships provided them with personal growth, gains in general learning, and increases in their practical application ability through the activities they engaged in during the internship. It has also been found that internships provided more intentional learning compared to volunteering (O’Neill, 2010).

Even with all the researched benefits of internships, there are still documented shortcomings of this type of experience (Bringle, 2017; Hanneman & Gardner, 2010). One downfall of internships is the lack of connection to academic material (O’Neill, 2010). Although internships should provide students to apply educational material they have learned throughout their academic career, internships are typically focused on services at the internship site, and have a large variability on the degree of connection to course or program material (Bringle,
Additionally, internships do not adequately develop the competencies students are expected to know to the level higher education requires (Hanneman & Gardner, 2010). With the expansive list of skills and competencies employers are looking for, internships are not sufficient to provide all of them, and other forms of experiential education should be utilized to promote the development of them.

In addition to these drawbacks, it has been found that not all internships will help increase the skills needed for student’s future career, as they are known to be highly variable on the quality of educational experience it provides for students (O’Neill, 2010). Internships are also typically more program focused, where service-learning is focused on course competencies, and provides more specific skills and abilities to students who engage in it. Additionally, it is only when internships are structured to be a high-impact practice that students actually receive career-enhancing benefits (Ramson, 2014). Unfortunately, not all internships are considered a high-impact practice. For it to be considered a high impact practice, the internship needs to be tied to specific learning outcomes, students should be able to reflect on the experience, receive feedback for self-improvement, and build mentoring relationships (Kuh, 2008). Interestingly, when internships are organized as a high-impact practice, they have many of the same characteristics of service-learning (Ramson, 2014).

Even with its resemblance to service-learning in this form, internships still lack some of the characteristics inherent to service-learning. For example, internships do not require students to write a structured reflection of their experience, which is what separates service-learning from other areas of community-based learning (Gronski & Pigg, 2000). Internships were also ranked below service-learning by Mooney and Edwards (2001) when using a hierarchy to illustrate the difference in ability for community-based initiatives to promote student learning and their
commitment to individuals within the community. Additionally, internships have also been identified as having less interaction between students and community members compared to service-learning, and many undergraduate interns are typically only allowed to observe work, or assist an experienced employee (Eyler, 2009).

**Capstone Courses**

Capstone courses are a culminating experience which allows students to apply the knowledge they acquired throughout their college career, and are typically taken during the final year of a student’s undergraduate degree (Holdsworth, Watty, & Davies, 2009). These courses provide an opportunity for students to consolidate and incorporate fragmented pieces of information from their field of study into a large project, to better enable them to transition into graduate school or a career (Andreasen, 2004; Bailey, Oliver, & Townsend, 2007). The capstone courses will typically conclude with a final project, presentation, or demonstration, which validates their learning within their area of study. They are a commonly used practice across all disciplines in universities throughout the United States (Andreasen, 2004), and are thought to improve undergraduate education (Kuh, 2008). Capstone courses have grown in popularity over the last decade (Gifford, Cannon, Stedman, & Telg, 2011), and subsequently lead to numerous research publications on the benefits students receive participating in them (Andreasen, 2004; Gifford et al., 2011; Holdsworth et al., 2009; Kuh, 2008). Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to assess the academic benefits capstone courses provide (Benton-Kupper, Brooks, & Slayton, 2004; Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Dunlap, 2005; McGill, 2012). Specifically, research suggests that participation in capstone courses improves a students' ability to apply and incorporate knowledge learned in their major, into a more concrete experience (Brownell & Swaner, 2009; Kinzie, 2013; McGill, 2012). Additionally, multiple studies have
also shown that capstone courses increase a student’s ability to think critically (Benton-Kupper et al., 2004; Kiener, Ahuna, & Tinnesz, 2013). Capstone courses are thought to improve a student’s critical thinking ability due to their emphasis on problem-solving and decision making, which in turn cause students to think critically (Gordon, 2000). Students also reported mastering skills in which they had not gained proficiency in during previous courses. These skills included verbal and written communication, teamwork, and time-management (Benton-Kupper et al., 2004; McGill, 2012). These skills were significant because there were skills the students identified as necessary for future success in their careers or in graduate school.

Capstone course have also been documented as producing personal and professional benefits to students as well (Benton-Kupper et al. 2004; Dunlap, 2005; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004; McGill, 2012). Benton-Kupper et al. (2004) found that students acknowledged the development of their interpersonal skills, such as leadership skills, personal integrity, ethical reasoning, the development of a service mindset, as well as enhanced their sense of civic responsibility, to a greater degree, compared to other courses taken in their major. Students also reported feeling a sense of accomplishment through the completion of their capstone project (McGill, 2012), which also enhanced the development of their self-efficacy (Dunlap, 2005). On a professional level, capstone courses have been found to create a professional identify for students, as well as help them transition into a career (Dunlap, 2005; Lizzio & Wilson, 2004). Capstone courses have also increased the likelihood of students to secure employment after completing their college degree (Miller et al., 2018). These professional benefits are thought to surface during capstone courses since capstones are considered to be an educational experience that connects student’s coursework to a related career-field (Fairchild & Taylor, 2000). It has been suggested that capstones provide a culminating experience that strikes balance between practical skill
application and career development in order for students to receive both academic and professional benefits (Gifford et al., 2011).

Although capstone courses allow students to apply information from academic courses, they do not necessarily involve an active learning component, or get students out in the community. As previously mentioned, these courses typically end with a presentation, or a project, which could be something as simple as a term paper, making it no different than a traditional college course in which students complete and turn in work. Service-learning, on the other hand, allows students to go into the community and actively implement their knowledge in a real-life setting. Being able to utilize a real-life setting exposes students to more variables to respond to, which would help increase competencies employers are looking for, which is something capstone courses fall short in. Additionally, capstone courses are not typically taken until the last year of someone’s educational career, perhaps making it too late to fully develop competencies for employability. Conversely, students are encouraged to take service-learning courses throughout their time in college, which allows them more time and opportunity to develop employability competencies.

**Undergraduate Research**

Although undergraduate research has traditionally been linked to scientific disciplines, it now extends to a variety of fields throughout a liberal education (AACU, 2007). With the expansion of research across several disciplines, and more research presenting evidence on students attaining academic achievements when engaged in it, it has been identified as a high-impact practice (Lopatto, 2010). Undergraduate research can include both student research projects supervised by a faculty member, or a collaboration on a research project with a faculty mentor. In either form, undergraduate research increases a student’s interaction with a faculty
member, and allows students to learn research methods, and develop the skills needed to carry out a research project (Kuh, 2008).

Performing research as an undergraduate student, under the supervision of a faculty member provides positive benefits, on both a personal and professional level (Hunter, Laursen, & Seymour, 2006; Lopatto, 2010). Personally, students reported an increase in self-confidence, self-awareness, and a sense of accomplishment (Lopatto, 2007; Russell, Hancock, & McCullough, 2007). Professionally, students reported a feeling of advancement in the professional field through scholarly publications, being a part of a learning community, building relationships with mentors, and clarification of a career path (Lopatto, 2007).

Additionally, participating in undergraduate research allows students to get a feel for what graduate school would be like, as well as learn standards for conducting research at the graduate level (Hunter et al., 2006). It has also found to increase persistence to graduation (Jones, Barlow, & Villarejo, 2010; Russell et al., 2009) and attending graduate school (Kuh, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). It also creates positive cognitive-related outcomes and critical thinking (Elgren & Hansel, 2006; Hunter et al., 2006; Kilgo et al., 2015). Lastly, performing undergraduate research enables students to learn various technical skills (Lopatto, 2007). However, it is not technical skills or specialized skills such as conducting research employers feel are lacking in college graduates.

Undergraduate research seems to be most beneficial for students who are considering graduate school, as it teaches them competencies for conducting research, and appropriate research methods. Assisting in undergraduate research does not necessarily allow students to apply the knowledge they learned in any of their courses. They could be working on a completely unrelated project than what they have been learning in their courses. Similar to
capstone courses, conducting or assisting in research does not necessarily allow students to work in the community and apply the knowledge they gained during their college career. Although working closely with faculty seems to be a major strength of this high-impact practice, it seems to lack both the community engagement and connection to academic content, making service-learning superior for career readiness.

Furthermore, Seymour et al. (2004) found that undergraduate students who completed research reported additional benefits to participating in research projects. Those additional benefits included thinking more like a scientist and also a positive shift in their attitude about wanting to learn and work as a researcher in the future. Although this evidence demonstrates encouraging results for those who conduct research, the benefit really comes as a state of mind of the students, where the benefits of service-learning reach beyond one’s mindset. Service-learning can be used as an applied state of research that has real-life implications for a group of individuals, or even a community. With the practical application that service-learning has, students are better able to apply what they have learned in college into a real-world scenario after college (Eyler et al. 2001). Additionally, service-learning is found to better bridge the transition from college to a career, more than completing undergraduate research has (Miller, Rocconi, & Dumford, 2017).

**How High-Impact Practices are Different from Service-Learning**

Although service-learning has been identified as a high-impact practice, it brings its own unique contributions that separates it from the other forms of high-impact practices previously discussed. What separates it from other high-impact practices is the fact that service combines both academic material and service to the community into one course. For example, internships typically provide service to the community, but emphasize student goals more than community
goals (Verjee, 2010). Although internships allow students to practice practical skills in a clinical setting, it does not necessarily apply academic material learned from academic courses. Capstone courses and undergraduate research incorporate academic material, but rarely provide service to the community. Lastly, none of these experiences would typically work on development of civic learning (Verjee, 2010).

**Community-Based Learning**

Community-based learning (CBL) is an educational strategy that combines service to the community and academic learning (Ibrahim, 2010). In community-based learning, students provide service to the community through their involvement at placement sites, while applying subject matter knowledge and skills during their service (Diab & Flack, 2013). This type of education provides students with hands-on experience in the real world, which in turn, provides a means for meaningful learning to take place, while building a sense of connection to their communities (Sorbel, 2004). A benchmark of this educational practice is the fact that students are learning while out in the community, and supporting the community agencies while they are there (Hardwick, 2013). Educators of community-based learning aim to help students develop not only their academic skills, but also their personal skills and their sense of civic responsibility (Cuban & Anderson, 2007). Because of the strong evidence of the positive impact that CBL has on students, CBL has become very common in colleges. (Ibrahim, 2010)

Community-based learning practices share common-characteristics, which provide the framework for this type of education. Those characteristics include having meaningful content for the students, allowing students to take an active role in their learning tasks, the community projects having learning goals that connect personal and public purpose together, students being provided with meaningful feedback, and the community partners providing both resources and
relationship for students to learn (Melaville, Berg, & Blank, 2006). The fact that higher-education and the community come together to create meaningful learning experiences for students is what makes community-based learning more than just volunteering. Some examples of community-based learning that college students have engaged in include visiting adolescents at an addiction hospital, which supplemented a class on addictive studies, providing company to an individual who has a disability to better learn about their emotional aspects of disability, visiting elderly individuals at nursing homes while taking a course in geriatrics, and tutoring children after school for students who were interested in becoming teachers.

Several benefits have been documented for students who engage in this type of education (Crebert, Bates, Bell, & Cragnolini, 2004; Conway, Amel, & Gerwien, 2009; Dawes & Larson, 2011; Larson, Walker, & Pearce, 2005; Schmidt, Shumfow, & Kackar, 2007; Smith, Davis, & Bhomik, 2010; Terry, 2008). These benefits occur across multiple domains, including academic, interpersonal and civic development (Ibrahim, 2010), and provided benefits beyond what a traditional classroom provides (Vasquez, Gonzalez, & Garcia, 2014). For example, increases in academic achievement were observed through student’s practical application of knowledge acquired through their college career, while working with members of the community (Sorbel, 2004; Vasquez et al., 2014). Vasquez, et al. (2014) found that students reported that community based-learning enhanced their academic development by providing a means for them to attain new academic knowledge and skills, while utilizing their critical literacy skills. The students cited this was made possible by working side-by-side with other students, the course, instructor, and member of the community. Several studies have also shown community-based learning increases student’s grades (Conway et al., 2009; Schmidt et al., 2007). Lastly, Murakami,
Murray, Sims, and Chedzey (2009) found that both the students themselves and the community staff that supervised them felt that the service had a positive impact on student learning.

In addition to academic benefits, studies have also found that community-based learning enhances student’s interpersonal skills (Crebert et al., 2004; Ibrahim, 2010; Larson et al., 2005; Smith, et al., 2010). Such skills included teamwork, collaborative learning, leadership skills, and self-empowerment. Lastly, civic benefits have also been found when students participate in community-based learning (Melaville et al., 2006; Reinders & Younis, 2006; Sorbel, 2004;). According to Melaville et al. (2006), community-based learning intends to prepare responsible and actively engaged citizens through their active engagement with members of the community. More specifically, Sorbel (2004) found that through their interaction with members of the community, students increased their cultural competency as well as their likelihood of being active, contributing citizens upon graduation. Reinders and Youniss (2006) also found that students in community-based learning increased their intentions to be engaged members of the community when they interacted with community members who differed from themselves in terms of social status, disability, and addiction.

Additionally, since students are providing support to community members at community agencies during this type of learning experience, a reciprocity of benefits to community members and community partners has been documented (Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Hardwick, 2013). In a study by Hardwick (2013), students engaged in community-based learning, which ended in research reports that the students wrote for the community partners that were based off the activities the students were involved in. At the conclusion of these projects, the supervisors at the community agency reported benefiting from the time, skills, and motivation of the students at their site. Additionally, the supervisors acknowledge that they did not have the financial means
to carry out their own research and would have never received the research information
generated by the students if it weren’t for this learning collaboration. Ferrari and Worrall (2000)
used survey research to assess community partners’ views about the university students who
performed work at their community agency. The supervisors at all 30 of the community-based
organizations expressed “very positive” perceptions of the student’s work and the skills they
brought with them to the community site. Lastly, it has been found that the service the college
students provided at their community agency directly benefited the clients at the agency
(Birdsall, 2005; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Schmidt & Robby, 2002).

**Academically-Based Community Service**

Academically-based community service is one form of community-based learning. With
this type of project, there is a partnership with a community partner in which there is a mutual
understanding of the objectives of the service being provided (Hall, 2010). The main goal of it is
to help improve the community by meeting the needs of others (Cress, 2005), and in general, it is
associated with doing public good (Preece, 2011). Academic-based community service is now
recognized as a way to promote a more collaborative involvement between universities and the
surrounding communities (Keith, 2005).

Since community service mainly benefits the community and its members, studies on
how students benefit from it are limited. Nonetheless, community service has been found to help
students develop and apply both academic and professional skills, while also providing personal
benefits (Cucina & McCormack, 2001; Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2013; Hochschild, Farley,
Chee, 2014; Rockenbach, Hudson, & Tuchmayer, 2014). Community service is found as a way
to transform students from passive to active learners, which ultimately provides educational
benefits to them (Eyler et al., 2013). When students participate in community-service, it is also
shown to increase their motivation to learn by enabling students to see first-hand the impact of their efforts, and how valuable what they are doing is (Cucina & McCormack, 2001). Professionally, community service participation is found to encourage vocational clarity and advancement, and students have also identified developing confidence in themselves as future professionals through their service (Rockenbach et al., 2014). Personal benefits include commitment to being a leader in the community, helping others, influencing the political structure, and finding meaning and a sense of purpose in life. Rockenbach et al. (2014) found students became more aware of the broad social forces that affect the populations they worked with (Hochschild et al., 2014). Community service helps prepare students to be more engaged and compassionate citizens (Rockenbach et al., 2014).

**How Community-Based Learning Differs from Service-Learning**

It is important to clearly differentiate how service-learning uniquely differs from community-based learning. Although both community-based learning and service learning provide meaningful service to the community, the main focus of community-based learning is to provide support to the community and community agencies, while service-learning has multiple objectives. In addition to serving the community, service-learning yields a wide range of outcomes for student learning, and in contrast to community-based learning, service-learning focuses on the development of the student (Gray, Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind, 2000). Specific to community service previously discussed, that type of service can be performed at almost any time and for any reason. In contrast, service-learning is embedded in academic courses, includes both an in classroom and off-campus experience, and has an explicit connection to transformative learning (Jacoby, 2015). Additionally, when comparing community service to service-learning, longitudinal evidence that compared over 20,000 students from a
national sample of diverse colleges and universities, which provide both service-learning and community service opportunities, found that academic benefits were found more in students who completed service-learning. Those academic skills included growth in critical thinking, writing skills, and increased Grade Point Average (GPA) (Vogelgesang, Astin, & Alexander, 2000).

There are two main things that differentiates service-learning from other forms of community-based learning; reciprocity and reflection (Jacoby, 2015). Firstly, an essential aspect of service-learning is mutuality between the students and the organization they are providing service to. The organization benefits from the service provided, which is determined by community needs, and the students benefit by learning from the service they are providing, which consequent strengthens subsequent service provided (Prentice & Garcia, 2000). Secondly, service-learning is based on the educational philosophy that learning stems from reflection, which is intentionally designed to promote learning, and not a consequence of the experience itself (Kolb, 1984). Reflections are typically intended to focus on the learning outcomes of the course, can take many different forms, and should include feedback from both the community organization and the instructor. Other forms of community-based learning do not typically include a reflection component, which reduces its academic credibility (Jacoby, 2015).

**Employability Skills in College Graduates**

This final section of the literature review will focus on employability skills. This section will begin by defining what employability skills are and discussing their importance in attaining employment. It will then discuss how undergraduate students often lack these skills when seeking employment since these skills are difficult to attain in a classroom. Next, research is presented that suggests service-learning as a means to develop these competencies. Lastly, there
will be identification and definitions of the specific employability competencies that will be the focus of this research.

**Employability Skills Defined**

Employability skills are non-technical skills, also known as soft-skills, that encompass interpersonal and behavioral skills that allow individual to apply their knowledge and be successful in the workplace (Weber, Finley, Crawford, & Rivera, 2009). Non-technical skills are often referred to as employability skills because they allow individuals to operate professionally in a work environment (Cassidy, 2006). Robles (2012) described them as “character traits, attitudes, and behaviors—rather than technical aptitudes or knowledge” (p. 457). These attributes are broadly applicable and are transferable to a variety of different occupations and a multitude of environments and situations. They will help college graduates both attain employment and be effective at work (Yorke, 2004). Examples of these types of skills include critical thinking, problem-solving, oral and written communication, teamwork, leadership, professionalism, career management, and adaptability. Unfortunately, these skills are difficult to learn through formal education, and typically are easier to learn outside of a classroom. Nonetheless, attention has been paid to those employability skills that can be developed while at a university.

**Importance of Employability Skills**

Undergraduate students should go beyond mastering the academic skills in their educational program, and seek to develop and enhance their soft skills as well. These employability skills are of critical importance (Wickramasinghe & Perera, 2010), and have been found to be the most important thing for entry-level job success (Wilhem, 2004). In fact, 85 percent of workplace success is attributed to these soft-skills (Robles, 2012). Deepa and Manisha (2013) asked employers what ratio they would rate soft skills compared to technical skills in
entry-level positions, and, 68 percent of the respondents indicated a 60:40 ratio. Furthermore, Sutton (2002) explained these employability skills as the main attribute that signifies an applicant’s ability to be successful in their future profession.

These skills help students from a variety of different disciplines attain employment in a wide-range of occupations, since they are not limited to one profession or career field (Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2010; Finch et al., 2013). Overall, research affirms that attaining proficiency in soft skills is of critical importance from an employers’ perspective (Jaschik, 2015; Paranto & Kelkar, 2000). Through the literature, it is also apparent that further research is needed on instructional methodologies that facilitate the development of these soft skills, due to their significance in attaining a career, yet lack of ability to develop them in a traditional college classroom. This has been supported by employers indicating a curriculum to develop such skills would improve the quality of the entry-level workforce (Deepa & Manisha, 2013; Jaschik, 2015).

Lack of Employability Skills

Since these employability skills are challenging to learn in a classroom, when college graduates first enter their career field, they often lack skills required for them to be successful (Fallows & Stevens, 2000; Perrone & Vickers, 2003). Additionally, there is incongruity between the skills undergraduate students learn in a college classroom, and those that employers are looking for. As a consequence of these two things, employers feel college graduates are not adequately prepared for the workforce after obtaining a college degree (Ennis-Reynolds, 2001). This lack of preparedness is more due to soft-skills, rather than hard skills. For example, Cotton (2001) found that although employers are satisfied with the technical skills college graduates possess, they are not satisfied with the soft skills of college graduates. Furthermore, Deepa and
Manisha (2013) found that 60 percent of the employers interviewed felt students who enter the workforce upon graduation did not have the soft-skills needed for workplace success.

