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# The Development and Integration of Community Engagement in Graduate Education

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT  
IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

by

PATRICIA ANN NOSKE

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of the University of the Incarnate Word  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

UNIVERSITY OF THE INCARNATE WORD

December 2018

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When embarking on this marathon six years ago, I had no certainty as to my destination nor did I know what would be encountered along the way. It became apparent, however, that knowing then what I came to learn would have overwhelmed and terrified me when that first step was taken. Yet, what I have come to learn is much greater than a collection of research tools, statistics, and concepts. I have learned about others in my community and the world beyond, and most importantly, I have learned about myself and the absolute certainty that one person can most definitely make a difference when there is a dream and determined focus.

As this phase of my work comes to a conclusion, it is critical to recognize those who have contributed to this effort. My deep appreciation is extended to those who participated in this study – their contributions cannot accurately be measured for without their willingness to share their knowledge and wisdom, this dissertation would not have been completed. I am extremely grateful to my chair, Dr. Arthur Hernandez, as he worked with me to refine and narrow my focus and offered unfailing encouragement throughout the dissertation process; I often heard “you can do this.” The contributions of committee members Dr. Susan Hall and Dr. Tisha Harding have been invaluable. Without their guidance, patience, and insistence on excellence, I would not have reached this milestone. They prodded, pushed, persevered, and believed in me when I lost belief in myself. Saying “thank you” for their incredible efforts is not nearly sufficient but I am hopeful they know the extent of my gratitude.

## Acknowledgments – Continued

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Above all, I could not have completed this journey without the unconditional love and support from family: my daughters Lee-Ann Halvorson and Janice Noske, and my “sons,” Dean Halvorson and Noah Spangler. Their encouragement and faith in my abilities continually provided me with the strength needed to push through when the going became difficult. They have *my* unconditional love, always.

Patricia Ann Noske

## DEDICATION

*Consult not your fears but your hopes and your dreams. (Pope John XXIII)*

To my husband and parents who watch over me – they believed I could do anything, so I did. To my grandsons Niklas and Riley, and to all those who dream and who have only begun their journeys – I offer these words with the hope that *your* dreams will guide and inspire you.

What if you have no dreams?  
 Those who hunger and those who thirst  
 For bread to fill their bellies and water to moisten dry, cracked lips  
 Do they still dream?  
 In this world, those who have lost their dreams  
 Form compelling images in lands where poverty extends beyond what the eye can see.  
 People who no longer dream in lands with borders  
 Crying out for understanding without boundaries,  
 For a land with roots deeply planted and needs that stretch beyond imagination,  
 A land where children yearn to feel the hand of God.

Dreaming and wishing cannot change the world. Or can they?  
 Plans can be made but plans change.  
 Hearts and minds may be closed, but can they also be changed?  
 Where does change begin?  
 Maybe each of us is like a tree with our roots planted deep inside our souls,  
 With a belief that one person can make a difference.  
 Having faith and a willingness to serve, going out into the world to teach and to learn,  
 Loss and grief etched in the faces of children, so much sadness and so many tears,  
 Bringing help to those who struggle and comfort to those in the face of tragedy,

With love and the Word incarnate  
 Those giving of themselves go beyond the horizon  
 To serve those who have lost so much.  
 Becoming partners to create new visions,  
 Inspiring and building new communities,  
 Foundations built with love and roofs made of hope.  
 The sages write of dreams,  
 But what are they, really?  
 I believe they are wishes made deep inside our hearts.  
 With open minds continuing to seek, those who dare to dream  
 Transform the ordinary into something special. A dream to make the world a better place.

## THE DEVELOPMENT AND INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN GRADUATE EDUCATION

Patricia Ann Noske

University of the Incarnate Word, 2018

This study, framed by Kolb's experiential learning theory, explored the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement. Questions have arisen as to whether students with advanced degrees are entering the job market with sought-after skills. In response, universities have continued to seek program improvements to enhance quality learning experiences to better prepare them for what follows after graduation. Within higher education, community engagement programs have been identified as an approach to respond to challenges as they have been shown to add substance, meaning, and value to students' learning.

An epistemological case study was conducted to better understand how graduate faculty and staff viewed the roles of graduate education and community engagement within their environments and how community engagement could be developed and integrated into graduate programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. This approach also provided the opportunity to understand the "how" and "why" of a particular phenomenon that is both complex and contemporary in nature rather than historical.

Domain and taxonomic analyses of interviews revealed five main topics: the purpose of graduate education; how practicums provide engagement opportunities; serving others; the role of reflection; and, barriers limiting further engagement practice. Findings indicated that engagement makes a difference in what students learn; however, topics that emerged from the

data expressed complex perspectives as to how engagement should function within graduate education. Continued exploration on these topics is likely to yield benefits to students with corresponding and reciprocal benefits to the university and the communities it serves.

The data revealed a willingness to support the inclusion of community engagement practices in graduate programs at a private faith-based university in south Texas. However, there was no clear indication to suggest how to overcome identified barriers that presently limit engagement practice to existing programs. Moving forward, it is likely that multiple approaches to engagement will need to be more fully examined. Advocates of greater engagement practice to achieve a fully engaged campus will likely need to address differences in how practices are structured but they may also find it helpful to assess those areas where there is common ground.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xii
INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND .....	1
Theoretical Framework .....	16
Statement of the Problem .....	27
Purpose of the Study .....	29
Research Questions .....	29
Significance of the Study .....	30
Assumptions .....	34
Limitations and Delimitations .....	35
Definition of Terms .....	35
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	38
Major Areas of the Review .....	38
Service-Learning .....	38
Matters of Definition .....	40
Claims Made by Advocates .....	46
Issues of Logistics and Implementation .....	51
Studies of Various Types of Effectives .....	57
Reflection/Reflexivity .....	63

## Table of Contents—Continued

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Servant Leadership.....68

Summary .....71

## METHODOLOGY .....72

Introduction.....72

Design .....74

Population and Sample .....76

Data Collection and Analysis.....78

Validity, Triangulation and Trustworthiness .....80

Ethical Issues .....85

## FINDINGS .....85

Analysis.....86

Level One: Interviewing .....88

Level Two: Transcription .....89

Level Three: Identifying Key Ideas .....93

Level Four: Domain Analysis .....94

Level Five: Taxonomic Analysis .....95

Summary .....99

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS .....101

Discussion.....101

The purpose of graduate education .....102

## Table of Contents—Continued

## DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

## Discussion

How practicums provide engagement opportunities .....	104
Serving others .....	107
Role of reflection .....	108
Reflection as a means of connecting learning .....	109
Reflection as a means of personal development .....	109
Reflection as a means to affect attitudes and values.....	110
Connecting the practicum and reflection .....	111
Barriers limiting further engagement practice .....	113
Implications.....	115
Limitations .....	118
Recommendations for Future Research .....	119
Conclusions.....	121
REFERENCES .....	123
APPENDICES .....	142
Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval .....	143
Appendix B: Informed Consent Document .....	144
Appendix C: List of Interview Questions .....	148
Appendix D: E-mail to Potential Participants.....	149
Appendix E: Interview Matrix .....	150

## LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. First Layer of Analysis: Interview Questions, Participant Responses, and Follow-up Questions.....	89
2. Examples of Decisions Made During Transcription.....	90
3. Layers Two and Three of Analysis: Included Terms, Semantic Relationships, and Cover Terms .....	94
4. Examples of Evidence for the Identification of Cover Terms/Domains.....	95
5. Identified Domains.....	95
6. Identification of “Content” Taxonomy from P2’s Transcript Analysis.....	96
7. Identification of Domains and Taxonomies.....	97
8. Examples of Interview Text Leading to the Identification of Taxonomy: Barriers to Transfer Learning .....	97
9. Examples of Interview Text Leading to the Identification of Taxonomy: Development of Approaches to Improve Learning .....	98
10. Examples of Interview Text Leading to the Identification of Taxonomy: Applications of Learning Experiences Beyond the Classroom .....	99

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Lewin's Experiential Learning Model .....	21
2. Dewey's Experiential Learning Model .....	21
3. Kolb's Experiential Learning Model .....	21
4. Service-Learning Model from Woodring College of Education .....	39
5. Case study process illustrating the iterative nature of case study research.....	76
6. Example of learning process based on Kolb's experiential learning model .....	112
7. Lewin's Change Model.....	117

## **Introduction and Background**

*We need to envision a transformed system of higher education that can support learners in gaining self-knowledge for personal and professional potential, so they can demonstrate real competencies and succeed in life. (Brzycki & Brzycki, 2016, p. 29)*

Universities throughout the United States have undergone significant changes over the last two centuries. Contemporary institutions face new challenges, however, that call for “a new model that is more appropriate to the needs of our society in the twenty-first century” (Crow & Dabars, 2015, p. 18). Furthermore, contemporary institutions represent “a reconceptualization of the American research university as a complex and adaptive comprehensive knowledge enterprise committed to discovery, creativity, and innovation” (p. 19). Crow and Dabars acknowledge an increased demand for new approaches to acquire knowledge within university communities. This argument is echoed by Beck et al. (2016) with the suggestion that “graduate programs must rethink and reform the training and mentoring” of students (p. 138). Community engagement practice functions as a means of connecting students to the core purpose of a university and there is a need “to examine what institutional structures, policies, and practices support or hinder the successful development of the community-engaged scholarly identity” (Ward & Miller, 2016, p. 191).

When considering the design of knowledge production, Crow and Dabars (2015) suggest that “the reflexive relationship between knowledge and its institutional context” be considered (p. 177). The question they pose is related to whether universities should replicate established processes or innovate with designs that transform. They argue that “each disciplinary culture must overcome its ambivalence toward different orientations and approaches to solving problems ...[and] organize for collaboration across disciplines to establish the preconditions essential to effective teaching and research as well as constructive social and economic outcomes” (p. 206).

O'Meara and Jaeger (2006) note that the overarching goal of institutions offering graduate education programs is to build capacity while preparing students for a future after graduation. At the beginning of the 20th century, the presidents of 14 universities in the United States gathered to discuss graduate education and its future. Historically, individuals in this country who sought advanced degrees had traveled to Europe due to a lack of opportunity in this country. According to Crow and Dabars (2015), the structures of undergraduate programs in the United States were modeled after Oxford and Cambridge (English models). However, it was the German model that heavily influenced graduate education in this country and carried with it what Crow and Dabars describe as a "reciprocity of learning and research" (p. 76). The intent of the German model was to cultivate the individual, so that it "engages not only the individual but also embraces the dimension of the ethical citizen in society and thus service to the community" (p. 79). There was also the objective to empower students with the ability to integrate various educational disciplines so that students could function more effectively in global economies.

The force of those 14 men who met in the early 1900s has led to the growth of graduate degree opportunities for more than one million students since the early 1900s, (Nerad, June, & Miller, 1997; Thelin, 2011). However, as noted by Nerad, June, and Miller who published in the mid-1990s, some advanced degrees were too narrowly focused, too time-consuming to complete, and did not adequately prepare graduates for a world outside academia. As universities continued to meet external and internal demands, which were at times conflicting, they continued their struggle to identify educational approaches that met the needs of students as well as the requirements of funding agencies, the labor market, and governing boards.

Thelin (2011) describes a period of university-building and institutional evolution in the late 1880s and early 1900s; a time when institutions were very competitive. Administrators and

philanthropic supporters focused on extravagant structural designs and attempted to lure talented faculty from competing universities. Additionally, this period was not without religious influence as significant contributions were made to universities with affiliations to the Baptist and Methodist churches. In 1884, a group of wealthy men and women endowed the formation of the Catholic University of America in Philadelphia. Although there was a strong focus on the physical structures of universities, there were also changes to “intellectual structures” during this period as university presidents sought to strengthen faculty and reputation (Thelin, p. 116). This helped to create the impetus for ever-increasing donations, particularly from such captains of industry as Carnegie, Vanderbilt, and Rockefeller. As funding increased, so did curriculum. This eventually extended to graduate programs as universities responded to the increased demand for specialization.

As this cycle of growth continued, so too did the physical structures of campuses as graduate studies required facilities that supported “modern scholarship” as the ideal university setting (Thelin, 2011, p. 130). It was also during this period of time that other Catholic universities experienced growth due to the influx of Catholic immigrants to urban areas rather than rural locations (e.g., St. Louis, Boston, and Chicago). Furthermore, this period of academic growth welcomed women, particularly with the formation of women’s colleges that developed relationships with other universities for women to pursue graduate degrees (e.g., Bryn Mawr and Johns Hopkins). However, Thelin also notes that during that growth period, women faced discrimination in academic employment markets. They were marginalized and thought of as “lone voyagers” and were delegated to the “academic kitchen” (Thelin, p. 143). Although women continued to enroll in colleges and universities across the country, with continued growth in graduate programs, a “pervasive chilly climate” for women continued to persist (Thelin, p.



344). According to O’Grady (2000), “education has always been contested territory, with conflicting and divergent interests competing for dominance” (p. 2).

Cassuto (2015) asserts that despite the evolution of educational initiatives, graduate programs should be restructured in ways that reflect the expectations of employment markets. He suggests that this also applies to the length of time to degree as well as the fostering of intellectual curiosity outside of academia. An additional concern facing universities in today’s competitive environment, according to Cassuto, is the reality that too many students graduate with a terminal degree disenchanted with the graduate school process, raising the question as to the downstream effect of their discontent. Recognizing that time-to-degree completion has remained a core issue in graduate education for decades (an average of nine years for doctoral students), universities continue their efforts to better understand the dynamics involved and address the continuing questions relating to the value of advanced degrees.

Nerad et al. (1997) previously noted that universities had continued to create new programs and structures designed to respond to increasing challenges, and as of the mid-1990s, the external job market remained “one of the strongest external forces exerting pressure on graduate education” (1997, p. 8). In the decades since, this pressure remains, as indicated during a recent panel discussion at the University of the Incarnate Word when panelists discussed the expectations by those in the external job market that graduate students would have specific skills to function and succeed after graduation (Triple Helix Career Panel, 2018). There was an emphasis on the need for graduates to have strong skills that extended beyond subject matter knowledge, including:

- Listening effectively and communicating clearly
- Remaining flexible
- Working well on teams
- Having a diversity of perspectives and a willingness to take risks

- Maintaining intellectual curiosity
- Having strong emotional intelligence
- Exhibiting strong analytical skills and critical thinking skills.

From a strategic perspective, according to the panelists, universities must identify ways to sharpen these skills, not only to provide students with the tools needed after graduation but also to remain competitive in the educational marketplace. As a result, universities continue to face the challenge of ensuring that graduate programs not only provide value but are also competitive to maintain enrollment and retention through graduation (Triple Helix Career Panel, 2018).

Zusman (2005) focuses on the expectations and pressures in higher education from external markets with regard to program choices, research outcomes, and financial considerations (p. 109-150). Although Zusman's comments were primarily directed to state-supported institutions, there is similarity to the findings made by Nerad et al. (1997) as well as Cassuto (2015) and Dorn (2017) that the public views higher education as "a private benefit, rather than a broader social good" (Zusman, p. 121). As noted by Dorn (2017), students in the 21st century are focused on "obtaining lucrative employment" (p. 228) with a "student as consumer" approach rather than "student as learner" (p. 229). Commenting on the criticism leveled against colleges and universities that they are not providing students with skills relating to critical thinking, problem solving, and community, Dorn notes the resiliency of higher education and his belief that institutions "will foster the civic capability and commitment to the public good" (p. 236).

