Service Learning and Social Justice: A Qualitative Study of International Service Learning and Students' Perceptions of Social Inequality

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SERVICE LEARNING AND SOCIAL JUSTICE:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING
AND STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY

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Thesis

Department of Counseling & Student Development
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL

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Sara Boro

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DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to everyone who works with or volunteers at the Newman Catholic Center. I would like to especially thank Roy Lanham and Doris Nordin for opening their hearts and sharing their passion for life and for service with all of the students at EIU and the Charleston community members. Without your continued love and support, this thesis would have never occurred. The time I spent as an undergraduate working with Amigos and Friends and the Fair Trade Global Justice Coalition helped me to develop into the person I am today. So Roy Lanham, Doris Nordin and the entire Newman Community, this is for you.
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ABSTRACT

Using qualitative methodology the researcher analyzed the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change. Overall participants were impacted by their experience in Haiti. Participants articulated a deeper awareness and understanding of social inequality and of their own privilege. Participants also communicated a commitment to continue service, change their career plans and change their lifestyles. Student development occurred in three phases including pre-departure, experience, and re-entry. Engaged preparation, reflection, consequential connection, and human connection were themes found to be very important components of this international service learning experience. The researcher presents a model, which could serve as a starting point to creating meaningful student experiences that have a life-long impact.
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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Nine hundred million people in this world do not have enough to eat, 1.7 billion people lack access to clean water, and 1.4 billion people in developing countries live on less than $1.25 per day (Hunger Project, n.d.). For example, every five seconds a child dies of hunger related diseases; that means in the time it has taken to read these last few sentences, three children have died, children who were brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, children who never got the chance to grow up (Hunger Project). These are facts that for some people may be shocking, but for most people present a challenge about how to reach out and change what appear to be overwhelming problems.

One way to encourage meaningful outreach is through education. Higher education institutions have the unique opportunity to both make aware and promote civic responsibility. Institutions can encourage and support involvement in civic activities in the community and/or abroad thus creating socially responsible students who have a heightened awareness and desire to impact social and economic inequalities. For this reason, the mission statement of many higher education institutions emphasizes educating its students to become good citizens (Morphew & Hartley, 1964). One of the ways that higher education institutions foster the development of their students is by creating service-learning programs.

The development of a relationship between students and the community, which can lead to social change, can be fostered through service learning. Cipole (2010) defined service learning as a “learning strategy in which students have leadership roles in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet real needs in the community” (p. 4).
Cipole believed that service should be integrated into students' academic studies with structured time to research, reflect, discuss and connect their experiences to their learning and their worldview. The concept of service learning is not a new one. In fact, it reaches back to the 1860s during the land grant movement and John Dewey's philosophical pragmatism during the early decades of the twentieth century (Stanton, Giles, Cruz &., 1999). The goal of service learning is to connect students to their community in addition to instilling a sense of active citizenship. In order for service learning to be successful, critical analysis, reflection and action must be included (Einfeld & Collins, 2008).

There are various ways to manage service learning for students such as course requirements, University sponsored events or through Registered Student Organizations (RSO). One such RSO is the Haiti Connection, part of the Newman Catholic Church's Student Volunteer Center (SVC). It offers a variety of volunteer opportunities for students. The Newman Catholic Center is a registered student organization at a mid-size public comprehensive university in the Midwest. The Haiti Connection at this university was founded in January 1989. This church-based organization "is committed to raising awareness and funds to eliminate injustices that impact the people of the third world. Their direct mission is to communities in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere" (Building Christian community, n.d.). Each year, the Haiti Connection sponsors two immersion service-learning trips to Haiti, in December and May, where students work on various established projects.

**Purpose of the Present Study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social
injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change. Research has shown that experience, reflection and reciprocity are key aspects of service learning (Einfeld & Collins, 2008). The Haiti Connection service trips are designed to foster socially responsible citizens by educating students about the issues and holding daily reflections during the experience. Therefore the following research questions will be asked (Einfeld & Collins, 2008):

1. After participating in the Haiti service trip, what are the participants’ understandings of social inequality?
2. After participating in Haiti service trips, what are the participants’ attitudes, values, and beliefs toward social justice?
3. After participating in the Haiti service trips, what are the participants’ perceptions on commitment to continuing service?
4. What are the participants overall perceptions of the Haiti service trip?

Significance of the Present Study

According to Cuban and Anderson (2007), there has historically been a small body of literature connecting service learning with social justice. Also, scholars have reported that only 1% of all service-learning programs conceptualize service through a justice-oriented lens (Boyle-Baise, Brown, Hsu, Jones, Prakash, Rausch, Vitols, & Wahlquist, 2006). The mission of many higher education institutions in the United States mentions “service” as one of the priorities of the university (Morphew & Hartley, 1964). Since service is important to many universities, service-learning programs should be evaluated on their effectiveness in fostering student development. If the Haiti Connection service trips are effective in creating socially responsible students, more programs should
be implemented to reflect some of the techniques used by the Haiti Connection to foster student development.

Limitations

As with any qualitative study, some limitations have been identified. First, the group of students who went on the trip included students who have already been to Haiti and are going for a second time. Thus, the students’ opinions and reflections may differentiate substantially from those students who are going for the first time. Second, many of the students who go to Haiti have been actively participating in the Haiti Connection and may already feel a greater desire for social change. The students who are already involved in Haiti Connection will be impacted differently by a service-learning experience than the majority of the general student body who do not participate in Haiti Connection. Finally, in a study where the researcher is an instrument (i.e. conducting interviews) there is always an opportunity for researchers bias.

Definition of Terms

**International Service Learning.** “A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others, and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of host country, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally, and globally” (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p. 19).

**Justice-Learning.** “A theoretical framework that more closely links and aligns service-learning and social justice education” (Butin, 2007, p. 178).
Service Learning. “a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5).

Social Justice Education. Social justice, like service learning, has several different working definitions. For the purpose of this study, I will refer to social justice as identifying social inequality and working toward equality for all society.

Three Types of Citizenship. Westheimer and Kahne conceptualize three types of citizenship to determine what kind of citizen was needed to promote a democratic society:

Personally responsible citizen. “one who acts responsibly in his/her community by, for example, picking up litter, recycling, obeying laws, and staying out of debt” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 3).

Participatory citizen. “one who actively participates in the civic affairs and social life of the community at the local, state and national levels” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 4).

Justice oriented citizen. “one who seeks to improve society by critically analyzing and addressing social issues and injustices” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 4). For the purposes of the present study, this type of citizenship will be used.

Summary

Social inequality exists throughout the world. Although many people may be aware of these inequalities, they do not know what to do to solve these problems. Higher
education institutions have the unique opportunity to fulfill its mission by raising student awareness and promoting a democratic society that encourages and supports involvement in civic activities in the community. The Haiti Connection service trips are one way that a mid-size public university in the Midwest tries to educate its students through international service learning. Research has shown that international service learning can have a great impact on students who participate. The present study will help identify the overall perceptions of participants regarding the impact the service trip to Haiti has on their understanding of social inequality.
CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

The purpose of this study is to explore the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change. The review of literature is organized under the following headings: service-learning, social justice, justice-learning, moral development, international service learning, and the Haiti Connection.

Service Learning

Universities have built service learning into their mission statements for many years. In 1964, Morphew and Hartley did a thematic analysis of mission statements of 300 randomly selected U.S. four-year colleges and universities. They found that there is a "prevalence of elements related specifically to "service" either by the institution or through the inclusion of civic values in students" (Morphew & Hartley, p. 462). They later found that the definition of service varied between public and private institutions. Public institutions tended to define service around "civic duty" and "civic engagement" where graduates stay in state, vote and pay taxes as responsible citizens. Private institutions mission statements used terms like "social challenges" and "transformation" suggesting quite a different definition of service than their public counterpart.

Service learning is not a new concept. In the 1960s and early 1970s there was a paradigm shift in the relationship between communities and college campuses (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999). Uprisings and the war on poverty drew attention to the national social problems at the time. Students began to engage in movements to make a social
change and become involved with the community. The earliest definition of service learning was “the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (Stanton, Giles & Cruz, p. 2).

Since the purpose of service learning is student development, research has been done to see whether service-learning programs are actually fulfilling their mission in creating more socially aware students. One way that service learning is introduced at many universities is through first year success courses. Mayhew and Engberg (2011) examined whether first year courses that integrated a service-learning component actually contributed to the student’s sense of civic responsibility. Researchers conducted a longitudinal study of students who were enrolled in first year success courses. Results suggested that there were significant posttest differences for charitable responsibility. Students who were enrolled in the service-learning courses reported significantly higher average scores on charitable responsibility than those enrolled in non service-learning course \(p < .01\). The researchers concluded that the service-learning component was effective for spurring developmental gains for students in charitable responsibility, but not social justice.

Researchers have also identified several important components of service learning. In order for service-learning programs to be successful, it is important to recognize the difference between students who grew up in a rural midwestern town and a student from Los Angeles and someone who might be looking through the invisible lens of white privilege (Cone & Harris, 1996; Fuentes, Chanthontip & Rios, 2010). Cone and Harris also argued that the experience should be distinct from students’ everyday experiences so they are challenged to broaden their perspectives on the world. Finally,
Cone and Harris concluded that students' service learning is not about how much service they have done or how well they have done that service. Instead the goal is to see an increased ability of students to engage in critical discourse at an abstract conceptual level.

Researchers have identified that reflection is an important component of any service learning experience (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Brandt & Manley, 2002; Butin, 2007; Cone & Harris, 1996; Gonzalez, 2009; Prentice, 2007). Rogers (2001) defined reflection as a process that allows the learner to "integrate the understanding gained into one's experience in order to enable better choices or actions in the future as well as enhance one's overall effectiveness" (p. 41). Reflection is most effective when an educator or mentor is there to guide the student (Cone & Harris, 1996).

Ash and Clayton (2004) described a reflection model that pushes students beyond superficial interpretations of complex issues and facilitates academic mastery, personal growth, civic engagement, critical thinking, and the meaningful demonstration of learning. The reflection framework developed by Ash and Clayton includes three general phases: objective description of the experience, analysis in accordance with relevant categories of learning, and articulation of learning outcomes. The articulated learning phase "establishes a foundation for learners to carry the results of the reflection process forward beyond the immediate experience, improving the quality of future learning and of future experience" (p. 142). Ash and Clayton conclude that articulated learning process provides evidence of student learning outcomes, it can help meet the growing demand for accountability in higher education, which requires institutions to identify and demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies they want students to have as a result of their educational experience.
Bringle and Hatcher (1996) developed a model for implementing and institutionalizing service learning within higher education. The model was developed around the establishment of an Office of Service Learning at Purdue University. The resulting model, the Comprehensive Action Plan for Service Learning (CAPSL), identified four constituencies on which a program for service learning needs to focus its principle activities: institution, faculty, students, and community. Although this is not an exhaustive list of constituencies to be considered, Bringle and Hatcher argued they must be included for the initial efforts of implementing a service-learning program to be successful.