**Employability Skills and Service-Learning**

There are numerous and diverse benefits of participating in service-learning (Brail, 2016; Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Strage, 2004). A benefit that has yet to be addressed is how service-learning enhances one’s career development. Although career preparation is not the primary goal for service-learning, it can make significant contributions to student’s professional preparation (Bowen, 2007). For example, service-learning is found to help convert academic knowledge into the workplace by providing students the opportunity to apply the knowledge they learn in the classroom into the real-world (Ramson, 2014). Service-learning is also found to enhance critical-thinking, problem-solving, communication, and leadership skills (Bowen, 2007), which have all been shown as imperative for workplace success. Consequently, Coetzee, Bloemhoff, and Naude (2011) suggested using service-learning as a pedagogy to develop employability skills and competencies that are too challenging to attain in a classroom. However, there is limited research on the development of soft-skills through service-learning.

To provide further support for the investigation of the development of employability skills and service-learning, Weber, Finley, Crawford, and Rivera (2009) suggested that these employability skills can be developed through life experiences, and Calvert and Kurji (2012) and Crossley et al. (2007) identified service-learning as one type of life experience that would help cultivate soft-skills. Kee, Ahmad, Ibrahim, and Nie (2012) suggested that universities should maintain relationships with community partners, since it is through these relationships that students have the potential to enhance certain soft-skills such as communication, problem
solving, and teamwork. Other than the limited studies noted above, there is a paucity of data and published research regarding this subject.

**Students Majoring in Kinesiology**

According to the American Kinesiology Association, kinesiology is defined as “an academic discipline which involves the study of physical activity and its impact on health, society, and quality of life. It includes, but is not limited to, such areas of study as exercise science, sports management, athletic training and sports medicine, socio-cultural analyses of sports, sport and exercise psychology, fitness leadership, physical education-teacher education, and pre-professional training for physical therapy, occupational therapy, medicine and other health related fields.”

Undergraduate students who major in kinesiology at California State University, Northridge will experience a learning-centered environment, where they will work with faculty, which take an integrated approach to provide opportunities and experiences to students, which allow them to achieve the department student learning outcomes (SLO’s) upon graduation. Those SLO’s are:

1. Apply an integrated kinesiological approach to encourage the adoption of healthy and physically active lifestyles, across diverse populations;
2. Apply evidence-based practices to enhance the study of human movement;
3. Demonstrate competent problem-solving strategies through intentional practices; and
4. Demonstrate knowledge of kinesthetic forms, processes and structures as they apply to the personal expression and culture of human movement.
**Employability Skills Competencies**

The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has identified seven competencies that increase the career-readiness of college graduates. The competencies have been developed through a taskforce comprised of college career services and staffing professionals who conducted extensive research with a large variety of employers. NACE identifies eight competencies associated with employability, seven of which are relevant to students majoring in kinesiology that will be the focus of the current research study. Those seven skills are problem-solving, verbal communication, written communication, teamwork, leadership, professionalism, and career management. Additionally, adaptability and the ability to analyze information are also found as important employability competencies for college graduates to have (Achieve, 2018; Finch et al., 2013; Jaschik, 2015). All nine competencies are discussed below with service-learning research incorporated within each competency to provide further justification for this research project.

**Problem-Solving.** Problem-solving skills are found as a critical competency needed for employability (Reid & Anderson, 2012; Stiwne & Jungert, 2010; Wellman, 2010). In regards to an employment setting, problem-solving skills often signify the ability to manage difficult and unforeseen situations in a workplace. Employers are looking for individuals that can identity such problems, assess them, and come up with a solution for the problem (NACE, 2014). Additionally, service-learning has been found to increase problem-solving skills (Bowen, 2007; Simons & Clearly, 2006).

**Oral and Written Communication.** Communication skills are ranked at the top of the list of skills employers are looking for. Unfortunately, college graduates often lack both written and verbal communication skills (NACE, 2014). Communication includes “speaking effectively,
writing concisely, listening attentively, expressing ideas, facilitating group discussions, providing appropriate feedback, negotiating, perceiving nonverbal messages, persuading, reporting information, describing feelings, interviewing, and editing” (Urciuoli, 2008, p. 216). The ability to communicate effectively through written work, is the main way we communicate in our society (Graham, Hampton, Willett, 2010). Additionally, being able to communicate clearly and express ideas is one of the skills found to be most valued by employers (Ennis-Reynolds, 2001). Service-learning has been found to improve student’s verbal communication skills in a few previous studies (Bowen, 2007; Clinton & Thomas, 2011; Coetzee, Bloemhoff, & Naude, 2011; Robinsons & Torres, 2007; Wickman, 2018), but previous studies have not documented improvement in written communication skills.

An example, specific to kinesiology majors, students in kinesiology go in to client-centered careers, meaning they will be caring for clients in ways that are meaningful to the patient or client to meet their goals. Having effective and open verbal, and non-verbal communication skills will enable students, who become professionals, to work more effectively work with their clients to achieve their goals.

**Teamwork.** Teamwork is the ability for students to work collaboratively in groups. It is found that through service-learning, students are better able to work cooperatively in a team with one another (Crebert et al., 2004; Furco, 2002; Ibrahim, 2010; Larson et al., 2005; Smith, et al., 2010; Wickman, 2018). Additionally, Coetzee et al. (2011) found that teamwork was improved through service-learning in a group of recreation majors. The students were unable to choose their group members, so they learned to interact with people different than oneself, and found that the group work, in turn, improved their people skills. Students reported gaining a better understanding of one another, and learned the importance of teamwork. The students also found
that some tasks were easier to accomplish in a group versus by themselves, and identified that support from team members was a motivating factor.

**Leadership.** Leadership is not an inherent quality people possess, it is something that can be learned and developed. Leadership skills are identified as having one of the largest skill gaps. Ultimately, higher education is not teaching their students leadership skills needed in their future employment (Conrad & Newberry, 2012). Leadership skills include motivating and guiding individuals, and service-learning is shown to increase leadership skills (Mouton & Wildschut, 2005). Improvement in leadership skills through participation in service-learning is previously documented in literature (Bowen, 2007; Clinton & Thomas, 2011; Coetzee et al., 2011; Crebert et al., 2004; Ibrahim, 2010; Larson et al., 2005; Smith, et al., 2010; Soria & Johnson, 2017).

**Professionalism.** When a college graduate enters the workforce, they are accepting a professional role, and the attitude and behavior they exhibit reflects the organization they are working for. Being professional encompasses a few different competencies such as being dependable and reliable, honest, having integrity, and being accountable. Service-learning has been found to enhance professional behaviors of students (Crandell, Wiegand, & Brosky, 2013).

**Career management.** Career management concentrates on the resources an individual invests into their future career. Service-learning can have an impact on the career’s students choose. Powerfully, Bowen (2007) noted that students who participate in service-learning projects tend to then choose a service-related career, particularly those in the “helping professions” of which kinesiology is often classified. Service-learning allows students to explore their various career options, discover professional development opportunities, network, and also provides opportunities for students to evaluate their readiness to enter the workforce. Service-
learning can also finalize a career decision for students (Bowen, 2007; Whitley, Walsh, Hayden, & Gould, 2017).

**Adaptability.** Adaptability refers to one’s ability to adjust to the various situations and circumstances one will be confronted with in the workplace. Since companies are always changing based on the needs of society or industry, they value employees who can also adapt to constantly changing needs (Reeves & Deimler, 2011). The ability to adapt entails being able to make smooth changes in a timely manner, without any setbacks.

**Ability to analyze information.** The ability to analyze information is an analytical skill that allows individuals to solve problems. Having the ability to analyze information enables individuals to investigate a problem and find a solution (Doyle, 2019). With so much information currently available, it is important for college graduates to be able to sort through it, and make an informed decision, based on the information available. Research has found that service-learning serves as a means to convert academic knowledge into the real-world (Ramson, 2014). More specifically, previous research found that kinesiology students have gained a greater understanding of theoretical principles through their participation in service-learning (Whitley et al., 2017).

**Summary**

Through this review of literature, the reader has been introduced to what service-learning is, how is can be implemented effectively, as well as examples of successful, research-based service-learning programs. From there, a multitude of research studies was presented that support the academic and civic benefits students receive from participation in service-learning. After that, the researcher introduced high-impact practices and community-based learning instructional strategies that have been well-researched, and shown positive results in student learning.
Although service-learning is considered both a high impact practice and a form of community based-learning, it is superior to the other learning experiences discussed in this review of literature due to the inherent challenges and limitations they all inherently possess. For this reason, the extensive research done on the benefits of service-learning, and it’s potential to develop employability competencies, service-learning has been made the focus of this research. As mentioned, research that combines service-learning and employability skills is scarce, and this research will seek to fill this gap in knowledge.
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This was a qualitative study that aimed to understand the influence that service-learning has on the enhancement of career-readiness competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology at a large public university. The ultimate goal of this study was to assess kinesiology students’ readiness to enter their career field through participation in a service-learning program. The following research questions guided this study: What are the learned employability skills of undergraduate kinesiology students participating in a service-learning project? What factors of the service-learning project shape the development of employability skills?

This chapter provides a detailed description of the methodology used in this study. First, the research tradition that was used is described, and why it was appropriate for this specific study is explained. Next, the chapter describes the research setting and where the study took place. After describing the setting, the data sources and research sample are explained, which includes how participants were recruited. Next, data collection instruments and procedures are explained, as well as the data analysis process. Lastly, the researcher’s role is discussed, and what that role entails when planning and conducting the research.

Research Tradition

The researcher used a grounded theory case study design to understand how a service-learning program enhanced the development of employability skills in undergraduate kinesiology students at a large public university. The purpose of conducting grounded theory research is to construct a theory that ultimately serves to explain the phenomenon under investigation. To create a theory that is grounded in the data that was collected, the researcher conducted multiple
interviews, engaged in concurrent data collection and analysis, and used constant comparative data analysis methods.

Concurrent data collection and analysis means that these things happened at the same time. Birks and Mills (2011) provide a more precise explanation of this process by explaining that data is collected, followed by initial analysis of the data, which influences what is done next in data collection. Since data collection and analysis co-occurred, key concepts from the collected data were found early on, and later interviews were then used to produce additional data that either confirmed or contested the initial categories of data. Lastly, a constant comparative data analysis occurred to further uncover the developing patterns from the initial data analysis. Constant comparative data analysis means the researcher simultaneously analyzed and coded data to develop concepts that were identified as significant to the study. By continually comparing specific occurrences in the data, the researcher refined codes and concepts and explored their relationship with one another, with the goal of developing a theoretical model that conceptualized the participant’s lived experiences (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

Using a grounded theory design was appropriate for this research because the researcher was looking to explore how participation in service-learning helped to shape the development of employability skills in kinesiology students, as well as what specific factors about the program supported the enhancement of those skills. The researcher used the descriptive information gathered from interviews to create a theoretical model to explain how a service-learning program led to the enhancement employability competencies for students.

To investigate the phenomenon of the enhancement of employability skills through participation in a service-learning program, the researcher also used a case study approach. Case studies are narrowly focused studies that allow for an exploration and collection of detailed
descriptive data of a particular phenomenon. Additionally, they contain four distinguishing characteristics; they are bounded systems, meaning they focus on a single unit or group that are bounded by time or activity. Case studies are particularistic because they focus on a particular situation, event, or phenomenon, they are descriptive because they provide in-depth descriptions of the phenomenon under study. Lastly, case studies are heuristic because they support an understanding of the phenomena under study (Merriam, 2009).

Using a case study design was appropriate for this research because the researcher focused on a service-learning program that is bounded by a certain number of participants participating in a specific activity with a designated end date. Additionally, it focused on a specific service-learning program, which made it particularistic. In-depth interviews with the student participants provided a rich, literal description of how this program enhanced their development of employability skills, making it a descriptive study. Lastly, it is heuristic because it will help support one’s understanding of factors within a service-learning program that help to enhance employability skills in college students.

**Research Site**

**Research Setting**

The researcher investigated a motor behavior service-learning program in the kinesiology department at California State University, Northridge. California State University, Northridge is a large public university in Southern California that was originally founded in the late 1950s as a part of a state college of Arts and Sciences. During the 1970s, it detached itself from that institution, becoming its own public university, and began its exponential growth over the next several decades, ultimately becoming one of the largest in the California State University system. It provides a low-cost education and proximity to numerous cities in which students can
commute from. The diversity of the vast service area of the university is reflected in its student demographics, with 50 percent of its student population identified as Latinx, 25 percent white, 13 percent Asian-American, eight percent African-American, and five percent in various other ethnicities. The students are evenly classified between men and women with significantly more students attending full-time compared to part-time. Almost 2,000 faculty members teach at Mountain View, 40 percent of which are full-time faculty, while 60 percent teach part-time. Among them, 50 percent identified as white, 20 percent as Asian-American, 15 percent as Latinx, eight percent as African-American, and seven percent are in other ethnicities, reflecting additional diversity within the university (Research Study’s Site of Institutional Research, 2018).

At California State University, Northridge, the department of Kinesiology also started out small, with about 600 in its major in the mid 1990s. From this year forward, the number of students majoring in Kinesiology grew steadily, along with increased student enrollment at the university. By 2002, California State University, Northridge’s enrollment was up to 34,000 students and close to 900 kinesiology majors. By 2015, it was one of the largest universities in the United States, and had over 40,000 students enrolled, 1,700 of which were majoring in Kinesiology. Currently, kinesiology is the third largest major in the university, with just under 2,000 students (U.S. News, 2018).

The Kinesiology Department identifies itself as a learning-centered community, where students, faculty, and the community are at the forefront in the study of human movement (“College of Health”, 2018). Its mission is to promote physical activity for personal expression and wellness throughout the lifespan. In order to promote physical activity toward the beginning of the lifespan, during early childhood, a service-learning program was created and implemented in 1994 by a professor of Motor Development in kinesiology, and will be the focus of this
research. This program takes motor development students into the community to provide developmentally appropriate movement activities to young children in order to increase the duration, intensity, and frequency of their daily physical activity, and allows students to apply concepts they learned in lecture.

Although the program originally started out small, targeting two daycare facilities on the university’s campus, the extreme growth in students majoring in kinesiology allowed for more service-learning classes to be offered, which allowed the program to be extended to pre-schools and elementary schools throughout the community. Currently, over 300 kinesiology students partake in the service-learning program each year, along with six different elementary schools. In 2009, the service-learning program became a requirement to earn a bachelor’s degree in kinesiology, and is taken by all the undergraduate students in the major, except those who are in the athletic training program.

Site Selection Strategy

The researcher used purposive sampling to select the research site, which is often used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling allowed for participants linked to the phenomenon under investigation to provide in-depth information on the research topic (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Applying a purposive sampling approach, the researcher also used a combination sampling method consisting of both criterion and opportunistic strategies to select this site. Criterion sampling allowed for cases to be selected that meet pre-determined criteria (Patton, 2014). The criteria that needed to be met were the conditions outlined in my research question, which is “What influence does participation in a service-learning project have on the enhancement of career-readiness skills in kinesiology students at a large public university?” California State University, Northridge is a large public university, with a significant number of
students majoring in kinesiology to choose from, most of which are required to participate in the motor behavior service-learning program.

Opportunistic sampling was used because the researcher had easy access to participants since the researcher has been an instructor in the kinesiology department for 10 years, and the coordinator of the service-learning program under investigation since 2015. Due to the researcher’s roles in the department and program, the researcher is in constant contact with gatekeepers, such as the department chair, instructors of the courses, and directors of service-learning sites, and because of this, the researcher anticipated having greater cooperation with those individuals due to their long-standing relationships.

Although conducting backyard research can be advantageous due to its accessibility, there are also disadvantages to conducting this type of study. For example, the researcher had to ensure no current students were included in the participant sample. Therefore, the researcher only recruited past students to be in the research study. Additionally, the researcher needed to negotiate the power imbalance between a professor and student, establish trust with them, but also make them aware that their conversations were for research, and needed to reflect their honest opinion. The ways in which the researcher did this are discussed in the Researcher Roles section, where the mitigation of participant reactivity is discussed.

**Research Sample and Data Sources**

Using a grounded theory case study approach, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 kinesiology students who had previously participated in the department’s motor behavior service-learning program. Those interviews facilitated transcribed interview data for the researcher to segment and analyze, and the researcher was ultimately able to develop a
theoretical model that explained how factors of the service-learning program interact with one another to shape the enhancement of employability skills.

**Participant Sampling Strategy**

The researcher used purposive sampling to recruit participants for the research study. Purposive sampling was applied by only recruiting students who took the service-learning course with instructors who had taught the course for five or more years. Two instructors met that criteria; the researcher and the assistant director of the program. The reason for only recruiting students from instructors who had a minimum of five years teaching experience in the course was to ensure the students who interviewed received a similar quality service-learning experience. Both instructors sent e-mail messages (Appendix A) to their past students through the university’s portal. The e-mails were sent to all of their students who took the service-learning course during Fall 2018, Spring 2019, and eventually Fall 2019, after the completion of that semester.

Students were instructed to contact the researcher through e-mail if they were interested in participating in the study. When the students e-mailed the researcher, the researcher verified the semester and year that the student took the service-learning course, and who they took the course with. Once this information was confirmed, the researcher set up and day and time for the interview that was conducive to the student’s schedule. An email reminder was sent to the participant the day before the scheduled interview to confirm that the participant was still available to come.

**Characteristics of the Sample**

Fifteen students total participated in this study; eight males and seven females. Four of the students graduated in Spring 2019, and the other 11 students were currently majoring in
kinesiology. Those 11 students were all within one year of graduating when they were interviewed. All the participants took the motor behavior service-learning course in either Fall 2018, Spring 2019, or Fall 2019 at California State University, Northridge. Since the students currently majoring in kinesiology were toward the end of their academic program as an undergraduate, they had already matriculated through most of the curriculum, and have already taken courses in exercise physiology, biomechanics, and sports psychology. Six of the participants had the career goal of becoming a physical therapist, three wanted to become a teacher/coach, two wanted to work in the field of biomechanics, one wanted to be an occupational therapist, one a physician assistant, and one wanted to be a nurse. All 15 of the participants had previous professional experience in the field of kinesiology. These students represented great diversity in many aspects, such as age, ethnicity, length of time attending California State University, Northridge, and previous service-learning experience.

Ethical Issues

A few ethical matters were taken into consideration prior to the researcher conducting this study. First and foremost, the researcher submitted a human subjects research application to the Standing Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (also known as the Institutional Review Board – IRB) at California State University, Northridge for their review. No research or recruitment was conducted until IRB approval was given. As required by the IRB at CSU, Northridge, the researcher had completed Collaborative IRB Training Initiative (CITI) Program’s Human Subject’s Research training prior to implementation of the research study. Next, the researcher ensured not to select students who were currently enrolled in one of the researcher’s courses as a means of avoiding coercion in participant recruitment. Additionally, before interviewing any participants, the researcher obtained informed consent from the
participants, and allowed them to withdraw their consent to participate at any time throughout the research process. Lastly, the researcher maintained the confidentiality of the participants through participant codes and exclusion of any identifying information. Only the researcher had access to identifiable data, while all other readers were only able to view de-identified data.

**Data Collection Instruments**

The data collection instrument that the researcher used in this study was a semi-structured interview guide. This guide was used to conduct one-on-one interviews, which is one of the most commonly used methods to collect data in qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Using a semi-structured interview guide allowed the researcher to use a mix of questions and prompts that collected data related to the research questions. The interview questions were derived from the researcher’s background knowledge of the course, service-project, and literature review. The interview guide also left open opportunities for conversations to stem from those questions (Durdella, 2019). Applying a grounded theory methodology, the semi-structured guide allowed the participants to guide the interview based on their responses.

**Interview Guide**

The researcher used the interview guide to conduct semi-structured interviews with 15 undergraduate kinesiology students who had recently completed the motor behavior service-learning program. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to assess the research questions by asking pre-determined questions formulated from the literature review and conceptual framework, but also allowed participants the opportunity to respond to the researcher’s questions in a way meaningful to them (Durdella, 2019). Questions were open-ended and designed to encourage reflection about the participant’s experiences in service-
learning, with particular emphasis placed on employability skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.

The interview protocol can be found in Appendix B of the dissertation. The guide began by providing the interviewee with background information about the research, and general information about how the interview will be conducted. The questions in the interview protocol stemmed from the research questions of the study, and since it is semi-structured, some questions were asked that were not on the protocol. Additionally, the researcher sought to follow major points of view of each respondent to get a complete understanding of each topic.

The main questions were broad in scope. Each main question was succeeded by follow-up questions and prompts to elicit more detail and clarification from the main questions, and to better explore the participant’s responses. Lastly, probes were used to allow participants to finish thoughts or remain on certain topics for a longer period of time (Durdella, 2019). The main and follow-up questions contained four different types of questions, and followed a sequence proposed by Patton (2014). Specifically, it started with experience questions that asked the participants to describe their involvement in the service-learning program. For example, the researcher started by asking the participants to describe their service-learning experience, including which site they provided service at, the age group of their children, and general information about their teammates. Next, the researcher asked opinion questions, such as what they felt was most valuable about their service-learning experience, and what, if any, skills their participation in the program helped them to enhance. Next were feeling questions which focused on what aspect of the service-learning project they felt were most beneficial in building non-academic skills. Lastly, the researcher ended the interview with background questions, since they were easy for the interviewees to answer, making them well placed at the end of the interview.
protocol when participants are most likely to experience interview fatigue. For example, the researcher asked how far along in school they were, if they had previously participated in service-learning courses, and if they currently worked, or plan on working in a kinesiology-related career field.