At the beginning of the 21st century, Weidman, Twale, and Stein (2001), published their report on graduate school socialization. They assert that it "refers to the processes through which individuals gain the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for entry into a professional career requiring an advanced level of specialized knowledge and skills" (p. iii). Based on that

perspective, these authors report on changes that should be considered to “develop more effective graduate degree programs” (p. iv); specifically, greater curriculum flexibility and more choices to improve student versatility after graduation. The authors call for a continual process of reexamination “to reflect changing global trends, technology, diverse populations, and societal demands for educating skilled professionals” (p. 100).

The reality in today’s business world and higher education is a continued obligation to address these types of needs, as suggested by Weidman et al. (2001), and the needs of the communities they serve (Bowen & McPherson, 2016; Cassuto, 2015; Dorn, 2017). For example, Mattingly (2017) comments that “the mathematical models of academic economists seemed detached from the actual worlds of financial exchange,” with many doctoral graduates going into academia “ill-equipped” to explain their knowledge to students (p. 339).

Whether one is in agreement with Cassuto’s perspective that graduate education may be “broken,” (2015, p. 1), there is consistency in the literature that programs may be improved by taking a holistic perspective when examining how they should function (Brzycki & Brzycki, 2016; Cumming, 2010; Kahu, 2013; Kolb & Kolb, 2009; Koulsh, 2000; Rae, 2007). When discussions focus on ways to address problems, Cassuto (2015) states his perspective that graduate programs cannot be separated from a university’s undergraduate program; “each makes the other possible” (p. 210) based on the symbiotic relationship between programs. Furthermore, Brzycki and Brzycki (2016) argue that more needs to be done in higher education with regard to meeting students’ needs. Taking a “holistic view of who they are and how to succeed” can lead to a more transformed system of higher education and one that begins “with each individual, one person at a time” (pp. 29-30).

Additionally, there is evidence that the cost of a university education, regardless of program, continues to escalate and many of those who stand outside academia doubt its value and effectiveness in a world with constant changes and shifting demands and expectations (Cassuto, 2015; Dorn, 2017; Mattingly, 2017; Thelin, 2011; Zusman, 2005). Thelin makes this point regarding the difficulty when assessing the effectiveness of university boards and administrators in the arena of graduate education.

[They] are generally eager to do a good job ...[however] it is extraordinarily difficult to evaluate the quality of the 'product' ...The challenge ...during the twenty-first century is to acknowledge its historical good fortune and to accept its role as a mature institution, along with the responsibilities that accompany that maturity. This task is ...rediscovering essential principles and values that have perhaps been obscured ...going back to the basics of these fundamental matters of institutional purpose (p. 362).

Building on the argument made by Thelin (2011), Brzycki and Brzycki (2016) not only emphasize the need for a more transformed educational system, they also suggest a need for embedding practices that support student transformation. They call for “action by higher education policy makers, education leaders, and practitioners alike to reshape our educational system with a new sense of focus on the self and the paramount importance of the individual” (p. 32), arguing that such a focus benefits the student who will ultimately benefit others.

Furthermore, Cassuto (2015) continually reasserts his perspective that there is a need for a higher ethic in graduate education with everyone involved in its delivery committed to taking ownership and responsibility, as well as a willingness to develop appropriate methodologies to improve the status quo. The argument is also made by Mattingly (2017) that “without roots in the multiple approaches to knowledge, colleges and universities lose their reason for being” (p. 342).

Persistent challenges continue to present themselves in all higher education environments; economically, socially, and technologically (Johansson & Felten, 2014). In changing times, universities have a unique opportunity to transform their environments to ensure that students

achieve maximum benefits from their educational experiences. How that is achieved becomes an overarching issue, one in which both universities and students have a vested interest. As observed by Johansson and Felten, “we live in transformational times” and educators must continue to seek and implement innovative methodologies that sharpen the skills of students within university environments (p. 1).

Graduate programs face particular challenges that have caused some in the higher education field to question their ability to prepare students for employment. More specifically, this has led “graduate students to a narrowly specialized course of study that is at best impractical and at worst destructive” (Cassuto, 2015, p. 2). As indicated by Zusman (2005), there is a continuing debate on whether there are too many students graduating with advanced degrees trying to find employment in a market with decreasing opportunities. She raises multiple questions about future trends, including the reality that students graduating with a Ph.D. can only find jobs they never expected to take and students who are currently pursuing doctoral degrees have no guarantee they will be able to find a job in their field. Although Zusman raises these questions, she does not have definitive answers. She does suggest, however, that universities consider broadening the curriculum to provide alternative opportunities for those graduating with advanced degrees. Understanding that market needs in the future may well be different from today, Zusman acknowledges that one alternative is to maintain the *status quo*. Furthermore, Goodhue (2017) notes the lack of research in the field of community engagement and graduate education, while recognizing the research previously done with undergraduate programs. She argues that those working at the institutional level have both opportunities and responsibilities to maximize the ways in which engagement practices can benefit both students and communities.

This issue had also been previously raised by Applegate (2002) and O'Meara and Jaeger (2006), all of whom argued for engagement practices to prepare graduate students for faculty positions.

Johansson and Felten (2014) argue that the economic challenges of today's world necessitate the need for universities to return to what they view as the essential purpose of all higher education – to create environments where students think more critically and understand more completely to ensure they are prepared for life after graduation. Additionally, universities are seeking to provide greater value for university education dollars by enhancing quality learning experiences for all students and to better prepare them for the future. When educational experiences contribute toward greater value, students benefit. (Klentzin and Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski, 2013; Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010; Miller & Archuleta, 2013; Pomerantz, 2006). This perspective is reinforced by Bowen and McPherson (2016) who also emphasize the need for a better understanding of today's higher education environment in order to prepare more effectively for the future. They suggest a stronger alignment between the needs of communities outside academia and how institutions meet those needs. Furthermore, Kuh et al. make the argument that the growing emphasis by universities on the development of initiatives that affect student engagement reflects the belief that the action of engagement provides a more meaningful learning experience. Although the focus of these authors' work is in undergraduate education, there is transferability to graduate education based on the belief, as identified by Kuh et al., that when students are more engaged, they are not only more productive they also strengthen personal development (Morin, Jaeger, & O'Meara, 2016).

Some researchers question the future direction of higher education and how it will achieve its purpose; that is, to advance knowledge (Post, Ward, Longo, & Saltmarsh, 2016) and produce "trained minds" (Mattingly, 2017, p. 7). Engaging scholars at a deeper level remains

critical to the success of higher education, although there continues to be some disagreement as to how this engagement is understood and incorporated into the praxis of educating those who will become responsible for leading us into the future (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011). O'Meara (2008) makes evident her perspective that as students shape their thinking about scholarship, they should take a broader view – one that takes into account the ability to connect educational philosophies across different disciplines and an ability to connect the abstract with the world outside academia (p. 26). Although this author focuses on the transition of doctoral students to faculty positions, she makes the point that when those students are not exposed to engagement opportunities they may not understand how their particular fields of expertise relate to their later work in academia.

At a time when O'Meara and Jaeger (2006) offered their perspectives on the inclusion of community engagement initiatives within the higher education environment, they were noting the renewed interest in that practice over the previous 20 years. This interest in engagement, however, has historically been focused on service-learning in undergraduate programs in an effort to keep up with an increasing awareness of global issues. The authors offer their opinion that educators within the graduate education environment have lagged behind in evaluating their programs to do the same, resulting in what they describe as a failure to prepare graduate students for the future. As a result, these authors maintain that graduate programs may be less than adequate despite the acceptance of the argument that graduate education, in general, advances knowledge.

O'Meara and Jaeger (2006) also make the assertion that a paradigm shift is essential for educators to expand their vision as to what constitutes knowledge, how it is acquired and applied, and how it is carried forward, particularly in graduate education. Integration should not

be done with a broad brush stroke, however, based on the success of service-learning programs at the undergraduate level. Students within the graduate education environment have different experiences and their *a priori* knowledge determines how they process those experiences. Furthermore, graduate departments and disciplines within a university's environment have very different interests, foundations, and goals, all of which impact how integration may be incorporated. Historically, the basic nature of graduation education may make it difficult for those tasked with the evolution of educational initiatives to appreciate the value of integrating community service. Typically, these programs have focused on basic rather than applied research that is scientifically based.

Within the literature, researchers have described the benefits associated with integrating community engagement into graduate education through the creation of opportunities for students to more effectively gain useable skills (e.g., research and teaching). These benefits also encompass a deeper understanding of a particular discipline and establishing connections with public agencies aligned with education. Regardless of any agreement with this point of view, many researchers in the field of higher education make clear that the quality of education is improved (Burnett, Hamel, & Long, 2004; O'Meara, 2008; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Tennant & Pogson, 2005; Trautmann & Krasny, 2006; Wittmer, 2004). To create a shift in thinking, O'Meara and Jaeger (2006) contend that educators within graduate education move away from what they refer to as an "ascendance of disciplines and specialized knowledge" (p. 10). They also point out that there have been other programs (e.g., medicine, law) that have been successful in their efforts to link theory and practice, particularly within clinical settings.

Morin, Jaeger, and O'Meara (2016) describe the continued interest within graduate education in service-learning initiatives, particularly in professional fields. However, they also



are clear that the integration of community engagement and service-learning activities within graduate education continues to face challenges, including a need to assess educational outcomes that may be associated with its incorporation across all disciplines. As a result, they suggest that it becomes necessary to distinguish between professional programs and those that may be viewed as more traditional (e.g., humanities and business).

Compounding the issue of integrating community engagement initiatives into graduate education is a focus on funding and support for research, primarily in specialized areas of expertise (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). For example, some universities provide compensation or tuition waivers for teaching assistants within graduate programs in an effort to develop future faculty, yet many universities do not. Furthermore, there are relatively few opportunities for graduate students to serve in a community capacity as an extension of their academic work. According to these authors, this results in a decreased ability of these students to understand how their particular discipline might contribute to the real world and how their knowledge might be transformed through interaction with settings outside academia. O'Meara (2008) also notes the importance of students understanding "the intellectual value of connecting ideas across academic disciplines, applying abstract ideas to real-world problems" (p. 26).

According to Scott (2006), "high technology and rapid globalization are altering work, leisure time, and formal schooling structures. ...academic institutions...must remain flexible enough to respond to emerging social demands, technological change, and economic realignments (p. 1)." How universities articulate their approach to these challenges should be rooted in their mission, Scott asserts. Furthermore, according to Feldner (2006), faith-based universities face the additional challenge of how to communicate their mission to ensure its clarity and meaning. They must also identify ways to strengthen their message while engaging

students academically. These challenges come at a time when the cost of higher education continues to escalate and when non-secular universities continue to expand their academic base. Feldner also notes that faith-based universities find themselves facing the additional task of maintaining their spiritual identities.

The University at the core of this study, a private faith-based institution in south Texas, was founded on the concept of Christian service that is preserved and extended “through teaching and scholarship, encompassing research and artistic expression” (“History,” 2018). In response to the challenge of identifying new methodologies that improve the value of college education, the literature suggests universities continue to find innovative pedagogies to engage their students while maintaining their mission (Feldner, 2006; Scott, 2006). Higher education, while recognized as a pathway toward a successful professional career, continues its evolution to meet the needs of a changing world (Engle & Lynch, 2009; Harvey, 2000; Johansson & Felten, 2014) and it is acknowledged by Engle and Lynch that in order to achieve such a goal, students must stay motivated and engaged. It appears, however, that challenges arise when it becomes necessary to identify, develop, and execute approaches that enable students to reap the benefits of a university education (Astin & Astin, 2000; Johansson & Felten, 2014). This is particularly true in graduate education (Morin, Jaeger, & O’Meara, 2016) and presents an even greater challenge in a faith-based environment (Feldner, 2006). Astin and Astin (2000) note the importance of leadership seeking ways to transform their institutions to ensure that the values identified by the Kellogg’s Foundation are passed on to students. These values, such as justice, equity, and responsibility, have always been included in the core values of the University involved in this study (“Core Values of the Mission,” 2018).

At a time when graduate education programs were being formed in the United States, a faith-based college for women was being established in the southwest. Furthermore, at a time of “institutional evolution” (Thelin, 2011, p. 113), the inception of a college based on religious principles may have seemed a precarious idea. This is particularly so for an initial group of three Sisters who had originally traveled from France to provide medical care and establish a hospital in early 1869 (Slattery, 1995). Following a tradition of service that had been in effect for more than 200 years, these Sisters managed to open an infirmary by the end of that first year, caring for those in need regardless of an ability to pay. By the early 1890s, the number of Sisters serving the community had increased to almost 200 and in addition to numerous hospitals, the Sisters opened a number of schools – one of which would become the University involved in this study.

Having received a charter in 1881 to open and operate schools, including those offering an undergraduate degree, the land on which the University would eventually be constructed was purchased in 1894. Built as a liberal arts college for women, the institution conferred the first baccalaureate degree in 1910. Graduate programs were initiated in 1950 and male students were admitted 20 years later at all levels of the college, although some men had previously been admitted into specific programs during the 1950s and 1960s. With the increasing enrollment of male students, athletic programs were expanded along with athletic fields. During the 1960s and 1970s, there were political and social issues throughout the United States yet the University had “escaped any major expression of student unrest or protest” (Slattery, 1995, p. 357). This was attributed to the college’s leadership and to the preservation of a “spirit of caring” (p. 358). In the years to follow, academic programs continued to expand and after the mid-1980s, enrollment

continually increased. In 1996, the college became a university and remains the largest Catholic university in Texas (Slattery, 1995).

At about that same time, the number of Sisters in faculty positions had notably declined and with the decline, an awareness of the Sisters' mission, which had for decades "permeated the campus ... was rarely discussed and simply taken for granted" (Slattery, 1995, p. 370). As the author notes, it became necessary to make mindful decisions that would continue the Sisters' mission of service. One of those subsequent decisions involved the requirement for all undergraduate students to complete 45 hours of community service prior to graduation as a means of continuing this tradition of service ("Community Service," 2018). This tradition was reinforced with the establishment of the Center for Civic Leadership by Sister Dorothy Ettling, "dedicated to promoting the common good for those in most need" ("ECCL History," 2018; "Founder," 2018).

From the time of its inception in the 19th century to the present time, the University remains grounded in its commitment to service and to educating students through that lens. As noted by Sister Ettling, "service and action for social justice are major tenets of the university's philosophy of education, and they offer a fertile ground for faculty and student involvement" (2013, p. 3). Based on that philosophical approach at the University, the perspective of Beere, Votruba, and Wells (2011) shifts to the forefront; that being, "to move forward, colleges and universities need to deeply embed public engagement in the fabric of their institutions" (p. 31). This process of alignment, as argued by the authors, is essential to ensure that a university's vision is clearly communicated and supported by its actions, both inside and outside the classroom.