**Social Justice**

There are several service learning paradigms including charity, civic education, project, communitarianism, and social justice (Einfeld & Collins, 2008). For the purposes of this study, the social justice paradigm will be used. In contrast with the charity paradigm, the social change paradigm goes a step further than the simple act of volunteering in a soup kitchen. In this model, students are encouraged to think critically about why such poverty exists and examine the systematic inequalities that continue to marginalize and oppress the poor (Einfeld & Collins). According to the findings of Morphew and Hartley (1964), the mission statements of many private institutions tend to be classified under the social justice paradigm so that students are encouraged and hopefully motivated to make social change.

Previous research has shown evidence of the difficulties facing educators who pursue a social justice focus (Fuentes, Chanthonhip & Rios, 2010). One challenge that faces institutions that focus on social justice is that many students entering a college or
university do not have much experience with diversity prior to their arrival on campus and are looking through the invisible lens of white privilege. Fuentes, Chanthonthip and Rios described the efforts to introduce students in a first-year course at a university to social justice principles. The goal of this course was to prepare students for future social activism. Researchers conducted a qualitative study to understand how participants in this course made sense of what they were learning with respect to social justice. The findings of the study suggest that effective social justice education can be achieved. Students showed a new awareness of social justice themes like equality and fairness. The data suggested a need for social justice educators to provide students with strategies to take action and give them a sense of personal agency.

Justice Learning

There has historically been a small body of literature connecting service learning with social justice (Cuban & Anderson, 2007; Butin, 2007; Boyle-Baise et al., 2006). In fact, scholars have reported that only 1% of all service-learning programs conceptualize service through a justice-oriented lens (Boyle-Baise et al.) and that Catholic universities are well positioned to introduce service learning in this way. As Morphew and Hartley (1964) discovered through their thematic analysis of mission statements of public and private universities, private institutions mission statements used terms like “social challenges” and “transformation” suggesting a social justice conceptualization.

Butin (2007) strived to create a linkage between service-learning and social justice education that strengthened experiential learning toward justice. Butin argued that although both pedagogies have many commonalities, the previous overlapping has been minimal. Butin defined service learning as “the linkage of academic work with
community based engagement within a framework respect, reciprocity, relevance and reflection” (pg. 177) and social justice education as “grounded in the civil rights era and aligned with similar project within intergroup and multicultural education, feminist pedagogy, and anti-oppressive education (pg. 178). Butin argued that the immersive, consequential, and sustained nature of a program allows for students to have a transformative experience. The importance of examination and reflection are highlighted as very important aspects of justice learning.

In their case study, Cuban and Anderson (2011) attempted to address the “why and how” of the process of institutionalizing service learning with a social justice perspective at Seattle University, a Jesuit University. The authors developed four themes about institutionalizing service learning with a social justice perspective: social justice worldview, attention to developmental processes, blended outcomes, and recognition of fragile boundaries. In order to successfully institutionalize social justice oriented service learning, a social justice worldview that permeates all aspects of university programs, must be adopted. Researchers also found that applying a developmental lens to the processes of service learning yielded important information. It is also important to realize that not all service-learning participants will have the same outcomes and develop the same competencies. Finally, researchers found it was important to recognize the fragile boundaries that exist between the university and the organizations that they work with.

In 2004, Westheimer and Kahne called attention to the spectrum of ideas represented in education programs about what good citizenship is and what good citizens do. Their arguments derived from analyzing both democratic theory and completing a two-year study of educational programs that aim to promote democracy. The authors
label three different versions of what it means to be a “good” citizen—personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented. The personally responsible citizen acts responsibly in his/her community by, for example, picking up trash, giving blood or recycling. The participatory citizen actively participates in the civic affairs and social life of the community at the local, state and national levels. Finally, the justice oriented citizen try to understand and analyze the interplay of social economic and political forces. Prentice (2007) found that students who had increased exposure to community issues through multiple service learning experiences were more likely to be justice-oriented. If having two or more experiences with service learning helps a student to become more aware of how he or she can impact the community, then it makes sense to provide sustained and institution-wide support for courses that include this pedagogy. Prentice argued that faculty who integrate service learning into their courses should consider developing service learning projects and reflection activities to intentionally develop the various types of citizenship.

Einfeld and Collins (2008) qualitatively examined how participants in a long-term service-learning program described their understanding of and commitment to social justice, multicultural competence, and civic engagement. They found that although students had an increased awareness of social inequality, only some students reported a sense of empowerment. Some participants of the study reported an increased awareness of their own privilege in terms of economic status or other factors, an understanding of other cultures. Multicultural skills such as an increase in capacities for empathy, patience, attachment, trust and respect emerged from the interviews. Einfeld and Collins conclude that social justice education should not only encourage civic engagement, but also equip
students with the multicultural competence, understanding of systematic inequality, and empowerment to effectively pursue social justice.

Seider, Rabinowicz, and Gillmore (2011) conducted a survey to determine whether the SERVE Program at Ignatius University strengthened the public service motivation of participating undergraduate students by combining weekly community service with readings in philosophy and theology. On average, students who participated in the SERVE program demonstrated statistically larger increases in public service motivation \((p = 0.0007)\). Students who participated in SERVE also had a deeper sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of struggling fellow citizens. From the qualitative interviews researchers determined that the SERVE program had impacted their career aspirations, commitment to public service and understanding of what constitutes public service. These findings offer insights about the role that philosophy and theology service-learning experiences can play in fostering college students’ commitment to public service.

**International Service Learning**

As the world becomes more connected, international service learning has become more common. International service learning is different than local service learning in that international service learning is unique in the fact that you are experiencing another culture and that immersion adds a new dimension to the learning, understanding, and appreciation (Gonzalez, 2009). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) conceptualized international service learning (ISL) as the intersection of three different educational domains: service learning, study abroad and international education. The authors argue that ISL draws from the strengths of each of these educational domains and define ISL as
A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity, (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others, and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally (p. 19).

Researchers predicted that the development of ISL through good research will lead to an enhanced network of international partnerships, better academic work, the enhanced growth of colleges and universities as global citizens, greater productivity and satisfaction among professionals, and the development of cities, both locally and in other countries, as global communities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Researchers believe that international service learning can improve intercultural skills, more rapid language acquisition, better demonstration of democratic skills, deeper understanding of global issues, greater transformation of students’ lives and careers, more sensitivity to ethical issues, and more lifelong interest in global issues.

International service learning at its core, when done correctly, is about transformation or preparing future leaders who will transform the world by being transformed themselves (Gonzalez, 2009). Essential elements of international service-learning that are key factors in making programs successful include: orientation to local culture, engagement, collaboration, satisfies a need defined by the community, reflection on experiences, sustainability, and flexibility/variety (Gonzalez).
Research has found that alumni of international service learning programs thought of it as an important and fundamental event, one that transformed them in different and significant ways (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Tonkin and Quiroga found that international service-learning experience shaped or reaffirmed participants’ ideas of what is meaningful and important, and for most it constituted a metaphor that guided their search for graduate education and jobs. Pless, Maak, and Stahl (2011) found that international service learning participants were more tolerant, open to different cultural norms and perspectives, less judgmental, and more sensitive to local needs. A common theme that arose from survey results was that experiences triggered deeper reflection processes and greater awareness of self and the role of leaders as global citizens (Pless, Maak, & Stahl).

**Moral Development**

Kolb defined learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010, p. 138.) Kolb conceptualized learning in a four-stage cycle made up of concrete experience (CE), reflective observation (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE). For Kolb, learning requires abilities that are opposing in order to meet a “prehending” or grasping dimension as well as a transforming or processing dimension. Four different learning styles emerge to describe the way individuals grow in each of these processes. The four learning styles include convergers, divergers, accommodators, and assimilators. Convergers are inclined to be good problem solvers and divergers tend to be more imaginative and aware of meaning and values. Assimilators are good with inductive reasoning and accommodators are the doers.
Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) conceptualized moral development from a cognitive-developmental framework. In their model there is a sense of moral autonomy and more adequate conception of justice. They indicated that moral reasoning develops over time through a series of six stages and three levels. The final stage of morality development, the universal-ethical-principle orientation, and right is defined by universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons. Since people have the capacity to morally develop to stage six, it is argued that the goal of education should be to develop students toward more complex ways of reasoning.

**Haiti Connection**

Each year, the Haiti Connection at the university used in the current study sponsors two mission trips to Haiti, in December and May, where students work on various established projects such as reforestation, micro loans for women to start businesses, and clean water. Since 1989 the Director and Campus Minister of Newman Catholic Center has led over 45 mission trips to Haiti with a total of over 400 students. There are no requirements to go on this trip although student involvement in the Haiti Connection and an openness to change is strongly encouraged. Before the students leave for Haiti, they are required to read *Haiti In Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture and People Development as the Primary Aim of Development Work* as well as attend mandatory meetings throughout the semester prior to the trip. A mission trip can range anywhere from four to eighteen students although the typical group average is ten people.
Once the students arrive in Haiti, they are required to keep a journal and participate in daily reflection. The goal of this requirement is to help students critically reflect on their experience. While in Haiti students stay in Port-Au-Prince, Barasa and Gwo Mon/Dekosye. In Barasa, students share two large rooms and beds, which lack electricity and a place to shower.

Although there are no requirements for students upon their return to the United States, there is a hope that students will feel a sense of civic engagement and desire to bring about social change. Many students who have gone on this trip later returned for a longer period of time to continue working in Haiti. The mission of the Haiti Connection "is committed to raising awareness and funds to eliminate injustices that impact the people of the third world" (Building Christian community, n.d.) is reflective of the social justice paradigm.

Summary

In this chapter, literature reviewed described service-learning, social justice, justice-learning, moral development, international service learning, and the Haiti Connection. The current study sought to explore the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change.
CHAPTER III  

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change. The present chapter includes the design of the study, participants, site, data collection and treatment of data.

Design of the Study

The current study focused on the perception of students who participated in the Haiti Connection service trip in May 2012. The Haiti Connection at the university in the current study has been in existence since 1989 and made over 45 trips to Haiti. In order to better understand the participants’ experience, a phenomenological qualitative approach was utilized. Participants were interviewed in order to better understand their overall experience both in terms of the international nature of the trip and their experience with service learning as it relates to social justice. A phenomenologist is concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor’s own frame of reference (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975). According to Bogdan and Taylor (1975), “qualitative methodologies refer to research procedures which produce descriptive data: people’s own written or spoken words and observable behavior” (p. 4). Qualitative methodology allows the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of purposively selected participants from their perspective (Patten, 2000).
Participants

Participants were students who participated in the May 2012 service trip to Haiti through the Haiti Connection at a mid-size comprehensive public university in the Midwest. Students who are members of the Haiti Connection can choose to participate in service trips to Haiti in May and December. In May 2012, eight Eastern students participated in the service trip. During their time in Haiti, students were asked to keep a journal reflecting on their experiences while abroad.