The last part of the protocol allowed the participant to provide closing remarks, such as anything they wanted to share that was not previously covered in the interview, or to go back to any topics participant’s may have wanted to provide more detail on, or share new insights on they had not previously thought of.

**Data Collection Procedures**

The researcher used the interview guide to conduct one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 15 kinesiology students. The researcher conducted all of the interviews in person over a seven-week period. The interviews ranged in length form 32-50 minutes, with an average length of 38 minutes. All of the interviews were conducted in the motor development lab, which was in the kinesiology department at California State University, Northridge. The location was a large and private room that could only be accessed through a personal code that only the program instructors had. Those instructors were notified when the interviews were taking place, and informed they would not be able to access the lab during that time to ensure confidentiality. The space was also quiet and safe, and the students felt comfortable since they had previously spent time in that lab planning and preparing for their service-learning project. The researcher arrived early to set-up a comfortable and private area to conduct the interview.

**Student Interviews**

When each student participant showed up for their interview at their agreed upon day and time, the researcher welcomed them and thanked them for their participation in the research
study. In addition, the researcher also provided them with background information about the research. After that, the researcher reviewed the informed consent (Appendix C) with each participant, as well as the bill of rights (informed consent), and if the participant agreed to participate, the researcher had them sign a copy of each form, and provided them with their own copy to keep. After that, the interview began. The students did not receive the interview questions prior to being interviewed, but they did know they would be talking about their experience in service-learning. Early in the interview process, listening to the respondents recount their stories about their experiences in the service-program was the main way data was collected. From there, interview questions became more detailed and specific to the responses of the participants as themes began to emerge. All interviews were recorded using the audio recorder on the researcher’s password-protected tablet device so the researcher could remain engaged in the interview. At the end of the interview, the researcher thanked the student for their participation, asked if they had any questions, and gave them a $20 Starbucks gift card for participating in the research project. This process was continued, one participant at a time, for seven weeks, until saturation was reached. Saturation, which is a widely accepted methodological principle in qualitative research, signifies that, based on the data that has been collected, additional data collection is unnecessary (Saunders et al., 2018).

Data Analysis Procedures

Data Preparation and Preliminary Analysis

The data was prepared for analysis by de-identifying all data through the assignment of a code to each participant to protect their identity. A participant linking list was created that linked each code to a specific participant, and that linking list was kept on the researcher’s password protected laptop computer, and was not accessible by anyone besides the researcher. The audio
recordings, which were kept on the researcher’s password protected tablet device, were also labeled with the appropriate code for each participant. The researcher transcribed each interview in a word processing program, verbatim, within two weeks of the interview taking place. Before the researcher began analyzing the transcripts, the researcher reviewed them for accuracy by comparing audio files to the transcripts. Once accuracy was confirmed between the audio files and the transcripts, the audio recordings were deleted from the researcher’s tablet device.

As this study is in the inductive grounded theory tradition, the researcher used a constant comparative method, which occurred throughout data collection and data analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). While data collection was still occurring, the researcher began coding transcripts that had been produced from initial participants. As transcripts continued to be coded, the researcher was able to compare codes amongst transcripts. This constant comparative method allowed the researcher to identify patterns within and across the transcripts and explore how coded groups of data related to the phenomenon under investigation, while still conducting interviews and collecting more data.

**Thematic Data Analysis**

The researcher conducted data analysis using a progressive coding system that went from open coding, to axial coding, and concluded with selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). According to Charmaz (2006) coding serves as the core of data analysis in grounded theory. A constructivist analysis of the data was conducted by the researcher, beginning in the open coding phase. Constructivists recognize the world is constructed through interaction (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Consequently, the researcher explored the phenomena of enhancing employability skills through participation in service-learning, and inductively came to an understanding about how participation helped develop employability skills.
In this first stage of thematic analysis, the researcher performed open coding, where each segment of data was named with a code to describe the core idea of that segment of data. Open coding was performed directly in a word processing program on each transcript. Codes were developed in vivo, meaning they came directly from the transcripts, and were identified with a descriptor that was also derived from the data, or something close to it. During this stage of analysis, the researcher focused on what was similar and what was different between the textual data she was coding. Similar segmented data was coded with the same code, and concepts began to emerge.

In the next stage of data analysis, the researcher transferred repeated codes into an excel spreadsheet, linked similar codes together to create categories, and named them with an axial code that represented the commonality between them. Axial coding occurred to explore the relationships amongst the concepts that were found during open coding. Based off of the coding paradigm recommendation by Strauss and Corbin (1990), the relationship between axial codes were first identified through the grounded theory constructs of causal conditions, phenomena, context, strategies, intervening conditions, and consequences. Strauss and Corbin further explained that using these grounded theory constructs provides accuracy and depth in theory development.

After all categories were grouped by axial codes, the researcher performed the final stage of coding, which was selective coding. Selective coding is similar to axial coding however, selective coding is more abstract. During selective coding the researcher analyzed all coded data to determine what the core category was that linked all data together. Strauss and Corbin (1990) described selective coding as “the central phenomenon around which all other categories are integrated” (p.116).
Interpretation

The final stage of the analysis was interpretation, which was the phase that allowed the researcher to make sense of the data that was collected. The researcher’s interpretation began after all the data had been coded according to the methods discussed in the thematic data analysis section. The data analysis gave the researcher an understanding of how service-learning enhanced employability skills, by exposing patterns and themes in the data. Using the grounded theory constructs of causal conditions, phenomena, context, strategies, intervening conditions, and consequences, an initial diagram was created for data organization. However, the axial codes were eventually re-grouped into one of four phases of service-learning; foundation, process, strategies, or outcomes, as this better represented what the axial codes signified.

Ultimately, a theoretical model was created to illustrate the relationships between the major themes that emerged, and explain how the factors of service-learning helped to enhance employability skills. The four phases of the service-learning project were structured into this theoretical model, with the central phenomenon of real-world experience at its core. In this theoretical model, each phase of the service-learning project also contained the axial codes that represented the occurrences that happened during that phase. Lastly, the researcher translated the results into a discussion where the results were interpreted, and the meaning of the themes that were discovered were connected to the work of others.

Researcher Roles

The researcher held many roles that had the potential to shape the study throughout its entire process. First and foremost, the researcher was an advocate for experiential learning, which is a form of education in which students develop knowledge and skills from direct experiences outside of a traditional classroom (Kolb, 1984). The researcher believes that
experiential learning leads to powerful academic learning because it allows students to interact with information making it more personal and meaningful to them. Taking students out into the community allows them to connect classroom study to the real-world, which ultimately moves their education from theoretical to practical and applied. Because the researcher supported this type of learning, and has dedicated the last decade of her professional career to learning how to run a service-learning program in the kinesiology department, which was a role that was handed down to the researcher after the passing of the program’s creator. Additionally, the researcher had a strong personal connection to this program because of their experience with the originator of it, who was the researcher’s mentor for the past several years. Additionally, the researcher has a Bachelor of Science degree in Kinesiology from this same university, and is familiar with the curriculum kinesiology student’s progress through while working on their degree. The researcher also has a Master’s degree in Kinesiology, and has previously conducted grounded theory research for partial fulfillment of that degree. Lastly, although the research role was always in the forefront during this project, the researcher had to be mindful how other roles interact with one another and have the ability to impact the overall study.

**Researcher Effects on Participants**

**Researcher bias.** The multiple roles that the researcher assumed during the process also created a personal bias in how the researcher conceptualized the study, which ultimately had the capability to affect both the data collection and data analysis. As coordinator of a service-learning program, the researcher believed that service-programs always provided positive experiences for students, as well as provided many types of benefits to them. Morse specifically, the preconceptions the researcher had were that the students enrolled in the service-learning
program would feel the experience of it had enhanced their career-readiness skills, when in fact the students may not have felt it did.

Since the researcher was the coordinator of this program, the researcher also held a bias about its impact on students. The bias was that the students found this to be an enjoyable, positive experience that provided them with hands-on experience providing physical activities to young children. Since kinesiology students go into client-centered professions, the researcher felt that this class would be really beneficial, and provide students with a practical application of their classroom knowledge. Since so few classes in the kinesiology department allow students to link theory to practice, the researcher believed service-learning was a great opportunity to do so. However, if a student did not see how this experience transferred to the age group, or population, they wish to work with, they may not have seen it as valuable as the researcher does.

**Participant reactivity.** Since the researcher was also a professor in the department, and the coordinator of the service-learning program under investigation, participants could potentially react to the researcher’s achieved academic position, and not be honest in their interview responses, but instead say what they think the researcher wanted to hear. Fortunately, the majority of the participants in the study had never had the researcher as a professor, which hopefully minimized participants connecting the researcher to the service-learning project under investigation. However, many of the participants still knew the researcher as a professor in the department, which may have caused them to respond in a socially acceptable manner, with responses that are misrepresentative of their true thoughts and feelings.

**Participant Effects**

The participants themselves had the ability to affect the research as well. Of particular concern was how the researcher interpreted the interview transcripts in relation to the biases
previously discussed. Since the researcher came into doing this research with specific presumptions, the researcher may have unintentionally focused on the responses that conformed those preconceptions, and inadvertently ignore those that did not.

**Strategies to Mitigate Researcher and Participant Effects**

To mitigate researcher biases, the effect the researcher may have had on the participants, and the potential participants effects on the researcher, several mitigation strategies were implemented throughout the research process. First and foremost, the researcher used triangulation, which means data was collected from multiple, independent sources, which helps support the credibility of the research findings. The researcher also used confirmatory analysis during the thematic analysis to ensure the biases were not creating themes that were not in the raw data. Additionally, the researcher had a colleague review the interview guide to ensure the questions were not leading or probing, and made sure the interview felt like a two-sided conversation that allowed the participant to relive their experience during the service-learning project.

**Summary**

In this study, the researcher sought to understand the influence of service-learning on the enhancement of employability competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology at a large public university. This study was conducted using a case-study grounded theory design, with data coming from semi-structured one-on-one interviews with students who have recently completed the motor behavior service-learning course under investigation. After the interviews were transcribed, a progressive coding system was used to conduct the data analysis. This coding system went from open coding, to axial coding, and concluding with selective coding. The final stage of the analysis was interpretation, which was the phase in which the researcher made sense
of the data that was collected. This phase allowed the researcher to understand how service-learning enhanced employability skills by exposing themes in the data. Those themes were ultimately displayed in a graphical model to illustrate the relationships between the major concepts that emerged, and explain how the factors of service-learning helped to enhance employability skills in undergraduate students. This graphical model will be presented in Chapter four.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this grounded theory case study was to understand the influence that service-learning has on the enhancement of employability competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology at a large public university. The purpose of conducting grounded theory research was to construct a theoretical model that ultimately helps to explain the constructs of service-learning that facilitate the enhancement of employability skills for undergraduate students, specifically, students within a motor behavior service-learning program. To create a theory that was grounded in the data collected, the researcher conducted multiple interviews, engaged in concurrent data collection and analysis, and used constant comparative data analysis methods. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the learned employability skills of undergraduate kinesiology students participating in a service-learning project?

2. What factors of the service-learning project shape the enhancement of employability skills?

Codes

To discover what factors of the service-learning project enhanced the development of the employability skills, each segment of the participant’s transcript was coded to identify what was being referenced in that part of the data. These open codes reflected the active engagement the participants had throughout the process, the challenges they encountered, how they overcame those challenges to achieve success, with particular attention highlighting the joy they experienced working with young children, as well as the enhancement of employability
The reoccurring concepts were grouped into 12 categories, or themes, and named with an axial code that represented the commonality between them. The 12 themes that were identified by the researcher were careful planning, established paradigm, community responsibility, active participation, intellectual engagement, unexpected challenges, not going according to plan, knowledge transfer, adaptability, appropriate assistance, positive outcomes for children, and employability skills. The themes that emerged in the analytical processes reflected the experiences of each participant in their service-learning project. As each participant reflected on their experience during the service-learning program, they created a broad picture of successes, challenges, and skills that were utilized during their involvement in the program.

Another recurring theme that emerged during conversations with the participants was that the real-world experience they had working with the children helped them to enhance the development of employability skills. Consequently, real-world experience emerged as the central phenomena that linked all the themes together, since employability skills were the topic under investigation throughout this study.

**Emergent Theory**

The axial codes were first identified through the grounded theory constructs of causal conditions, phenomena, context, strategies, intervening conditions, and consequences. From this, an initial diagram was created using this axial coding paradigm for data organization, which is displayed below in figure 1. However, as evidenced by the axial codes, the categories of data
represented different phases of the service-learning program, and were ultimately re-grouped into one of four phases of service-learning; foundation, process, strategies, or outcomes.

Theoretical Model

Ultimately, a theoretical model was created to illustrate the relationships between the major themes that emerged, and explain how the factors of service-learning helped to enhance employability skills, along with another outcome of the program, which were positive outcomes for the children. This theoretical model can be found in figure 2. The four phases of the service-learning project were structured into this theoretical model, with the central phenomenon of real-world experience at its core. In this theoretical model, each phase of the service-learning project also contained the axial codes that represented the occurrences that happened during that phase.
The first factor of service-learning that appeared to shape the enhancement of employability skills was the foundation of the course. Having a strong foundation for the course is of critical importance since it is the starting point in which all other aspects of the course will be built upon. The foundation of the course directly impacts three other features of the model; real-world experience, the process, and the strategies. Both the process and strategies have a bi-directional relationship with real-world experience. This is because the process and strategies that are utilized will impact what happens in the real world, but the real world will also dictate the processes and strategies that are used. These three things; real-world experience, the process, and the strategies, also directly impact the outcomes that will be experienced by the students in a service-learning class. The following sections will further describe the model and the relationships between themes. Additionally, an overview of the descriptive findings will be presented through stories, quotes, and subthemes.
Background Information on the Motor Behavior Service-Learning Course

Before presenting an examination of the constructs of the grounded theory model, background information on the motor behavior service-learning course will be provided to give the reader context. Additionally, information about another service-learning course that the majority of the participants took is also presented, so the reader can also gain perspective on that course, to better understand the comparison the students made between the two courses.

Course Overview

The motor behavior service-learning course is a two-unit course that students take concurrently with a three-unit lecture course on motor development. It is a unique course in that it links service with learning, which is why it is called service-learning. Community service-learning provides students the opportunity to integrate the abstract elements of an academic course with concrete examples experienced beyond the classroom. To accomplish the learning objectives of this course, the students participate in a project that integrates motor behavior content while addressing a need identified by community agencies. The community agencies for this course are nearby child development centers, preschools, and elementary schools. Two of these child development centers are on the campus of the university, and the rest are within a five-mile radius from the campus.

The students complete 10-hours of service throughout the semester, and spend an additional 10-hours in activities directly related to the service they provide, such as activity planning with their teammates, and preparing resources to implement the activity. The course is scheduled one day a week, for two-hours, and most of that time is spent at the community site working with the children. During the student’s time at their assignment community agency, they provide developmentally appropriate movement activities to their assigned group of children to
increase the children’s motor skill proficiency, while also increasing the amount of physical activity the children engage in. The children range in age from as young as 18-months, to eight years-old, depending at the site the student is assigned to. This unique experience helps the student to develop skills in observing movement behaviors, gathering data, analyzing results, and comparing results to the existing body of knowledge. A complete syllabus for the course can be found in Appendix D.

**Course Objectives and Competencies**

There are several course objectives for the motor behavior service learning course. These course objectives provide the foundation for the course, and everything the students do in the course is intended to meet these objectives. At the completion of the course, the students should be able to exhibit several competencies as a result of their experience in the service learning program. These competencies are divided into four different categories. These categories include the knowledge they gained about motor behavior, inter and intra-personal development, community awareness, and their commitment to life-long learning. The course competencies are presented below:

**Understand and Apply Knowledge Related to Motor Behavior**

1. Apply motor behavior concepts, theories, and models during the planning and implementation of a community project.

2. Examine whether motor performance changes are due to deliberate practice or age-related factors.

3. Apply a quantitative or qualitative assessment of movement skills in a diverse population, including various age groups, healthy individuals, or individuals with disabilities or special needs, via observing digital records or real time performance.
4. Recognize that a learner’s solution to a movement challenge is a unique coordination pattern.
5. Apply an ecological perspective to encourage change in motor performance while designing developmentally appropriate movement activities for a specific population, including various age groups, healthy individuals, or individuals with disabilities or special needs.
6. Evaluate the developmental appropriateness of movement activities and then modify the practice conditions of these activities to better suit the learner.
7. Identify appropriate measures (product and process) for documenting motor performance changes over time.
8. Define and distinguish between the terms learning and performance.
9. Structure a physical practice environment by applying different ways that we learn skills, and provide appropriate feedback to enhance motor performance and learning.
10. Identify and use ways to increase physical activity levels of the population served.
11. Plan task variations such that variability in practice enhances motor control and learning.

Develop Inter- and Intra-Personal Learning
1. Apply effective communication techniques for working with your peers and community agency.
2. Recognize the importance of effective communication.

Develop Community Awareness and Practice Community Engagement
1. Demonstrate an understanding about a particular community or population in the community.
2. Apply effective problem solving and thoughtful decision-making skills in a community setting.

Demonstrate a Commitment to Life-long Learning
1. Engage in new experiences and assume unfamiliar roles, accepting challenges in the process.
2. Extract meaning from an experience by engaging in effective self-reflection.

Course Logistics

On the first day of the motor behavior service-learning course, the students are introduced to the service learning project. This is accomplished through a detailed explanation of the syllabus, which includes a clear description of the community project they will participate in throughout the semester. The students gain an understanding of what their role is in the project, where they will be providing service, the age group of the children they are working with, and a general overview of the assignments they will complete throughout the course. The students are able to ask the professor as many questions as necessary in order to better comprehend what they will be doing, and what is expected of them.

When the students return to class for week two, they select one or two partners they would like to work with, depending on class size, and are then assigned a group of children to work with by the professor. The rest of this class period is used for the partners to get to know one another, and fill out risk management forms from the office of community engagement. These forms include emergency contact information and guidelines that the students sign about appropriate behavior, language, and dress. The instructor also provides a few presentations on developmentally appropriate activities, and introduces the students to course resources, like the movement wheel, that will help them create appropriate activities for the children. Basic information about how to work with children is also provided, as many of the students have not previously worked with children.

During week three, the students begin to work in their project teams to create developmentally appropriate activities for the group of children they will be instructing. This is done by using an activity plan template that the instructor provides the students with. This
template is meant to make the planning easier for the students, ensures the students write a
detailed plan, it has the students include movement modifications in case the activity is not at
appropriate difficulty for the children, and has the students create short cues for the movements
to facilitate success in the children’s performance. During this time, the professor walks around
the classroom and assists the students in developing their initial ideas for their activities. This
day in class concludes with the professor providing information that the students will need to
attend their orientation at the community site the following week.

For the fourth week of instruction, the students meet directly at the community agency
during class time for an orientation at their community agency. During this time, the students are
introduced to the site director, any classroom teachers they will be working with, meet the group
of children towards the end of the orientation, and conduct a small ice-breaker activity with the
children. The students also learn about any rules or policies they must follow at their specific
site, and turn in any required paperwork, such as TB tests and behavior contracts. This
orientation enables the students to get acclimated with their service site, see the physical space
they have to perform the activities, as well as a gain a small amount of experience working with
the children prior to their first day of implementing their first movement activity.

On the fifth week of instruction, the students return back to the university to continue
their activity planning with their team. This is the final class period that the students have before
they go out to work at their community site. Therefore, this class session is also used to answer
any questions the students may have, having been to the site and met the children. The professor
also provides any final announcements and reiterates course expectations.

Starting in week six, and through the remainder of the semester, the students meet
directly at their service site to implement their activities with the children. All service is
accomplished during class time, so the students do not have to take any additional time out of their schedule. All of the students in a course section are at the community agency at the same time, while their course instructor is there to supervise and support them. Although each community agency has their own specific implementation strategies, all of them follow the same general protocol.

For the students that work with the younger children (18 months-four years), they implement an activity that is 15-20 minutes in length, with a small group of children, typically four to five of them, while the children’s classroom teacher supervises. Once the 15-20 minutes are over, a new group of children will come out, and the students will then work with that new group of children, leading the same activity they implemented with the first group of children. This process will repeat three to four times, depending on how many children are there that day, and until their hour of service is complete.

For the students that work with the older children (five to eight years), they implement one 30-minute activity with one group of children. These groups of children typically consist of eight to nine children. With the older children, two students who are partnered up and will implement their activity with their group of children for 30-minutes, and another group of two students will assist them by helping guide the children, get equipment, and even partnering with children when needed. After the 30-minutes are up, the group of children go back into their classroom, and a new group of children come out. At this point the groups of students switch, and the pair of students that were assisting are now in charge of teaching the new group of children the activity they created, and the pair of students that were previously in charge of implementing the activity are now assisting. Once this second half hour is over, the students service hour is over.
At the completion of the service hour, regardless of what community agency the students are at, and what age group of children they are working with, the students are responsible for cleaning up and meeting briefly with the instructor for announcements. The remainder of the semester runs exactly the same way, with the students completing individual reflection assignments every other week while at the site. The students complete their hours during the last week of instruction for the university, and turn in a time log to the office of community engagement upon completion.