At the time the institution was established in the 1890s, the idea of a religious-based institution was not new. Universities founded on religious principles trace back to the Colonial era; however, none of those original institutions had a basis in the Catholic faith. Regardless, many of those early colleges and universities (e.g., Harvard and Yale) were involved in work that could be described as mission-driven even though there was a bias toward “established denominations” (Thelin, 2011, p. 29) with educational opportunities denied to women and persons of color. Thelin asserts that it is possible to recognize and respect the historic traditions of a university while accepting the premise that its heritage may function as “a source of renewal and rediscovery” (p. xi). It is also important to consider that assessing the current needs of a university’s community requires far more than financial resources. As Thelin explained, universities “shape the dominant institutional imagery of our national commitment to academic pursuits and advanced learning” (p. 72). However, there are other organizations connected to universities that, while less visible, are no less important. Colleges and universities are not isolated entities, separate and apart from their communities. Rather, they are embedded in the fabric of those communities and as such, the connections between them provide ample opportunities for students to gain knowledge and expand their learning (O’Meara, 2008).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Merriam (2009) explains that “a theoretical framework underlies all research... (it) is the underlying structure, the scaffolding or frame” guiding the scholar’s study. While no theory is considered to be all encompassing, its use does allow for a better appreciation of the literature through a specific lens (Anfara & Mertz, 2006). Furthermore, understanding the link between theoretical concepts and research questions is, according to Rocco and Plakhotnik (2009), important to scholarly research as it offers a frame within which to navigate and understand the

issues involved. Selection of a specific theory also allows scholars to build on existing studies to provide a lens that subsequently “becomes a transformative perspective that shapes” the narrative (Creswell, 2014).

Grant and Osanloo (2016) describe the use of a blueprint when building a house as an analogy to describe the process of selecting a theoretical framework. For dissertations, this framework functions as “the foundation from which all knowledge is constructed (metaphorically and literally) for a research study” (p. 12). Furthermore, when selecting this framework, a researcher operates from his or her own personal perspective as to what constitutes knowledge. The selected framework is directly linked to the way the researcher thinks about and approaches learning and, as noted by Grant and Osanloo, there is no wrong choice.

A rich literature discusses the connection between concrete experiences and more abstract learning, and learning as an abstract concept dates back at least to the times of Confucius and Aristotle (as cited in Moser & vander Nat, 2003). Both suggested that learning and doing are irrevocably linked and that individuals strive to learn throughout their lives, both from examining what they want to learn and why something exists (Li, 2003). While this study is informed by Kolb’s experiential learning theory, understanding that theory begins with a review of the perspectives of John Dewey as Kolb relied heavily on Dewey’s philosophical approach to education and learning (Kolb, 1984).

A belief in learning from experience is an approach introduced into the mainstream by such theorists as Dewey (1938) who argued for the validity of experience when creating knowledge. For example, Dewey argued for a dual approach to learning, combining the “longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience”; the experiences of today contribute toward understanding the learning of tomorrow and this process continues throughout one’s life (1938,

p. 73). Dewey also suggested that from an intellectual perspective, learning activities must be observed intentionally if they are to move forward. Additionally, he did not consider all experiences equal in their educational outcomes; as “experiences that provide learning are never just isolated events in time” (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 162). Dewey, as noted by Roberts (2006), was considered by some as “the father of experiential learning” (p. 19) in that his basic beliefs focused on “the organic connection between education and personal experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 25).

For some researchers, experiential learning begins with the work of John Dewey. In *My Pedagogic Creed* (originally written in 1897), Dewey states that

all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions. Through this unconscious education the individual gradually comes to share in the intellectual and moral resources which humanity has succeeded in getting together (1929, p. 291).

Dewey is clear as to his belief that the situations in which individuals find themselves eventually lead to some kind of learning through transformation of the occurring event. Ultimately, he sees education as being a “process of living” rather than a process toward living in the future (p. 293).

More than 30 years after writing his *Creed*, Dewey published a text on *Experience and Education* (1938) that has become the basis for what many in the education field believe about experiential learning. Dewey made the argument for the consideration of education by examining issues that go beyond looking at the traditional perceptions of learning. He wrote,

The main purpose or objective is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life, by means of acquisition of the organized bodies of information and prepared forms of skill, which comprehend the material of instruction. ...Books, especially textbooks, are the chief representatives of the lore and wisdom of the past, while teachers are the organs through which pupils are brought into effective connection with the material. Teachers are the agents through which knowledge and skills are communicated... (p. 22)

Dewey declared that his intention was not to criticize existing philosophical issues of the era that pertained to education; rather, he wanted to make evident his perspective that what “is taught is thought of as essentially static. It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future (1938, p. 23).” Dewey was laying the groundwork for his theory of education; that it was grounded in experience while acknowledging that education and experience were not necessarily equal in their capacity to connect with learning.

Dewey (1938) also believed it was necessary to frame the experience through the clarification of specific principles. This would include his perspective that experiences occur on a continuum; as experiences change and evolve, so does learning. He also cites the principle of habit; meaning, “the basic characteristic ...is that every experience is enacted and undergone modifies the one who acts and undergoes, while this modification affects, whether we wish it or not, the quality of subsequent experiences” (1938, p. 56).

The importance and reality of accepting that experiences do not occur in isolation was explained by Dewey (1938), as he believed they are part of the broader environment in which individuals function and during which others affect how each experience is understood. This principle dictates that as an individual progresses through various situations, learning outcomes depend on the situation itself as well as what occurred before and after. Furthermore, Dewey believed in the collateral nature of learning “in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important” than the lesson or fact which is learned (p. 81). Ultimately, Dewey notes that, “when preparation is made the controlling end, then the potentialities of the present are sacrificed to a suppositious future” (p. 83).



Yardley, Teunissen, and Dornan (2012) condense their understanding of experiential learning to the definition, “constructing knowledge and meaning from real-life experience” (p. 161). These authors make the argument that one’s understanding of experiential learning involves the interpretation of the very nature of knowledge – what it is and how it is acquired. It is, they believe, “underpinned by the philosophical principle of constructionism, from which perspective social interactions are fundamental” (p. 162).

Kolb (1984) argues for the “legacy” of Dewey in the sense that he was “without doubt the most influential educational theorist of the twentieth century” and Dewey’s work “best articulates the guiding principles for programs of experiential learning in higher education” (p. 5). Kolb and Kolb (2005) are clear as to their understanding of experiential learning; that is, “a philosophy of education based on what Dewey called a ‘theory of experience’ ” (p. 193). They also make evident their perspective that “all learning is relearning” in the sense that experiences change how individuals perceive and absorb that to which they have been exposed (p. 194). This process of knowledge creation occurs as the experience is observed, reflected upon, and understood within the context of what is already known to the individual.

The literature on experiential learning focuses a great deal on the work of Kolb as well as the earlier works of such theorists as Dewey and Lewin, both from those in the research field who affirm Kolb’s opinions in a particular field or in practical application, and those who disagree with their development and framework. To better understand the perspectives of Dewey and Lewin, in that their approaches informed Kolb’s work, their learning models are illustrated in Figures 1 and 2. Kolb’s model is presented in Figure 3.

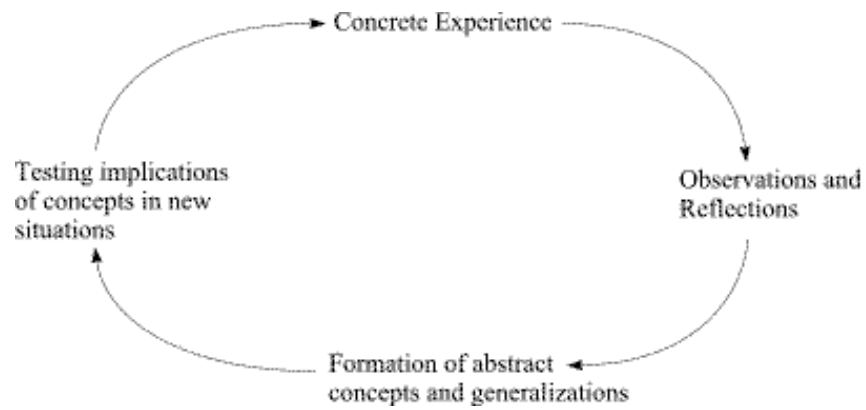


Figure 1. Lewin's experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984, p. 21).

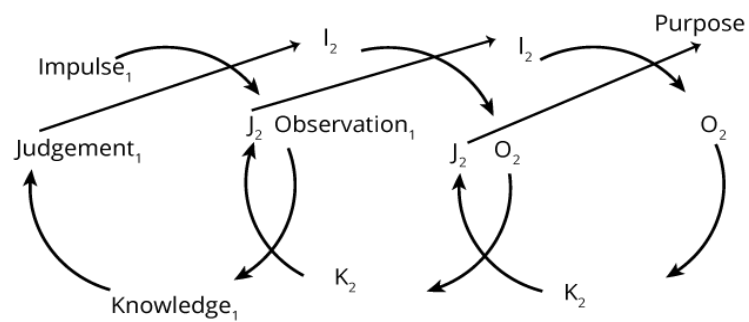


Figure 2. Dewey's experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984, p. 23).

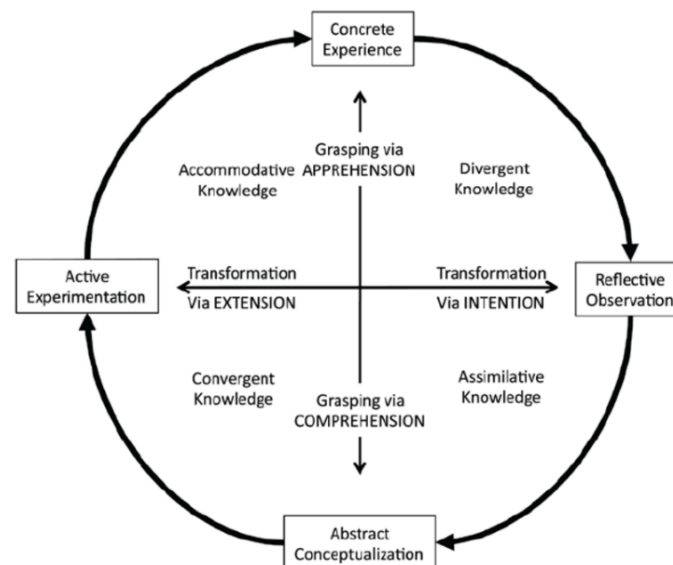


Figure 3. Kolb's experiential learning model (Kolb, 1984, p. 42).

The presentation of these models in a visual format illustrates the differences between earlier theorists and Kolb's perspective on the connections between a particular experience and the process that follows (Kolb, 1984). It is noted, however, that there are distinct similarities between Kolb's model (see Figure 3) and that of Lewin (see Figure 1). Both include four stages; both stress how the experience itself forms the foundation for the observation and reflection that follow; and, both indicate how the process leads the individual from the observing stage into the next phase where concepts may be formed, laying the groundwork for the development of new experiences. Furthermore, while Lewin's model included 'testing implications' in the fourth stage, Kolb uses the phrase, 'active experimentation.' Furthermore, Kolb explains that his model was intended to suggest the transforming effects of experience, and it includes greater detail on the kinds of knowledge created through the learning process.

The majority of the literature on experiential learning reviewed for this study, including Kolb's original and subsequent works, suggests he intended the model to represent learning stages. Regardless of the use of those two terms (styles and stages), Bergsteiner, Avery, and Neumann (2010) note their perspective that Kolb's model is flawed, primarily with regard to the classification of terms. While noting the influence of Kolb's work, Bergsteiner et al. stress that Kolb's model (see Figure 3) lacks clarity as to whether it is representative of four learning styles or learning stages. What becomes of interest, however, is their adaptation of Kolb's model using the words experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and doing as those words do not appear on Kolb's model as he illustrated. Their revised model identifies the same links between the experience itself, the observation and reflection that follow, the abstract conceptualization, and the active experimentation (Bergsteiner et al., p. 35).

Additional criticism is also offered by Tennant (2007) and Jarvis (2012) who argue that Kolb does not sufficiently focus on the reflective component of experiential learning and that his model does not consider the diversity of learners' cultural experiences. While Kolb's contribution to the field cannot be minimized, Rogers (1996) asserts that the elements of learning, to include goals and intentions, are not addressed by Kolb within the learning cycle. Furthermore, there is the opinion of Miettinen (2000) who suggests that the elements of experience and reflection in Kolb's cycle occur in isolation rather than through some type of interaction with others. Criticisms notwithstanding, Miettinen recognizes Kolb's influence in the arena of education and learning. Additionally, McCarthy (2010) addresses Kolb's work and affirms its presentation as a holistic and cyclical process that reflects how learning occurs when the cycle is completed.

Within graduate education, Malinen (2000) is clear as to her intention that experiential learning is a distinct phenomenon that helps those in the educational domain to understand how adults learn and develop methodologies to facilitate that learning. As Malinen attempts to better appreciate the gap between theory and practice, she points out many of the ambiguities among the various theoretical approaches to education and notes her belief in the emergence of a specific and formalized theory of adult education based on experiential learning. However, she views adult experiential learning as a phenomenon that lacks clarity and one that is not clearly defined. Her goal in reviewing existing theorists such as Knowles, Kolb, and Mezirow was to articulate specific aspects of learning – what is knowledge and knowing and what are their conditions?

Malinen (2000) is in agreement with Kolb that perceiving a particular experience does not automatically lead to learning; as Kolb stated, “something must be done with it” (1984, p.

42). Furthermore, reading or hearing about a particular fact does not mean that the individual ‘knows’ that fact; only that the fact exists within a particular framework. Malinen argues that it is only through the application of a specific ‘fact’ within context that it becomes known to the individual through some type of analytic process. For theorists such as Lewin and Kolb, that involves reflection. Malinen is specific, however, as to her intent that adult experiential learning is a “re-construction process” (p. 135) that involves first and second-order experiences. First-order experiences equate to personal knowledge and due to the re-constructive process, second-order experiences result from what the author describes as “discrepancies” within that process (p. 136).

It also becomes important to clarify and distinguish between experiential learning and experiential education, although the distinction may not be completely clear within the literature. The latter term is described as an “interdisciplinary field” due to its application within such fields as sociology and psychology (Carver, 1996, p. 149). The author describes this as a holistic process and one where the term is defined as, “education (the leading of students through a process of learning) that makes conscious application of the students' experiences by integrating them into the curriculum [and] ...involves any combination of senses...emotions...physical condition...and cognition (p. 151).”

Additionally, Breunig (2005) notes the “experience rich” nature of experiential education while recognizing that the description is valid only when experiences are viewed along with the “aim, intent, and purpose of their practice” (p. 107). She defines the term as, “a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values” (p. 108). Blenkinsop et al. (2016) comment on the “lack of clarity” when trying to determine the meaning

of experience within the experiential educational field. The authors attempt to simplify the term by comparing it to the more traditional forms of learning such as “feeding information to participants who then regurgitate it without any meaningful engagement” (p. 103). In a more recent article, Breunig (2017) attempts to further differentiate the terms, noting that “experiential education implies that there is an intended teleological aim toward which the experiential learning [as a teaching method] is directed” (p. 215).