The PI purposively selected five of the participants from the group to use in the sample. “The use of purposively selected participants requires the researcher to have access to particular types of participants who are especially likely to help in gaining an understanding of a phenomenon” (Patten, 2000, p. 29). Participants were selected based on their year in school, whether or not they had previously been to Haiti and their demographic information to ensure that the sample was representative of the population. Participants were each assigned a pseudonym that will be used for the purposes of this study.

Participant 1: Michael is a white male student majoring in accounting who participated in the service trip to Haiti after his junior year of school. He has had limited experience traveling outside of the United States including Jamaica, Mexico and the Grand Cayman Islands on vacation but had not participated in any type of service trip. His hometown is located in a rural setting of 4,500 with very little diversity. Michael was involved with the Haiti Connection for a year and a half before going to Haiti and has been the chair of several of the Haiti Connection committees.
Participant 2: Melissa is a white female student majoring in Sociology with a minor in Anthropology who participated in the service trip to Haiti after her sophomore year of school. She had no experience traveling internationally before going to Haiti but participated in service trips with her church in High School. Her hometown is located in a rural setting of 19,500 with little diversity. Melissa was involved with the Haiti Connection for a year before going to Haiti and was the chair of the Water for Life committee in the semester before going to Haiti.

Participant 3: Haley is a white female student majoring in Health Studies with a Public Health option and participated in the service trip to Haiti after her senior year of school. She had no experience traveling internationally before going to Haiti. However, she did participate in volunteer work throughout high school and participated in a service trip in college. Her hometown is located in a rural setting of 11,000 with little diversity. Haley was a member of the Haiti Connection for two and a half years before going to Haiti and was the chair of the Espwa Pou Demen.

Participant 4: Shannon described herself as a half Japanese, quarter Polish, and quarter German female student majoring in Career and Technical Education with an emphasis on Family Consumer Sciences and participated in the service trip to Haiti after her junior year of school. She has had extensive experience traveling and living outside of the United States in countries such as Korea and Japan but had not participated in any type of service trip. Her hometown is located in a suburban setting of 75,000 with a lot of diversity. Shannon was a member of the Haiti Connection for a year before going to Haiti and did not chair any programs.
Participant 5: Katie described herself as a half Mexican, half Caucasian, female student majoring in Recreational Therapy. She has had limited experience traveling outside of the United States such as Germany on vacation and to Mexico to visit family, but had not participated in any type of service trip. Her hometown is located in a rural setting of 7,500 with some diversity. Katie was a member of the Haiti Connection for one year before going to Haiti and was the chair of the Water for Life Program.

Site

The research for this project was conducted at a mid-sized, public mid-western rural university. Student enrollment at the university during the fall 2011 semester was 11,178 students, which includes 9,657 undergraduate and 1,451 graduate students. The specific breakdown of undergraduates includes 2,114 freshmen, 1,814 sophomores, 2,431 juniors 3,254 seniors. The rural surrounding community has a population of 21,710 residents. The university is located in small rural setting with a predominantly white population.

Data Collection

This study utilized the qualitative approach for data collection and analysis to answer research questions. All participants who were qualified for the study were sent an email requesting their participation. Participants were then asked to sign an informed consent form. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with all consenting participants of the service trip to Haiti in May of 2012, after their return to the United States. The primary investigator also analyzed student journals using the phenomenological method to gain an in-depth understanding of the impact the service trip had on participants. To ensure accuracy, the interviews were recorded by the primary investigator (PI) in secure
and confidential rooms both on and off campus. To converse successfully as part of a qualitative interview requires practice. You must learn from the people rather than study them (Yin, 2011). In order to learn from the people and avoid bias, the PI used the following techniques throughout the interview: 1) speaking in modest amounts, 2) being nondirective, 3) staying neutral, 4) maintaining rapport, 5) using interview protocol (Yin).

**Treatment of Data**

Upon completion of the interviews, they were transcribed and coded to find themes among student experiences. The names of participants were changed for confidentiality. Data analysis involved a Five-Phased Cycle of compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding in order to code the data (Yin, 2011). The compiling phase consisted of transcribing the interviews and copying the journal entries from the participants’ journals. In the disassembling phase, the PI coded the interviews and the journals separately through a trial and error process to create open codes or level one codes. These codes were closely related to the actual words used by the participant (Yin). In the reassembling phase, the PI coded all of the interviews and journals together into 12 different themes or level 2 codes while constantly querying (Yin). Level 2 codes categorized the level 1 codes into larger themes (Yin). Further reassembling broke codes into subthemes and reached even higher conceptual levels. Codes were organized in categories pertaining to the research questions. In the interpreting phase, themes were reorganized into developmental stages of the participant including pre-departure, experience and re-entry. Finally, conclusions were drawn about the significance of the study and new themes that emerged.
CHAPTER IV

Findings

The purpose of this study is to analyze the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change. This chapter presents the various themes that emerged through analysis of interviews and journal entries from students who participated in a May 2012 service trip to Haiti. The participants were members of a student organization, the Haiti Connection, at a mid-size public university in the Midwest. Each of the participants was an active member in the Haiti Connection for at least one semester prior to the trip and none of the participants had been to Haiti previously. During the semester, students worked with the Haiti Connection to raise funds for various projects in Haiti from clean water to reforestation. When the students went on the trip in May, they visited the projects that they had been working to raise money for throughout the semester. Each research question is presented with themes that emerged from the topical area through both the interviews and the journal entries.

Research Question 1: After participating in the Haiti service trip, what are the participants' understandings of social inequality?

The first theme constructed through interviews and the journal entries was an emerging awareness about tangible inequalities that participants perceived between their lives in the United States and what they experienced in Haiti.
Tangible Inequalities

Participants had the opportunity to interact with Haitian people who benefitted from the projects that are funded by the Haiti Connection. Through their interactions, participants were able to experience first-hand inequality between their lives and the lives of the Haitian people. Participants described several subthemes concerning tangible inequality.

*pov*erty.*

The participants were expressive in their encounter with poverty in Haiti. They were struck by the contrast between poverty in the United States and poverty in this developing nation. As Michael (interview) stated:

They had no source of income at all, they had no money for food, her kids weren’t in school and there was no hope for this family. I just remember thinking to myself after this, how can you be in such a beautiful spot just looking over these mountains, and then walk into such a devastating situation like that?

Several participants included journal entries that echoed Michael’s thoughts. Katie (journal) wrote:

Today I really feel like I was slapped in the face with poverty. I know I’ve seen it all around but it didn't really hit me until today. We went to an older couples house to see if we should help them out. Their house was in such terrible condition. It's so tragic to see that there are people living in such horrible conditions. No one could ever deserve this.
Shannon (journal) also wrote: "(There is) so much need. Poverty…I wonder what the dictionary would define it as. (My definition)- lack of basic needs for a family to be strong, independent, and self-sufficient.” Haley (journal) stated:

While I knew we weren't in the slums of the city, the poverty was still so incredibly visible in these areas (affected by the earthquake). It is amazing how much damage was done, but still so much work needs to be done to repair everything.

*lack of access to water.*

One day while in Haiti, the participants made a trip to the water source with some children in the community. The water source is where many people in the community of Barasa have to go to collect their water for daily use. Some people make the trip up to five times a day just to make sure their family has enough water to survive. The participants were unanimous in mentioning this experience in either their interview or journal. As Michael (journal) wrote:

As we left with two Haitian children we met there (at the water source) who were collecting water, the reality of the situation hit me. These people have to make this trip, which I almost didn't want to even take, up to five times a day and they do so carrying gallons of water. And they don't have a choice like I did this journey. It is necessary for their survival.

Haley (interview) echoed Michael in her interview: “It was about midday, and they said that they get water five times a day. They spend their lives getting water. It is astonishing, the need that these people have.” Shannon (interview) stated:
Those girls spend most of their life, walking back and forth to get water for their family while they could be in school. That’s totally different because we just get water from our faucet so quick and it’s good water too. I guess it opened my eyes more about how important water is and what people have to do or go through.

Katie (journal) wrote: “We walked to the water source today. It was pretty eye opening to get to somewhat experience what the people here have to go through to get water.”

*hunger.*

Throughout the trip, the participants encountered several individuals who were suffering from hunger and were impacted by their interactions with these Haitian people.

As Haley stated (interview):

> When you hear about it (hunger) at committee meetings and at the Haiti Connection meetings, sure it means something, but it doesn’t mean that much. Actually going and hearing the people say it, seeing what they go through, hearing them tell you “I am hungry”, and knowing that they mean it…very different.

Michael (journal) wrote: Today at times was really sad. The sadness for me really came from the hunger I could feel these children were dealing with. Katie (interview) recalled:

> And they (two little girls) were just like “I’m really hungry.” That was really hard. I gave them gum but that wasn’t enough at all. And you kind of still think they would leave but that’s not enough, that’s not what they need.

Overall, these interactions with Haitian people and being able to witness this inequality first-hand was very impactful for many of the participants. Poverty, lack of access to water, and hunger were the three most prevalent areas where participants
communicated that they perceived inequality between their lives and the lives of the Haitian people.

**Research Question 2: After participating in Haiti service trips, what are the participants’ attitudes, values, and beliefs toward social justice?**

The second theme discovered through interviews and the journal entries was an emerging recognition of one’s own privilege.

**Recognition of Privilege**

While reflecting on their experience in Haiti, participants made comparisons between their lives in the United States and the lives of those they encountered in Haiti. Throughout this theme, participants discussed the difference between necessity and luxury. Through this process, participants began to understand and appreciate their own privilege, critically analyze structures that keep people in poverty, and think about how to work for a more just society. As Haley explains:

> When I (compare) my life and the lives of the people that we worked with, it was very eye opening and it makes you wonder, why is it like this? How do we fix this? Is there a way to fix this?

**lack of government support.**

One of the subthemes that emerged under recognition of privilege was a lack of government support in Haiti. Participants were cognizant of government support that is available in the United States and the fact that they take it for granted. As Haley (interview) stated:

> The government (in Haiti) is so incredibly corrupt. There is no cooperation anywhere, money is being stolen and (there is) so much that is keeping these
people where they are. It is very difficult knowing that you personally cannot help this one person whereas in America, it's not an issue.

Michael (interview) echoed Haley's thoughts: “We (Americans) have homeless people, but we have ways to provide for (them). (In Haiti), there is no government interaction, no government assistance or anything like that.” Shannon (interview) also commented on corruption in the government in Haiti: “The government in Haiti is corrupt and it’s not organized so that’s why the country is not as good as it could be.”