**Other Service-Learning Courses**

Most of the participants (13 out of 15) had prior service-learning experience. Four of the participants participated in service-learning at other universities in the field of health, nutrition, and computer science. Nine of these participants previously took a different service-learning course within the same department as the motor behavior service-learning course. This other service-learning course is an elective course in adapted physical activity, and is taken at one of two facilities on the university’s campus. One of these facilities has adapted exercise equipment for clients with physical limitations and disabilities, and the other is an aquatics facility where the students provide water-based exercise to those same clients. For this course, the students enroll in a two-unit lecture course and a one-unit lab course. For the lab portion of the course, the students sign up for different time blocks throughout the week where they can come to the facility and work with their client for one-hour.

In these courses, the students work one-on-one with a client assigned to them, typically age 50 and older, and provide adapted physical activity to them. This is done by implementing an exercise program to the client that previous graduate students created. The students are responsible for safely having the clients perform each exercise, and recording SOAP notes,
which are notes that provide subjective information, objective information, an assessment of the exercise, and a plan for future progress for the client.

Through conversations with the participants, a few differences were found between this course and the motor behavior service-learning course that was at the center of this research. In the adapted physical activity course, the students worked by themselves, rather than with a partner as they do in the motor behavior course. They worked with only one client, rather than a group, and the age of the clients was much older, compared to the children they worked with in the motor behavior course. Also, in the motor behavior course, the students were responsible for making their own plan to implement with their clients, where in the adapted physical activity course, they were given a plan to implement. Additionally, the service time was imbedded into the student’s class time for the motor behavior course, but in the adapted physical activity course, the students had to find time outside of the established class schedule to provide service. Lastly, it appeared that there was more preparation time in the motor behavior course, than in the adapted physical activity, since in the motor behavior course, the students do not begin working with the children until week six, but are already working with clients in week two of the adapted physical activity course.

**Foundation**

The first factor of the motor behavior service-learning program that was found to shape the enhancement of employability skills was the foundation of the course. Three parts of the course foundation were found throughout the transcripts, and coded as established paradigm, careful planning, and community responsibility. The foundation of the course provides support for what the students will encounter once they are at their community site working with the children.
Established Paradigm

**Introduction and orientation.** As previously discussed, when the semester first begins, the students are required to meet in class with their professor for the first few weeks for instruction. However, during the fourth week of the semester, the students leave the classroom to attend an orientation at their community agency. In addition to the procedures for orientation that were discussed in the previous section, this experience allows the students to become familiarized with the site where they will be doing their activities, and the resources that will be available to them while they are there. Participant 11 explained how during her orientation, the principal showed the students all of the equipment they had at their school. She stated that this simplified her activity planning since she knew exactly what was available to her, and did not have to question whether the site had something or not.

Participant 12 compared the planning process of the motor behavior service-learning course to the adapted physical activity service-learning course that she previously took. This comparison showed her appreciation for the extensive preparation provided by the motor behavior course. Participant 12 stated that everyone she knew in the adapted physical activity service-learning course felt unprepared. She further explained that the students only had one day in class to learn about the program, the service they would provide, to learn the machines they would use, and exercises they would do. In the adapted physical activity course, the students begin working with clients on the second day of instruction, and participant 12 felt that it was too soon into the semester to give the students that kind of responsibility. She stated, “I felt more prepared for the [motor behavior] class. It was nice having several days in the classroom to learn what to do, and then having an orientation first so we were more comfortable.” Participant eight had a similar experience in that same adapted physical activity service-learning course.
Participant eight explained that in that course, some of the skills they were supposed to implement with their client were not taught until halfway through the semester or later. This caused confusion among students, and an overall inability to confidently implement the exercise plan with their clients. Participant 14 substantiated this statement when she explained that in the adapted physical activity course, the instructors expected the students to know how to perform all the exercises with their clients, even though the professors did not teach the exercises to them.

**Creating activity plans.** Another foundational piece to the motor behavior service-learning program, was that the course requires students to create their own activity plan. This is different than the adapted physical activity service-learning course that the majority of the participants in the study took. In that course, the students were given an exercise program that a graduate student created, and were only responsible for implementing the program with their client. Responses from the participants that took both service-learning courses indicated positive support for the students creating their own activity plan, as all nine participants that took that course stated they preferred to create their own activity plan. Participant six made the following statement:

I liked creating the plan because I knew exactly what we were doing, what the purpose was, and I didn’t have to question anything. I wouldn’t implement a plan that I didn’t know how to do, whereas in [the adapted physical activity service learning course] there were machines that I didn’t know how to use, yet they were given to me on my plan, but they didn’t teach us how to use the equipment much.

Participant three described how having someone else create the exercise plan in the adapted physical activity service-learning course affected her experience in it. She described feeling more like an assistant to the client, and explained that the students were only allowed to
implement the plan that was given to them, not create anything new for the client. Participant 14 specified that she felt more of a personal connection to the motor behavior service-learning program since she was responsible for choosing exactly what the children would do every week.

**Course resources.** Most students (11 out of 15) did not have prior experience creating an activity plan before. The researcher knows from personal experience as an instructor, that this is reflective of the majority of students who take the course. In an effort to simplify this task, the students are given an activity plan template, along with other course resources, to assist them with the process. This template is a step-by-step guide that helps the students plan their activities each week. During the interview, participant 15 explained that there was a document that helped guide him through his activity planning. Similarly, participant two explained that “[The professor] gave us a template…. So that was really helpful in learning to write a detailed activity plan.” Additionally, participant seven stated “she felt like the activity plan template was really clear and easy to follow and that you just had to follow what the template asked for in order to write a good plan.” Almost all the participants (14 out of 15) concurred that having this template was a helpful resource.

Additionally, the instructors provide the students with a movement wheel. This is a course resource to help the students come up with activities that provide meaningful movement experiences for the children. The movement wheel is used to help the students understand that they should not create unsystematic play activities. The students should instead focus on movement concepts such as spatial awareness, the effort the body places on tasks, as well as relationships with objects and people. This tool allows students to better plan developmentally appropriate activity by laying everything out in one model.
This course resource appeared to play a significant role in helping the students to create their activity plans. Most of the participants (10 out of 15) referenced using this when asked how they prepared to work with the children every week. Specifically, participants five, eight, and 13 stated that they used it for every activity plan they used. Participant three even described how she made her own wheel to help her come up with activity ideas for the young group of children she worked with. Participant 15 provided the following example of the movement wheel:

So, for the activities, we had this wheel that our instructor gave us, and essentially it was divided into three different areas, and you would begin by choosing if you wanted to do a manipulative or non-manipulative [skill], and then from there it presented more categories in those sub-divisions, and essentially, we would use the wheel to come up with the activities. We would look at different skills that the kids would utilize, whether it be in sport, manipulating an object, or running with their body weight.

Furthermore, participant 12 explained that the wheel gave her ideas on how she and her group members could have the children perform activities in different ways, while participant 10 discussed how he used the wheel to think of different ways he could have the children perform throwing, like hard throws or soft throws.

**Service imbedded in class time.** Another aspect of the established paradigm of the motor behavior service-learning course that the participants valued was that the service time was imbedded within the time frame of the course they were enrolled in. Participant seven discussed a community garden service-learning project that she participated in during her time at a different university. She explained that she had to complete 12-hours of service outside of her scheduled class time, but her busy schedule prevented her from finding adequate time to perform her service, which ultimately hindered the experience from being enjoyable for her.
In addition to participant seven explaining that not having service-time accounted for in her class schedule was found to be problematic for her, she also shared a story about being at the community garden alone, with no one to go to for help when she needed it. She explained that she rarely saw her course instructor throughout the entire semester, and predominately communicated with him through e-mail. An added benefit of having the service time occur during class time, like in the motor behavior course, is that it allows the course instructor to be at the site with the students. The instructor helps to provide supervision over the children, is able to answer questions when they arise, and can provide feedback after the session is over on how to improve for the following week’s activity.

Not only are the service hours built into the scheduled class time, but the commute time is also accounted for. The course is scheduled for a two-hour time block, but the students are only at the site for a little over an hour leading activities. This allows for students to travel to the community agency with enough time to get there, following a class at the university, and can also return to the university in enough time for their next class. Participant 13 stated, “I think everything was set up well as far as the timing and being able to get there from school and back to class.”

Having adequate time for the students to familiarize themselves with both the service-learning project and the site, by means of an orientation, are two critical components of the foundation of the course. This allows the students to enter their community agency with ease, as they have been prepared for what to expect. Another aspect of the course’s foundation intended to better prepare the students for their service-learning experience is the opportunity for them to create their own activity plans. Knowing exactly what one will be implementing facilitates the student’s preparedness once they are at the site, and empowers them in their position as a leader.
The students felt confident implementing their plan since they themselves created it, and seemed to appreciate having that control. Additionally, appropriate course resources, such as the activity plan template and movement wheel, formed part of the course’s foundation meant to simplify the process of creating their own activity plan. Since the activity plan is a tool to enhance the student’s preparation, resources that aid in its creation proved to be vital to their success. Lastly, ensuring that the students did not have to take time out of their schedule, had enough time to commute to and from the site, and were able to have their instructor at the site are other features of the course’s foundation intended to simplify the project for the students. Although no one can ever be fully prepared for what will happen while gaining the real-world experience, having a foundation that imbeds sufficient preparation time, tools, and experiences, better prepares the students for what to expect.

**Careful Planning**

There is a tremendous amount of planning by the students that must occur prior to starting activities at the community agency. While preparation comes from having the previously discussed established paradigm for the course, the students also spoke about the diligent planning they did to prepare to work with the children. For example, participant four discussed how he always made sure to start his activity plan early so they had sufficient time to produce an effective plan for the children. Additionally, participant eight identified that every week in class, leading up to implementing activities with the children, she learned how to teach the children the specific movement skills that they would be working on throughout their service project. Creating activity plans, figuring out how to explain activities and cue movements, and communication with their partner were three things found to be utilized by the participants while engaging in careful planning.
Activity planning. All of the participants discussed creating their activity plan as the primary way they prepared to work with the children every week. In fact, participant three identified creating an activity plan as the most important aspect of the service-learning course, while participant six stated that the activity plan was the only thing he and his partner did to prepare to work with the children every week. More specifically, participant 11 described how she would work with her partner to plan out what they wanted to do for that week’s activity. She explained that they would pick an overall area of focus, like hand-eye coordination, and that every activity plan they created had a theme. They would then use the activity plan template to create different activities that corresponded to the theme for the week. Participant 15 gave details of how his group would use the activity plan template to create three different activities for every day that they were at the site. He stated that they tried to make the activities simple, yet engaging. Over time he learned to incorporate a lot of games, with a little competitiveness, to increase participation from the children. Participant four confirmed using the template to create multiple activities, and further expanded on what the activity plan consisted of. He stated:

We had three different movements the kids would do every time… so the plan would have a diagram of what we wanted to do, the verbal cues we would give the kids, repetition, guidelines, like how far they are going to have to go, like if they are going from cone to cone, methods or procedures for the movement, and what we wanted them to practice.

Developmentally appropriate language. All of the participants discussed creating developmentally appropriate language to explain the activity to the children, or to cue their movements. Participant five, who was an exercise specialist, and participant 11, who worked as a physical therapy aide, both discussed how they typically only work with adults, so explaining
things to children was not something they were accustomed to. Both participants provided examples of having to use less-complex words to explain to a child how to perform a movement, compared to how they would explain it to an adult. Using simplified language for the children was echoed by the majority of the participants. For example, participant four stated “You have to say things that are easy for them to understand. You can’t say, ‘OK bring your knee to flexion, they don’t know what flexion is’.”

Lastly, participant six explained how part of his planning process was deciding on developmentally appropriate language to ensure the children would be engaged in his activity. This participant described how in one of the activities he implemented, he were going to have the children perform different locomotor skills, like side steps and vertical jumps. However, he knew the children would not be engaged if he explained the activity in that manner. Therefore, to increase participation in his activity, he and his partner told the children they were going through ninja training, and translated all the locomotor movements into movements used by ninja, and renamed the movements to increase the interest of the children.

**Communication with partner.** Almost half of the participants (seven out of 15) discussed communicating with their partners as part of their planning process. Participant five shared how he and his partners communicated throughout the week, either through text or e-mail, to ensure everyone knew the specifics of the plan. Participant four more specifically explained that “We always made sure everyone in the group knew exactly what we were doing… we always made sure everyone knew exactly what the movement task was, and what the plan was.”

Participant seven stated that she and her partner had good communication throughout the weeks, and communicated both during class time and over text message to decide what skill they wanted to focus on. Participant nine seemed to have the most communication with her partner as a form
of planning, and stated “Each time we had to execute the plan, there was before, during, and after communication that occurred.”

As previously discussed, creating an activity plan is a unique feature that the foundation of the course requires. This was found to be influential as interviews with the participants indicated that creating an activity plan for the children was an essential part of their planning process. In addition to completing the activity plan, the participants also established the developmentally appropriate language they would use to explain the activities to the children, which is an indispensible part of the course foundation, as the goal of the program is to facilitate skill development in children. Lastly, communicating with one’s partner as a means of planning was established early on in the course. This allows for greater structure once at the community agency, which enhances the experience for the children. Having a course that imbeds proper planning experiences within its foundation is critical to achieving success once at the community agency.

**Community Responsibility**

Another part of the foundation of the course is the emphasis that the instructors place on being responsible while at the site. Unlike the previously discussed adapted physical activity service-learning program, the motor behavior service-learning program required the students to go into the community and work with community members. Several sub-themes within community responsibility were found by the participants, and discussed below. However, participant 15 mentioned several of these characteristics of being responsible in the community as part of his interview:

You need to know what your role is there, and be thoughtful of the activities you make for the kids. You always have to come prepared and on time, like you can’t be late, you
can’t miss class just because you are tired, and dress, you have to think more about what you are wearing while you are working with the kids, and also be more careful about what you are saying in front of them.

**Language.** Most of the participants (11 out of 15) identified being cautious regarding the language they used in front the children. Participant 10 discussed how he really had to watch his language while he was there, and talked about how his language can be “colorful” at times due to the time he spent as a U.S. Marine. Participants three, four, and five all discussed being more vigilant about what they said since they knew that the children were listening, whereas participants six and nine discussed using professional language in front of the children. They explained that even though the children are young, they still wanted to treat them in a professional manner, were careful about their word choice, and tried their best to only use language that would be appropriate in a workplace.

**Being present and on time.** Almost half of the participants (seven out of 15) discussed the need to be present, and to be on time during their service learning course. Participant 12 stated “the kids expected us to be there for them, so it made me never want to miss class.” Regarding being on time, participant 10 commented how “you actually needed to be there early, not just on time, because you needed adequate time to set up the activity for the children and prepare with your teammates.” Participant two further substantiated this by reflecting on how the professor deducted points if you were late, which further emphasized the importance of being there on time for the children.

**How you conduct yourself.** Slightly over half of the participants (eight out of 15) acknowledged that part of the community responsibility they felt caused them to conduct themselves in a certain manner while in front of the children. Participants one, five, six, and eight
made references to acting in a professional manner while at the site. For example, participant
eight explained that the community agency she was assigned to had strict rules, and she made
sure to increase her professionalism while there. Participants five and six specifically identified
increasing their professionalism while in front of the children, whereas participant one described
being respectful to the teachers and staff that he worked with. Participant 10 provided a more
specific example of the community responsibility he felt by discussing a contract that he had to
sign at his community site. He stated:

The director of the school, she had us sign a contract up front, telling us the things we are
to do and things we cannot do… it is up to you as a professional to abide by the contract
you signed. The contract told us how to dress and act.

Participant seven also indicated that there were things she couldn’t say or do at the site,
which made her feel increased responsibility while at the community agency. Lastly, participants
four and 12 specifically discussed how the children were constantly observing them, which
induced greater awareness of their behavior, and provoked them to be conscientious of how they
were acting. Participant four stated, “You have to be careful of what you say, what you do, how
you act, [the children] are always watching you.”

**Being prepared.** A group of participants (five of 15) discussed how one has to be
prepared when going to the community sites. Participant 12 discussed how students have to be
more prepared in this service-learning course compared to the other courses that she has taken.
She explained that in her other courses, you were not penalized for coming in late, nor was it
required that you actively participate or be engaged in the course material. In contrast, the motor
behavior service-learning course required that you come prepared with a 30-minute activity plan
to implement with the children, as well as brought all resources and equipment with you that you
would need. Participant six reaffirmed the preparation participant 12 discussed by explaining how the school sites are a more professional environment than the university, because your responsibility is more similar to that of teaching assistant or instructor, and consequently, you have to be more prepared to work in that capacity.

An emphasis on responsibility at the community agency is strongly imbedded into the course foundation, and discussed at length at the beginning of the semester. The need to be present and on time is a requirement set forth in the course’s foundation. This is made clear by a statement in the course syllabus that stated absences, coming late, or leaving early on service days were heavily penalized because children were depending on the students being there. The standards for how the students should behave while at their community agency is discussed at length during the beginning of the semester, this includes both appropriate language and how the students should conduct themselves while at the community agency. Lastly, being prepared means that the students were ready ahead of time. Being ready ahead of time is also built into the foundation of the course, as the course requires the students to turn in their activity plan two weeks ahead of time. This means that the students have planned exactly what they will do with the children a few weeks prior to actually doing this activity. In essence, the foundation of the course prevents students from not being prepared, or even waiting until the last minute to build a comprehensive lesson plan.

Central Phenomenon: Real-World Experience

One of the final questions of the interview with the students asked them to describe what aspect of the service-learning project they felt was the most beneficial in building non-academic skills. All of the participants provided a response that involved real-world experience. After further examination of the themes that emerged through open and axial coding, it was
determined that all of the themes could be characterized in support of real-world experience. Consequently, this was selected as the central phenomena. In addition to some form of real-world experience being given as a response to this question, the majority of the stories shared by the participants centered on this theme as well.

This central phenomenon is found at the core of the theoretical model, since it is the event that explains all other occurrences in the model. First off, one of the three things that having a solid foundation directly feeds into in the conceptual model the real-world experience they have. Essentially, the foundation that is put in place prepares students for what the will encounter during this real-world experience. In a reciprocal context, the real-world experience also affected the process the students went through and the strategies they used, in return, the process and strategies also affected the real-world experiences the students had. Ultimately, the real-world experience also affected the outcomes that the students experienced.

Having university students enter the community and work with individuals makes service-learning uniquely different from other courses taken in college. Participants one and 13 both discussed how reading in books and listening to lectures gets monotonous, and gaining real-world experience provided them an opportunity to apply skills they had learned about in the course. Participant six and 10 further added how this experience gave them ability to practice a different type of skillset than what is typically taught in a classroom, and provided them with insight on which of their skills need to be strengthened. Lastly, participant four explained his desire to know what to expect in the real-world from the courses he takes while in college. However, he unfortunately explained that this real-world knowledge is not something he received from his other courses, and stated “besides [this] service-learning course, I did not have any other classes that even compared” which further showed the uniqueness of this course.
Slightly over half of the participants (eight out of 15) discussed having a group of people to work with as the most beneficial aspect of the service learning program. Participant 13 stated “Just being able to have a physical being to work with, I think that’s a huge part of it... The interaction was the biggest part, experiencing that interaction because it isn’t something you get in normal classes.” Participant 15 substantiated this statement by explaining that he felt the most beneficial part of the service-learning program was actually being at the site with the children and working with them. He explained how one is “giving your energy to them and you are seeing the results of what you are doing with them.” He further stated, “I just loved the hands-on aspect of it. You hardly get any classes like this, and it’s such a valuable experience to actually go out and work with individuals and teach them skills like you will in your career.” Lastly, participant 12 provided the following statement about having a group of children to work with:

I mean, I think just the whole experience of actually being able to work with kids and experience the real world. Like it’s one thing to learn about it in the classroom, but if you can’t apply it, then it doesn’t matter anyways. We work with patients in our profession, but we don’t get much experience of doing that in college, except this class. Like we do small group work in lectures sometimes, and sometimes we give a speech, but this is one of the few times we actually get to work with people, it’s a whole different set of skills, you have to be able to work with people if you want to be successful in your career.

Not far removed from this, another group of participants (four out of 15) identified the hands-on experience being most beneficial. Participant seven explained that this experience was different because you “get to get out the classroom and do hands-on work”. She stated that she benefited more from this type of experience, compared to what she is presented with in the traditional classroom, and explained both immediate utilization of what she learned while at the
site, as well as how she will use it in her future career as a dance instructor. Participant eight further explained that not being in the classroom and gaining in-the-field experience was what really helped her. She explained that abstract concepts were made more clear during this experience, and she valued having the opportunity to teach someone motor skills, like she will be doing in her future career. Lastly, participant 11 stated “In the classroom you learn the technical things, but you really don’t learn how to apply what you are learning”. She further explained that this course provided a means for the students to apply what they learned in lecture, and experience the unpredictability of what will happen in the real-world.