Moving forward almost 50 years from the work of Dewey (1938), Kolb introduced experiential learning theory (ELT) to explicitly describe what Warren Bennis later referred to as “the missing link between theory and practice, between the abstract generalization and the concrete instance, between the affective and cognitive domains” (Kolb, 1984, p. ix). Based on a constructivist point of view, Kolb believed this theory specifically provides “something more substantial and enduring... the foundation for an approach to education and learning as a lifelong process” (p. 3). Acknowledging that he was not the one who created ELT in the concrete sense, Kolb does state that he “discovered” the theory within the works of such theorists as Dewey, Lewin, Vygotsky, and Piaget (Kolb, 2015).

Piaget was concerned with cognitive development and specifically, how experience shaped and informed intelligence. Vygotsky’s work also focused on cognitive development but on the idea that there was a direct link between learning and human development as shaped by experiences. Lewin primarily concentrated on an awareness of how practice and theory could be integrated, specifically in his subsequent work in the area of organizational development. Kolb states that all three, in addition to Dewey, had a significant effect on him and his development of ELT (Kolb, 1984).

Each individual encounters unique experiences that shape how those experiences translate into learning (Dewey, 1938). However, the depth of learning will depend not only on the experience itself but also in the manner by which an individual processes and absorbs that which is learned. Kolb (1984) wanted to make evident that learning from experience remained grounded in the concept of learning through the reality of the experience itself. While this approach may have been viewed as non-traditional in Dewey's time, learning through experience has become recognized as an accepted educational philosophy in today's university environments (Kolb, 2015; Lovat & Clement, 2016).

Although Kolb, like Dewey, also viewed experiential learning as a process, it was not viewed by him as one that was understood in terms of outcomes. He defined learning as a specific process, "whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (1984, p. 38). Furthermore, it was his belief that experiential learning should not be understood as "a set of tools and techniques to provide learners with experiences from which they can learn" but rather "a philosophy of education" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p. 193). Within the arena of higher education, Kolb questions whether specialized skills should continue to be the focus of curricula development or whether there should be a shift toward a more integrative development of approaches that emphasize the links between learning and experience. At an individual course level, developing content with an experience component may be more easily accepted, depending on the academic department. It becomes more problematic, in Kolb's opinion, to effect such change at an institutional level (Kolb, 1984). It is his belief, however, that universities should

provide the integrative structures and programs that counterbalance the tendencies toward specialization in student development and academic research. Continuous lifelong learning requires learning how to learn, and this involves appreciation of and competence in diverse approaches to creating, manipulating, and communicating knowledge (p. 206).

In the second edition to his work, Kolb's purpose was to build on his earlier perspectives rather than replace them. He wanted to make evident his intention with regard to the introduction of ELT, that being "to create, through a synthesis of the works of foundational scholars, a theory that helps explain how experience is transformed into learning and reliable knowledge" (p. xxi). This encompasses his perspective of the theory's holistic framework and applicability to interdisciplinary approaches in academic environments. More specifically, he articulates how he provides an uncomplicated definition, experiential learning from and within his theoretical perspective, stating that "learning is a continuous process grounded in experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 39). Within educational environments, the learning process becomes more evident as educators develop and implement approaches to replace old ideas with new ones.

Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2007) assert that "we learn from experience in a variety of ways" (p. 159). They describe various dimensions of experiential learning, to include those that involve collaborating with others and various theoretical concepts. Particularly in the field of adult education, they state that experience plays a substantial role in how and what is learned. The authors are clear, however, as to their perspective that there remains much to be learned in this field, particularly with regard to the creation of methods to enhance experiential learning.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Cassuto (2015) questions whether graduate schools, as a whole, may not be fulfilling their intended purpose. Suggesting that universities find their mission of public service, Cassuto argues that "a more outward-looking orientation" is needed (p. 230). He asserts that "graduate students spend longer and longer on degrees that lead fewer and fewer of them to the jobs they desire" (p. 2), and as a result, Cassuto recommends a holistic examination of the challenges



facing colleges and universities. “It’s time for graduate education to start leading an examined life” (p. 3) and consider such approaches as revising curricula to ensure students are adequately prepared to successfully navigate the professional world once they graduate. This is particularly relevant considering attrition rates in graduate schools, particularly within doctorate programs. With some estimates at 50% and other estimates even higher for women and minorities, the problem becomes more critical (Cassuto, 2015; Gardner, 2008). How, Cassuto asks, can graduate education programs address relevant issues and provide students with the skills needed to effectively function throughout life after graduation? That question is answered, in part, by Goodhue (2016) as she suggests that there are opportunities to improve the relationship between graduate education and community engagement.

In response to a demand for greater value in higher education, universities continue their quest to enhance quality learning experiences for all students and to better prepare them for what may follow after a degree is conferred (Klentzin & Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski, 2013; Kuh et al., 2010; Miller & Archuleta, 2013; Pomerantz, 2006). Community engagement programs, to include formalized service-learning, have been identified as an operational approach for universities that are responding to these challenges. Some research has shown that these programs add substance, meaning, and value to a post-secondary education (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Bamber & Hankin, 2011; de Janasz & Whiting, 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Giles & Eyler, 1998). Furthermore, it has been suggested by Warchal and Ruiz (2004) that it is possible to increase the value of existing engagement programs, which have the potential to positively affect continued engagement later in life. They also offer the argument that positive outcomes are more probable when programs are linked to an overarching university mission of service (Warchal & Ruiz, 2004). The literature makes evident that the primary purpose of higher

education is to increase knowledge and that graduate education has a responsibility to ensure that students are prepared for the lives that follow their education (Cassuto, 2015; Goodhue, 2016; Post et al., 2016; Thelin, 2011). The literature, however, does not clearly articulate how universities should address that responsibility although the idea of linking community engagement to graduate programs is an approach that has been suggested (Goodhue, 2016; O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Roberts, 2006).

### **Purpose of the Study**

As this study was conducted, I sought to explore the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement (CE) as well as understand how they viewed the role of graduate education and the potential benefits of engagement within their environments. I also sought to explore how community engagement could be developed and integrated into graduate programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. For the purposes of this study, it is understood that community engagement involves collaboration between emerging student scholars and their external communities to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills within a framework of reciprocity (Carnegie, 2012).

### **Research Questions**

During the conduct of this research study, I explored the overarching question of how community engagement might be integrated within graduate education programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. The following primary questions guided the inquiry:

1. How do participants describe the role of graduate education programs with regard to building capacity of students for employment after graduation?

2. How do participants describe community engagement and its place within graduate education at the University?

### **Significance of the Study**

In the early 1900s, the American Association of Universities was established for the primary purpose of focusing on the common interests of universities relating to graduate study (Nerad, June, & Miller, 1997). Prior to that time, students primarily went to Europe to obtain graduate degrees although there were universities providing specialized doctorates, primarily in medicine and law. The number of graduate students in the United States increased steadily throughout the 20th century to the point where, in the late 1990s, there were some who believed that there were too many doctorates being awarded; the primary argument being that those with advanced degrees were not prepared to effectively function outside an academic environment. In response, some universities began to reevaluate curricula in an effort to respond to both internal and external demands. According to Nerad et al., there were claims that graduate education failed to consider societal needs with an accompanying claim that some doctorates, for example, were too narrowly focused.

External work environments (those outside academia) are more interested in those individuals who not only possess substantive knowledge in a given field but who are also flexible, can apply knowledge in real-world settings, and function effectively on teams (Cassuto, 2015; Triple Helix Career Panel, 2018). This is particularly true in such areas as the humanities where students face difficulty in finding employment outside academic environments (Cassuto). There are additional concerns, as noted by Gardner (2008), about the length of time it takes for students to complete advanced degrees and challenges associated with student-faculty relationships. The latter concern is primarily related to the growing diversity of graduate student

populations, particularly women and minorities who reported “feelings of ‘differentness’ ” (p. 131).

Of additional concern in the field of graduate education is the attrition rate of graduate students. As previously noted, within doctoral education estimates are as high as 50%, or higher, in specific instances, raising questions as to why the percentages are so high. Cassuto (2015) asserts there are multiple issues involved, to include the length of time it takes to complete a program and increasing costs. According to Wendler et al. (2010), this issue may be rooted in the student-faculty relationship and the lack of student involvement outside the classroom.

According to Nerad, June, and Miller (1997), it is recognized in the field of higher education that students must not only be encouraged to pursue graduate education, administrators and educators must also identify ways to meet the needs and challenges of graduate students in order to improve retention. This involves removing barriers by providing improved mentoring programs, research opportunities, alumni intervention, and increased funding, particularly at the doctoral level. Time-to-degree in the majority of graduate fields is at least 7 to 10 years. For many students, this not only presents financial challenges but also a challenge to stay motivated in order to complete an advanced degree. Additionally, graduate programs often fail to consider the needs of external work environments, especially at the doctoral level.

Current data focus on expectations of employers related to undergraduates. Recent studies, however, suggest that organizations are expressing the need for individuals with increased knowledge of cultural environments as well as “integrative learning” and practical skills to include professionalism and a strong work ethic (Wendler et al., 2010, p. 35). In consideration of a university’s role in the larger community, there is a transforming effect on student scholars and communities (Peterson, Perry, Dostilio, & Zambo, 2016).

According to Feldner (2006), some experts seem to agree that there is no single definitive answer to the question of how graduate education can meet the demands of the external marketplace while it continues to build capacity and enrich the knowledge base of emerging scholars. If an intent of graduate education is to prepare students for life after graduation, universities need to effectively respond to that intent when real-world expectations remain unclear. Additionally, faith-based universities must respond in ways that align with their spiritual identities.

Cassuto (2015) asserts that, considering the cost of graduate education, universities must not only retain their current graduate student population they must also attract a new population. Suggestions on how best to accomplish such a goal include the development of innovative programs geared toward improved retention by identifying student needs and challenges and then meeting those needs and challenges head on. For example, when a goal of a university's graduate education program is to prepare future faculty, then the use of teaching assistants can be an effective tool to not only strengthen student interest but also identify those students who may be better suited for employment outside academia.

An original intent of community engagement within graduate education was to encourage students to recognize the significance of their programs to professional environments through direct application of knowledge (O'Meara, 2008). Accepting that intent as a foundation, I expected that an exploration of this topic for this study would not only add to the body of knowledge it would also provide insight into potential methodologies designed to improve the quality of graduate education. It was also anticipated that this study would support the premise that by integrating community engagement into the graduate education curricula students would

become more engaged scholars, enhancing their ability to function as professionals in real-world settings.

Additionally, there appears to be a lack of awareness and understanding as to how reciprocal relationships between graduate education and communities benefit both environments. This study was intended to clarify some of these connections, while recognizing and describing barriers currently existing that potentially limit engagement between graduate programs. This study also focused on experiential learning programs, specifically, service-learning. Their growth within graduate education reflects existing research that these initiatives are an effective strategy for universities to graduate individuals who are civically-minded with the knowledge and skills necessary to become “active citizens in their communities, assuming influential roles in empowering others and in enhancing their quality of life” (Weiler et al., 2013, p. 236).

I also expected that this study may potentially function as an aide to those who are involved in the design of graduate education programs, particularly those that are intended to further complement and enhance a university’s mission. Furthermore, research findings from this study may assist in promoting the exchange of knowledge and skills within a framework of reciprocity between universities and the communities in which they serve (Carnegie, 2012).

Wendler et al. (2010) states that a primary goal of graduate education has always been to build capacity in specific fields. Continuing to meet this goal may involve working with external environments to build relationships. There is evidence that higher education environments are not only motivated to improve opportunities that engage scholars but also to engage scholars with their communities in an effort to build capacity and create opportunities (Butin, 2010; Dostilio, 2017; Post, 2016; Stoecker, 2016). As noted by Butin (2005), “service-learning

seemingly breaches the bifurcation of lofty academics with the lived reality of everyday life...[and] speaks to our sense of duty and fairness in the world” (p. vii).

In a world that is constantly being redefined, bold and innovative changes in higher education are more important than ever before (Medley & Akan, 2008). There is an established need for a generation of students who are not only inspired but who also have the ability to engage themselves in an increasingly complex world. Students of tomorrow need to be “ready and able to take their knowledge of the best that has been thought, said, and done and apply it to the problems of the present and the future” (Barber, Donnelly, & Rizvi, 2014, p. 77). Research has shown mixed results on how to best respond to such a call, yet these authors assert that changes in higher education must not only be rapid they must also be radical.

Hilton and Jacobson (2012) assert that institutions of higher education find themselves struggling in a new environment of uncertainty. Some universities are responding by developing programs based on the perspective of Dewey that there is education and experience (Cassuto, 2015). It is this connection, according to Dewey (1938), that contributes toward a non-traditional approach to education when experiences include activities designed to engage individuals in service.

### **Assumptions**

For purposes of this study, several assumptions were made, the primary one being that all key informants were identified and included as they were known to have responsibilities involving the conduct of graduate education and/or the potential to influence the integration of community engagement practices within graduate education programs. A second assumption was that participants in this study would be able to recall essential details of their knowledge and experiences in the areas of community engagement and graduate education. It was also assumed

that participants would answer questions truthfully, generating sufficient data to address the research questions. It was expected that each participant would have voluntarily contributed to this study, signing an informed consent form with the ability to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. In order to elicit truthful responses, participants have not been identified by name or department to ensure protection of their privacy and protect confidentiality.

### **Limitations/Delimitations of the Study**

At the outset of this study, it was recognized and understood that there are a limited number of individuals at the University who are involved in the conduct of graduate education programs. It was also recognized that any of the experiences described by participants represent relative moments in time and are therefore, dependent on conditions existing at that point in time. Furthermore, a possible limitation of this study relates to the fact that all participants are female. An additional limitation of this study pertains to the sample size as well as the researcher's choice of analysis, making it more difficult to generalize findings.

A delimitation of this proposed study is that it is framed solely within the graduate education environment at a single faith-based University in south Texas where programs are intended to align with the institution's mission of service. Additional delimitations of the study include the selected research questions and variables of interest.

### **Definition of Terms**

There are specific vocabulary and terms as defined below that are offered to enhance the reader's understanding of this study.

**Community engagement.** This term may be understood in different ways, depending “on the perspective and interests of the definer” (Adler & Goggin, 2005). Bloomfield (2005) explains that “students recognize that there are important and interesting issues in the world to



which their discipline could and should make a contribution, but only if it looks outward as well as inward (p. 1).” Regardless of the terminology used to describe community engagement in higher education environments, there is commonality in that there are distinct connections between educational environments and the communities in which students live and serve (Post et al., 2016). For purposes of this study, however, community engagement involves collaboration between emerging student scholars and their communities to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills within a framework of reciprocity (Carnegie, 2012).

**Community service.** An action or activity within engagement that functions as a means by which students may become more civically responsible within service-learning programs (Deeley, 2010; Eyler, 2002).

**Reflection and reflexivity.** For purposes of this study, these terms involve a process that allows individuals to understand not only what they know but how they know it; a thoughtful examination of self to gain valuable perspectives (Valandra, 2012; Hellawell, 2006). They are also described as a means of increasing self-awareness that can lead to a change in how a learner processes and incorporates learning into a framework of self in order to more effectively engage in the learning process (Dearnley & Meddings, 2007; Einfeld & Collins, 2008).