*lack of basic human necessities:*

A second subtheme that emerged was a realization of what basic necessity means. At times, participants expressed guilt and struggled to comprehend the stark contrast between the lifestyles of Haitians and Americans. As Haley (interview) stated:

There are just so many things available to you (as an American) that you might not think...I might not wake up tomorrow morning or I might starve tomorrow and not make it the next day.

In her journal, Katie expressed: “Everyone has the right to clean accessible water. It's tragic that so many don't and that there are many people who do but just take it for granted.” Melissa (journal) echoed Katie: “I can't imagine how the Haitians feel. Possibly having to walk hours many times a day to get water.” Melissa also included in her journal: “I can't believe something as simple as an outdoor toilet can mean so much to a person. It really puts in perspective how much Americans take for granted.”

Participants talked about the basic need of food that many Americans take for granted. As Haley (journal) wrote: “There isn't a thing we (my siblings and I) wouldn't do for each other, but food has never been a concern between the three of us.” In his journal,
Michael expressed a similar feeling: “We’re out on the porch eating snacks in front of these kids who are starving, and who knows when the last time they had a decent meal was.”

*excessive luxuries.*

While many Haitians struggle to have their basic needs met, many Americans have a surplus of food, water, etc. In their interviews and journals, participants reflected on the “luxuries” that they have as Americans. As Melissa (journal) wrote: “I can't help but think of how hard it will be going back to the U.S. We have so many luxuries that is kind of disgusts me.” Haley (journal) wrote something to the same effect: “We Americans have so many conveniences. Not many Americans would live like a Haitian and not feel some form of resentment or neglect.” In her interview, Haley echoed this point:

> When you are in a place like America, you have almost every opportunity available to you, as long as you have the money for it, which honestly isn’t that hard to come by. (You have) college, student loans, grants, and scholarships, that gives you that opportunity.

*life is hard.*

While in Haiti, participants suffered some unaccustomed hardships. This allowed them to experience what many Haitian people have to go through every day. Although participants were only in Haiti for a week, they tried to keep it in perspective that Haitian people have to live like that every day and they don’t have the luxury of being able to leave and go back to the United States. Melissa (journal) expressed:
When we finished, we headed back up the worst hill I've ever walked. In the moment I was so mad. My legs felt like Jell-O, I couldn't breathe, I was sweating like crazy, and the path seemed like a never-ending steep climb. But why didn't I think about the family who walked this multiple times a day?

After a long day, Michael (journal) wrote: “Tonight I find myself completely exhausted and wondering how Haitians live this life every day, especially since we haven't experienced the full extent of Haitian life.” Shannon reflected in her journal that it was really difficult for her to understand what Haitians went through on a daily basis: “I feel naïve when I talk to them because I really don't know how their situation feels.” In her interview, Katie explained an impactful moment for her on the trip:

That’s when it really impacted me how poverty stricken Haiti is. For a really long time, it didn’t hit me, and I don’t really know why. It was 5 days with no electricity; it’s not my whole life.

*the cost of privilege.*

The final subtheme that emerged was that the participants learned from interacting with Haitian people an appreciation of having been born into privilege. The participants unanimously agreed that they were amazed by the positive attitudes that the Haitian people had about life. As Haley stated in her interview:

If you close your eyes to everything, except what you see in them, you would never know that they are struggling. They have such faith either in their family or in themselves or God. They have problems beyond my wildest dreams and they are significantly happier than the majority of Americans I see who have so much more.
Many participants recognized that they were changing and learning from the Haitian people. As Katie stated in her journal:

I'm so disappointed in myself that I'm still being selfish, ungrateful, and complaining. I still have a lot of learning to do but the Haitian people are teaching me so much and I am forever in their debt for that.

Megan (interview) echoed Katie:

I complained the whole week about how much walking we did. Then, this little girl was walking and holding my hand. (She had) no shoes on in the gravel, dirty roads and she walked all of the way up the hill with us. I (thought), I have been complaining all week, walking up all these hills. I have shoes on, nice shoes, and you don’t have any shoes and you are holding my hand and (you are) watching out for me and I am just complaining. It taught me a lot not to be so worried about myself and to think about others.

When Katie was asked (in an interview) what she gained from this experience she replied:

I learned about myself, how much I have and how much I need to be appreciative for. The Haitian people teach you a lot about that, just to be happy and grateful in every situation.

In summary, recognition of privilege refers to the process where participants began to understand and appreciate their own privilege, critically analyze structures that keep people in poverty, and think about how to work for a more just society. While reflecting on their experience in Haiti, participants became aware of their own privilege
by comparing Haitian and American lifestyles, and their perceptions of what is important began to shift.

**Research Question 3: After participating in the Haiti service trips, what are the participants’ perceptions on commitment to continuing service?**

Participants expressed a primary theme as a result of considering this research question. This theme is labeled Commitment to Continue Service and reflects a desire to continue giving back to Haiti upon their return to the United States.

**Commitment to Continue Service**

Under commitment to continue service, several subthemes emerged. Participants not only were motivated to continue serving Haiti, but to make changes to their lifestyle and career paths. Some participants even expressed that they would like to return to Haiti to do long-term volunteer work. The first subtheme that emerged was a passion, on behalf of the participants, to continue service.

*passion to serve.*

While participants were in Haiti, they visited the projects that the Haiti Connection raises funds for throughout the year. These projects have helped change the lives of many Haitian people. Based on first-hand experience, participants were motivated to continue serving to raise funds for Haiti. Because of the Haiti Connection’s Espwa Pou Demen program, a sixteen-year-old girl was able to return home to live with her family. Katie reflected on this in her interview: “The fact that we could do that is really cool. You can’t help but be proud to be a part of that, and it makes you want to do more.” Michael echoed Katie: “I do have the power to make a small difference and by
not doing so, I am not living up to my convictions.” Michael (interview) also reflected on the Espwa Pou Demen project:

It (helped us to) open our eyes a little bit more towards the change that we are making and to recommit ourselves to continue to make sure that the Haiti Connection thrives and is able to keep helping these people and to keep building on the projects that we have. When you start to think about (our projects) it makes you want to commit, to raise more money and find ways to provide more.

Shannon (interview) stated that she would like to continue raising awareness: “I want to educate people more about the trip, about the country, what they can do, and (that their) money will be safe and (that they) are making a difference.” Haley found inspiration through her visits to the various projects and wrote (journal):

I expected to go through emotional turmoil from what I saw. Instead, I've seen inspiration from outlook on their lives and my own. They have given me a hope I never dreamed I would have found, especially in a country like Haiti. This trip has meant the world to me and has changed me in so many ways. I hope I never forget.

Michael echoed Haley’s thoughts in his journal:

The only toys (the children) had were balloons made out of condoms and soccer balls made out of plastic bags and rubber bands. This really makes me want to do a toy drive for the December trip to bring down maybe instead of shoes. All I really know is no kid should ever have to play with condoms.

Melissa also stated (interview): “I feel more passionate about helping and I want to sponsor a child and I want it to be my money that I have earned and that I am sharing.”
lifestyle change.

Beyond the motivation participants felt to continue serving the people of Haiti, many of them were so impacted by the experience that they decided to make changes in their lifestyles. As Michael wrote in his journal:

After this trip I've realized I need to change some things in my life and my outlook. I used to really want to make a lot of money so I could afford to live comfortable. Now I want to make enough money to just live a simple life and anything extra I want to use to help people.

Katie wrote something similar (journal): “When I get back I plan to appreciate nature more, always have a positive attitude, appreciate life, cut back significantly on my use of technology, and sponsor a child.” Megan (interview) also stated:

I think I’m more aware of how much I buy now. I don’t buy as much unnecessary items such as clothes, jewelry, and hair products. You don’t need that stuff. They didn’t need that stuff. Why do I need that stuff? I have (also) started saving water.

career change.

Two of the participants stated that the trip to Haiti influenced the direction they would like to go in their future careers. When asked what his future career plans were, Michael (interview) responded:

I don’t know. I am an accounting major, so I am pretty much guaranteed a job after graduation, but I can’t say that I even really want to be an accountant anymore. It seems like money just doesn’t mean that much anymore. To deal with money every day and see these huge numbers and think about everything that
people could be doing down there (Haiti) and how much we could be helping them (the Haitian people). I really have distaste for that.

Haley (interview) also said that her career path was influenced by her trip to Haiti:

My dream job now is to work with Partners in Health. Their motto is giving a preferential health option to the poor. So that kind of combines my desire and passion for Haiti with what I plan on doing in my life. To work for Partners in Health would be like incredibly ideal.

*desire to return to Haiti.*

Four out of five participants communicated that they would like to return to Haiti in some capacity. Katie wrote in her journal:

I feel like I owe Haiti so much after everything it's done for me. Joining the Haiti Connection has given me purpose, hope and meaningful, lasting relationships. How could I not feel in debt to a country that has contributed to all of those aspects in my life?

Katie also stated in an interview: “I would love to do long term volunteer work in Haiti. I don’t know if that’s in God’s plans for me but I really hope so.” Haley had a similar desire to return and stated:

I want to stay more connected with the country. It’s been a life changing experience and the more I am away, the stronger that my desire becomes to go back, and the more that I see how much it has impacted my life.

Michael also expressed in interest to go back (journal):

We are leaving Barasa tomorrow and I find myself extremely sad about this. There are so many more people I would like not only to help, but also to also just
spend time with and get to know. I find myself already trying to find a way to come back, whether it be to live here for a year or two or just visit. I really hope some way that my path in life leads me back here some day. I truly feel I owe this community more than I could ever possibly repay it in a hundred lives because it has really changed my outlook on life.

Overall, many participants communicated that their experience on the service trip to Haiti impacted not only their worldview but also future career plans. Due to their transformative experience in Haiti participants articulated a passion to continue serving Haiti, a need to make changes in their own lifestyles or career path and a desire to return to Haiti for long-term volunteer work.

Research Question 4: What are the participants overall perceptions of the Haiti service trip?

As participants described their experience in Haiti, several themes emerged that were significant for them in terms of their development. Other themes related to some of the difficulties they faced while they were in Haiti.

Consequential Connection

Participants had the opportunity to interact with many people that benefitted from the projects funded by the Haiti Connection. When participants were able to witness, first-hand, the change that they have brought about in the lives of some of these individuals, it empowered them to feel that they had the power to make a positive impact on someone else’s life. Consequential connection refers to this moment that participants realized that the projects that they had helped create were making real change in the lives of the Haitian people. Shannon describes this phenomenon: “(It happened) all
because a group of college students care. One change in me can change the world.”

Under this theme, several subthemes emerged regarding the various projects that the Haiti Connection sponsors.

**Espwa Pou Demen.**

The newest project of Haiti Connection, Espwa Pou Demen, was designed to help bring a family out of poverty. Haley, who is the chair of the program, explained more:

It was based on the first step of a program of Fonkoze, a micro-crediting institution, (designed to help) women from extreme poverty to the point of where they are complete self-sustainable, running their own business and helping to help the rest of their community move up that ladder. We took the first step of their program, Chemen Lavi Miyo, and created our own program based on that idea.