The real-world experience that the students received through their participation in the motor behavior service-learning program proved to be invaluable. This is supported by all 15 participants identifying it as the most beneficial aspect of the program. This course was uniquely different than the other courses the participants had previously taken at the university, and it allowed them to practice a different type of skill set than what they typically do inside of a classroom. Having hands-on experience where they get to work with individuals, and apply what they had learned in their lecture, provided them with valuable real-world experience.

**Process**

The next phase of service-learning in the conceptual model is the process the students went through as they were involved in the service-learning program. This included working with their teammate(s), teaching the children the skills they had planned for them, and any difficulties that they encountered along the way. The process the students experienced during their service-learning program was directly influenced by the foundation of the course, because having a solid foundation made the students better prepared for the program. The process was also directly affected by the real-world experience, because what occurred while they were working with the
children in the field impacted how they engaged and responded. Additionally, how they engaged and responded, also directly impacted the real-world experience they had. In the end, the process the students went through ultimately influenced the outcomes they received from their participation in the program.

**Unexpected Challenges**

Regardless of having an established paradigm, and the students taking time to plan for their service-learning, unexpected challenges still arose. These unexpected challenges were ongoing issues that the participants had not originally planned for, but did have to address throughout the service-learning program. When asked about challenging experiences the students encountered during service-learning, their responses fell into two broad categories; challenges with teammates, and challenges with the children.

**Challenges with teammates.** Some of the students (six out of 15) described having challenges arise with their teammates. This mainly consisted of their partner, or one of their partners, not contributing equally. Participant one shared, “Unfortunately my partner wouldn’t do much, so I was mostly creating the plans myself”. This was further supported by participant eight who explained that one of the most stressful times of the semester was when one of her partners didn’t respond to her for two weeks, nor contributed any work, so she had to take on all of the workload by herself. Two other participants had a different type of challenge with their partner, in that their partner was only there for half of the semester. Participant four said that his partner had surgery halfway through the semester, and could no longer help him at the site. He further stated that not having enough assistance made his time at the site particularly challenging. Similarly, participant 11 explained that her partner dropped the class halfway into the semester, so she had to take on the activity planning and implementation on her own.
Challenges with the children. Almost all of the participants (12 out of 15) reflected on the unexpected challenges that they experienced with the children. Something that was discussed by almost half of the participants (seven out of 15) was the short attention span of the children. This was a challenge throughout the service-learning program because the participants constantly had to find ways to keep the children’s attention while they provided instruction. Participant four discussed how the children he worked with lost interest quickly because of their short attention span, while participants 11, 12, and 14 all discussed how it was difficult to get the children to pay attention because they became distracted easily. Not far removed from the attention issues, some participants shared (five out of 15) having a hard time getting the children to listen to them. Specifically, participants one, five, and nine all shared how the children did not want to listen to them, and they had to use a loud voice, or pull the children aside to address listening and attention issues.

Other participants reported challenges that had more to do with the skill level of the children. Participant 11 explained that one of the unexpected challenges she faced was the children not being able to perform the skills she had planned. Similarly, participant three explained that the children she worked with were only about 18 months old, and most of them “…did not have the proficiency to do many motor skills, so it was challenging to figure out skills appropriate for them”. Participant 13 had a comparable challenge, but in his case, this challenge arose from the children in his group having varying levels of proficiency. He explained that his challenge was having “One student that was more advanced, and trying to keep his interest, like always changing the task based on what the child needed, in regards to how good they were.”

Experiencing unexpected challenges with partners and with the children was part of the process that the students went through during their service experience. These occurrences
affected the process that students went through because some had to take on an increased workload due to the lack of contribution from their partner, and the majority had to discover ways to manage the unexpected challenges with the children. Although the foundation of the course is meant to prepare the students for what they will experience during the service-learning project, it cannot prepare them for everything that will happen throughout the process. That is why gaining this real-world experience is beneficial, as it better prepares the students for the actuality of what it is like working with individuals.

**Things not Going According to Plan**

In addition to having unexpected challenges throughout the service-learning program, the participants also discussed things not going according to plan within their given service hour with the children. This differs from the unexpected challenges they faced in that these are things that happened that caused them to not be able to implement their activity as they planned. The issues that caused the activity to not go according to plan fell into three main categories; the children, the weather, and the equipment available.

**The children.** The majority of the participants (nine out of 15) discussed experiencing issues with the children. Most of the participants that encountered challenges with the children (seven out of nine) reported issues with the children not wanting to participate in the activities that the students had planned for them. Specifically, participants 10, 11, and 12 explained they always had at least one child that did not want to participate in the activities that they implemented. For example, participant 11 shared a story about having one child in her group of three and four-year-old children that was “stubborn”, and refused to do the planned activity every week. Similarly, participant 10 worked with five-year-old children, and discussed how there was one girl in his group that would always stop participating halfway through the activity,
and run around the playground instead. Other participants, such as participants seven and eight, who both worked with third graders, provided accounts of their entire group of children not wanting to participate some weeks. Participant eight stated, “They didn’t want to play the games that we played. They wanted to, they had their own ideas of the games that we should play. And then they would be like, no, that’s stupid, let’s do this instead.”

**Weather.** A group of participants (six out of 15) discussed how unexpected weather conditions forced them to change how they implemented their activity. Both the rain and poor air quality were both discussed as weather-related issues that the participants encountered. Due to the weather conditions, the participants explained that they had to do their activities indoors instead of outside as planned. Participant 12 explained:

> We had so many bad weather days from the fire and then the rain, and like, we didn’t find out we would be working in classrooms until we were literally walking back to do the activity, so we had to adapt literally on the spot. We had no time to try and prepare for it.

Participant 14 experienced the same struggle, and shared a story about fires causing poor air quality, and explained how she had to implement one large group activity indoors with all the children, and that wasn’t something she had planned on doing. Additionally, participant seven explained how several of the days that she was at the community site were hindered due to weather conditions. She explained that she and her partner would have their activity completely planned out, but when they arrived to the site, they were told they would have to move indoors because of inclement weather, so they had to adjust their activity on the spot.

**Equipment.** Another group of participants (six out of 15) described encountering challenges with the equipment that caused the activity to not go according to plan. Participants two and five explained that the sites they were at did not have the proper equipment that they
wanted to use, so they had to find something else to perform their activity. Participant two, who worked with three and four-year old children, explained how they were doing a balancing activity where the children were to balance a ball on a racket. However, when they arrived to the site, the school did not have enough balls, so they had to find something different for the children to balance on the racket that would still provide a challenging activity. Participants four, eight, and 13 stated that there were one or more instances where there was not enough equipment for all of the children, either because the site did not have enough, or they did not bring enough because there were more children than expected. Participant 13, who worked with three and four-year-old children, explained how he was “…used to having 10 children in his group, so he brought 10 cones for them to use for an activity, but when the children came out for the activity, there were 15 of them, and he did not have enough equipment.”

Lastly, participants one and five described a different type of issue they had with equipment. The issue that the children were not using the equipment as instructed. Participant one, who worked with two and three-year old children said, “I figured when like the cones weren’t really a good idea because they were just moving them around and stacking them.” He explained they were supposed to be used as a boundary marker, but the children had a different idea of what to do with them. This was reiterated by participant 5, who worked with seven-year old children, and described a child who was grabbing and kicking the cones over, instead of using them as a soccer goal.

Things not going according to plan with the children is a similar part of the process as the unexpected challenges that arose with them. However, when the children did not participate in activity that the students created, it challenged the students at the site to a greater extent, as all the preparation they did seemed to disappear. Unexpected weather conditions and issues with
equipment were another part of the process some of the participants went through. Poor weather affected the series of steps the students went through to complete their activity for the day.

**Active Participation**

Another part of the process that the students experienced, which ultimately enhanced their employability skills, was they actively participated throughout the service-learning program. Almost all of the participants (14 out of 15) discussed their active participation each week by means of leading the children in an activity. For example, participants one, nine, and 12 reflected on how they were the ones responsible for teaching the children, and stated this was a new opportunity for them, since most other classes they have taken do not require this type of participation. Furthermore, a small group of the participants (four out of 15) shared stories of how they physically demonstrated the activities for the children to assist them in better understanding the activity or skill they would be working on for the day. For example, participant two explained that one of his team members would verbally explain the activity, while the other two teammates would demonstrate, so the children had a clearer expectation of what they were supposed to do. Likewise, participant 14, who worked with two-year old children said “…we would also demonstrate [the skill] first so [the children] could follow us.”

Almost half of the participants (seven out of 15) discussed how they physically partnered up with children in the group to do the activity with them. Participant four explained that they had an uneven number of children in his group of four and five-year old children, so he or his partner would always do the activity, or partner up with a child, so that they could have an even number. Participants three and 11 seemed to be especially active in their participation with the children. They both shared descriptive stories of games and activities they implemented at the beginning of each session to encourage the children’s excitement to perform the skills with them.
Participant three, who worked with children as young as 18-months, described how she would play the baby shark song and do all the movements that corresponded to the song to get the children to come over and play along. Similar to participant three, participant 11, who worked with four and five-year old children started her activities with a game, usually Simon Says, and explained “I would use little games to get their attention, and they were really connecting with me, which was nice to see… Me being enthusiastic really changed their mindset.”

Active participation is the essence of the process of service-learning. The active participation that the students engaged in throughout this experience is what make service-learning different than other courses taken in college. Actively participating in the activities and with the children appeared to enhance the children’s participation, and help with progression through the activity plan for the day. Students actively participating with the children occurred in the service part of the service-learning, when they were actually out in the community with the children.

**Intellectual Engagement**

In addition to physically engaging with the children, the participants also provided descriptions about how they were intellectually engaged during service-learning. This was another part of the process they went through, which ultimately led to the outcomes they experienced. The participants provided a variety of examples of ways they were intellectually engaged during the process, which occurred prior to providing service, while they were at the site, and after they implemented their activities.

Participants one, two, three, and nine discussed their intellectual engagement through their activity planning. Specifically, participant three discussed how she was mentally involved in the process of planning the activities because she was the one creating a plan for someone
else, and deciding what they would implement and what equipment would be utilized. Additionally, participant one discussed how his intellectual engagement came from trying to create fun activities that allowed the children to practice the skill they were working on for that week.

Other participants discussed their intellectual engagement during their service at the site. A third of participants (five out of 15) discussed this engagement stemming from analyzing movement skills the children were performing. Participant 11 recalled how she would analyze the children’s jumping and hopping, and then use her knowledge of the movement assessments to focus on certain technical aspects of those skills, in order to increase the children’s movement proficiency. Additionally, participants four, five, and nine discussed analyzing the children’s movement to ensure they were performing correctly, while participant eight used movement analysis to figure out how to break down and teach a skill component by component.

Another form of intellectual engagement that was used at the site was having to quickly adapt by finding solutions to change and modify activities. Although all 15 participants discussed having to find solutions in some capacity, participants one and four reflected specifically about the intellectual engagement they had while at the site to achieve this. Participant four discussed the importance of “being mentally in tune to what is happening so you can quickly change an activity if it is not going well, so that the children can still reach the goal of the activity.” Additionally, participant six provided the following example of his intellectual engagement while at the site:

We did this activity on throwing, and I knew almost all of the male students were able to throw well, and the girls had trouble throwing it far, so we had to analyze that, and bring them closer, make it easier for them.
Lastly, a group of participants (five out of 15) discussed the intellectual engagement that occurred after their activity was over for the week. This came in the form of their reflection writing. Writing reflection papers are a required assignment for the course. Reflection prompts are given to the students every other week once they are their community agency providing service. These reflections consist of two different prompts, and the students are required to write a short paper that connects what they have observed in their service experience, to academic material that they are learning in the lecture component of the course. Participant four specifically discussed how the reflections made him think about what they did right, what they did wrong, and how they can improve. He further stated that the reflections “…provided an opportunity to think about what occurred in the past” and what he could improve on, and stated “…it was a good skill to have.” Participants three and nine discussed how the reflections allowed them to think about how the children improved in their motor skills, while participant seven talked about the critical thinking she engaged in to specifically relate examples of the children’s performance to what the reflection prompt asked.

Intellectual engagement was the part of the process that allowed the students to incorporate what they were learning in their lecture into a practical experience. During this process, the students utilized the academic knowledge they gained in their lecture to create activity plans, analyze movements, problem-solve, and write reflection papers. In some cases, this part of the process enabled the students to enhance their academic learning beyond what was possible in a classroom.

**Strategies**

Another aspect that the foundation of the course directly affected was the strategies students applied. Strategies consist of the methods used at the site to help both the students and
children be successful in what they were doing. A bi-directional relationship was also found between real-world experience and the strategies the students used to manage the circumstances they were faced with. This is because what happened in their real-world experience impacted what strategies they used, and the strategies then impacted what occurred.

**Appropriate Assistance**

In the motor behavior service learning course, the instructor wants to ensure the students are supported, but not to the point that the assistance they are receiving is prohibiting them from developing further as a scholar and practitioner. Participant five stated that in the adapted physical activity service-learning course he took, the instructors of the course took too much control over the experience. He explained that if something did not go according to plan with their client, the instructors would intervene so that the clients received the best experience possible, but ultimately caused the students to miss out on a valuable learning opportunity. He further stated that he did not believe that the students in the adapted physical activity course would develop the same skill set as they did in the motor behavior service-learning course because they received too much assistance from the professors, which hindered his ability to problem-solve and think critically. Lastly, participant five stated that he believed not having extensive assistance in this type of experience is more beneficial because it more accurately represents what he will experience in his career.

The service-learning program is structured for the students to receive assistance three different ways so they do not become overly frustrated, and can stay focused on supporting the children on site. First, from the professor. Professor feedback on activity plans is an essential way that the students know they have planned appropriate activities for the children. This type of support is typically more prominent at the beginning of the semester, and not needed as much as
the students gain experience working with the children. An important point is the professor only provides feedback on the site plans, and does not dictate what the students will do. Secondly, the students are paired up with someone in the course to complete the project and help make the workload and work at the site more manageable. Lastly, the students have support from the classroom or physical education teacher while at their site. The classroom teachers are asked to support the students with behavior problems of the children, since the students typically do not have much experience with them, but all other issues should be left for the students to handle. When the participants were asked about some of the challenges they faced while at the site, it was found that those challenges were resolved with the help of these three sources of assistance.

**The professor.** Seven of the participants discussed receiving assistance from the professor when faced with a challenging situation. The assistance that the course professor provided came in the form of feedback or suggestions on the activities with the children. Participant two stated that one of the most challenging things was coming up with new and challenging activities for the children. He further explained that the main way he lessened this challenge was by asking his professor for ideas of activities that the children would like. He specified that the professor did not provide them with a comprehensive activity plan for the children, but rather gave ideas on the types of skills his age group would enjoy and coupled that with movement concepts the children typically need improvement on. Additionally, participants one, nine, 11, 13, and 14 discussed receiving feedback from their professor prior to implementing their activity plan. Participant one said “[The professor] would go through [the activity plan] and give feedback on it” and further explained that “the feedback was helpful because it helped him catch major problems that may occur at the site, and also helped add creativity to their activity.”
Teammates. All fifteen participants discussed receiving assistance from their teammates. Fourteen of the fifteen discussed receiving assistance from their teammate(s) while engaging in activity planning activities. Participant one was the only participant who did not report having help from his partner, and instead said “Unfortunately, my partner wouldn’t do much, so I was mostly creating the agendas myself”. All of the other participants described the different ways they would receive help from their teammates during the activity planning process. Some participants described consistently working as a team to create the activity plan, for example, participant two said “I would get together with my two other teammates, and we designed a plan that we thought would fit the kids and help them learn and enhance their performance”. Other groups decided to split the work of the activity plan amongst the group members so they each could focus on a small section. Participant four explained that he and his group divided up the plan and one person would work on one movement task, and build the skills needed to work on that movement task once at the site.

Slightly over half of the participants (eight out of 15) discussed having help form their teammate(s) while implementing the activities at the site, which made it easier when things did not go as planned for them. Participant 10 stated, “…at the site, he and his teammates worked really well together”. Furthermore, participant 12 said:

We had good teamwork…I definitely took more of the lead when we were at the site, just because I have so much experience with kids and stuff, but [my partner] would always jump in and help, or get stuff for the kids, so I could focus on instructing them, which was helpful.

Additionally, participants one, four, six, and nine described how they and their partner were grouped with another pair to help support one another while implementing their activities.
At half of the community sites that the motor behavior service-learning program attends, the students have a partner, and then that set of partners teams up with another group, so one set of partners is responsible for implementing their activity plan for 30-minutes, while the other group assists them, then a new group of children come out for the next 30-minutes, and the partner that were helping to facilitate now implement their original activity plan, while the other two assist them. Participant one explained:

The first half-hour, a few groups would work with the kid, and then we would switch with the other teams, so instead of us implementing the exercises, we would help out others. Like, if they needed us to get cones or something, or balls, we would go get them while they would give [the children] instructions. We would be looking at if the kids were doing the activity correctly, so we would serve as a set of eyes for them.

Participant six further explained that when he saw other groups struggling he would go in and help them so they didn’t have to do all the work, meaning teaching the children and trying to keep them organized. Unfortunately, participant four described that his biggest challenge was not having enough assistance while at the site. This individual was assigned to work with 20 children at a time, which is the largest number of children allowed at one time. He had two other partners, but one of them had surgery half way through the semester, and could no longer participate at the site. Additionally, one of the individuals they were supposed to be teamed up with began working with another group instead. Ultimately, having this lack of assistance while at the site made things more challenging for participant four.

**Site teachers.** The majority of the participants (nine out of 15) discussed having support from the teachers at the site when faced with challenging children in the program. Participant 3,
who worked with the youngest group of children, approximately 18-24 months, an age group in
which the classroom teachers are typically asked to support the students more, stated:

I felt like the teachers at the center were supportive… she didn’t sit down, not even for a
second, like she was running around with us. She was grabbing kids, making sure they
were all doing it. And even if we had kids that didn’t want to do it for a second, she
would make sure they would do it once or twice, and then let them go.

For all of the other groups that worked with children older than this, the teachers are told
to let the students be in charge, but to be there for support, particularly for behavior issues with
children. The point is for the teacher to support the students so they can focus on teaching the
children skills, but not so much support that the students are not actively engaged in the process.

When the participants described the assistance they received from the site teachers, it mainly
revolved around re-directing the children. For example, participant one described the teachers
going involved when the children would hit one another, while participant two talked about
how the teachers would help them when the children would not listen to them. Participant 12,
who worked with eight year-old children, provided the following example of the assistance she
received from the P.E coach at the school she completed her service leaning at:

There was a kid who wouldn’t follow instructions. I talked to this child multiple times,
my partner talked to this child multiple times, so I got their coach involved. Coach sat
them out and had a talk. The kid came back and apologized, and was basically perfect
after that, he knew we weren’t playing. Later on, he had happened to not follow
directions again, and I would be like ‘do you want me to talk to coach?’ and he was like,
no, no. So after [the coach] would talk to him, he was good.
One of the strategies that is employed to ensure the students have a successful service-learning experience is to provide them with appropriate assistance. Since there are different areas that the students need help with, there are a variety of supports that are available to them to assure that they will have the support that they need. When students need help creating activity plans, handling difficult children at the site, and teaching skills to the children, the different forms of assistance that are imbedded in the course are an important strategy that they can sue to help achieve success.

**Adaptability**

All 15 participants discussed the concept of adaptability as one of the strategies used to be successful through the process they went through, and the challenges they experienced. The adaptations they made were preceded by things not going according to plan while at the site, and in some cases the unexpected challenges they faced throughout the semester. There were three categories of things the participants had to adapt to; the children, the physical space they had to work with, and the equipment they had to work with. These subthemes mirrored the subthemes that were found about things not going to plan, the difference within them however, is the focus on how the students actually adapted to resolve the unexpected challenge they were faced with.

**The children.** Almost all of the participants (12 out of 15) told stories of adaptating their activity based on the needs of the children. Some of the participants (four out of 15) explained changing the activity when the group of children, or even a single child, did not want to play the game they had prepared. Participant 10 explained “When they don’t want to do something, you have to change your plan and find something they want to do”. Another group of participants (three out of 15) shared how they would adapt their activity based off of the children’s reaction to their activity. Participant four explained the need to understand how the children are reacting
to your activity, and adapt if the children are losing interest, or else the activity won’t flow well.

Lastly, another group of participants (four out of 15) discussed adapting an activity based on the proficiency level of the individual children in the group. For example, participant six discussed a throwing task that he implemented with his group of five and six year-old children, where they had to throw a ball to a target. He explained, “Some children had trouble with it, so we would fix it for them. We would either move [the target] closer or further, higher or lower”, which ultimately made each individual child successful at the activity.