**Service-learning.** With more than one hundred definitions found in the literature, service-learning has been described as pedagogy, as scholarship, and as a means to apply theory in a practical way; ultimately, a definition may well depend on context (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Calvert, 2011; Lovat & Clement, 2016; Morton & Troppe, 1996). Stanton, Giles, and Cruz (1999) view service-learning as “the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (p. 2). For purposes of this study, service-

learning is understood as an educational practice combining specific learning objectives and intentional reflection with community experiences (Gelmon, Holland, & Spring, 2018).

## **Literature Review**

*What students do during college counts for more than what they learn.* (Kuh et al., 2010, p. 8)

### **Major Areas of the Review**

This quotation from Kuh et al. (2010) is directed toward an educational philosophy that is based, in part, on Dewey's belief that there is a connection between experience and education (Dewey, 1938). As an outgrowth of that perspective and from the framework of Kolb's experiential learning theory, this chapter provides an overview of the literature that either explicitly or implicitly relates to the topic of this study, including service-learning and related terms, the role of reflection and reflexivity in the learning process, and a connection between service-learning and servant leadership.

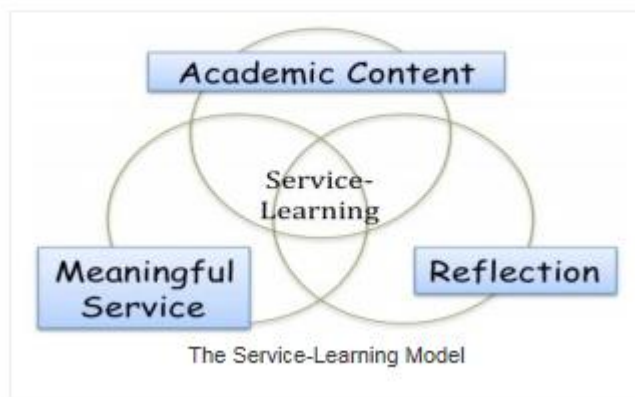
### **Service-Learning**

The development of educational philosophies during the early part of the 20th century was, according to Dewey (1938), marked by disagreement. There were some who viewed education as the transmission of basically static skills and knowledge from teacher to student within instructional and disciplinary frameworks. Dewey offered a point of view that was a departure from this traditional perspective, believing that experience and education were connected in a basic and unique way yet recognizing that the two were not necessarily equal. It was this connection, Dewey argued, that contributed toward a non-traditional approach to education when the experience included activities designed to engage individuals in service.

Having searched throughout much of the literature on service-learning and experiential learning, and after reviewing multiple databases, there does not appear to be a generally accepted model depicting the integration of community service within graduate education. Various universities in the United States have, however, developed their own models to show the

relationships between learning, service, and reflection in higher education environments. The following model is representative of designs that have been developed at various colleges and universities in the United States (“Learning in Community & Schools,” 2018).

### **The Service-Learning Model**



*Figure 4.* Service-learning model from Woodring College of Education.

Regardless of the underpinnings of a particular theory, the goal of a model appears to be the inclusion of real-world application to make evident the meanings behind theory and applying context where none previously existed. While it is noted that a model may be defined as a multi-dimensional depiction of a specific process intended to improve our understanding, it may also be viewed as “analogies in which objects and relations in one system, the model system, are used as stand-ins to represent, predict, and elaborate those in the natural world” (Lehrer & Schauble, 2010, p. 9). Kiely (2005) presents what he refers to as a ‘model’ for service-learning. It is not a visual representation in the traditional sense but a written framework that relies, in part, on Kolb’s experiential learning model. There are, however, models that describe different foundations on which to build with some consensus as to a reliance on and support of Dewey’s educational model and Kolb’s experiential learning model and theory. Both of these were

previously discussed and both depict processes involving evaluations of thinking and ultimately translating experiences into something that is new and unique to the individual (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984).

**Matters of definition.** Carver (1996) notes that service-learning is merely one form of experiential education along with those based on academia and community support and, according to Jacoby (2015), one that incorporates a reflective component. As a separate and distinct educational andragogy within the field of education and community engagement, and as a form of experiential learning, service-learning functions as a means by which service (through engagement) may be introduced into the learning process (Carver, 1996). Within the higher education environment, andragogy is made distinct from pedagogy in that the term refers to adult education (Knowles, 1980; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2015). Knowles had previously noted his interest in developing an adult education theory that considered “the unique characteristics of adult learners” (Knowles, 1973, p. 40) in order to distinguish it from pedagogy, which focuses on the education of children (Mooney & Edwards, 2001). Andragogy, as a distinct term, is grounded in both humanistic and pragmatic perspectives and “is primarily concerned with the self-actualization of the individual” (Knowles et al., 2015, p. 74).

For purposes of this study, at its most basic level, “learning involves change” (Knowles, 1973, p. 7). Transitioning to service-learning, it is essentially viewed as a specific experiential education practice that is embedded within formal educational environments and one that engages the student in community activities designed to achieve specific learning outcomes (Jacoby, 2015; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). However, service-learning is not intended to be a one-way educational approach as student learning needs to be substantive, which occurs with action, reflection, and analyses. Mooney and Edwards (2001) suggest that experiential learning

and service-learning are linked in that the latter refers to “an evolving pedagogy [sic] that incorporates student volunteering into the dynamics of experiential learning and the rigors and structure of an academic curriculum” (p. 181).

The argument is made by Harkavy (2004) that service-learning may have a more significant purpose that goes beyond an educational methodology. Ultimately, service-learning has transitioned to an educational philosophy oriented toward such values as empathy and as a result of educational reform, to a method of active learning. Some pioneers of this educational movement view students as change agents, particularly in higher education learning environments (Stephens et al., 2008). Additionally, Butin (2010) clarified his perspective that service-learning is not limited to a single thing while continuing to recognize its limitations and explore its possibilities. The overarching question becomes whether or not learning occurs through service. Butin asserts that the potential for learning is there but that educational practices, including service-learning, are constrained and limited as to their purpose when used in traditional ways. He argues that it is because of this perspective that the possibilities of service-learning in higher education can be explored. “The transformational potential of service-learning in higher education thus rests in its academic capacity ...For service-learning frees us from the false notion of controllable teaching of controlled subject matter, from knowledge as static, and from truth as fixed” (p. 46). Operating from his perspective that service-learning is part of community engagement, Butin also argues that service-learning functions as “the linkage of engagement in the community with scholarly practices and research” (p. 125). Even though the shift toward community engagement in higher education began more than 25 years ago, Butin ultimately argues that service-learning continues to evolve and that it has the potential to transform higher education.

While service and learning as separate philosophies have existed for centuries, the blend of the two into a distinct concept and specific practice of service-learning within educational environments was formalized in the 1960s (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). Service-learning had previously been viewed as values-based and was initially defined by service-learning pioneers as “the accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth” (Stanton et al., p. 2). Influenced by the educational philosophy of Dewey that experience functions as a foundation to learning, service-learning was fueled by the political and social issues of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Furthermore, the use of a hyphen within this definition has a distinct interpretation in that its use is interpreted by some educators as a means of identifying the role of reflection and its intention to establish a reciprocal relationship between service and learning to something that is new and more meaningful (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Harkavy, 2004; Jacoby, 2015). As Kim (2003) pointed out, “learning cannot be separated from thinking” (p. 72). A similar argument was made by Kolb (2015) who considered reflection an essential component of the experiential process and further bolsters the perspective of Mezirow (2009) that it is through the process of reflection that individuals transform their thinking. As argued by Liu in his forward, such an initiative provides students with opportunities that allow for the integration of “the life of the mind with the habits of the heart” (Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999).

There appears to be a lack of agreement as to how the terms ‘community service’ and ‘civic engagement’ should be defined and, according to Adler and Goggin (2005), there is an extensive choice for definitions that could well depend on the interests and perspectives of those who suggest definitions (e.g., civic engagement as community service or political involvement). These authors suggest that civic engagement, with its various dimensions, cannot be limited to a

single point of view unless it is examined within a specific context. Similarly, Brabant and Braid (2009) contend that, for civic engagement activities to have lasting and significant effects on students, institutions in higher education should define the term so that it aligns with the “institution’s educational mission and local context” (p. 61). Community service may be interpreted as the action or activity within civic engagement (Eyler, 2002).

According to Prentice (2007), civic engagement has been broadly defined to include political action as well as community involvement and a practice that encourages responsible citizenship. Metzger (2012) suggests that civic engagement involves building connections between students and the community as a result of the service-learning experience. Whitley and Yoder (2015) view civic engagement as involving social responsibility and political engagement to include student attitudes and behaviors.

One of the challenges associated with understanding learning through service is the overlap in definitions of various terms – whether it be service-learning, community service, civic engagement, or community engagement. Torney-Purta et al. (2015) introduce the term civic learning, noting their perspective of its two components - civic competency and civic engagement. Additionally, the term community-based research is interjected into the conversation by Beckman, Brandenberger, and Shappell (2009), who relate the term to service-learning and other engaged teaching strategies. They describe it as “a mode of scholarship ...in a manner that significantly involves the community partner in the research process” (p. 46).

The literature also links these terms as a means of describing engaged institutions. Originally introduced by Boyer (2016), the idea of an engaged institution is one that is interlinked with its community. “As such we have a vested interest in the well-being of our community,” with a concurrent responsibility to educate and engage (Shannon & Wang, 2010, p.



108). It is a concept that is mutually beneficial to an institution and the communities it serves.

This reciprocal relationship

provides a foundation of knowledge, while the community provides insights to cocreate this knowledge and presents a platform for knowledge to be shared and utilized. Through community collaborations, academic departments are able to engage faculty and students in initiatives that further academic research agendas. Effective university-community partnerships are able to address critical needs (p. 109).

Others in the field note that community engagement occurs *through* service learning (Barry, 2014). There are also those who substitute the term community engagement with civic engagement and service-learning (Butcher et al., 2003). Regardless of its definition, the literature does have some consistency on the value of community engagement within learning platforms, as previously discussed.

Barker (2004) addresses some of these complicating issues and refers back to Boyer, using the term civic engagement interchangeably and noting that

Many terms associated with engaged scholarship are applied to overlapping concepts in ways that seem conflicting, confusing, or redundant. This taxonomic inconsistency is an especially serious problem as engaged scholars are trying to make the case in the clearest possible terms that their scholarship is at least as rigorous as traditional academic work ...the aim is not to replace previous forms of scholarship but rather to broaden and deepen the possibilities for civic engagement in higher education (p. 123).

However, as previously noted and in an attempt to establish clarity, for purposes of this study, community engagement is understood as collaboration between emerging student scholars and their communities to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills within a framework of reciprocity (Carnegie, 2012). O'Meara and Jaeger (2006) describe community engagement somewhat differently, that it "involves some reciprocal interaction between graduate education (through students and faculty) and the public, an interaction that betters both the discipline and the public or set of stakeholders for whom the work is most relevant" (p. 4).

There is evidence in the literature, however, that the term engaged scholarship is more descriptive of what true engagement means within higher education programs; connecting the educational resources of a university with the needs of communities through reciprocity (Barge & Shockley-Zalabak, 2008; Fitzgerald, Burack, & Seifer, 2010; Saltmarsh, Giles, Ward, & Buglione, 2009; Small & Uttal, 2005). Furthermore, it may be understood as “knowledge in use,” as suggested by Peterson (2009, p. 543). Within higher education, the term is more specifically described as “the mutual beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources between academics and knowledge professionals,” focusing on “collaborations in a context of partnership and reciprocity” (Lytras, Papadopoulou, Marouli, & Misseyanni, 2018, p. 69).

There are, however, other, complicating factors when attempting to understand the term, engaged scholarship. For example, Gilvin (2012) suggests that scholarship may be understood as “applied, a term that conveys the transformation from theory into praxis” (p. 2). Furthermore, Gilvin also suggests that the description – publicly active graduate education – is an applicable term in the sense that graduate students can innovate and transform while still learning. Extending this concept, Boyer (2012) suggests that universities bear responsibility “to broaden the scope of scholarship ...one that assigns ...four essential, interlocking functions”: the scholarship of discovery, integration, sharing knowledge, and application of knowledge (p. 148). Boyer makes the point that once discovered, knowledge must be communicated through “interdisciplinary conversations,” shared with others, and applied in some type of context with professors becoming ‘reflective practitioners’ to help students move from theory to practice. Boyer states that he is increasingly convinced that “the scholarship of engagement also means creating a special climate ...in which the academic and civic cultures communicate ...with each other” (p. 153). Ultimately, Boyer believes that engaged scholarship is about service.

**Claims made by advocates.** The argument has been made that service-learning as a legitimate teaching approach has become more popular as institutions of higher education strive to create more effective learning programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999). A belief in learning from experience is an approach introduced into the mainstream by such theorists as Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984, 2015), both of whom argued for the validity of experience when creating knowledge. For example, as previously noted, Dewey argued for a dual approach to learning that combined longitudinal and lateral experiential characteristics. A similar perspective on learning is discussed by Nuangchalem (2014) who suggests that through experiential learning and civic education, students would better understand their ability to make a difference in the world. An argument is also made that “our common future outcomes depend upon graduating students who can fully use their academic knowledge and skills for the greater good” (Cress et al., 2013, p. xix).

There appears to be no disagreement regarding the responsibility of individuals to meet the needs of others; however, Gelmon, Agre-Kippenhan, and Cress (2013) note that there is a lack of agreement regarding the extent to which those needs must be addressed (, 2013). These authors also make the argument that success not only relates to the original goals and context of a service-learning initiative but also the strength of the collaborative partnerships, the depth of reflection, and the quality of the evaluation process. There is the concurrent issue of intention. To illustrate, Reitenauer (2013) suggests that each individual should determine, “what makes you come alive and then go do that. ...what the world needs is people who have come alive” (p. 192). This perspective reinforces the voices of others in the literature (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Hays, 2008; Nuangchalem, 2014).

According to Eyler and Giles (1999), service-learning has always been understood as an educational approach to motivate those who are involved in community engagement to go beyond the act of service and question the need or cause being addressed. Its underlying theory rests on the premise that a balance exists between the act of serving within a community and the act of academic learning linked by a student's reflection of the two. Although the basic tenets remain, the concept has evolved over time and through practice so that it is also understood as linking the action of being in service with a community and existing knowledge toward a goal of creating new knowledge, not only within the educational discipline but also for the individual (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Stanton et al., 1999).

Service-learning has also been recognized as an effective educational practice to reinforce educational content (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Researchers have documented its ability to transform learning into something that enables students to adapt and make sense of a world that is constantly changing (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; de Janasz & Whiting, 2009; Giles & Eyler, 1998). The argument has also been made that learning through service as a legitimate teaching approach has become more popular as institutions of higher education strive to create more effective and meaningful learning programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

One strategy to accomplish what Dewey envisioned is the implementation of a formalized service-learning program, the benefits of which have been well-documented and which have been shown to have a positive impact on a university's public engagement platform (Miller & Archuletta, 2013). Research shows that service-learning programs have the ability to transform learning into something that enables students to become more adaptable in a constantly changing world (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002; Bamber & Hankin, 2011; de Janasz &

Whiting, 2009; Giles & Eyler, 1998). Additionally, when the qualities of commitment to growth, empathy, and building community are embedded in teaching, students respond. This relates to service-learning in the sense that a new culture is created in classrooms where trust and respect exist, and where students begin to believe in their ability to make a difference in the world (Hays, 2008). Universities have continued their evaluation of learning strategies in an effort to reconsider how service-learning, as a distinct educational concept, can transform and enhance students' learning while, at the same time, making a difference in the lives of those within the communities in which they live (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009).