With this program we are currently taking on two families every year.

Throughout the semester, students raise funds to support the program and a caseworker that makes weekly visits to check up on the families. The main responsibilities of this committee are to keep track of spending and budgeting and to develop questions for the caseworker to ask the families. This program was very challenging for students to understand in the beginning and they were not able to see the impact that it would make on the lives of the Haitian people. Haley, the chair of the program, explained the struggle that students faced (interview):

(There was) not much sense of actual assistance when, a lot of what we would do during our committee meetings was coming up with the evaluation sheets and making sure they actually made sense. I don’t think it really felt like they were
making an impact, especially since we weren’t able to see the impact until a few months later. I know that was very difficult for them.

It wasn’t until the participants were able to meet the families in the program that they were able to see the change that they helped to create. Katie in her interview explains how her feelings changed:

Before that I thought it (Espwa Pou Demen) was a really huge money sucker and something that I didn’t really believe in. I had a lot of reservations about that. But then we went there, and we met with the two families, and it really like came alive to me or really showed me that what we are doing is what we are supposed to be doing.

Michael echoed Katie in his interview: “This program was a lot for us to take on, but seeing such positive results from this family made me realize that our hard work and effort has paid off.” The participants had the opportunity to visit both families. Shannon describes how she felt listening to the mother of the second family when they visited her home: “It was really moving when we were inside. I saw Haley start to tear, and it really hit me how much of a difference it makes, what we are doing here.” One of the biggest accomplishments of the program was that one of the families was able to bring their daughter back from restavec. Haiti has a large number of children who live outside their parent’s homes, and serve in awful situations. These children are known as restavec, a Creole word meaning, “staying with” (What are restavec?, n.d.). Participants expressed that seeing this family reunited in front of their eyes, was a very impactful moment for them. As Michael stated: “This girl was brought back to live with her family now, and
she is actually enrolled in high school which, in Haiti, is just unheard of for a girl.” Katie echoed Michael in journal:

The most amazing result our program has helped achieve for this family is that their daughter is back. They could not afford to keep their daughter so they sent her to be a restavec. Because of their small business, they were able to bring her back.

Melissa also expressed a similar feeling in her interview:

They gave their daughter to somebody. They told the mom she was going to be okay but they actually are sent into bad conditions. She came back since we put them in the program. That was really cool.

Water for Life.

Another project of the Haiti Connection is Water for Life. Through this program, the Haiti Connection raises money for water purification systems for families in Haiti. In addition to these systems, the Haiti Connection has funded the construction of cisterns, which collect and store rain water so that the Haitian people do not have to walk as far to find a water source. The Water for Life program has provided an entire community access to safe drinking water. Before families had access to water stored in a cistern, they may have had to walk up to an hour to the nearest water source. Haley (interview) reflected on this: “You see one family with a cistern who would have had to walk 3 hours to get (water) and now you see that their kids can go to school.” Melissa elaborated in her interview: “They are getting healthier and their kids will be healthier because they are drinking the clean water.” Michael echoed Melissa in his interview:
Cholera is a huge issue in Haiti and this project has completely wiped out cholera in the region where we have the filtration buckets. They have had one case in the past five years I think. That just kind of set the tone for the whole trip. We were just thinking that these people are walking around checking buckets and it was no big deal. Then we come to find out that we have completely wiped out an epidemic.

Throughout the experience in Haiti, participants had the opportunity to interact with many people that benefitted from the projects funded by the Haiti Connection. Consequential connection refers to experiences where participants were able to witness, first-hand, the change that they have brought about in the lives of some of these individuals. Being able to see the impact of the work that they had done empowered them to feel that they can make a positive impact on someone else’s life. Two of the projects that were most impactful for participants were Espwa Pou Demen and Water for Life.

**Human Connection**

Another theme that emerged under this research questions was human connection. Since 1989, the Director and Campus Minister of Newman Catholic Center, has led over 45 mission trips to Haiti with a total of over 400 students. In that time, the Director has formed many strong relationships with individuals in Haiti that the group works with on a regular basis to implement the projects sponsored by the Haiti Connection. Before students leave for Haiti they will be familiar with people such as Gusnord Gathro, who has worked as a translator for the Haiti Connection for over five years. Even though the participants were not able to speak Creole and converse with everyone they met, they still felt a strong connection to the people of Haiti. Melissa (journal) reflected on her
interactions with the people they met: “We didn’t speak the same language, don’t have the same culture, and we all shared the excitement and togetherness.” The group had the chance to meet the children in the School Sponsorship Program, the families in Espwa Pou Demen, and other individuals that have greatly benefitted as a result of the projects of the Haiti Connection. Participants explained that this human connection made the projects that they work on much more personal and real. Haley explained (journal) how meeting the people in the Espwa Pou Demen program changed things for her:

Originally I was hoping to get a voice to put with the names and faces, but I got so much more. It was an incredible experience getting to help the families directly and not just from back in my apartment (in the United States) as I created and planned everything out.

Katie (interview) talked about the school sponsorship program: “We took pictures of (the children) to send out to (their sponsors). That was really cool to put actual faces and personalities to the kids we have in the program.” Shannon felt a personal connection to one of the families in the Espwa Pou Demen program and explained (interview): “I liked meeting them. It’s better when you can make a personal connection and when you personally know them and can talk to them.” Shannon stated (interview) that it made a difference to be able to meet the people in the programs: “You don’t really like feel like you are doing something but when you see...it’s just different when you experience it and meet the people that you are helping.”

During their time in Haiti, the group had the chance to meet the children in the School Sponsorship Program, the families in Espwa Pou Demen, and other individuals that have greatly benefitted as a result of the projects of the Haiti Connection. Even
though the participants were not able to speak Creole and converse with everyone they met, they still felt a strong connection to the people of Haiti. Participants explained that this human connection made the projects that they work on much more personal and real.

**Negative Connection**

One theme that emerged from perceptions of participants was some of their negative experiences. Although a majority of the journal entries were positive, participants expressed moments where they were frustrated, overwhelmed and upset. All of these negative experiences were found in the journal entries and not in the interviews. Melissa explained (journal) a negative experience that she had during one of the school visits:

> At first it was fine talking to one or two kids but then so many surrounded Michael and I. They all wanted photos, they all wanted to touch my hair, feel my skin, and look down my shirt. They broke my ponytail but within seconds a young girl had tied it back together and put my hair up. In the moment I was so frustrated and angry, but looking back, the young girl fixing my ponytail was a sign from God. I was too caught up in the moment to appreciate her willingness to help me.

Several participants described being upset and annoyed when people were constantly begging them and asking them to help or give money. As Shannon described (journal): “I still hate it when people say can I have a dollar, especially annoying kids. I can't stand it. It blocks my heart to give.” Michal echoed (journal) Shannon:

> One thing that did kind of upset me was when the director of the chapel was thanking us for coming and all of the work we do he had the nerve to ask us to
repair the church in front of the whole congregation. I don’t know if this is
acceptable in Haitian culture or what but it made me feel extremely
uncomfortable. I am starting to feel like the people we help don’t realize how hard
we have to work to raise the money that we do.

Katie also reflected (journal) after having a bad day:

Today was a little rough for me. I complained to myself way too much. Not only
am I incredibly disappointed in myself, but I’m scared that I’m going to forget
everything that I’m learning. I should never have any reason to complain.

Overall, participant’s experiences in Haiti were positive and the experiences they
talked about in the interviews were all positive. However, in their journal entries,
participants expressed moments where they were frustrated, overwhelmed and upset.
Since none of these negative experiences were found in the interviews, it is possible that
after reflection participants were able to bring their experience into a more positive light.

Language Connection

Participants expressed some frustration when it came to the language barrier
between them and the Haitian people. The participants were taught basic vocabulary and
had the option to participate in Creole lessons from a fellow Haiti Connection member,
but it simply wasn’t enough for them to have a meaningful conversation. Participants
expressed their frustration about not being able to communicate and having to use a
translator. As Haley wrote (journal): “It is frustrating not being able to talk to them
outside of “bonjou” and “sak pase.” I wish I knew what they were saying.” Melissa also
described (interview) a similar experience: “It was hard not being able to talk to them or
anything because of the language.” All you could say was ‘Hi.’” Melissa wrote about her
struggles during mass one day: “Sitting here in church now, I'm totally lost. I have no clue what is being said or sung. I couldn’t understand a single word being said.”

Although several of the participants struggled with the language, they were able to overcome some language barriers through sport or game and they began to realize and appreciate language acquisition. As Katie wrote (journal):

The coolest part is that we get to interact with the people here. The kids are so fun. We tried to communicate as much as possible, but it's hard with the language barrier. Learning another language is hard, but I can definitely see why it would be worth it.

Melissa also reflected on language barriers in her journal: “As I think more about my experience here with the language barrier, I find it more valuable butchering Creole in attempt to have a conversation.”

Almost all of the participants expressed some frustration when it came to the language barrier between themselves and the Haitian people. Participants expressed their frustration about not being able to communicate and having to use a translator. Although several of the participants struggled with the language, they were able to overcome some language barriers through sport or game and they began to realize the importance of language acquisition.

Other Themes

Several themes emerged outside of the four research questions. As participants were reflecting on how they became involved with Haiti Connection and why they decided to go to Haiti, several participants said they joined because they spoke with someone who had already been to Haiti and were inspired by their story.
Expectation

The Haiti Connection meets once a week throughout the school year. During these meetings, students give presentations about their experience in Haiti, or other topics such as current issues in Haiti (e.g. Restavec Children). Four out of five of the participants stated that they became involved in the Haiti Connection through meeting another member who was passionate about Haiti and shared his or her experience with them. As Shannon stated: “We were talking about Haiti Connection and Steve (member) was really passionate about it. So I (thought), maybe this is a pretty good organization.” Haley also got involved in Haiti Connection through a member: “Steve (friend) introduced me to Haiti Connection and he said that he was actually going at the end of that semester and so that semester I actually got involved in Haiti Connection.” When asked why they decided to go to Haiti, two participants stated that their decision to go to Haiti was influenced by member who had already participated in the service trip. As Melissa stated:

I think when the group presented on their trip when they went and then he was talking about the December trip, what all they do and I talked a lot to Jen Prillaman. And she told me like what they do because she had gone before and some other people like Jonathan. And I kind of just signed the paper and was like “this will be really fun.”

Michael echoed Melissa in his response:

I think it was probably like the third or fourth meeting that someone had done a presentation on the trip they’d done during December of that year. Seeing the
pictures and all that, that's when it really kind of started to hit me...how much help Haiti needed.

In summary, a majority of the participants stated that they became involved in the Haiti Connection through meeting another member who was passionate about Haiti and shared his or her experience with them. Through talking with these individuals and learning about Haiti through presentations at meetings, participants started to build expectations about what their experience would be like once they arrived in Haiti.