**Physical space.** More than half of the participants (eight out of 15) discussed adapting their activity to the physical space they had to work with. Six of these participants discussed having to modify their activity to work for an indoor environment when the environmental conditions, such as air quality and rain, prevented them from being outside. Participant seven provided the following example:

We had a very unfortunate series of indoor weeks where we would have things planned and then we’d get there and we’d have to adjust on the fly. One of the first times we were in a really small room and we were doing throwing, there just wasn’t enough space.

Participant 13 discussed having to adapt his activity for the same reason, and told a story of using the chairs in the classroom to roll balls through. Additionally, participants two and five reflected on having to adapt their activity to the physical space they had. Both participants shared stories about the space they wanted to use at the site being occupied by another group in the class, so they had to quickly change their activity to fit the new space they would have for the week.

**Equipment.** A group of participants (six out of 15) shared how they had to adapt the equipment they used based on what was available to them at the site. Participant one and eight
both gave the example of having to use poly spots instead of cones when finding out that their site did not have cones available. The other four participants spoke more generally about adapting the equipment they planned on using for the activity based on what was available to them.

Adapting activities and equipment was another significant strategy that the students used to achieve success while at the community site. As many of the participants mentioned throughout their interviews, there was always something that did not go according to plan when they were working with the children. The fact that they had the ability to adapt their activities to meet the demands of their given situation was a useful strategy that alleviated the problematic situation they were in.

**Transferring Knowledge**

Another way that the participants achieved success at their sites was through transferring the knowledge they gained about motor development, into what they were doing with the children. Participant 3 said “I felt like what I was learning in school, in the classroom, was really mirroring what I was doing at the center. I was really able to take what I was learning and apply it over there.” All 15 participants discussed using what they learned in the lecture component of the course to help make the activities successful, or to help the children enhance their skill performance. For example, participant 11 stated:

I would say with like motor development and age, even gender, at the point I didn’t know anything about it, and when I learned specifics about who is going to be different at this age, I think that helped me realize the boys are going to be stronger and want to kick from a farther distance. So, when I did soccer skills I grouped the boys together so they could kick harder and farther than the girls.
Almost half of the participants (seven out of 15) discussed using movement assessments, which is something learned in the lecture component, in their service-learning component. Participant four described using the movement assessments to analyze what step level the children were in for different skills. He said this made him realize how much instruction the children needed in terms of the motor skills, and would instruct them in areas where they were lacking proficiency.

Lastly, a group of participants (five out of 15) discussed the use of two terms, universality versus variability. These concepts describe how children of an age group will have a universal skill set, but have variability in how they perform skills. Participant eight explained “We learned that each kid is in their own stage. Like, even though there’s a stage that they need to follow, everyone is variable.” This ultimately allowed the group to make modifications within a skill for the different children in her group, based on their proficiency level.

The last strategy that the students utilized to achieve success with the children was transferring the knowledge they gained from lecture into their service-learning program. The knowledge they gained allowed the students to better analyze what was occurring with the children at the site. Utilizing this strategy enabled the students to make assessments and judgements about what they were observing within the children, and make a high-quality connection between what they learned in their lecture course with what they experienced working with the children.

**Outcomes**

A combination between the real-world experience the students had, the processes the students experienced, and the strategies they utilized to manage what happened during their real-world experience, all led to the outcomes the students attained. Those outcomes fell into two
different categories; positive outcomes for children, and employability skills, which was the topic of this research. Both groups of outcomes will be discussed below.

**Positive Outcomes for Children**

When the participants were asked to describe a success they experienced during the service-learning program, all 15 participants identified an accomplishment that was related to the positive outcome of a child, or the group of children they were working with. For example, Participant 5, who worked with a group of seven-year olds, stated:

I feel the biggest success was seeing improvement in the children from the beginning of the semester to the end. Like, you [the instructor] kept telling us we would see them develop, but towards the end it kind of dawned on me that the kids were changing and they were developing because of what I was doing with them, and I was really excited to see that, it felt good.

Participant 10 echoed this statement and explained that his success came from seeing improvement in the children. He described that most of the five -year old children in his group enhanced their ability to produce an underhand throw, and by the end of the semester the children were able to knock down targets that were set-up for them. Similarly, participant 11 described the challenges her group of four and five-year old children had with skipping and hopping. Because of this, she ensured to build those skills into every activity she did with the children, and at the end of the semester, most of the children could hop and skip. She further stated “It felt really good to see their improvement, and it felt like a huge success leaving knowing that they improved”.

124
In addition to see skill improvement in the children, another type of success that was identified by the participants were children becoming less timid. Participant four shared the following story about a four-year old girl in the group of children assigned to them:

I would have to say the biggest successes were the kids that seemed extremely shy the first week, like who didn’t want to look at you, who were looking at the ground and didn’t want to participate, didn’t want to partner up, and were by themselves. Then watching them want to actually participate a few weeks later, watching them want to partner with people and do the activity, and watching them want to be more social. So that happened with one girl for sure. I remember before that she was extremely shy, she wouldn’t even say her name, I think when she did say her name, she lied, it wasn’t the name on her nametag. But, four to five weeks in she was yelling, jumping around, throwing the ball, moving really well, wanting to talk to people, talking to the instructors. I think that’s a huge success story.

Participant eight shared a similar story about an eight-year old girl she worked with. She specified that this girl did not participate with them for the first several weeks. Participant eight would try and motivate her by asking her questions and challenging her in the tasks that they had planned. This excited the girl and initiated her participation. Participant eight explained that “She eventually started getting competitive with everyone, and then everyone was cheering her on, and once they started cheering her on she participated even more. It was exciting to see that.”

Improvements in motor skills and progressive changes in the child’s behavior were both identified by the participants when asked about a success that they achieved. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, one of the main goals of the service-learning program is to increase
motor skill performance in children. It is obvious that this goal was achieved, as over half of the participants (eight out of 15) shared stories supporting this. This skill improvement will benefit the children both now, and in the future, as they continue to engage in physical activity. Secondly, their improved behavioral outcomes, such as becoming more outgoing and more eager to participate shows more willingness to try new sports and physical activities, as well as increased self-confidence of the children. Regardless of which one of these successes the participants shared, the children obtained these outcomes as a result of the experiences they had with the kinesiology students during the service-learning program.

**Employability Skills**

The second outcome of the service-learning program that the students experienced was the enhancement of employability skills. This goes back to the first research question of this study, which was to see what the learned employability competencies are for these kinesiology students. In order to assess this question, nine employability skills were evaluated during this research study; problem-solving, professionalism, verbal communication, written communication, teamwork, leadership, career management, adaptability, and the ability to analyze information. Overall results showed that the participants were able to enhance all nine of the employability skills as a result for their participation in this service-learning program. Descriptive results for each of those nine skills are presented below.

**Problem-solving.** All of the participants stated that their problem-solving skills were enhanced as a result of participating in this service-learning program. Although the participants provided a variety of responses when asked what aspects of service-learning facilitated this enhancement, all their responses focused on the adaptations they made during their activity implementation. This included the problem-solving they engaged in when having to adapt the
equipment they used, the physical space they had for their activity, and the adaptations they made based on the children’s mood or reaction to the activity.

The participants attributed having limited time to problem solve how to resolve any issue they were faced with as what enhanced their problem-solving skills. For example, participant one said that the adaptations he made at the site required “quick thinking”, while other participants discussed that modifying activities challenged them to quickly assess out how to immediately solve a problem. Participant nine described how every time she was working with the children, there was always something that did not go according to plan, and consequently, something she needed to adapt or modify. This challenged her to think rapidly, and adjust accordingly, in order for the children to have a good experience. Participant four described this same problem, and explained that it challenged him to think “how am I going to solve this?” He further explained how it had to be solved quickly, because the longer he waited, the less engaged the children were. Lastly, participant 14 described how she would have the teachers intervene when the children misbehaved, but realized she should try and resolve the issues herself, which ended up enhancing her problem-solving skills.

**Professionalism.** Almost all of the participants (14 out of 15) stated that their professionalism was enhanced as a result of this service-learning program. The participants explained that their professionalism was enhanced due to the community responsibility they had during the service-learning program. Previously discussed sub-themes within community responsibility included the language they used, the preparedness they had to have for the children, how they conducted themselves at the site, and being present and on time, and all of these things were also found to increase their professionalism. During the interviews, some of the participants seemed hesitant about how working with children could increase their
professionalism since “…how you act with a child is much different than how you act with an adult.” For example, participant 15 explained that “Sometimes when you work with younger patients, you may not be as professional as you would be with adults. You are more light-hearted and more-friendly.”

However, the participants were able to correlate professionalism to the fact that community agencies had rules to abide by, and explained the professional interactions they had with the teachers there, which also enhanced their professionalism. More specifically, participant 13 discussed how he worked closely with the staff members at his community agency, and they displayed mutual respect for one another, making him feel more like a colleague rather than a student. Participant three stated that she thought she possessed appropriate professionalism since she already had experience working with children. However, she further explained that the classroom teacher she worked with displayed a high level of professionalism to both her and the children, and was a good role-model to the level of professionalism she will need in their career.

Additionally, participant seven stated it was a different kind of pressure being at a school, which caused her to increase her professionalism. And even though she currently worked in a kinesiology related job, she had a level of comfort with her employment, so being at the school reminded her to act more professionally. Furthermore, participants 10 and 14 stated that having to be more accountable with deadlines is what caused them to increase their professionalism. Since the teachers at the site expected to receive the activity plans by a certain day, these students took their deadlines more seriously, and made sure to submit their plan early, so the teacher was not waiting on them.

There was only one participant who did not feel that service-learning enhanced her professionalism. Participant 11 explained “I am geared toward physical therapy, so the kids and
the environment of not having any set rules kind of isn’t really my thing.” It appeared this participant was more focused on how the children acted at the site, rather than taking into consideration all the aspects of being at a community site, like the other participants did.

**Verbal communication.** All 15 participants stated that their verbal communication was enhanced as a result of this service-learning program. All but one of these participants explained that their verbal communication was strengthened as a result of using developmentally appropriate language to explain activities to children. Specifically, participant 10 stated that his verbal communication was strengthened as a consequence of this because he had to use a different type of language to explain things to children, and he now feels confident in teaching skills to a younger population than what he is used to.

When participants five and 12 were asked in general if they thought service-learning enhanced employability skills, they both stated “yes”, and specifically identified the enhancement of their verbal communication because of the criticalness for the children to clearly understand what they were being asked to do. Participant five further stated that effective communication is a powerful way to administer instructions, so you must practice ways to produce clarity in what you say. Participant 15 shared how working with children of different ethnicities, cultures, and backgrounds helped him better develop his verbal communication, and stated he would be working with diverse populations in his career as a physical therapist, so this experience was especially beneficial to him. Also, participant nine stated her communication was her weakness coming into the project but it was ultimately enhanced as a result of instructing the children every week, and finding more appropriate ways to explain things to them. Likewise, participant two explained that this experience helped him become more confident in public speaking. He said he was uncomfortable speaking in front of the children at first, because he
hadn’t had much practice with public speaking. However, since the course required the students to lead the children every week, the repetition made public speaking become easier for him.

**Written communication.** Almost all of the participants (13 out of 15) stated that their written communication was enhanced as a result of the service-learning program. Of the participants that stated that the service-learning program enhanced their written communication skills, all of them discussed that this occurred due to the activity plans that they had to write. Most of the participants (10 out of 15) described the activity plans required a lot of detail. For example, participant five said “I would say for written communication, the thing that helped me was writing those activity plans. They had to be really detailed”. This was supported by participant 11 who explained that she had to communicate her activity plan in writing in great detail so that both her instructor and the teacher of the children knew exactly what she was going to do. She further stated that she never had to write instructions that had that much detail before, so it ended up improving her written communication. Participant 1 also explained that having to create a comprehensive activity plan helped him write with more detail, which was something he wasn’t accustomed to. The remainder of the thirteen participants discussed how explaining an activity in writing is what enhanced their written communication. For example, participant eight explained, “It’s easy to show how to play a game, but when you write it out, it’s a lot more difficult.”

Participant’s three and nine stated that the service-learning program did not enhance their written communication skills. Participant nine discussed the activity plans as a form of written communication, but stated she did not feel it challenged her writing skills. Participant three further explained:
I know the activities, we had to write them out, but sometimes it was really hard explaining the activity in the plan… I felt like I was being repetitive and redundant in my plan… I didn’t know if I was writing too much, or not writing enough, or if it even made sense, but you are trying to explain an activity and I kept thinking, does this even make sense to [the professor]?

**Teamwork.** All 15 participants stated that their teamwork competency was enhanced as a result of this service-learning program. All of the participants told stories about the teamwork they engaged in, both to prepare activities for the children, and while they were at the site. Participant seven stated “The whole project depended on good teamwork, like you would be successful without it”. When asked in general if service learning helped to enhance employability skills, participant one stated yes, and identified teamwork specifically. He stated his partner did not help much, but that he still attempted to get his partner to assist him with the work, and learned that if he asked him to do little things, like get equipment, the partner would typically help, and it took stress off of participant one.

Over half of the participants (eight out of 15) also identified that they would not have been able to successfully complete the project without a teammate. Even the participants who had teammates that did not contribute as much as they would have preferred still stated that this project showed them the importance of teamwork. For example, participant eight stated that the challenges she had with her teammates made he better handle teamwork, and participant 10 stated he learned to adapt more to other people’s needs so they could have successful teamwork. Lastly, participant 11 said she learned that communication with her teammate was key for the team to be successful, and tried to enhance their communication between one another.
Participant 14 explained that, from this experience, she learned that it is important to find each other’s strengths, and to build upon those strengths for successful teamwork. She stated that her partner did not speak English as a first language, so she took the lead instructing the children at the site since she was more comfortable explaining things to children. Her partner, however, was extremely creative, and the majority of the ideas for the activities they did with the children came from him. She also explained how this course gave her a different opportunity to develop her teamwork skills. She explained that in college, you typically only work together academically, like writing a paper or doing a presentation. However, in the service-learning course, it was different because you went out into the community to implement a project with one another, and poor teamwork would affect more than just your grade, it would affect the experiences they children in the program.

**Leadership.** All 15 participants stated that their leadership skills were enhanced as a result of this service-learning program. Almost all of the participants (14 out of 15) discussed how “being in charge” of a group of children and teaching them skills enhanced their leadership. Participant two discussed how he and his teammates would lead the children from beginning to end, by describing that they led the children in a warm-up, then taught them different skills and guided them through a game where they used those skills, transitioned them from one activity to the next, and then directed them in a cool-down. Participant one provided the following explanation about the enhancement of his leadership skills from being in charge of a group of children:

You get put on the spot, you have to take control or the kids will take control of you, so definitely, you get to learn leadership skills. Even though it might not seem like it at the
moment, but slowly, you reflect from the beginning of the semester to the end, and see all of this improvement.

Participant 11 further explained:

My biggest take-away was leadership. Like, being in charge of a group I think was really important because at a job, if you are asked to speak in a meeting, you are going to have to know to do that. In a classroom setting, you don’t really develop leadership skills.

Many other participants (nine out of 15) described how they took the lead within their group or teammate(s). Participant nine discussed the leadership role she played within her group and explained that she felt like she had to “steer the ship” and practice assertiveness and putting her foot down since her partner was more soft-spoken, and slower to make decisions.

Participant’s one, four, eight, and eleven stated they were forced to step up as a leader since their teammate did not contribute to the project like they should have, which ultimately enhanced their leadership skills. Participant five had a slightly different reflection on improving his leadership, and explained that to him, being an effective leader starts with how you conduct yourself, and this project made him more aware of how he was conducting himself in front of the children.

Lastly, participant eight provided her reasoning as to why she thought leadership skills were enhanced by saying “I think since the service-learning program wasn’t in the classrooms, it was in-the-field experience, it really helped with leadership skills.”

Career management. Most of the participants (12 out of 15) stated that the service-learning program supported them in a career decision. The participants came into the service-learning course with varying levels of experience with children. Some of the participants worked with children on a daily basis in their jobs, some had younger family members, and some had no prior experience with children at all. Despite their prior experience, or lack thereof, the
experience they had in the service-learning course appeared to influence the majority of the participant’s career plans. Participants three, six, and eleven all specified they now want to work with children as a result of the experiences they had with them. Participant three stated:

After [the adapted physical activity service-learning course] I was like no, I can’t do this, so I changed my major, well not my major, I was still KIN because I was already so deep into it, I was almost done, but I decided I will just do something else after, like pharmacy school or whatever, but after this class, I’ve been working with kids for so long in my job, like I’m the person that calls all the shots and stuff, so I felt comfortable, it felt like second nature to me. So, I was telling my mom even, I might be interested in doing something with kids rather than adults. It’s hard, adults with injuries, and older people with injuries, as messed up as it is to say, they aren’t looking to get better. They are just looking to continue the rest of their life and daily living. But with the kids, it’s like motor development, it’s the things they are going to learn whether they want to or not they are going to and they are so curious and ambitious, and I see it with the kids, they are so hungry to learn so I think it really did throw a different idea into my head that this may be an opportunity for me, or it might be an option to get into something with children.

Participant’s seven and eight both identified that this service-learning project confirmed wanting to work with children in their careers. Participant seven, who currently works as a dance instructor for children, explained that she had always enjoyed her job working with children, and that the service-learning program gave her another positive experience with them, confirming that she would want to work with them in her future career. Additionally, participant eight said:

I already knew I wanted to work with kids, but I know for sure now that I do want to
work with kids because I saw how much patience I had compared to other people, and how I didn't get angry right away. I also enjoyed their attitude and I was okay with it. I also enjoyed their bad attitude. I was like, it's okay. I wanted to see like how I could solve it, and when I saw successful results, it felt good.

Two of the participants, participant one and participant 15, both stated that the experience they had teaching children gave them exposure to a demographic that they would work with at some point in their career. Participant one plans on being a physician assistant, and knows he will work with children at some point during his career. He explained that learning how to talk to and explain things to children, a skill that he developed during the service-learning program, will be something that he utilizes in his career. Similarly, participant 15, who will start physical therapy school in the fall, described the connection that he made between working to motivate children to be healthy during the service-learning project, and how he will later work to get children healthy when he works as a physical therapist.

Participants five, 10, and 13 identified that the service-learning experience did not really have an impact on their career plans because they were already solidified in exactly what they wanted to do for their career. However, these participants did make a connection between their future career and what they did in service learning. Participants five explained the following:

I never planned on working with children because I work more with movement rehab and really want to work with individuals with chronic diseases. But at the same time, it gave me the experiences of explaining skills in a really simplified manner, which I may need to do depending on the client that I work with. So, it didn’t change my mind on a career or anything, but it did give me experience with something I may need to do in the future.
There were only two participants who identified that the service-learning experience confirmed that they did not want to work with children. Participant nine stated that the program showed her that she could work with children, but also stated she knows it is not the demographic she wants to work with. Participant 14 said the experience “made me go away from kids, because it is so different than who I am”.

**Adaptability.** All 15 participants stated that their ability to adapt was enhanced as a result of this service-learning program. Since the service-learning project caused the students to have to make numerous adaptations due to their activity not going according to plan, they ended up becoming more adaptable. Participant 12 stated “I’ve never had to adapt like I’ve had to do in this class before. Adaptability to me was the strongest thing about this class”. Participant 14 felt similar and stated that adaptability was the biggest take-away for her. She further discussed having to adapt based on the children’s attitude that day, and also explained that on more than one occasion when they got to the site, the classroom teacher mentioned they couldn’t go outside, or they needed them to work on a specific skill because the teacher needed to do an assessment on the child. All of these things challenged participant’s 14 adaptability, but ended up being more capable of adapting because of it.

Participant four felt that adaptability was an important skill he developed throughout the semester because of always having to find ways to modify this plan. He stated that, “…the faster you learn to adapt at the site the more successful you will be.” This participant, along with participant one, talked more extensively about the need to constantly adapt at the site, compared to stories that other participants shared. They shared numerous accounts about the unpredictability of what happens when one works with the children, and often referenced that things never went completely according to plan. Because of this, the two participants explained
they were constantly adapting, and increased their ability to make quick and meaningful adaptations as the semester progressed.

**Ability to analyze information.** All 15 participants stated that their ability to analyze information was enhanced as a result of this service-learning program. Almost half of participants (six out of 15) explained that the real-world experience allowed them to see course concepts in “real-life”, which helped them better understand those concepts. Participant five said “Having real-world examples really helps. You can’t really analyze in class, you just try and understand”. Additionally, participant two said he realized that he was able to answer challenging questions in his reflection papers because of his increased ability to analyze information, which was developed through this experience.

Lastly, six out of 15 participants reflected on how they can better analyze movements due to this experience. Movement analysis represents a large portion of the lecture component of the course. However, participant 12 explained that it is a hard skill to learn in the classroom, but the service-learning course helped her better learn that analytical skill by providing her with real-life examples. This skill is especially important because it is a skill that many kinesiology students will need in their future career. More specifically, participant four explained this class allowed him to better understand the critical components of fundamental movement skills, which facilitates a better analysis of movement patterns when critiquing movements, which he said would be helpful for anything kinesiology related.