For example, Abes, et al. (2002) noted that, as a result of their research on service-learning, specific motivating factors were identified that encouraged faculty use. These included an improved understanding of material and social problems by students as well as increased personal development and improvement in linking theory to practice. Furthermore, Bamber and Hankin (2011) asserted that service-learning functioned as a means to transform student learning intellectually and to increase students' awareness of global issues. Additionally, Sax and Astin (1997) reported on research results from the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. It was noted that student reports showed positive outcomes as a result of service-learning initiatives. For example, students reported that they were more socially responsible and had an increased commitment to serving within their community as well as increased academic development.

An original intent of service-learning was to motivate those who were involved in service to go beyond the *action* of serving and question why there was a need for service (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Stanton et al., 1999). Although the basic tenets of service-learning as a methodology remain, the concept has evolved so that it is also understood as linking the action of being in

service with a community to existing knowledge with a goal of creating new knowledge. Furthermore, service-learning has also been recognized as an effective teaching strategy (Abes, Jackson, & Jones, 2002) and researchers have documented its ability to transform learning into something that enables students to become adaptable in a world that is constantly changing (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; de Janasz & Whiting, 2009; Giles & Eyler, 1998). There is also the perspective that service-learning functions as an approach designed to build knowledge and raise civic awareness (Hunter & Brisbin, 2000). These authors, however, question the capacity of service-learning to create consistent and comprehensive change with regard to student outcomes and suggest that to continue as a viable teaching approach service-learning should be fully integrated into a course curriculum.

Calvert (2011) views service-learning holistically as an approach that enhances community sustainability, ethical values, and innovation. Additionally, the argument is made by de Janasz and Whiting (2009) that a rapidly changing global environment necessitates a shift from a traditional understanding to a holistic approach in order to better prepare students for competition. While they agree that service-learning has the potential to transform learning, transformation should be accomplished in such a way so that students not only become more adaptable they also develop and retain behaviors that are morally grounded with an expected outcome of greater cultural awareness. This is made evident in the research conducted by Bleicher and Correia (2011) indicating that students were more aware of their community and themselves as a result of service-learning activities.

A more holistic approach had been previously recommended by Eyler and Giles (1999) who noted their belief in the importance of linking “head and heart” (p. 9). In their opinion, the approach took into consideration the extent of human development so that it remained as

important as cognitive development in university settings. Similarly, Zhao and Kuh (2004) advocated supportive learning environments connecting academic learning with community practice. They suggest that collaborative learning involves more than learning within higher education settings. Rather, service-learning is an activity in which students are engaged collaboratively to enhance learning. Furthermore, Zhao and Kuh suggest that the integration of “diverse academic and social activities into a meaningful whole is also required to convert the experiences into authentic learning” (p. 117).

The idea of supportive learning environments is also discussed by Gibson (2012), who suggests that a new century brought new demands for a different vision of scholarship, one that has a responsibility to go beyond providing students with knowledge to provide students with opportunities that engage them within their communities. This goal for this changing vision is to help students become more aware of societal needs and problems. “Specifically, universities ...must entertain and adopt new forms of scholarship—those that link the intellectual assets of higher education institutions to solving public problems and issues. Achieving this goal will necessitate the creation of a new epistemology” (p. 239). Toward that end, Gibson suggests that universities will need to adopt new pedagogical practices and “new ways of thinking about how institutions are structured, organized, and administered” (p. 240). Pursuing engaged scholarship can, according to Gibson, not only advance knowledge it can also provide a means for students to contribute toward the resolution of social problems.

Additionally, Huebler (2015) advocates for a shift in how graduate education programs are structured. As a result of her research with graduate students, she describes the desire of graduate students to move away from traditional interpretations of learning and toward an approach that incorporates “interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary collaborations within and

beyond the academy, and integrative approaches to theory and practice to provide ...the educative experiences necessary for a broad range of careers and active participation in society” (p. 307). Such an approach should combine engagement and critical reflection to achieve a more direct application of knowledge and alleviate what Huebler describes as a sense of feeling disconnected from what was being taught in the classroom and isolated from other scholarly communities. Furthermore, Huebler suggests that this heightened engagement practice is, in practice, an extension of service-learning in that it integrates learning at a more significant level through “collaborative research practices and projects that contribute to co-creating democracy” (p. 309). .

**Issues of logistics and implementation.** O’Meara and Jaeger (2006) suggest that the future of graduate education is not necessarily bleak and without hope for reform. For example, there are programs (e.g., the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate) that are taking innovative approaches to graduate education to ensure that doctoral students become “stewards of their discipline” (p. 15). O’Meara and Jaeger also note that, for those students who participated in community service within their undergraduate programs and who go on to graduate work, there may be an expectation that opportunities will exist to connect their academic work with real-world application. University leadership has been tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that their programs create service-learning and community-based research opportunities for graduate students, particularly those in doctoral programs. O’Meara and Jaeger argue that this shift requires organizational change and a re-evaluation of how graduate programs are designed to better prepare students for the real world.

While a typical model for community engagement within graduate education may not be available, O’Meara and Jaeger (2006) suggest that leadership examine programs within



professional disciplines to build new frameworks for other disciplines. In order to effect change, they recommend specific practices to include building on existing models and programs from professional programs (e.g, nursing); engaging stakeholders (e.g., students and faculty) who have a vested interest in positive outcomes; examine and strengthen connections between educational programs and the community; and, examining and if necessary, changing the university culture to enable programs to flourish.

The argument is made by Franz, Childers, and Sanderlin (2012) that “enhancing the engagement culture on a university campus is a multifaceted effort” (p. 29) yet it is also one that is difficult to achieve. The authors suggest the change process should include an evaluation of the current academic culture as well as requiring a shift to an engagement culture. This can best be accomplished, they argue, with “the development and delivery of programs that provide measurable and sustainable results” (p. 30). The downstream benefits to accomplishing this goal, including improved research and teaching as well as stronger connections to the outside community, are described by these authors but similar benefits have also been described by others in the engagement field (Childers et al., 2002; Gilvin, 2012; O’Meara & Jaeger, 2006; Plater, 2004).

O’Meara and Jaeger (2006) explain that while considerable research has been done to explore the benefits of incorporating service-learning into undergraduate programs (e.g., personal development and critical thinking skills), little study has been devoted to incorporating this approach to graduate education. As previously noted, these authors make the argument that a paradigm shift is essential for educators to expand their vision as to what constitutes knowledge, how it is acquired and applied, and how it is carried forward. Their intent was to make evident the need for institutions to not only reevaluate their educational approaches but also to examine

how their educational programs are structured. They argue for the integration of community engagement in all disciplines, while recognizing that research is limited to determine the efficacy of engagement practice. They make the assertion that the studies that have been done are sufficient to make an inference of effectiveness across disciplines.

O'Meara and Jaeger (2006) also make evident those benefits associated with integrating community service into graduate education: creating opportunities for students to more effectively gain research and teaching skills; creating a deeper understanding of a particular discipline; and, establishing connections with public agencies aligned with education. Regardless of any agreement with these benefits, the authors argue that integration "improves the excellence of graduate education" (p. 5).

As acknowledged by O'Meara and Jaeger (2006), there are programs within graduation education that embed community service; however, these programs are the exception. To a significant extent, barriers originate in how graduate programs were historically developed based on a scientific model, and how that development affected both the cultural environment of graduate education and program requirements. This type of model has continued and the perception has evolved to the point where universities increasingly value students' specific expertise over the application of that expertise to the world in which they live. O'Meara and Jaeger make the argument that such a perspective insulates graduate students and they eventually become even more disconnected from their communities, resulting in a failure for these students to become more grounded in a university's mission.

The university itself becomes a barrier to the integration of community service within graduate education as each institution is tasked with the development of norms, practices, and structures affecting how programs are delivered (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). For example, these

authors assert that the focus for those graduate students aspiring to join universities as educators is grounded in research rather than the more practical nature of faculty life, resulting in new faculty ineffectively functioning within their new environments from a practical perspective. Furthermore, for some universities reward systems for faculty tend to place a stronger emphasis on research and external funding, ultimately sending inconsistent messages. What eventually occurs, according to O'Meara and Jaeger, is that an institutional culture is created that values research more than public service. Beere, Votruba, and Wells (2011) describe a study conducted in the early 2000s that involved more than 4,000 doctoral students. Results indicated that more than 50% had an interest in community service yet for the majority, their universities did not prepare them for that role. "Students need opportunities" but they must also "learn how to integrate public engagement with teaching, research, and service" (p. 122).

Further complicating the problem of integrating community service into graduate education is the issue of competitiveness. According to O'Meara & Jaeger (2006), "universities exist in a competitive culture and do not yet offer alternative pathways to excellence and prestige that involve doing things that are different" (p. 13). These types of cultures make it more difficult for universities to create programs where community engagement is both encouraged and sustained. These authors make the argument that the downstream consequence of such inaction is that "future faculty will likely be socialized away from scholarship that has a public purpose" (p. 15), leading to an ever increasing distance between a university's mission and its culture.

Cumulatively, these barriers lead to a failure for universities to graduate students who are able to perceive and understand how community engagement fits into their scholarship (Beere, Votruba, & Wells, 2011). This lack of understanding leads to faculty who do not appreciate how service can be used as a way of teaching and discovery within a particular discipline, all of which

leads to a failure for those entrusted with educating students of the future to make evident that their knowledge has a public purpose (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006).

The argument is also made that enhanced learning and greater awareness come from teaching strategies that are directive in an approach to ensure connections between service and learning (Bleicher & Correia, 2011; de Janasz & Whiting, 2009). This point is also made by Bringle and Hatcher (1999) who had previously noted their perspective that institutions of higher education needed to be more mindful of how best to connect educational practices with social and community problems. Bringle and Hatcher, as well as Ostrander (2004), suggested that the expansion of service-learning initiatives across degree programs is only one way that universities can continue to adopt practices that sustain their viability. The institutionalization of a university's service-learning program indicates its inclusion into the academic culture as well as an alignment with the university's mission. According to Bringle and Hatcher, this expands the opportunity to create lasting and positive effects on students, faculty, institutions, and communities.

An argument for institutionalization is also made by other researchers. For example, Johnson (2013) argues for embedding service-learning into curriculum to provide active learning experiences. Additionally, Butin (2006) presents his argument that shifting to institutionalized service-learning within university environments is essential if service-learning is to be fully transformational. Furthermore, it is suggested that service-learning cannot be viewed as a single entity but rather as an initiative incorporating specific components designed to provide students with a means of deepening their academic learning, raising awareness of social justice issues, and enhancing community responsibility (Klentzin & Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski, 2013; Ostrander, 2004).

Within the literature, it is noted that the endurance of service-learning programs is questioned when viewed from the perspective of those who must justify the value of a college education. Although the positive effects of service-learning have been recognized over a significant period of time, it has been suggested that the methodology needs further evaluation in order to sustain its place in higher education (Klontzin & Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski, 2013). This perspective had also been voiced by Bamber and Hankin (2011) who argue for a community engagement model that incorporated service-learning into a course curriculum, an approach that lends itself to institutionalization and one that is more durable. It is noted, however, that early pioneers of service-learning cautioned against institutionalization as they were concerned about the inclination of some universities to resist change, resulting in a dilution of the transformational effects of service-learning (Stanton et al., 1999).

In a recent article by Levkoe, Friendly, and Danieri (2018), they assert that the inclusion of service-learning initiatives represent an awareness of and response to a call by the public to provide “relevant knowledge and skills for employment and experiences of active citizenship along with more direct community engagement” (p. 1). The practice may be understood as a mechanism to incorporate “foundational knowledge” with “practical skills” (p. 3). This builds competency as well as improving a student’s ability to succeed at the professional level. A similar perspective had been previously identified by Clinton and Thomas (2011) as they concluded that the integration of service into the curriculum enabled students to build competencies while also building confidence in their ability to succeed in their profession. Additionally, they make evident that the skills resulting from integrated service-learning are difficult to measure. Their research focused on self-reports, which was a limitation of their study.

In a somewhat contradictory article by Berle (2006), it is suggested that while some university administrators remain enthusiastic about service-learning initiatives, faculty and students are somewhat resistant. The benefits of service-learning have been made clear to include the enhancement of skills that become important once students embark on their careers. Berle argues that one of the reasons for a lack of faculty commitment points to a lack of understanding of the mutually beneficial relationships between students and communities. Other reasons include the perception that additional time is necessary to implement service-learning, and how to use service-learning effectively. Additionally, there is the consideration of the perspective of those communities who are the recipients of service-learning initiatives. Blouin and Perry (2009) noted that, in general, partnerships between communities and students have “a net positive,” yet challenges remain, including “poor student conduct, poor fit ...and lack of communication” (pp. 132-133). The authors suggest that a remedy can be found through improved communication and preparation.

**Studies of various types of effectiveness.** Considerable research has been conducted to better understand service-learning; however, these initiatives have typically been studied while students were actively engaged in programs as undergraduates. Research results indicate that the service-learning components of service and reflection positively impact student development and awareness of social issues, ultimately translating into an *intent* to remain civically engaged (Bleicher & Correia, 2011; Gibson, Hauf, Long, & Sampson, 2011; Goldberg & Coufal, 2009; Levesque-Bristol, Knapp, & Fisher, 2010; Nuangchalem, 2014; Terkla, O’Leary, Wilson, & Diaz, 2007). Additionally, the suggestion has been made that the traditional view of service-learning as a means of transformational learning, prevalent during the 1990s and early 2000s,

shift to a more holistic approach, one that examines all facets of this educational philosophy (Calvert, 2011; Deeley, 2010; de Janasz & Whiting, 2009).

In their research, Klentzin and Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski (2013) identified possible futures for service-learning to include service-learning as an academic discipline and a model of student engagement. A recommendation for a separate and distinct academic discipline that goes beyond supportive pedagogy has been previously noted by others in the literature (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Johnson, 2013; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Butin, 2006). A push for institutionalizing service-learning, according to Stater and Fotheringham (2009), began with a need to identify additional funding sources as well as challenges to find ways of increasing student involvement and build sustainable programs. Stater and Fotheringham support an argument for institutionalizing service-learning with their commentary that universities are striving to stay relevant in a time when social responsibility appears to be a significant issue.

A second possible future of service-learning may be viewed “as a movement to intellectually and emotionally connect students with the campus in order to increase student learning and student persistence/retention” (Klentzin & Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski, 2013, p. 55). The authors suggest that this perspective of student engagement benefits both the student and the university, and the approach has seen growth across the United States, particularly in private universities. The emphasis in this approach is on meaningful engagement of the student rather than on service-learning and community service, and those who are supportive of this believe it has the potential to increase student achievement and retention. This type of process had been previously discussed by Pomerantz (2006) and is, to some extent, based on the belief that learning intrinsically creates change and further, learning involves action by students relating to that which they learn. Learning then, according to Pomerantz, involves determined action by

students and demand for improvements in higher education comes from students as well as those in academia.