**Engaged Preparation**

Another theme that was discovered involved the student’s participation in the Haiti Connection prior to the student leaving for Haiti. Students in the Haiti Connection work year round to raise money for their projects in Haiti and raise awareness about the struggles that the Haitians, and many other people, face on a daily basis. Under this theme, participants explain why they decided to join Haiti Connection, begin to understand what the group does, show an increasing awareness about the inequality that exists between Haiti the United States, and express their desire to go to Haiti.

*motivation for joining Haiti Connection.*

Participants were unanimous in stating that they chose to join Haiti Connection because they wanted to do something good or get involved. Participants had been introduced to the group in different ways but all saw that what the Haiti Connection was doing was really making a difference. The group has always had a very strong presence on campus and is known for hosting the same fundraisers each year, such as the Haiti Connection Yard Sale. When participants wanted to get involved and make a difference,
they thought that Haiti Connection seemed like the right fit. As Haley stated in her interview: “Knowing that there is a very specific group of people that you are directly helping even without going down there, it makes a very big impact.” Katie also shared (interview) a similar response:

Sophomore year I (thought) I should do something good with my life and I should get involved and Haiti Connection sounded like it had both of those things. (In Haiti Connection), I could do something meaningful and help somebody and I could get involved. I never in my life would have thought that I would actually go to Haiti.

Shannon echoed Katie in her interview:

I wanted to get involved with something (service related), but I felt like a lot of on campus service groups are just focused on themselves and not (as) global minded.

I felt like Haiti Connection does the most.

Melissa agreed with Shannon (interview): “(Haiti Connection) was a lot of fun, everyone was really nice and what we are doing is good.” Michael, who was the chair of his philanthropy for his fraternity, stumbled upon Haiti Connection as a volunteer opportunity. As Michael stated (interview):

We thought we should probably start giving back and provide some resources and one meeting Haiti Connection came up. I decided I’d go to a meeting and it was pretty cool. I started to learn about Haiti and all the help they needed and decided it was something worthwhile doing.
active participation in Haiti Connection.

Throughout the year, Haiti Connection members continuously work to raise funds for various projects in Haiti and plan events to raise awareness about global issues, such as hunger and violence. During this time, participants put in a lot of hours raking leaves, sorting clothes for a yard sale and learning about Haiti. Because of their active engagement in the group, participants were inspired to go to Haiti and see the impact of the work that they are doing. As Michael stated (interview):

(I decided I wanted to go to Haiti) right after I finished the yard sale. I’d put in tons of work and I had raised all of this money. I was hearing about all of these projects we were doing and where the money was going, but I wanted to go see it first hand and see the help we were bringing to these people.

Michael was the chair of the yard sale committee fundraiser that raises around $6,000 dollars each year by collecting items from students at the end of spring semester and selling them in a yard sale in the fall. Students in the Haiti Connection put in a lot of hours organizing this fundraiser. Haley wrote her undergraduate thesis about clean water in Haiti. As she said (interview):

My thesis was on clean water in Haiti and the research was serving Haitians experience with water and the effects that clean water has had on their lives and what it was like before they had clean water.

Haley stated (interview) that, “I think my desire to truly go down there wasn’t to help them but to help me fully understand.” Melissa also felt a similar motivation for going to Haiti. As she stated (interview): “As the semester went on I was really looking forward to going because I got more involved in the group and figured out what all we do.” Katie
decided she wanted to go to Haiti to experience everything first hand: “I wanted to learn a lot about myself and how I could make a difference in everyday life. I wanted to learn about Haiti for myself not what other people have told me.” Shannon stated (interview) that: “I wanted to see how real it was. Sometimes in the meetings they will be talking about water cisterns, and I have no idea what (they’re) talking about.”

In summary, engaged preparation refers to the period of time before participants go to Haiti when they are working to raise money for various projects in Haiti. During this time participants explain why they decided to join Haiti Connection, begin to understand what the group does, show an increasing awareness about the inequality that exists between Haiti the United States, and express their desire to go to Haiti.

**Reflection**

Throughout the trip, participants held daily reflections where they discussed as a group what they had done that day and shared any moments that particularly impacted them. The Campus Minister, who attended the trip, facilitated these reflection sessions. During these sessions, he encouraged participants to critically reflect on their experience. Some of the themes that emerged under this category include broadened perspective, higher purpose, and advice.

*Broadened perspective.*

During the trip, participants experienced many hardships that they were not used to in the United States. For instance, they stayed in towns without electricity and were not able to shower on a regular basis. Because of this, several participants communicated having a negative outlook on their experience in Haiti through their journal articles.
Through reflection, participants were able to look beyond their own experience and see through the eyes of another participant. As Shannon stated:

It’s hard to live in the moment when you’re thinking about yourself too much.

You’re there for them and you are there to make connections. You’re there for other people. So it (reflection) puts things more into perspective. I guess the reflection just remembering this isn’t all about you, it’s about other people too.

Several participants commented that this was beneficial and helped them to have a broader outlook on the experience. As Haley (interview) stated: “The reflections in general really helped you to experience Haiti in multiple ways, you know, not just your own way and other peoples as well.” Katie (interview) echoed Haley: “I think that’s really helpful that you get to hear other peoples’ perspectives. You might learn something from somebody that you wouldn’t have thought of that day.”

higher purpose.

On the last night in Haiti, participants had a final reflection where they talked about the most impactful moments for them on the trip. Participants were asked to reflect first in their journals and then share with the group. In their journals, participants reflected on whether or not they thought that God had placed them there for a reason.

Three of the participants stated that they felt as though God had placed them in Haiti for a reason. As Melissa (interview) stated: “I think he (God) put me there for a reason because I am a Sociology major and I want to work with (the) lower class, poor, homeless society.” Haley (journal) echoed Melissa:

Based on my collegiate career and everything that has led up to this moment, I most certainly do believe that I have been chosen to come to Haiti and that God
has helped to instill such a deep rooted passion for this beautiful country and its people. I just haven't figured out how it plays out in the purpose of my life and what I am meant to do with this passion yet.

Michael found that by going to Haiti, he was actually able to become close to God. As he (journal) wrote:

I have always felt like my religious beliefs played a huge role in why Haiti Connection means so much to me and I think getting away from the complicated American lifestyle really helped me get close to God. I found myself praying a lot more and not my usual prayers of just thanks and asking for help but I found myself talking to God a lot more.

advice.

After reflecting on their experience abroad, participants became aware of how much of an impact going to Haiti had on their lives and how important it is to have international experience in this global economy. As Katie stated: “I do think of myself as a global citizen now. You know I am not just here in America, I am here in this world.”

Once participants realized how important this experience was in their life, they encouraged others to seek out similar experiences. As Michael (interview) stated:

No matter what type of job, everything these days is globally oriented. I think (college students) need to take the time while they can (to go abroad) and maybe when they get out into the business world they will think a little bit more about that little guy down there and maybe it will sway their decisions a little bit to kind of protect them. To protect all mankind instead of just protect their selves, which tends to be a common theme in the U.S.
Katie (interview) echoed Michael:

I think we need to push study abroad. I think it's a really good thing. Even if it is for school because you will learn a lot about the people, about other cultures and you will care more and you will consider yourself more of a global citizen because that is so important because everyone is in their little box. It is really important to go out and reach out and step outside of your comfort zone.

In summary, the guided group reflection, in conjunction with reflecting on their experience in their journal, helped participants make sense of their experience in Haiti. Through reflection, participants were able to broaden their perspective, examine the role of their faith in their experience in Haiti, and recognize their changing perspective into more globally oriented.

Summary

Chapter IV explored the themes that were found through analysis and comparison the individual interviews conducted by the primary investigator and journal entries written by the students who participated in the trip to Haiti. These themes fell under ten categories including: emerging awareness of tangible inequalities, emerging awareness of one's own privilege, commitment to continue service, consequential connection, human connection, negative connection, language connection, expectation, engaged preparation, and reflection. Chapter V will provide a summary of previous chapters and include recommendations for future research as well as suggestions for student affairs professionals based on the experiences of the participants.
CHAPTER V
Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to analyze the perspectives of participants on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating participants about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for participants to advocate for social change. The Haiti Connection service trips are designed to foster socially responsible citizens by educating participants about the issues and holding daily reflections during the experience. Therefore the following research questions were asked: (1) After participating in the Haiti service trip, what are the participants’ understandings of social inequality?; (2) After participating in Haiti service trips, what are the participants’ attitudes, values, and beliefs toward social justice?; (3) After participating in the Haiti service trips, what are the participants’ perceptions on commitment to continuing service?; (4) What are the participants overall perceptions of the Haiti service trip? In the present chapter, the results of the study are discussed, a representative model is presented, implications for student affairs practitioners are discussed, and recommendations for future research are provided.

Discussion

Chapter IV explored the themes that were found through analysis and comparison of the individual interviews conducted by the primary investigator and journal entries written by the participants who participated in the service trip to Haiti. In chapter V, these themes will be placed into three categories: pre-departure, experience, and re-entry. Pre-departure refers to any themes that pertain to experiences that happened prior to participants going to Haiti. Experience refers to any themes that pertain to the time that
participants were in Haiti and re-entry refers to themes that happened after participants returned from Haiti. The themes that fell under the first category, pre-departure, include expectation and engaged preparation. The themes that fell under the second category, experience, include tangible inequality, recognition of privilege, consequential connection, human connection, negative connection, and language connection. Finally, the themes that fell under the third category, re-entry, include reflection and commitment to continue service.

**Haiti Connection**

Morphew and Hartley (1964) did a thematic analysis of mission statements of 300 randomly selected U.S. four-year colleges and universities. They found that there is a "prevalence of elements related specifically to “service” either by the institution or through the inclusion of civic values in participants” (p. 462). They later found that the definition of service varied between public and private institutions. Public institutions tended to define service around “civic duty” and “civic engagement” where graduates stay in state, vote and pay taxes as responsible citizens. Private institutions' mission statements used terms like “social challenges” and “transformation” suggesting quite a different definition of service than their public counterpart. Westheimer and Kahne (2004) developed three different versions of what is means to be a good citizen—personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The justice-oriented citizen is one who tries to understand and analyze the interplay of social, economic and political forces. This is the type of citizen the Haiti Connection strives to create. Through a mixed methods study, Westheimer and Kahne concluded that the groups in their study were
effective at achieving goals consistent with their respective underlying conceptions of citizenship.

Although the university in the current study is a public institution, the Haiti Connection is part of a faith based student organization and therefore has a mission statement very similar to that of a private institution. The mission of the Haiti Connection “is committed to raising awareness and funds to eliminate injustices that impact the people of the third world” (Building Christian community, n.d.) is reflective of the social justice paradigm. Similar to the findings of Westheimer and Kahne, the Haiti Connection participants in this study reflected many of the qualities of a justice-oriented citizen. Participants were able to critically reflect on their experience and define structures that keep the Haitian people in poverty. “We (Americans) have homeless people, but we have ways to provide for (them). (In Haiti), there is no government interaction, no government assistance or anything like that” (Michael).