The experiences the students had throughout the service learning program, both with their partner and with the children, resulted in the enhancement of their employability skills. Many factors interacted with one another throughout the service-learning course, which provided students with conditions that were suitable to practice these nine competencies. Being in an
environment with a variety of opportunities to utilize these competencies ultimately led to the enhancement of employability skills, which was the second outcome achieved by the students through their participation in this program.

**Summary**

Results of this research showed that all nine employability skills were enhanced from the student’s participation in the motor behavior service-learning course. The enhancement of these employability skills did not occur automatically, but as a consequence of a numerous constructs interacting with one another. These constructs were displayed in a theoretical model that showed the relationship between them, and how they led to the two outcomes that the students gained as a result of their participation in the motor behavior service-learning program.

This model begins with the foundation of the course. The established foundation of this course is meant to prepare the students for what they will experience while at the community site of their service-learning. However, no matter how much preparation one does, it cannot fully prepare them for the real-world experiences they will encounter once they begin working with the children, which is why real-world experience was identified as the central phenomenon. This real-world experience produced occurrences that allowed students to engage in various processes that enabled the students to employ strategies that would ultimately enhance their employability skills. To help overcome some of the difficulties the students experienced during their service-learning program, the students also had strategies they utilized. These strategies further allowed for the students to practice certain employability skills, which eventually allowed for the enhancement of them. At the conclusion of the course, the participants were able to identify that though their participation in this course, there was an enhancement of the nine employability skills investigated in this study. They were able to reflect back on aspects of the course that
helped them develop these competencies, and ultimately a theoretical model was created to visually display those factors. An unexpected outcome of this project was that the participants shared that the achievements the children had as the most successful part of the project. This truly illustrates the uniqueness and reciprocity of service-learning, in that both the students providing the service, and the children receiving the service, all benefit from the experience.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This final chapter provides a discussion about the importance and relevance of the results of this study. It will focus on explaining and assessing what was found through this research by relating the results to the two research questions, and to the review of literature provided in chapter two. This chapter begins by providing an overall summary of the study. Following, a discussion will be presented where the results of the study are connected to an existing larger body of research, as well as to the conceptual model presented in chapter one. Next, the research will discuss the limitations of the study, as well as the generalization of the results to other populations. The implications for policy and practice will then be discussed where the researcher will recommend changes to educational practices, followed by recommendations for future research, where areas for further examination are presented. The chapter will end with a concluding statement that affirms the key elements of the study that should be understood by the reader.

Summary of the Study

One of the primary goals of higher education is to prepare students for the workforce, supporting them to become contributing members of society (Chan, 2016; Miller, Rocconi, & Dumford, 2018). Therefore, the career readiness of college graduates is an important issue in higher education for student competency preparation and success measures, and university reputation (Finch et al., 2013; Miller et al., 2018; Sleap & Read, 2006). Yet, college graduates often enter the workforce unequipped to meet the challenges of the organizations they work for. For example, the majority of employers feel, upon completion of an undergraduate degree, that
recent college graduates are not well prepared for their careers (Jaschik, 2015). Critical-thinking, and written and oral communication, are all cited as skills frequently missing in college graduates, with fewer than three in 10 employers feeling college graduates are prepared in those areas (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2015). Ultimately, there remains a workforce-readiness gap in college graduates, which perhaps indicates inadequate career preparation for students in higher education (Finch et al., 2013; Rateau et al., 2015; Soares & Perna, 2014).

This highlights a shortcoming in higher education and the lack of educational practices at the college level that prepare students for workplace success. Although the specific, technical abilities, known as hard-skills, are important for workplace success, employers also seek employees that possess soft skills, such as critical thinking, leadership, and teamwork, over job specific skills (Finch, Hamilton, Baldwin, & Zehner, 2013). In order for students to be better prepared, educators must utilize instructional methods, and create learning environments that allow students to transfer what they are learning in the classroom to appropriate and challenging contexts (Eyler, 2009). Service-learning could be the solution to this problem since it allows students the opportunity to develop the career competencies desired by employers, while also giving them experience in their career field, all while earning a college degree.

The purpose of this grounded theory case study was to understand the influence of service-learning on the enhancement of career-readiness competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology at a large public university. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the learned employability skills of undergraduate kinesiology students participating in a service-learning project?
2. What factors of the service-learning project shape the development of employability skills?

To assess these research questions, the researcher conducted one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 15 kinesiology students who recently completed a motor behavior service-learning course at California State University, Northridge. Questions for the interviews were open-ended and designed to encourage reflection about the participants' experiences in service-learning, with particular emphasis placed on employability skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and problem-solving.

The researcher analyzed the data using a progressive coding system that went from open coding, to focused coding, to axial coding, and concluded with selective coding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). Through the process of open coding, the researcher identified commonalities of key concepts discussed by the participants. Twelve themes were identified by the researcher; careful planning, established paradigm, community responsibility, active participation, intellectual engagement, unexpected challenges, not going according to plan, knowledge transfer, adaptability, appropriate assistance, positive outcomes for children, and employability skills. Another recurring theme that emerged during conversations with the participants was that the real-world experience they had working with the children helped them to enhance the development of employability skills. Consequently, real-world experience emerged as the central phenomena that linked all the themes together, and identified by means of a selective code.

The final stage of the data analysis was interpretation, which was the phase that allowed the researcher to make sense of the data that was collected. The data analysis gave the researcher an understanding of how service-learning enhanced employability skills, by exposing patterns and themes in the data. Ultimately, the interpretation phase allowed the researcher to construct aa
graphical model to illustrate the relationships between the major themes that emerged, and explain how the factors of service-learning helped to enhance employability skills, along with another outcome of the program, which were positive outcomes for the children.

The first factor of service-learning that appeared to shape the enhancement of employability skills was the foundation of the course. Having a strong foundation for the course is of critical importance since it is the starting point in which all other aspects of the course will be built upon. The foundation of the course directly impacts three features of the model; real-world experience, the process, and the strategies. This real-world experience has a bi-directional relationship with the process, because it produced occurrences that allowed students to engage in various processes that enabled the students to employ strategies that would ultimately enhance their employability skills. Real-world experience also had a bi-directional relationship with strategies utilized by the students to help overcome some of the difficulties the students experienced during their service-learning program. These strategies further allowed for the students to practice certain employability skills, which eventually allowed for the enhancement of them. These three things; real-world experience, the process, and the strategies, also directly impact the outcomes that were experienced by the students in a service-learning class. Those outcomes were positive outcomes for the children, and the enhancement of the nine employability skills under investigation during this study; problem-solving, professionalism, written and verbal communication, teamwork, leadership, career management, adaptability, and the ability to analyze information.
Discussion

Service-Learning

Results of this study add to and reinforce the plethora of research that shows students receive positive benefits from their participation in service-learning (Bowen, 2007; Brail, 2016; Casile, Hoover, & O’Neil, 2011; Currie-Mueller & Littlefield, 2018; Fenzel & Peyrot, 2005; Hawkins & Kaplan, 2016; Meyers, 2009; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Mpofu, 2007; Strage, 2004). Additionally, this study found that there is alignment between service-learning and the seven career-readiness competencies identified by The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), which are relevant to students majoring in kinesiology, as well as adaptability and the ability to analyze information, which are also important employability competencies for college graduates to have (Achieve, 2018; Finch et al., 2013; Jaschik, 2015). The results of this study suggest that service-learning can be used as a pedagogy to develop employability skills that are too difficult to achieve in a classroom.

Problem-Solving

The first employability skill under investigation in this study was problem-solving. Problem-solving skills have been found as a critical competency needed for employability, and signify the ability to manage difficult and unforeseen situations (Reid & Anderson, 2012; Stiwne & Jungert, 2010; Wellman, 2010). Problem-solving skills were found to be enhanced through participation in the motor behavior service-learning course. This is consistent with previous research that also found that service-learning courses increased problem-solving skills (Bowen, 2007; Simons & Clearly, 2006).

Almost all of the students discussed that their problem-solving skills were enhanced through needing to make modifications and adaptations to the activity they did with the children,
including the equipment they used, and the physical space in which they had to perform the activity. The ability for the students to solve problems they were confronted with over the course of the semester enhanced their problem-solving skills, which was also found in previous research by Simons and Clearly (2006). Additionally, some of the participants reported that solving conflict between their teammates or between the children is what enhanced their problem-solving skills.

**Verbal Communication**

Verbal communication includes speaking effectively, expressing ideas, facilitating group discussions, providing appropriate feedback, and reporting information (Urciuoli, 2008). All of the participants stated that their verbal communication skills were enhanced as a consequence of their participation in the motor behavior service-learning course. Improved verbal communication skills as a result of being involved in a service-learning course was previously found in other studies (Bowen, 2007; Clinton & Thomas, 2011; Coetzee, Bloemhoff, & Naude, 2011; Robinsons & Torres, 2007), especially in comparison to students who did not take service-learning courses during their college career (Wickam, 2018).

More specifically, there were two main factors described by the students, which facilitated their development of this competency. The first was having to learn how to communicate with the children. Discovering and using developmentally appropriate language to describe activities to the children was a key influence on the student’s enhancement of their verbal communication. This mirrored results that Coetzee, Bloemhoff, and Naude (2011) found in a group of recreation majors in a service learning course, who explained that their communication was enhanced as a result of learning how to effectively communicate with children during their service project. The second way that the participants explained that their
verbal communication was enhanced was through communicating with their partner. Communication between groups was an essential part of carrying out a successful project. The students needed to communicate with one another to adequately plan activities for the children, and also while they were at the community site, in order to have successful implementation of their activity plan. This is consistent with results from Robinsons and Torres (2007) who conducted a case study with undergraduate students in an agriculture leadership service-learning course. In that study, the students also identified enhancement of their verbal communication skills through constantly communicating with their teammates to plan and implement activities.

Written Communication

Written communication skills include the ability to express your ideas through writing and writing concisely (Urciuoli, 2008). This skill is important because being able to effectively communicate through writing is currently the main form of communication in our society (Graham et al., 2010). Written communication was enhanced in almost all of the participants in this study. All of the participants who stated their written communication skills were enhanced as a result of their participation in service-learning attributed their improvement to writing activity plans. Both the details required in the plan, and learning to present a logical flow of ideas within that plan facilitated this. The fact that all but two participants stated that their written communication was enhanced as a result of their participation in service-learning refutes previous research by Coetzee et al. (2007) that found that students did not improve writing skills through service-learning.

Teamwork

Teamwork is the ability for students to work collaboratively in groups (NACE, 2014). All 15 participants stated their teamwork was enhanced through participation in the motor behavior
service-learning program. Students obtained first-hand experience of group dynamics through their participation in this course, since it required them to work in pairs or small groups to complete a community-based project. Numerous studies previously found that students who participate in service-learning increase their capacity for teamwork, collaborative learning, and were better able to work cooperatively in a team with one another (Coetzee et al., 2011; Crebert et al., 2004; Furco, 2002; Ibrahim, 2010; Larson et al., 2005; Smith, et al., 2010), especially compared to students who did not participate in service-learning courses (Wickman, 2018).

In this study, the student’s shared stories of working together to create and implement their activity plans every week, and described assisting other groups that were experiencing challenges with their children. Almost half of the participants identified that they would not be able to successfully carry out the community-based project if they did not have a partner to help complete the assignments and manage the children while at the community agency. This reinforces previous research by Coetzee et al. (2011) who found that the teamwork that a group of recreation majors engaged in during a service-learning project made the community project easier because their team members assisted in getting everything done, lowered the workload for each individual in the group, and allowed for better control of the children during project implementation. Lastly, a few of the participants discussed how challenges with their teammates made them better understand group dynamics, become more assertive, and learn to adjust to another person’s schedule.

Professionalism

Professionalism entails a few different features such as being dependable and reliable, honest, having integrity, and being accountable (NACE, 2014). Participation in service-learning was found to enhance all but one of the participant’s professionalism. Increased levels of
professionalism as a result of participation in service-learning is well established in prior research (Bowen, 2007; Crandell, Wiegand, & Brosky, 2013). The students reported that the project required them to be on-time, be prepared, use professional language, show respect to the staff and the children at the community agency, and follow specific guidelines at the site they worked at.

**Adaptability**

Adaptability refers to one’s ability to adjust to the various situations and circumstances one will be confronted with (NACE, 2014). All of the participants reported becoming more adaptable as a result of their experiences in service-learning. The students predominately reported that having to adapt activities and equipment to the physical space and the needs of the children they were working with is what enhanced their adaptability. The students continuously reported on their activities not going according to their original plan, and needed to make immediate adaptations in order to make the activity successful. Having to accommodate a change in plan to complete a goal is a valuable experience for the students to have, as being faced with unforeseen circumstances presents them with challenges to overcome during the process of implementing their activity plan. Additionally, adaptability has been found to be the core feature of problem-solving (Finch et al., 2013).

**Ability to Analyze Information**

Student’s ability to analyze information was also enhanced as a result of their participation in service-learning. In service-learning, the students apply content matter that they learned in the classroom while simultaneously providing service to the community (Diab & Flack, 2013), which allows for this analytical skill to be improved upon. Service-learning has been found to be a relevant method for converting the academic knowledge the students acquired
in their course into the real-world, which ultimately helps them transfer that knowledge into their workplace (Ramson, 2014).

The majority of the participants in this study stated that they were able to connect the experiences they had while working with the children to the material they learned about in their lecture. Some participants provided specific examples of applying theories from the course while working with the children, which supports research by Coetzee et al. (2011) who found students felt they learned how to apply theories they were educated on in class in a practical way through their participation in service-learning. Almost all of the participants discussed how the service-learning program enhanced their ability to analyze information by providing the means to better understand how to analyze movements. They were better prepared on how to interpret and analyze movements by seeing real life example of the skills when the children performed them. Gaining a greater understanding of principles by seeing them in practice with kinesiology students was also found in previous literature (Ramson, 2014; Whitley et al., 2017).

**Career Management**

Service-learning was found to impact the career management of the majority of the students in this study. For some of the participants in this study, the service-learning program solidified their career choice, by means of confirming they wanted to work with children in their future career, or in the case of one participant, confirming she did not want to work with children. Other students reported that the service-learning experience broadened their career choices. This supports previous research that states that service-learning programs can both help students explore various career options, and in some cases, help finalize a career decision (Whitley, 2017). In other cases, the participants stated this experience allowed them to practice skills needed in their future careers, like communicating with children, analyzing movement
skills, and working with diverse populations. Since these are skills the students will need in their future career, it appeared that service-learning served as a means of providing professional development opportunities, which Bowen (2007) also found.

**Leadership**

Leadership was a competency that was enhanced in all of the participants through their participation in service-learning. This is of particular value since leadership was identified as one of the largest skill gaps that students have when entering the career field (Conrad & Newberry, 2012). This shows that leadership skills are not being taught to students while in college, and focus needs aimed at engaging students in experiences that would better enable them to develop this skill, such as through service-learning. Improvement in leadership skills as a consequence of participation in service-learning adds to a vast amount of previous research that uncovered this same result, for students in a variety of majors (Bowen, 2007; Clinton & Thomas, 2011; Coetzee, Bloemhoff, & Naude, 2011; Crebert et al., 2004; Ibrahim, 2010; Larson et al., 2005; Smith, et al., 2010; Soria & Johnson, 2017).

The main reason the participants in this study improved their leadership capability was through leading a group of children in a series of activities on a weekly basis. The students described their particular role in leading the group of children, which ranged from capturing the children’s attention, to being in charge of skill demonstration, and providing verbal instructions on what the children will be doing. The process of enhancing leadership skills supports previous literature that found, through self-reports, that students developed leadership skills through service-learning by designing and leading children in an activity station (Whitley et al., 2017).
**Experiential Learning Theory**

By using Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning theory as a framework, this study explored what employability competencies are enhanced through participation in service-learning, and what factors of the service-learning project shaped the development of those employability skills. Service-learning is a form of experiential learning where the students are able to apply what they learned in the classroom into a real-world experience. Eyler (2009) explained that the knowledge a student obtains through the practical application of material in a real-life experience will be more relevant to that student, compared to anything the textbook alone could teach them. Crossley et al. (2007) further explained that it is difficult to teach employability skills through academic curriculum, and therefore believes that service-learning as a good method to provide students the opportunities to achieve these skills. This is further supported by Weber, Finley, Crawford, and Rivera (2009) who suggested that these employability skills can be developed through life experiences, and Calvert and Kurji (2012) who identified service-learning as one type of life experience that would help cultivate soft-skills.

In addition to confirming existing research related to experiential learning, the results of this study also confirmed Kolb’s (1984) four cyclical constructs of experiential learning theory. More specifically, in the first stage of experiential learning theory, the students underwent a concrete learning experience, which was their actual participation in the service-learning program. This concrete experience led to the second stage of experiential learning, which was reflective observation. This occurred as the students wrote and reflected on their experiences in service-learning. The reflective process allowed learning to occur during the service-learning experience, which was the third stage of experiential learning, abstract conceptualization. In the fourth stage, called active experimentation, the students planned and then tested and applied
what was learned in the classroom to each time the students went to their service-learning school site. This happened in a continual cycle every time the students went to their service-learning site, which further supports Kolb’s suggestion of learner’s going through this cycle several times, making it a spiral of cycles. A diagram of the experiential learning cycle can be found in Appendix E.

**Limitations**

Several of the limitations of this study stem from its methodological design. For example, since this study is a qualitative case study, the results will not be generalizable to a population, but rather can only be transferred to other groups in similar contexts (Durdella, 2019). Although these results are not generalizable to all populations and courses, the results of this study can certainly be utilized by kinesiology service-learning courses at other universities and other disciplines within the College of Health and Human Development. Additionally, the theoretical model that was created from the data in this study can be shared with the director of service-learning at CSUN. This can be used for professional development with professors across disciplines who implement or are interested in implementing service-learning courses.

Additionally, the small sample size of only 15 participants may be seen as a limitation of this study, however saturation was attained with this number of participants. Saturation is a benchmark used for discontinuing data collection. It has been described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as a “criterion for judging when to stop sampling the different groups pertinent to a category.... and that no additional data are being found whereby the sociologist can develop properties of the categories” (p. 61). Additionally, the ability for the participants to recall information from their service-learning experience up to one year after they took the course may impair their ability to provide accurate accounts of their experiences, or due to selective memory,
allow for potential biases about the experience to surface. Lastly, data for this research was self-reported by the participants. Since students have a varying ability to reflect on and analyze their experience, it could ultimately skew the results.

Other limitations come from the researcher’s role in conducting interviews with participants. Since the researcher is a professor in the department, and also the coordinator of the service-learning program, the researcher’s position may have impacted participants’ willingness to fully share or describe their experiences. Furthermore, the researcher holds certain biases, such as the belief that service-learning programs always provide positive experiences for students, and provide many types of benefits to them. However, triangulation was used, meaning data from multiple, independent sources, was collected and compared to existing literature to help support the credibility of the research, as well as confirmatory analysis of the findings to help ensure researcher biases did not influence the results of this study.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

The results of this study suggest that service-learning courses provide students with experiences and opportunities that allow them to enhance employability skills. Consequently, service-learning can be implemented as a means to enhance employability competencies, which students often lack upon completion of their undergraduate degrees. This could ultimately help reduce the workforce-readiness gap that currently exists as a result of undergraduate students lacking these skills. Consequently, universities should strive to increase service-learning offerings for students and so learners can receive the benefits associated with service learning.

Additionally, this research highlights the need to advocate for the field of kinesiology to affirm nationally identified competencies for students. These competencies should include applied and field-based experiences such as service-learning, internships, and academically-
based community-service, in order for students to practice and enhance the identified competencies. Furthermore, it is recommended that kinesiology students complete an assessment of said competencies as they enter their undergraduate programs, and a post-assessment upon completion of their degree, to see if and how well the undergraduate program facilitated the development of skills. These assessments should then be compared to pre and post-assessments taken from students in service-learning courses. This quantitative data could help illustrate the effectiveness of service-learning courses in facilitating the enhancement of the identified competencies.

In order to successfully implement service-learning programs, colleges and universities need resources such as internal funding mechanisms such as grants, in order to carry out service-learning programs. These grants should help provide incentive programs for faculty to implement service-learning programs, since it takes a significant amount of time to create and implement the courses. Additionally, these grants should fund faculty development focused on learning the fundamentals of service-learning, curriculum pedagogy, and implementation methodologies. Moreover, community partners also need to be cultivated, expanded and rewarded for their participation in service-learning. Although the main reward for community partners is having college students come to a campus and implement programs within their area of expertise, for some community partners, more is needed. Small grants, stipends, or donations of needed equipment could help encourage participation from community partners. Community partner cultivation takes time and needs a faculty leader to accomplish this. Reassigned time or financial support to accomplish this collaboration.