A quantitative study of 477 academic records was conducted by Strage (2004) to determine whether there was a difference in performance by students who participated in a course with a service-learning component and those without that component. She notes that results were “modest” but does conclude there was evidence to suggest that when service-learning is embedded within a course there are academic benefits (p. 261). Additionally, the results of a meta-analysis involving more than 11,000 students, conducted by Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011), also indicated improved academic performance as well as improved attitudes in self, school and learning, civic engagement, and social skills. Admittedly, the attitudinal changes were self-reported; however, these authors believe the results confirm the benefits of service-learning programs. It is important to note that this research was quantitative in nature and some argue that qualitative studies may be more meaningful for this type of research as that approach affords the researcher an opportunity to more fully explore the reasons for particular behaviors and the meaning students attribute to their experiences (Fullerton, Reitenauer, & Kerrigan, 2015). These authors present the results of their research and indicate that service-learning does have a lasting effect on sustained participation including enhanced learning of self and the world in which the participants live. Similar findings were reported by Parmenter and Thomas (2015) who note that students reported a deeper understanding of their learning as well as greater appreciation for the learning experience because of their service participation. The challenge with variables remains, however, regardless of the type of research as all service-learning programs are not equal in scope or content.



An earlier study attempted to address this particular challenge (Astin, Sax, & Avalos, 1999). Although these authors conducted quantitative research with more than 12,000 participants, findings were based on self-reports. The results did indicate, however, that statistically, students who engaged in community service activities during their college years were more likely to continue their service beyond graduation. A study that was conducted several years later was strictly based on the question of whether service-learning promoted civic engagement (Reinke, 2003). Although this research focused on a specific post-graduate group of students, the majority of the study participants believed community service was important and all students believed their participation in service-learning enhanced their learning. Furthermore, many of the students indicated an improved ability to link theory to practice, a primary goal of service-learning programs. These results were associated with the qualitative portion of Reinke's mixed methods study and she noted that the quantitative portion yielded very different results; that students were less likely to remain civically engaged. The author felt this difference could have been attributed to several factors, including a small sample size and motivation.

A significant body of work was presented by Astin et al. (2006) that involved a longitudinal study of more than 8,000 undergraduate students and more than 40,000 faculty, the purpose of which was to explore the effects of service-learning on subsequent engagement. Results indicated that male faculty were less likely to use a service component in their courses, and faculty from public universities were more likely to be engaged in their communities than those at private universities. Furthermore, public university faculty reported that their institutions' community partnerships had greater priority and provided more resources than those at private institutions. Ultimately, the results of this study indicated enduring effects of service-learning on graduates, particularly the components of service and reflection. However, the "study

suggests that service-learning can have an impact, but its impact will vary, depending on the outcome of interest” (p. 123).

Yorio and Feifel (2012) assert that service-learning, as a teaching method, consists of specific elements (reality, reflection, reciprocity, and civic responsibility) that contribute to specific learning outcomes, including personal insight, an understanding of social issues, and cognitive development. However, certain difficulties become evident when attempting to link specific outcomes due to the number of variables in service-learning programs. Ultimately, these variables may significantly affect learning outcomes. A similar argument had previously been made by Butin (2006).

It has been suggested that it is possible to increase the value of service-learning programs, particularly with regard to their potential to positively affect continued civic engagement later in life. Researchers make an argument for presenting service-learning from the foundation of a theoretical framework and suggest that positive outcomes are more probable when service-learning is tied to an overarching university mission of service (Warchal & Ruiz, 2004).

In addition to the lack of consensus on how to define various terms related to service-learning, there is also a lack of consensus on the benefits and outcomes of community service when embedded in a service-learning program. Noting that student attitudes do not necessarily transform into specific behaviors, it has also been suggested that institutions of higher education focus on behavioral changes rather than on changing attitudes about civic engagement (Whitley & Yoder, 2015). However, earlier research suggests that it is a shift in attitude that may result in a student’s sustained civic engagement. Preliminary findings were somewhat specific and indicated that civic attitudes and participation in activities varied based on the student’s

participation in community service while in high school and a specific scholars' program while attending college. Those findings also indicated an increase in student self-efficacy, a belief in the value of community service, and the desire to become more informed on social issues (Terkla, O'Leary, Wilson, & Diaz, 2007). Furthermore, research had also been done that reflected a positive shift in civic attitudes by those who engaged in service-learning and community service as well as an intent to remain civically engaged (Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002).

The research on the long-term effects of community service and civic engagement appears to be mixed. For example, Burth (2016) suggests that existing research has not clearly shown that service-learning programs result in long-term positive effects on continued civic engagement. Going back 20 years to Furco (1996) and the perspective that lasting effects of engagement may depend on where the emphasis in service-learning is placed, on *service* or on *learning* or an equal measure of both, Burth argues for further evaluation of service-learning competency. Service-learning programs, in his opinion, should include civic education designed to increase the potential for students to become civically and politically engaged later in life. He suggests that existing research lacks consistency and that additional longitudinal studies are necessary to warrant any claims of long-term efficacy. Criticisms of service-learning research were also made by Butin (2006) who argued that it is not methodologically possible to quantify the benefits of service-learning because there are too many variables (e.g., differences in faculty, course content, etc.).

There has been research, however, indicating a positive connection between the action of participation within a community while engaged in service-learning and continued civic engagement, although much of the research is based on self-reported intentions (Kahne &

Spote, 2008; Singer, King, Green, & Barr, 2002). The research presented by Deeley (2010) makes the argument that service-learning functions as a means for students to become more civically responsible through community service.

### **Reflection/Reflexivity**

Research has shown that those students who are involved in service-learning initiatives, and who are passionate about the work they are doing, learn at a deeper level; it is the action through application of theory that creates a new reality (Eyler & Giles, 1999). As noted earlier, the hyphen in the term service-learning is intended to represent the role of reflection and its concurrent intention to connect service and learning to something that is new and more meaningful. A similar argument was made by Kolb (2015) who considered reflection an essential component of the experiential process.

Reflective practice is a process that allows individuals to understand not only what they know but how they know it (Valandra, 2012). Additionally, Hellawell (2006) explains that there is a need to purposefully examine oneself in an attempt to relate to learning. This “deliberate self-scrutiny,” or reflexivity, is an important skill to practice in order to gain valuable perspectives (p. 483). The idea of ongoing reflexive practice then enables one to become better equipped to explore paths to making meaning of experiences (Grant, 2007). Further, the concept of reflexive practice leads to a greater awareness of self, according to Dearnley and Meddings (2007) and Einfeld and Collins (2008). This increased self-awareness then leads to a change in how learners process and incorporate learning into their framework of self in order to more effectively engage in the process.

Reflective practice is also considered by some researchers as a component that is critical in the service-learning process. For example, Deeley (2010) argues that reflection has the

potential to build capacity in critical thinking skills. She illustrates her point by noting feelings of discomfort experienced by some students who questioned their assumptions while engaged in service-learning and community service. These students reported, however, that the reflective process helped them to overcome the discomfort, leading to a stronger sense of self.

Almost two decades ago, Eyler and Giles (1999) noted how some students feel discouraged while engaged in community service, as they observed problems they felt could not be solved. The authors suggest that reflection functions as a means of helping students overcome these feelings but also recognizing that some students may lack important cognitive skills necessary to engage in effective critical reflection. This perspective is also referenced by Molee, Henry, Sessa, and McKinney-Prupis (2010) who suggest that reflective practice does not necessarily lead to enhanced learning for all students, particularly for those who have not mastered other skills as suggested in Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. Seddon (1978) outlines the taxonomy, noting Bloom's intent to gain acceptance for his belief that individuals lack the ability to master evaluation and synthesis if they have not yet mastered the ability to understand and apply knowledge. It is this lack of mastery that Eyler and Giles (1999) suggest may function as a barrier, hindering students while they are engaged in community service. These authors suggest, however, that service-learning initiatives have the potential to engage students when reflection and discussion are more effectively embedded in service-learning programs.

Challenges are also discussed by Mitchell (2008) who states that within service-learning programs, students learn when they are able to connect the action of experience to the lessons of the course. However, this learning does not necessarily lead to a greater awareness of social issues. Mitchell refers to the perspective of some that community service may be perceived as

“forced volunteerism” (p. 51) and this could well offset any positive effect of service on subsequent engagement. To overcome this barrier, Mitchell suggests that there should be greater emphasis on the critical reflection piece of service-learning so that students believe they can become “agents of social change,” using the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities (p. 51). This agency has been previously identified as a goal by some of the early service-learning pioneers (Stanton et al., 1999).

A slightly different perspective had been previously identified by Stukas and Snyder (1999) who held that when community service is mandated, students are less likely to continue any involvement in community service. However, when students are given a choice they are more likely to remain engaged. Furthermore, Stukas and Snyder note that for those students who had previous experience with volunteering before being engaged in a mandated program, their subsequent willingness to remain engaged in community service was not necessarily negatively affected. The suggestion that subsequent community engagement is affected by the idea of autonomy is later affirmed by Levesque-Bristol et al. (2010) who note that their research indicated an increase in learning satisfaction when students believed they had choices, directly interacted with service recipients, engaged in class discussions, and participated in reflection.

It has been suggested that service-learning provides a connection to building knowledge capacity but it is the practice of reflection that functions as a crucial means of increasing service-learning’s power (Eyler, 2002). This author argues for the intentional introduction of reflective practice into service-learning curricula but acknowledges there is still no guarantee students will connect experiences to learning and building knowledge capacity. Furthermore, Eyler suggests that it is through the use of reflective practice, at regular intervals, that educators are able to help

students better understand the complexities of new knowledge and how to use what they learn. The end result, in her opinion, is a positive effect on cognitive development.

The idea of gaining knowledge while engaged in reflecting-in-action, or learning while doing, had been previously proposed almost two decades earlier and has been echoed by researchers who hold the perspective that reflection functions as a bridge between action and comprehension (Dubinsky, 2006; Schön, 1983). The pedagogy of service-learning has been described as being like a stool with three legs (service, learning, and reflection) with the idea that reflective practice through assignments should be embedded in a service-learning course on a regular basis. It has also been suggested that the kind of reflection necessary to effectively link students' experiences with meaning does not happen on its own. Students need to learn reflective habits, which are best expressed through written reflections that help the student better understand how and what they learn. Written reflections help students become more aware and transform their experiences into knowledge that they will be able to use in the future (Dubinsky, 2006).

Furthermore, some researchers explain that experience is central to the concept of learning, "regardless of its dimension" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007, p. 144). This belief is later reinforced with the additional note that experiences in isolation do not create learning. Experiences form "the raw material" in learning but it is reflection on those experiences that individuals transform into understanding and knowledge (James & Brookfield, 2014, p. 12). A related point is that individuals may be challenged when trying to make meaning of their experiences as well as the argument that reflection serves as a tool for individuals to connect their experiences and meaning. An additional argument is made that reflection lacks effectiveness when it fails to connect experience and meaning. Furthermore, educators have a

responsibility to encourage and support reflective practice. The importance of educators taking more time to build connections between learning and less time on content is emphasized, suggesting that there may be too much emphasis on an arbitrary schedule rather than ensuring students understand what they learn (Denton, 2011).

The inherent value of reflective practice as a means of understanding learning experiences both within and outside the classroom has been noted when describing the growth of service-learning programs at the university level (McClam, Diambra, Burton, Fuss, & Fudge (2008). Research led to the conclusion that service-learning provides students with a means of applying what they learn to real-world settings. Within this approach, reflective practice functions as a tool that helped students better understand how and why they learned. Furthermore, the argument is made that when reflections are written, students are better able to study and further reflect on their thoughts, enhancing their development and building knowledge capacity (Bleicher & Correia, 2011). An additional argument is made for reflection as a means of enhancing student learning of self (Schofield et al., 2013).

Reflexivity also functions as a means to use the “thinking” mind to examine experiences (Doyle, 2013). Doyle recognizes the challenge to identify what reflexivity really means due to the evolving nature of context – how and when it is used and by whom. She notes the apparent disagreement by some that not everyone is capable of engaging in reflective practice and raises the question that some may not believe in their ability to reflect. She argues that the “capacity to think” is required for reflexivity (p. 249) and that the practice of thinking begins at infancy through interactions between parent and child. Doyle recognizes that there appears to be hesitation by some individuals to recognize their discomfort with not knowing and suggests that educators utilize dialogue to break down resistance to open discussion. She does not suggest,



however, that individuals can just decide to be reflective. For reflexivity to occur, thinking is taken to a different level as individuals bring their own reality to what is encountered. In addition, reflexivity is not an exercise in self-indulgence, although some may see it as such, and Doyle makes the argument that reflective practice is about how the self is engaged in and affected by that which is external to self. Experiences alone lack sufficiency for reflective practice as there must also be purposeful thinking. Doyle's perspective is similar to but departs slightly from Schön's (1983) idea of reflection-in-action; that individuals engage in reflective practice while engaged even when they are not consciously aware of doing so.

### **Servant Leadership**

According to some studies found in the literature, there is a distinct connection between service-learning and servant leadership. For example, Eyler and Giles (1999) assert that "service-learning is also about leadership development" (p. 10) as it has the potential to create opportunities for students to take a leadership role in serving others; "to see how their skills make a difference" (p. 39). Collier (2013) suggests that "servant leadership seeks to transform others," providing vision and empowerment for others. Furthermore, Collier argues that service-learning provides students with opportunities and potential to explore their abilities within a leadership capacity.

Within higher education, servant leadership has been identified as a philosophical methodology based on the idea that service to others contributes to society (Cunningham, 2004). This approach has been shown to improve student performance both academically and personally (Hays, 2008; Parris & Peachey, 2013). Such a concept may not be that simple, however, as "the ideas of serving, helping, self-effacing, and effectiveness permeate the servant-leadership concept" (Cunningham, p. 2). It is a mindset that drives specific behaviors, based on the idea that

caring for and serving others not only adds value to the community but also to those individuals who engage in servant leadership practice.

The argument is also made that servant leadership may offer a strong ethical foundation and model of leadership that allows those in higher education to better prepare students for the challenges in a world that continues to change (Hays, 2008). Almost 50 years ago, Greenleaf commented that “leaders must be creative, and creativity is largely discovery – a push into the uncharted and the unknown” (1969, p. 315). Within higher education, Greenleaf described the slowness of colleges to respond to a call for stronger leadership, administering what was later described by Polleys (2002) as an “anti-leadership vaccine” (p. 118). Polleys also referred to servant leaders as having the ability to perceive the diversity of individuals and is in agreement with Greenleaf’s perspective that leadership is fostered “one person at a time” (p. 120). In addition, Polleys states that,

Through hands-on experience in needy areas, and through learning about themselves and their community and about leadership research and theory, university students are developing responsibility for their community, a sense of engagement, and the knowledge that service is mutually beneficial. The world needs young people who want to learn ...who want to see institutions called back to their primary mission of service and groups move toward goals that are in the best interest of the whole. (p. 128)

Astin and Astin (2000) reported on the Kellogg Foundation’s report that recommended universities make a shift toward engagement as a mechanism for schools to produce leaders who are transformative.

Although it has been suggested that the origin of servant leadership goes back to Biblical times, Greenleaf was credited with popularizing this approach to leadership that has increased in popularity (Cunningham, 2004). As noted by Astin and Astin (2000), the students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. “To cope effective and creatively ... future leaders will not only need to

possess new knowledge and skills, but also be called upon to display a high level of emotional and spiritual wisdom and maturity” (p. 1).