Pre-departure

Gonzalez (2009) explored the global service-learning program at the University of Georgia and compiled a list of key factors that make a global service-learning program successful. She argued that global service learning can best be leveraged when participants are sufficiently prepared for their encounter in a new cultural environment through an orientation to local culture of the host country they plan to visit.

Likewise, before participants went to Haiti, they were required to read Haiti In Focus: A Guide to the People, Politics and Culture and People Development as the Primary Aim of Development Work as well as attend mandatory meetings throughout the semester prior to the trip. However, in addition to this basic orientation, participants were
active members of the Haiti Connection by listening to presentations from members who have returned from Haiti, learning more about the country and its struggles, and actively participating in committees to raise funds and awareness for the organizations various projects in Haiti. “As the semester went on I was really looking forward to going because I got more involved in the group and figured out what all we do” (Melissa). Participants put in numerous hours and made sacrifices to raise money for projects in Haiti. One fundraiser that the Haiti Connection holds each year is a yard sale that raises around $6,000.

(I decided I wanted to go to Haiti) right after I finished the yard sale. I'd put in tons of work and I had raised all of this money. I was hearing about all of these projects we were doing and where the money was going, but I wanted to go see it first hand and see the help we were bringing to these people (Michael).

This active engagement in the group and acquisition of cultural knowledge is a vital aspect of the development of the participant. Also, because the participants were so intimately involved with these projects in Haiti, they were motivated to see first-hand the impact that they are making.

Experience

_Tangible inequality_

Einfeld & Collins (2007) conducted a qualitative study of 9 students who had completed a minimum of 300 hours of service through the AmeriCorps program at their university. They found that students who had participated in a service-learning program had an increased awareness of social inequality.
Similarly, the present study also found that participants expressed an emerging awareness of social inequality. Participants were exposed to several situations and described shock by the poverty they saw. None of the participants had ever worried about access to clean water. During the trip, they encountered Haitian people, mostly children, who had to travel an hour up to five times a day to obtain water.

As we left with two Haitian children we met there (at the water source) who were collecting water the reality of the situation hit me. These people have to make this trip, which I almost didn’t want to even take, up to five times a day and they do so carrying gallons of water. And they don’t have a choice like I did this journey. It is necessary for their survival.

Participants were also exposed to many people who did not have enough to eat. This is something that was very difficult for the participants to see.

And they (two little girls) were just like “I’m really hungry.” That was really hard. I gave them gum but that wasn’t enough at all. And you kind of still think they would leave but that’s not enough, that’s not what they need (Katie).

Recognition of privilege

Fuentes, Changthongthip & Rios (2010) argued that one challenge that institutions face is that many students entering a college or university have limited experience with diversity prior to their arrival on campus and are looking through the invisible lens of white privilege. Therefore, it is important for students to develop an awareness of their privilege. Einfeld and Collins (2008) found that service-learning participants reported an increased awareness of their own privilege. Pless, Maak & Stahl (2011) found that international service learning can boast self-development including a
greater self-awareness and that the immersive, consequential and sustained nature of an international service-learning program allows for students to have transformative experience.

Likewise, the current study found that due to the immersive nature of this program, participants were able to gain a better perspective of their own privilege. “It was 5 days with no electricity; it’s not my whole life” (Katie). Once participants had an increased awareness of social inequality, they began to reflect on their privilege as a United States citizen in effect become more aware of their privilege.

There are just so many things available to you (as an American) that you might not think…I might not wake up tomorrow morning or I might starve tomorrow and not make it the next day (Haley).

Consequential Connection

As Fuentes, Changthongthip & Rios (2010) stated, data suggests a need for social justice educators to provide students to take action and give them a sense of personal agency.

Through the Haiti Connection, participants also raise funds and work on projects throughout the year. This allows them to see the change they have made, feel empowered and are motivated to continue service. Consequential connection refers to this moment that participants realize that the projects that they help create make real change in the lives of the Haitian people. The ability to see the real change that they had made in the lives of the Haitian people empowered them to continue service. “(It happened) all because a group of college students care. One change in me can change the world” (Shannon). One of the programs, Espwa Pou Demen, is designed to help a family out of
poverty. Meeting the families in this program and seeing the change that the Haiti Connection has made in the lives of those people, was really impactful for the participants. “It was really moving when we were inside. I saw Haley start to tear, and it really hit me how much of a difference it makes, what we are doing here” (Shannon).

**Human Connection**

The earliest definition of service learning was “the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (Stanton, Giles & Cruz 1999, p. 2). The importance of the relationship between the university and community is an important component of international service learning. Cuban and Anderson (2007) found that university-community relationships do not exist naturally and take time to grow and that those relationships need to constantly be negotiated and nurtured. Gonzalez (2009) created a list of key factors that made global service learning programs successful. One important aspect was making sure the service satisfies a need defined by the community. She argued that, GSL cannot be about exchanges that have no value to partners. Seider, Rabinowicz & Gillmore (2011) also argued that service-learning participants had a deeper sense of responsibility for struggling fellow citizens.

Likewise, the Haiti Connection consistently works with the same community in Haiti and has built a relationship over many years. Since 1989 the Director and Campus Minister of Newman Catholic Center has led over 45 mission trips to Haiti with a total of over 400 students. Through making that human connection and seeing the face of the person they were helping, participants felt empowered and motivated. As Shannon stated: “You don’t really like feel like you are doing something but when you see…it’s just different when you experience it and meet the people that you are helping.”
Negative Connection

There is limited previous research on the negative aspects of students who participate in international or domestic service learning programs. In the current study, participants shared several negative experiences from their time in Haiti. All of these negative experiences were found in their journal entries. “I still hate it when people say can I have a dollar, especially annoying kids. I can't stand it. It blocks my heart to give” (Shannon). Although participants had written in their journals about these negative experiences while they were in Haiti, upon further reflection back in the States, they had a more positive outlook.

In the moment I was so frustrated and angry, but looking back, the young girl fixing my ponytail was a sign from God. I was too caught up in the moment to appreciate her willingness to help me (Melissa).

This suggests that reflection was a key aspect in helping participants reframe their negative experiences and have a more positive outlook once they returned to the United States. Had reflection been missing in this situation, this participant might have let this negative experience detract from her overall development on the trip.

Language Connection

Gonzalez (2009) explored the global service-learning program at the University of Georgia through speaking with faculty leaders for their various programs. One of the challenges that faculty faced in developing programs was the language barrier.

Likewise, in the current study, the language barrier between the participants and the people that they interacted with in Haiti was challenging for the participants. “It is frustrating not being able to talk to them outside of "bonjou" and "sak pase." I wish I
knew what they were saying” (Haley). Although several participants found this frustrating at times, they learned to appreciate language and were motivated to practice their Creole. “Learning another language is hard, but I can definitely see why it would be worth it” (Katie). Even though there was a language barrier, participants were able to overcome this and still interact with the local community. “As I think more about my experience here with the language barrier, I find it more valuable butchering Creole in attempt to have a conversation” (Melissa).

Re-entry

Commitment to continue service

Seider, Rabinowicz & Gillmore (2011) found that service learning impacted career aspirations and commitment to service. Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) found that service learning experiences reaffirmed ideas of what is meaningful and important, and for most it influenced their graduate education and job aspirations. Bringle and Hatcher (2011) argued that international service learning has the potential to greatly transform students’ lives and careers.

Likewise, after participating in the service trip, participants were not only motivated to continue serving Haiti, but to make changes to their career paths. One participant reflected on his job aspirations and concept of money.

After this trip I've realized I need to change some things in my life and my outlook. I used to want to make a lot of money so I could afford to live comfortable. Now I want to make enough money to just live a simple life, and anything extra I want to use to help people (Michael).

Many participants agreed that the trip was a transformative experience.
I expected to go through emotional turmoil from what I saw. Instead, I've seen inspiration from outlook on their lives and my own. They have given me a hope I never dreamed I would have found, especially in a country like Haiti. This trip has meant the world to me and has changed me in so many ways. I hope I never forget.

**Reflection**

Cone and Harris (1996) developed a theoretical framework from which to view service learning. Their service-learning model can be broken down into five parts. The fourth component of the model included reflection and the fifth component assumed that reflection is most effective when an educator or mentor is there to guide the student. Butin (2007) highlighted the importance of examination and reflection as an important aspect of service-learning. Kohlberg and Hersh (1977) argued that moral reasoning develops over time through a series of six stages and three levels. The final stage of moral development is the universal-ethical-principle orientation where right is defined by universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Similar to previous research, the data in the current study suggests that the guided reflection and journaling were important aspects of an international service learning experience and that through reflection, participants moved toward stage six of Kohlberg and Hersh’s moral development model. During the trip, participants were asked to keep a daily journal to reflect on their experience in Haiti. In addition to writing in their journals, participants had the opportunity for further reflection through group reflections facilitated by the Campus Minister who led the group through Haiti. These guided reflections were
very beneficial in helping participants realize the impact that this experience has had on their lives as well as broadened their perspective through hearing the stories of other participants. “The reflections in general really helped you to experience Haiti in multiple ways, you know, not just your own way and other peoples as well” (Haley). In addition to this broadened perspective, these reflections led participants to begin critically examining structures that prevent the people in Haiti from moving up the socioeconomic ladder. Through this critical examination, some participants were able to move through Kohlberg and Hersh’s moral development model and recognize universal human rights such as access to clean water. “Everyone has the right to clean accessible water. It’s tragic that so many don’t and that there are many people who do but just take it for granted.” (Megan). Several of the participants commented that because of corruption in the government, many Haitians were not able bring themselves out of poverty.

The government (in Haiti) is so incredibly corrupt. There is no cooperation anywhere, money is being stolen and (there is) so much that is keeping these people where they are. It is very difficult knowing that you personally cannot help this one person whereas in America, it’s not an issue (Michael).

A representative model

Based on themes that were discovered through the research, a model was developed to describe student development in various stages of an international service-learning program. This representative model expands on Kolb’s theory of experiential learning to include important developmental aspects of international service learning experiences. The model can be broken down into three stages, pre-departure, experience, and re-entry. Each stage has four components of development including knowledge,
experience, reflection, and action. As participants develop knowledge, experience, it is
the reflection component that moves them toward action. Once a student is fully engaged
in action at the stage one level, they are best prepared to move toward stage two. The
process repeats itself in stage two and culminates in stage 3.

Stage 1: Pre-departure  Stage 2: Experience  Stage 3: Re-entry

Figure 2: Boro’s Model of ISL Development

Stage 1: Pre-departure

In this stage, participants are new members of the Haiti Connection. The
knowledge component of this stage consists of participants learning about the projects in
Haiti through presentations, speaking to members who have returned from Haiti, and by
joining the various committees such as Water for Life or Espwa Pou Demen.