Furthermore, university-wide service-learning committees or communities should be offered to begin and further the conversation about increasing service-learning programs across
campuses and disciplines. The CSU is the largest university system in the country, and holds a powerful position to standardize and implement a multi-campus, evidence-based service-learning program that can reach 23 campuses across the state. This includes support from college deans in regards to the implementation of service-learning programs, as there needs to be a shared vision for service-learning as well as value placed on service-learning courses. Administrators across campuses must understand how service-learning differs from other experiences, such as internships, since service-learning encompasses specific course content competencies while internships provide broader, program-based ones. Additionally, campus career centers should be informed of the career and employability skills that have been found to be cultivated and developed from service-learning courses as evidenced in current research. This can direct career centers on what to highlight for mock employer interviews, resume writing, and portfolio building. Future employers and internship sites should also be educated on the value that a service-learning prepared student provides. This could even result in service-learning students receiving priority placement with internships as they have a proven history of working in the field.

It would also be beneficial to provide training to the teachers at the community agencies so they are better prepared to assist and support the students when they are at the site, and are more aware of the expectations of the students while providing service. Furthermore, providing a checklist to the teachers during orientation to ensure they cover everything the students would need to know prior to beginning activities would provide a more complete orientation experience for the students.
For any subject matter within a university, programs should consider requiring at least one service-learning course to increase a student’s career-readiness competencies. In addition, service-learning research discusses how effective service-learning courses results in improved grades, attendance and retention in schools. Therefore, universities that have a low retention and graduation rate can increase their retention and decrease the length of time to graduation by increasing service-learning offerings. This would be especially beneficial for a university such as CSUN, who has one of the lowest retention and graduation rates in the entire CSU. Lastly, when a community partners with a campus, a strong sense of community begins to emerge. This is especially important in communities that struggle financially, and have limited financial resources to attain such services. These communities begin to see universities as a place of support, service, and partnership. With this, the bigger picture of the community-based aspect of service-learning begins to emerge, which signifies a significant distinction between other forms of experiential learning.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should be directed at further exploration of service-learning courses. Based on stories shared by the participants in this study, the quality of service-learning courses seemed to play a critical role in the experiences that students had, and the outcomes they attained. Therefore, it is important to compare and contrast courses of different quality, and parcel out results based on the characteristics of those courses. Additionally, since the sample size of the current study was quite small, conducting quantitative research on a larger population would provide more robust information about the effectiveness of service-learning enhancing employability competencies.
Furthermore, since a significant implication of this research study is to increase opportunities for students to take service-learning courses, factors that promote faculty buy-in also warrants investigation. This is important to research because including service-learning in a course is profoundly reliant upon the initiative of the faculty to create and implement those courses. Designing and implementing a service-learning course takes a considerable amount of effort, and the time commitment is typically seen as a barrier for professors designing new service-learning courses. Additionally, future research with faculty should also focus on their perspectives about service-learning. It is important to understand and characterize faculty perceptions and preferences about service-learning to ensure their views and opinions on it do not serve as an impediment to its implementation.

Another area of future research should focus on the pedagogical curriculum of service-learning and design methodologies. Although this research shows that service-learning can be used as a means to enhance employability skills, it does not inform us of the pedagogical curriculum and design methodologies that best support the enhancement of those skills. Accumulation of this type of research can result in evidence-based practices which provide instructors with instructional procedures of the practices that produce positive outcomes for students, which in this case would be the enhancement of employability skills.

Lastly, future research should also be done with service-learning community partners and employers to triangulate all findings into a 360-degree view of ideal competencies for students to obtain upon completion of their undergraduate degrees. Community partners should be researched to explore which employability competencies they believe are enhanced in students as a result of their participation in service-learning. Their observations should then be compared against the student’s perception to confirm congruency between the two. To complete the
comprehensive view of employability competencies, research should also be conducted with employers within kinesiology professions, such as physical therapists and individuals in the fitness industry, to identify and confirm specific competencies needed by graduates entering into those career fields.

**Concluding Statement**

The results of this study indicate that undergraduate kinesiology students are able to enhance their employability skills through their participation in a service-learning program. This is important because the majority of employers feel, upon completion of an undergraduate degree, that recent college graduates are not well prepared for their careers (Jaschik, 2015). The lack of readiness to enter a career by college graduates creates a workforce-readiness gap indicating inadequate career preparation for students in higher education (Finch et al., 2013; Rateau et al., 2015; Soares & Perna, 2014). In order to close this gap, education practices that allow students to better develop employability competencies should be more-widely integrated into higher education. Service-learning appears to be one type of educational practice that enhances employability skills. If service-learning courses were more widely-available, and a greater number of students could engage in this type of learning, the workforce-readiness gap could ultimately be reduced as more and more students develop employability competencies through their participation in service-learning.
References


Appendix A: Research Invitation

E-mail invitation letter

The following message is sent on behalf of Rebecca Pena:

Dear __________________________,

I am writing you to invite you to participate in a dissertation study that I am conducting as a doctoral candidate at California State University, Northridge. My study explores how your participation in the motor development service-learning program (KIN 478) may have possibly helped prepare you for a career in a kinesiology-related field.

As a part of the study, I am conducting one-on-one, confidential interviews with students who have completed this course within the past two semesters. I am conducting interviews to obtain student’s opinion on how well the service-program prepares individuals for their careers, as well as what aspects of the course could be modified to better enhance employability skills. Each interview should last approximately 45 minutes to one hour. Responses used in my dissertation will remain confidential, and your name will not appear in the study. Additionally, at the completion of the interview, you will be given a $20 Starbucks card for compensation for your participation in this study.

If you would like to participate, please contact me by e-mail at rebecca.pena.783@my.csun.edu or office phone (818) 677-7519. Your participation in this study is voluntary, and your decision to participate, or not participate, will not affect any aspect of your academic career.
Appendix B: Interview Guide

Service-Learning and Employability Skills
Interview Guide

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:
Hello. Thank you for taking time out of your schedule to talk with me today. Before we begin the interview session, I would like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research, and let me know if you have any questions about your right to participate. I want to remind you that your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may decide at any point to withdraw from the study without penalty.

Purpose of the interview:
This interview is intended to collect information for a dissertation research study that examines how the motor development service-learning program you recently completed may have helped to enhance skills you will use in a kinesiology-related career.

Timing:
Today’s interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Are there any questions you have for me before we get started?

II. Interview Session: Main Questions

- Can you describe your service-learning experience, including the site you provided service at, the age group of their children you worked with, and general information about the group of students you partnered with?
  - Can you describe how you prepared to work with the children every week?
  - How did you create your lesson plans and how did you and your team members divide up the work to prepare a comprehensive lesson every week?
  - Can you describe and provide examples of how the children responded to you, your team members, and the activities you did with them?
  - Can you describe a challenging experience you had during the service-learning experience and how it was resolved?
  - Please share what successes you or you and your team experienced from the service-learning project.

- What types of skills do you think you need to be successful in a kinesiology-related career field?
  - Do you feel the service-learning project helped you to develop or enhance any of those skills you just named? How so? Can you provide an example?

- Employability skills are defined as non-technical skills such as teamwork, leadership, written and verbal communication, and adaptability. Do you think the service-learning project helped you to develop any of these soft-skills? Why or why not?
Problem-solving skills means you have the ability to manage difficult and unforeseen situations. Do you feel the service-learning project helped to develop this skill? If so, can you provide an example of how?

Written and verbal communication are also important skills to graduate with, can you explain if you feel the service-learning project helped to develop these two types of communication skills and why?

Teamwork is the ability for students to work collaboratively in groups. Do you think this project helped to develop your teamwork skills? Why or why not?

Do you feel the service-learning project helped to enhance your leadership skills? If so, can you explain how?

Did service-learning help in a career decision in anyway? Examples include solidifying a population to work with, or type of movement skills you would like to focus on?

Adaptability refers to one’s ability to adjust to the various situations and circumstances one will be confronted with. Do you feel you have become more adaptable as a consequence of this project? If so, explain how.

The ability to analyze information is an analytical skill that allows individuals to solve problems. Do you think the service-learning project helped to develop this skill? Can you explain how?

Closing Questions

Before we conclude, I would like give you an opportunity to share anything about your experience in the motor development service-learning program that you have not already been able to say. Have you shared everything that is significant about this experience with me? If there is anything else that comes to mind, please contact me and share whatever else you feel would be important or helpful for me to know.

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you again for participating in this interview. I appreciate your time and sharing your stories with me. I also want to reiterate that everything you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to give you an opportunity to ask any questions that you have about this interview. I will contact you within the next 30 days with a transcript of this interview for you to review for accuracy of the information you shared with me.
Appendix C: Informed Consent

California State University, Northridge
CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

Service-Learning and the Enhancement of Employability Skills in Undergraduate Kinesiology Students

You are being asked to participate in a research study, Service-Learning and the Enhancement of Employability Skills in Undergraduate Kinesiology Students a study conducted by Rebecca Pena as part of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree in Educational Leadership at CSUN. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:
Rebecca Pena, M.S
Department of Kinesiology
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330- 8287
(818) 677-7519
Rebecca.pena.783@my.csun.edu

Faculty Advisor:
Sloane Burke, Ph.D., MCHES
Department of Health Science
18111 Nordhoff St.
Northridge, CA 91330- 8285
(818) 677-2997
Sloane.burke@csun.edu
PURPOSE OF STUDY
The purpose of this research study is to understand the influence of service-learning on the enhancement of employability competencies for undergraduate students studying kinesiology.

SUBJECTS
Inclusion Requirements
You are eligible to participate in this study if you 1) are a student who is currently majoring in kinesiology at CSUN or has a bachelor’s degree in Kinesiology from CSUN; 2) completed at least 60 semester units prior to being selected, 3) completed the motor development service-learning program during Fall 2018 or Spring 2019.

Time Commitment
This study will involve approximately 45-60 minutes of your time over the course of one day.

PROCEDURES
The following procedures will occur: You will complete a 45-60 minute in person interview about your previous participation in the motor development service-learning course.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS
The possible risks and discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include: minor emotional risks during the interview and issues of privacy. For example, some questions may make you feel uncomfortable, uneasy, or embarrassed. Additionally, there is a small risk that people who are not connected with this study will learn your identity or other personal information. To mitigate the risks associated with this study, you may choose not to answer any question that makes you feel uncomfortable, or stop the interview all together if it makes you embarrassed, uncomfortable, or uneasy. To mitigate any issues of privacy, the interview location will be private and secured. Additionally, the audio recordings will be deleted immediately after they are transcribed, and your name will be replaced with a participant code on the transcripts, and any results that are reported.

BENEFITS
Subject Benefits
You may not directly benefit from participation in this study.

Benefits to Others or Society
Your time and feedback from this interview will serve to further research in service-learning’s role in developing college student’s employability skills.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION
The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT
Compensation for Participation
You will receive a $20 Starbucks gift card for your participation in this study.
WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES
You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.** The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

CONFIDENTIALITY
**Subject Identifiable Data**
All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

**Data Storage**
All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. The audio recordings will also be stored on a password protected personal mobile device owned by the researcher, then transcribed and erased as soon as possible.

**Data Access**
The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

**Data Retention**
The researchers intend to keep the research data for approximately 5 years and then it will be destroyed by permanently deleting all digital files and shredding any paper documents.

**Mandated Reporting**
Under California law, the researcher is required to report known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information in the course of conducting this study, she may be required to report it to the authorities.

**IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS**
If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research and Sponsored Programs office, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, by phone at (818) 677-2901 or email at irb@csun.edu.
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT
You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.

___ I agree to be audio recorded

___ I do not wish to be audio recorded

_________________________________________  __________________
Participant Signature                          Date

______________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

_________________________________________  __________________
Researcher Signature                           Date

______________________________________________
Printed Name of Researcher
Appendix D: Motor Behavior Service-Learning Syllabus
Department of Kinesiology

KIN 478 – Application of Motor Behavior Principles

Catalog Description

Corequisite: KIN 477. Course designed for students to use a life span perspective to demonstrate how to design, implement, and assess motor skill programs for any group of individuals regardless of age, developmental level, or movement task.

Prerequisite: KIN 377. Course designed to examine theoretical and applied foundations for the learning of motor skills. Specific emphasis is placed on the interpretation of this knowledge for structuring the learning environment.

Course Description

The most unique aspect of this course is the linking of service with learning, also called community service-learning. Community service-learning is the opportunity to integrate the abstract elements of an academic course with concrete examples experienced beyond our campus. To accomplish the learning objectives of this course, you will participate in a project that integrates motor behavior content while addressing a need identified by a community agency. This unique experience will help you to develop skills in observing movement behaviors, gathering data, analyzing results, and comparing results to the existing body of knowledge.

Textbooks

Required readings will be posted on Canvas. In addition, you will need your textbooks from KIN 377 and KIN 477 as supplements to the course. These textbooks are listed below. If you do not own these textbooks, use equivalent books available from the Oviatt Library.


Course Objectives

At the completion of this course, you will be able to:

Understand and Apply Knowledge Related to Motor Behavior
12. Apply motor behavior concepts, theories, and models during the planning and implementation of a community project.
13. Examine whether motor performance changes are due to deliberate practice or age-related factors.
14. Apply a quantitative or qualitative assessment of movement skills in a diverse population, including various age groups, healthy individuals, or individuals with disabilities or special needs, via observing digital records or real time performance.
15. Recognize that a learner’s solution to a movement challenge is a unique coordination pattern.
16. Apply an ecological perspective to encourage change in motor performance while designing developmentally appropriate movement activities for a specific population, including various age groups, healthy individuals, or individuals with disabilities or special needs.
17. Evaluate the developmental appropriateness of movement activities and then modify the practice conditions of these activities to better suit the learner.
18. Identify appropriate measures (product and process) for documenting motor performance changes over time.
19. Define and distinguish between the terms learning and performance.
20. Structure a physical practice environment by applying different ways that we learn skills, and provide appropriate feedback to enhance motor performance and learning.
21. Identify and use ways to increase physical activity levels of the population served.
22. Plan task variations such that variability in practice enhances motor control and learning.

Develop Inter- and Intra-Personal Learning
3. Apply effective communication techniques for working with your peers and community agency.
4. Recognize the importance of effective communication.
5. Explore one’s own personal values and ethics.

Develop Community Awareness and Practice Community Engagement
1. Demonstrate an understanding about a particular community or population in the community.
2. Apply effective problem solving and thoughtful decision-making skills in a community setting.

Demonstrate a Commitment to Life-long Learning
1. Engage in new experiences and assume unfamiliar roles, accepting challenges in the process.
2. Extract meaning from an experience by engaging in effective self-reflection.

Applied Course Content
I. Introduction to Community Service-Learning: What and Why
II. Developmental Appropriateness
III. Application of Motor Behavior Terminology, Theories, Models
IV. Observing and Assessing Movement Performance and Learning
V. Examining Biological, Psychosocial, and Socio-cultural Factors that Influence Movement Performance versus Learning
VI. Classifying Skills
VII. Stages of Skill Acquisition
VIII. Ways We Learn Skills
IX. Understanding How We Control Movements
Student Performance Evaluation

Service Components

5% Readiness

Learning is not a spectator sport. Fundamentally, the responsibility to learn is yours and yours alone. For learning to happen in any course, you must take an active role in the process. You being actively engaged in your learning is advocated by discoveries made in neuroscience about how the human brain learns. For example, we know that “the dendrites of our brain cells only grow when the brain is actively engaged and the neuron-networks formed in our brains only stay connected when they are used repeatedly” (Ratey, 2002, pg. 19). To enhance this neural process, you are expected to come to class “prepared” and “ready” to learn, which requires you “read and study” the assigned reading “before” you walk through the door. During class time, we don’t merely “cover” content, which means I talk less to get you to talk more about what you have read, its meaning, and how it relates to learning and developing movement skills.

Your “readiness” for class and your active engagement in your learning are assessed via Learning Tasks (some out-of-class and some in-class). For example, some Learning Tasks require you to write a response with detailed supporting evidence. Your performance on these types of Learning Tasks is evaluated using a Learning Task Rubric. This rubric allows me to assess how accurately you interpret the content of the course and how you are able to support what you say with evidence (information, facts) from the reading. Other Learning Tasks are evaluated solely on the accuracy of your response.

Learning Tasks that are missed cannot be made up. An out-of-class Learning Task is due on the date specified in the Tentative Course Sequence. Out-of-class Learning Tasks cannot be emailed to the instructor; therefore, if you anticipate missing class, and an out-of-class Learning Task is due, deliver your assignment to one of your peers and kindly ask him, or her, to submit your assignment in class on the day it is due.

5% TB Test Results, Immunization records (Associated Student Site Only), Online Student Service-Learning Plan & Agreement, Student Time Sheet (mid-semester check), Student Time Sheet (final) submitted on the due date indicated in the course sequence.

For those at the Associated Student Site: To participate in this service-learning course, you must turn in immunization records that show you have been immunized from pertussis (whooping cough) and measles. These are typically done as a part of your childhood vaccines. Any religious reasons for not getting vaccinated should be discussed with the instructor immediately. Also, if immunization is not safe for you, please also see the instructor for further direction.

15% 20 Service-Learning Hours (minimum) – see Course Attendance Policy
Learning Components

Academic credit in this course is not awarded for simply “doing a service” but rather for demonstrating the knowledge and abilities you have acquired from your service-learning project. Therefore, the purpose of your project is for you to apply motor behavior principles and to learn more about yourself. The extent and quality of your learning is evaluated via three Reflections, a final Synopsis Paper, and eight Activity Plans. Reflections and the Synopsis Paper must be submitted through Canvas (Turnitin) by their respective deadlines. Conversely, hard copies of Activity Plans are submitted directly to your lab instructor/site supervisor on respective due dates. Absolutely, NO assignments are accepted through email, therefore, plan accordingly.

30% Reflections (3)
15% Synopsis of Academic Learning
20% Activity Plans (4)
10% Modified Activity Plans (4)

Grading Scale: A plus/minus A-F letter grading system is used in this course.

A 93-100  B+ 88-89  B- 80-82  C 73-77  D+ 68-69  D- 60-62
A- 90-92  B 83-87  C+ 78-79  C- 70-72  D 63-67  F <60

Course Attendance Policy

20 Service-Learning Hours (minimum of 2 hours per week for 10 service weeks) – For your community project, you are expected to complete a minimum of 20 service hours. You are expected to submit a detailed Student Time Sheet(s) of your service hours on the respective due dates. Your time sheet should include a log of any activities (and time) related to your project, e.g. reading articles, looking for activity ideas, preparing your activity plans, traveling from campus to your service site and back to campus, on-site participation, writing your reflections, communicating with your team, etc. Attendance (on-site participation) is critical, especially on service dates when you are working at your community site. Each service day is worth 15 points, for an accumulation of 150 points. Absences, coming late, or leaving early on service days are heavily penalized 5 points because we have clients depending on you.

Student with Disabilities

This instructor, in conjunction with California State University, is committed to upholding and maintaining all aspects of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. If you are a student with a disability and wish to request accommodations, please contact the office of Students with Disabilities Resources located in 110 Student Services Building, or call (818) 677-2684 for an appointment. Any information regarding your disability will remain confidential. Because many accommodations require early planning, requests for accommodations should be made as early as possible. Any requests for accommodations will be reviewed in a timely manner to determine their appropriateness to this setting.
Statement of Cheating and Plagiarism

Each student is expected to be familiar with, and abide by, the conditions of student conduct, as presented in the university Catalog, with emphasis on sections entitled, Student Conduct Code, Academic Dishonesty, Faculty Policy on Academic Dishonesty, and Penalties. Any student engaging in academic dishonesty (e.g., cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, plagiarism) is subject to discipline, which may include a failing grade in the course, and may also be subject to more severe discipline by the University.

Classroom Climate

Professionalism and courteous conduct contributes to your learning and the learning of others. Courteous conduct includes showing respect for others’ points of view and contributions. Discourteous conduct, on the other hand, distracts from your learning and the learning of others. Conduct that distracts from learning includes checking your phone for messages, engaging in side-bar conversations not related to course content, studying for other courses while in class, and using a laptop or tablet for actions unrelated to our class.

Course Sequence

There is a course sequence that supplements this syllabus. The sequence is a tentative outline of the topics and assignments for this semester. In most instances, the sequence of the course schedule is followed; however, due to extenuating circumstances, it is sometimes necessary for the instructor to make changes in either the schedule or assignments. It is your responsibility to know and follow the written guidance given in this syllabus and the course sequence.

Earthquake Emergency Response

In the event of an earthquake, it is important that we, as a class, are prepared to respond appropriately. First, and foremost, remain in the classroom. Immediately “duck, cover, and hold.” In most cases, we will shelter “in place” for a time. Do not use your cell phone during this time.

Sexual Misconduct Disclosures and Maintaining a Respectful Learning Environment

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining a respectful space to express their opinions. Professional courtesy and consideration for our classroom community are especially important with respect to topics dealing with differences in race, color, gender and gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, disability, and age.

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help maintain a respectful learning environment on our campus. In the event that you choose to write, speak or otherwise disclose about having experienced sexual misconduct/sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking and specify that this violence occurred while you or the perpetrator were a student, federal and state laws require that I, as a “responsible employee,” notify our campus Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator will
contact you to inform you of your rights and options as a survivor and connect you with support resources, including possibilities for holding accountable the person who harmed you. Know that you will not be forced to share information and your level of involvement will be your choice.
Appendix E: The Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 9184)