I think it was probably the third or fourth meeting that someone had done a
presentation on the trip they’d done during December of that year. Seeing the
pictures and all that, that’s when it really kind of started to hit me...how much
help Haiti needed. (Michael).

Participants are learning about the mission of the Haiti Connection and its commitment to
address poverty from the source and create sustainable programs that allow Haitian
people to build capacity. The experience component of this stage consists of participants
working to raise funds for the Haiti Connection projects. Throughout this process,
participants are reflecting on their knowledge and experience. At a certain point in this stage, while participants were reflecting on their experience in Haiti Connection there were motivated to go to Haiti to see the change that they are making in the lives of the Haitian people.

(I decided I wanted to go to Haiti) right after I finished the yard sale. I’d put in tons of work and I had raised all of this money. I was hearing about all of these projects we were doing and where the money was going, but I wanted to go see it first hand and see the help we were bringing to these people (Michael).

The action component of this stage refers to the participant actually going to Haiti. The pre-departure stage is critical in the development of participants because it allows participants to gain a basic understanding of social inequality before they go to Haiti. If they do not have this basic understanding, they may not fully appreciate and understand what they see once they arrive in country. Also, while working to raise funds for the different projects in Haiti (experience), participants are putting in numerous hours and feel more of a connection and “buy in” to actually visit the projects for which they are raising funds.

**Stage 2: Experience**

In this stage, participants are in Haiti. The knowledge component of this phase refers to participants learning about how Haitian people live, how their projects are carried out in Haiti, learning some Creole language, etc. Also, participants are undergoing an emerging awareness of tangible inequality and an emerging awareness of their own privilege. The experience component of this stage refers to what the participants are actually doing while they are in Haiti such as visiting families in the Espwa Pou Demen
program, testing water for the Water for Life program or building a cistern. Reflection occurs on an ongoing basis throughout the trip by way of journal entries and group discussions. The daily reflections allow participants to gain a broader view and look beyond their own experience through hearing the reactions of fellow group members.

“...The reflections in general really helped you to experience Haiti in multiple ways, you know, not just your own way and other peoples as well” (Haley). Because participants are undergoing an emerging awareness of inequality, constant reflection is necessary to help participants process what they are experiencing. By critically reflecting on their daily activities, participants are able to ascertain a deeper understanding of social injustice and the structures that stop the Haitian people from moving up the socioeconomic ladder.

“The government (in Haiti) is so incredibly corrupt. There is no cooperation anywhere, money is being stolen and (there is) so much that is keeping these people where they are” (Haley). In this stage, action refers to the act of participants returning to the United States. Important aspects that make this stage meaningful to participants are the human connection and the consequential connection. When participants were able to make a connection with someone in Haiti, it became more personal for them. “You don’t really like feel like you are doing something but when you see...it’s just different when you experience it and meet the people that you are helping” (Shannon). Consequential connection allows participants to see that the work they are doing is making a real, sustainable change in someone’s life.

Stage 3: Re-entry

In this stage, participants are returning to their lives in the United States. The knowledge component of this stage refers to participants learning about ways to stay
involved with the Haiti Connection or other similar organizations. Knowledge also refers to learning how to view their role as an American after returning from Haiti. Experience refers to getting back into the routine of going to Haiti Connection meetings, living with family, going to class, etc. This process of returning after going abroad is often referred to as reverse culture shock. Participants are trying to understand how their newly acquired knowledge and experience can fit into their old life. Reflection is a key aspect at this moment. Reflection in this stage refers to when the participants are processing how this experience has impacted their worldview, career path, and lifestyle. Through this reflection, participants gain a better understanding of self and purpose.

After this trip I've realized I need to change some things in my life and my outlook. I used to really want to make a lot of money so I could afford to live comfortable. Now I want to make enough money to just live a simple life and anything extra I want to use to help people.

Action in this stage refers to participants actually changing their major, lifestyle, or even returning to Haiti for long-term service opportunity. Action also refers to participants resuming their position in the Haiti Connection sharing their experience with other members. This process of sharing their knowledge and experience with Haiti Connection members that are planning to visit Haiti leads to deeper reflection understanding of how this experience has impacted their life and their worldview. “I do think of myself as a global citizen now. You know I am not just here in America, I am here in this world” (Katie).
Recommendations for Student Affairs Practitioners

After reflecting on the findings of the present research and previous studies done on the topic, there are several components that are important to incorporate to create successful international service learning programs. First, it is important to provide international service learning participants with an in depth orientation prior to the service learning experience. This orientation should include basic information about the culture, language, and current affairs in country. The ideal model would look similar to the Haiti Connection where participants are actively engaging in service prior to departure through fundraising and awareness raising in a student organization. Secondly, international service learning programs should be designed and evaluated to make sure they satisfy a real community need and relationships with communities abroad should be constantly nurtured. This will make the experience more beneficial for not only the community, but also the participants who will see that the work they are doing is actually making a difference. Thirdly, guided reflections with a mentor or professor should be held throughout the service learning experience and after completion of service. Participants should also keep a personal reflection in a journal. Through guided reflection, participants will be able to make meaning of their experience. When they encounter social inequality they should be posed to reflect on their own privilege. This will aid the participant in developing a greater self-awareness. Finally, upon the participant’s return to the United States, they should be provided with an outlet or means to continue service or share their experience with other people.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study focused on the experience of five college students on an international
service trip and there are several opportunities to explore this topic more in depth. First, future research could explore international service learning of larger and more diverse samples of college students at a university with a larger international service-learning program. Second, research could be done comparing the experience of students who participated in an international service-learning program at a public university vs. a private university. Third, a longitudinal study could be done through interview with select participants from Haiti Connection service trips for the past 20 years. Finally, research could be done to compare experiences of students who participate in Haiti Connection service trips after being involved with an organization compared to students who simply participate in a week-long service trip with no prior involvement in the area served.

Conclusion

Social inequality exists throughout the world. Although many people may be aware of these inequalities, they do not know what to do to solve these problems. Higher education institutions have the unique opportunity to fulfill their mission by raising student awareness and promoting a democratic society that encourages and supports involvement in civic activities in the community. One way to do this is through service learning. The concept of service learning is not a new one. In fact, it reaches back to the 1860s during the land grant movement and John Dewey’s philosophical pragmatism during the early decades of the twentieth century (Stanton, Giles & Cruz 1999). The goal of service learning is to connect students to their community in addition to instilling a sense of active citizenship. The Haiti Connection service trips are one way that a mid-size public university in the Midwest tries to educate its students through and international service learning experience.
The current study sought to analyze the perspectives of students on service trips taken to Haiti by the Newman Catholic Center in (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change. Overall participants were impacted by their experience in Haiti. Participants articulated a deeper awareness and understanding of social inequality and of their own privilege. Participants also communicated a commitment to continue service, change their career plans and change their lifestyles. Student development occurred in three phases including pre-departure, experience, and re-entry. Engaged preparation, reflection, consequential connection, and human connection were found to be very important components of this international service learning experience.

As the number of service learning programs continues to grow, it will become a top priority for Student Affairs professionals to develop and evaluate service-learning programs based on student development outcomes. International service learning is a wonderful educational opportunity in which participants can learn to be independent and global citizens but this development is not intrinsic. Learning outcomes can be achieved by preparing participants through active engagement and orientation processes, developing programs that allow the student to experience consequential and human connection, and by guiding to participants to critically reflect on their experience while abroad and upon their return to the United States. The model created through this research could serve as a starting point to creating meaningful student experiences that have a life-long impact.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Qualitative Study of Service Learning in Haiti

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Sara Boro from the College Student Affairs program in the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate. You have been asked to participate in this study because you will be participating in the upcoming service trip to Haiti as a part of the Haiti Connection.

The purpose of this study is to explore students’ perspectives of international service learning regarding issues of (1) educating students about social injustice and (2) cultivating a desire for students to advocate for social change.

Should you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to interview with the primary investigator of the study for approximately 30 minutes to 1 hour on the topic of your experience in Haiti. You will also be asked to submit a copy of your journal entries for analysis. During the interview, you will be asked a series of open-ended questions and will be encouraged to give your honest opinions in all situations. The risks associated with this study are no greater than those associated with daily life.

The interview will be audio and/or video recorded, but the researcher will not place your name on any documents resulting from the interview. Any information that is obtained with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be viewed only by the principal researcher and the thesis advisor for the study. If a quote is made, a pseudonym will be used to ensure that you are not misquoted. This informed consent document will be kept separate from the interview data. All audio recordings as well as transcripts of the recording will be kept locked in a secure place for three years beyond the conclusion of the study and will then be destroyed to protect your privacy.

Beyond the one-hour interview, the only other contact that will be made with you is the emailing of the completed transcription for your review. If you are comfortable with the accuracy of the transcription, you will not need to respond and this will conclude your participation in the study. If you disagree with any part of the transcription, alterations will be made.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice your future relation with Eastern Illinois University, Newman Catholic Center, Haiti Connection, or Department of Counseling and Student Development. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask. If you have additional questions later, please contact Sara Boro (seboro@eiu.edu) or the thesis advisor Dr. Richard Roberts (rlroberts@eiu.edu) who will be happy to answer them.

You are making a decision about whether or not to participate. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to participate. You may withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may be entitled after signing this form should you choose to discontinue participation in this study.

In signing this form, I:

1) agree to participate in all aspects of the study voluntarily;
2) am aware of and agree to the audio/video recording of all interviews;
3) recognize that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time;
4) am giving permission to use any quotations without attribution.

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this thesis research study.

_____________________________  ________________
Printed Name of Participant     Date

_____________________________  ________________
Signature of Participant       Date

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL 61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

_____________________________  ________________
Signature of Investigator     Date
APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

The following questions will guide the interview:

Previous Involvement:
1. Tell me a little bit about where you come from.
2. What sort of organizations were you involved with prior to Haiti Connection?
3. Before coming to Eastern had you traveled internationally or participated in any service trips?

Involvement in Haiti Connection
1. How did you first hear about the Haiti Connection?
2. When did you become a member?
3. What factors influenced your decision to go to Haiti?
4. Do you hold any leadership positions in the organization?

Haiti Trip
1. What factors influenced your decision to go on the service trip to Haiti?
2. What did you hope to gain from this experience?
3. Did you have any reservations about going on the trip?
4. Talk to me about the different projects you worked on while you were in Haiti.
5. I know that you hold daily reflections while you are in Haiti, can you talk to me about those reflections?
6. What were the components of the trip most meaningful to you? If those components were not included, what would have been different?

Social Justice/Future Plans
7. How has this experience impacted your view of social inequality?
8. How do you define social inequality now that you have been to Haiti?
9. What have you gained from this experience?
10. Do you have plans to continue working with Haiti Connection or another organization to promote social equality? Please explain.