Greenleaf proposed that education has the capacity to be a “maturing force” and that “depth of meaning” comes from experience (Greenleaf & Spears, 1998, p. 181). Furthermore, the argument is made that servant leadership promotes caring and ethical behavior that is grounded in the basic concept of service to others. Within the realm of higher education, Greenleaf’s idea of servant as leader can profoundly affect student as well as teacher (Hays, 2008). For example, when the qualities of commitment to growth, empathy, and building community are embedded in teaching, students respond; a new culture is created in classrooms where trust and respect exist and where students begin to believe in their ability to make a difference in the world.

Furthermore, an argument is made by Spears (2002) for a connection between servant leadership and service-learning in that the latter is, in actuality, servant leadership and experiential education blended to create an effective teaching strategy that has the potential to encourage personal growth. Servant leadership attributes such as awareness and empathy, among others, have also been identified (Russell & Stone, 2002). These same attributes, each of which suggests a positive perspective, are embedded in service-learning, according to Eyler and Giles (1999).

Astin and Astin (2000) note that learning through service not only provides the opportunity to strengthen leadership skills it also creates opportunities for students to become empowered to create change. “When students see themselves as both learners and teachers, they take more responsibility for their own learning and help create more favorable learning environments for themselves and others” (p. 19). Such a positive approach is also carried through and suggested by Lahman (2012) who makes an argument for the use of appreciative inquiry to

encourage those engaged in service-learning initiatives to concentrate on positivity; a transformational approach to higher education. Lahman argued that the approach was one that focused on student strengths and by doing so, students could achieve more positive outcomes both civically and academically. The application of appreciative inquiry was also suggested by Harrison and Hasan (2013) who viewed the approach as a remedy toward what they saw as negativity in higher education. These authors noted that a positive approach can positively affect institutional culture. Rather than focusing on the problems in higher education environments, Harrison and Hasan propose a shift in focus to look at what has been effective in higher education and focus on those strengths as programs are evaluated.

### **Summary**

This review is intended to provide a better understanding of the literature that relates to the topic of this study - that being the development and integration of community engagement in graduate education. Therefore, the discussion focused on an overview of the literature that either explicitly or implicitly relates to the topic: service-learning, reflection and reflexivity in the learning process, and a connection between service-learning and servant leadership. The literature made evident that the overarching goal of institutions offering graduate education programs is to build capacity while preparing students for a future after graduation (O'Meara & Jaeger, 2006). As noted, significant research has been done that explored learning initiatives and their effect on students. This research primarily focused on undergraduate students, however. Researchers have also recognized the need for further study to better understand and explore the influence of experiential learning approaches on both student and institution.

## Methodology

*Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.* (Goethe)

### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement as well as understand how they viewed the role of graduate education and the potential benefits of engagement within their environments. I also sought to explore how community engagement could be developed and integrated into graduate programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. This chapter describes the research methodology used to explore the research questions as well as data collection, data analysis, triangulation and trustworthiness, and ethical issues.

The choice of a methodological approach is dictated by what the researcher wants to know and then a choice as to how best to obtain that knowledge (Creswell, 2012). A case study approach was selected as it provided me with the relative freedom to explore a specific topic based on participant responses and an opportunity to question why and how something happened within a specific context. This was particularly important for this study as there is little research on the topic and there are a limited number of existing comparable programs from which to extract information. Although *a priori* knowledge exists at the University involved in this study, it primarily pertains to community engagement practices in undergraduate programs. Furthermore, the study is epistemological in the sense it involves the acquisition of knowledge: what I as the researcher can learn from conducting the study (Hofer & Pintrich, 2001).

The benefits of this particular approach included the opportunity for me, in my role as the researcher, to discover and understand the perspectives of participants and the meanings they give to their own experiences as well as an examination of the uniqueness of the experiences

they perceive and describe (Degand, 2015; Neuman, 2006; Willis, 2007). Through the use of a case study, I hoped to better understand how participants understood community engagement as well as their own roles and responsibilities within graduate education.

This chapter defines the methodological approach selected for this case study, the purpose being to explore and describe how community engagement may be developed and integrated within graduate education programs. I collected data from purposefully selected key informants in order to identify those elements that may be used to create a framework within which community engagement may be integrated within graduate programs. These individuals were selected based on their roles and responsibilities at the University; specifically, all have been involved at some level in graduate curricula development or have influence on community engagement practices. Additionally, this study sought to address the overarching question of how community engagement may be effectively incorporated into graduate education programs beyond those involving the health-related disciplines.

Yin (2014) argued that case studies involve a process, beginning with a review of the literature and the creation of research questions to form the study. While it is recognized that a case study approach may not afford the researcher the opportunity to provide the breadth of a quantitative approach, it does provide an opportunity for depth on a specific topic. Due to the specific intention of this research and its anticipated value to the University's community, a qualitative approach became a logical choice as it allowed me, as the researcher, to have more control to explore how something could be accomplished; in this instance, how community engagement might be developed and integrated within graduate education programs. A qualitative study allowed me to ask specific, probing questions based on responses; exploring the foundation of a particular statement in an effort to deepen my understanding.

In addition to the overarching question of how community engagement might be integrated within graduate education programs, the following primary questions guided the inquiry:

1. How do participants describe the role of graduate education programs with regard to building capacity of students for employment after graduation?
2. How do participants describe community engagement and its place within graduate education at the University?

The following additional questions served as an initial mechanism that allowed me to explore those issues:

1. How does the participant describe the purpose of graduate education in general and at the subject University?
2. To what extent does the participant understand how the existing practicums and/or internships in graduate programs at the University serve to fulfill its mission of service?

## **Design**

In this research, an epistemological case study provided me with the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of the topic as well as an appreciation of how graduate programs function within higher education in general and at a private faith-based University in south Texas. A case study is described by Creswell (2012) as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (p. 465). This approach fit within the accepted view of qualitative research; that is, the researcher is able to explore a defined case. While a literature review provided me with the necessary background to focus on the direction of exploration and a theoretical framework provided me with the lens to examine and explore the topic, they did not provide the data that was essential for me to better

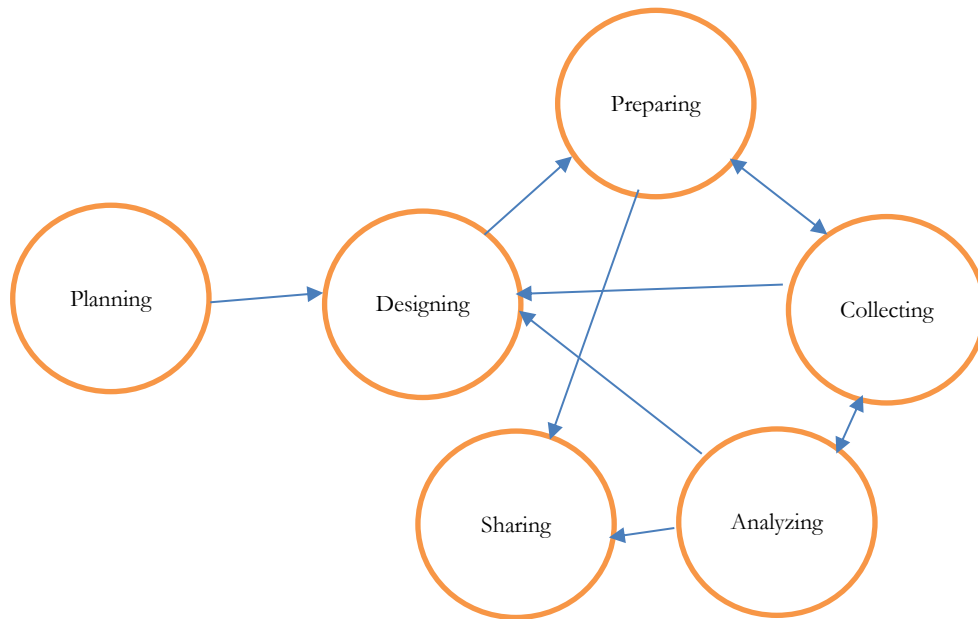
understand the selected case. As noted by Gerring (2007), utilizing a case study approach allows for a “better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part” (p. 1).

Selection of a case study as the methodological approach was based on the research questions and, according to Yin (2014), it is appropriate when wanting to better understand the “how” and “why” of a particular phenomenon that is both complex and contemporary in nature rather than historical. While this approach is recognized as being “one of the most challenging” forms of qualitative research, it is also recognized as one that is insightful and one that provides the researcher with the ability to “convey truth” (Gerring, 2007, p. 3).

Yin (2014) considered case study research to be a linear process (p. 1) as illustrated in Figure 5. The process is intended to show the path taken by a researcher as a study progresses. For example, when approaching this study, I developed a plan, following which I developed general research questions (what did I want to know?) that led to the selection of a research design. At that time, I began to prepare with a review of the literature having tentatively considered the review through the lens of Kolb’s experiential learning theory. This led to the development of various aspects of the study to include a deeper understanding of its theoretical framework and significance. In turn, this led to identifying those with knowledge who could potentially assist in answering my research questions. This stage of the process also involved seeking IRB approval. The process then moved to the collection of data. I had to determine how to obtain useful knowledge and subsequent decisions involved the mechanics that had to follow (e.g., transcription). Interviews were conducted, during which data was preliminarily analyzed. The two way arrow at this stage of the process is intended to represent the potential to return to the preparation phase if needed. Once all data was collected, analysis began, and during that phase there is the potential for a researcher to collect further evidence (e.g., through additional



interviews); hence, a second two-way arrow. Decisions were then made as to how to present the data and then share it with others.



*Figure 5. Case study process illustrating the iterative nature of case study research.*

**Population and sample.** The “product of a good case study is insight” (Gerring, 2007, p. 7) and for this study, insight was gained through interviews, together with a review of the literature; both conducted through a framework of Kolb’s experiential learning theory. As noted by Coyne (1997), how participants are selected can have “a profound effect on the ultimate quality of the research” (p. 623). Creswell (2012) identifies a population as “a group of individuals who have the same characteristic” (p. 142) and for purposes of this study, the participants consisted of those who are recognized as being “information rich” (p. 206) on the topic of graduate education programs and community engagement.

Qualitative research includes specific characteristics to include the exploration of a particular problem and obtaining “data based on words from a small number of individuals”

(Creswell, 2012). Furthermore, case study research concerns itself with meaning (Mason, 2010). When conducting qualitative research, researchers often question the number of participants necessary to conduct a thorough study. The answer is most often, “it depends” (Baker, Edwards, & Doidge, 2012). Additionally, Mason (2010) argues that the number may depend on the concept of saturation, noting that with qualitative studies the number of participants is significantly smaller than with quantitative studies as there is a “point of diminishing return” (p. 1).

Ultimately, participants for this study were identified based on their role within the University and the expectation that the knowledge and experiences associated with their role would enhance my understanding of how graduate education programs function and how community engagement may be understood and integrated within these programs. The participants were well positioned to provide information that was important to this study. They included a professor within one of the graduate departments (non-medical) who has significant experience in the development and delivery of graduate programs, some of which involve a service-related component. Interviewees also included a Dean with one of the graduate programs with experience in curricula development; a director for and professor in one of the health-related graduate programs that incorporates engagement practices; and two individuals who have significant knowledge of community engagement and who have administrative responsibilities that allow for their influence in its integration into educational practices at the University. Participant positions and their knowledge base contributed significantly to the credibility of the data. All participants had unique perspectives from which to offer insight on this particular topic.

Purposefully selected participants were contacted via e-mail after IRB approval was approved (see Appendix A) and an Informed Consent document prepared (see Appendix B). The

e-mail and subsequently submitted Informed Consent explained the study and extended an invitation to participate. It was anticipated that during the interview process, participants may have identified others with the potential to provide useful information; a technique referred to as snowballing (Creswell, 2012). This approach was not utilized, however. Had it become necessary to interview additional individuals, they would have been contacted via e-mail to determine their willingness to participate and provided with the Informed Consent document.

**Data collection and analysis.** In this study, individual, in-depth, semi-structured, face-to-face, and audio-taped interviews were conducted at participant-selected sites. A list of questions was prepared to guide the interviews (see Appendix C). Clarifying and probing questions were also used during the interviews so that they were primarily participant-directed in an effort to capture the essence of each individual's knowledge and experience. It is important to note that the same probing questions were not asked of multiple participants; they were singular within each interview to seek clarity and purpose of the content being delivered within a specific context. It was recognized and accepted at the outset that the interview process (to include initial and follow-up interviews as well as subsequent transcriptions of audio tapes) would be time-consuming. In addition, it was recognized and accepted that participants could potentially be reluctant to share personal insights that might be helpful to the study (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011).

For purposes of this study, data analysis began during the interview process and continued through the subsequent and more detailed analysis of interview transcripts (Maxwell, 2013). Transcripts were reviewed beginning with a preliminary exploratory analysis to gain a broad understanding of the content and to develop initial ideas regarding how to organize the data. Based on the purpose of this study and this initial exploratory analysis, I made the decision

to follow with a detailed examination of the data using domain and taxonomic analyses, as discussed by Spradley (1979). This allowed me to develop and describe the various patterns and themes that became evident within the data itself (Creswell, 2012; Spradley, 1979).

According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011), domain analysis “stems from the belief that symbols are an important way of communicating cultural meaning.” In this context, symbols are referred to as cover terms that are identified during the analytic process. Each symbol will have three elements: (1) the cover term, (2) at least one referent, and (3) a relationship between the cover term and referent(s). Spradley (1979) noted that a semantic relationship must exist in order to identify a domain, which is identified from various cover terms. Although multiple types of semantic relationships were identified by Spradley, I chose to utilize “x is a kind of y” (strict inclusion) to initially establish a connection between the data and cover terms; *x* representing the included term (the actual word/words of the participant) and *y* representing the cover term. It is recognized that there is a subjective component involved in this type of analysis (e.g., choice of “challenge” as a cover term); however, the subjectivity is minimized by providing evidence for the choices made. While it is noted that Spradley recommended the use of domain analysis for ethnographic studies, Leech and Onwuegbuzie argued that it is appropriate to use when analyzing qualitative data as it provides an “alternative lens” (p. 570) to better understand relationships between concepts.

The domain analysis was followed by a taxonomic analysis, which is described as a kind of classification system. It is recognized that while a domain analysis may be conducted on its own, an additional level of analysis relating to the development of taxonomies provides a more thorough understanding of the data. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2011) noted that this additional level “helps the researcher to understand how participants are using specific words” (p. 571).

Once the researcher identifies the domains, they are then grouped into taxonomies to reflect the relationships existing between the domains within each taxonomy. Again, this relies on the researcher establishing a choice for the semantic relationship; in this case, I remained consistent with the choice, using *x is a kind of y*.

Within the analytic process, I also relied on the perspectives of Roulston (2010) who suggests that the researcher should stay as close to the data as possible in order to avoid forcing data into a specific classification. During the analytic process for this study, I used an “iterative and recursive process,” returning to an earlier transcript as a cover term was developed to determine whether there was correlation that may not have been evident during earlier reviews (Roulston, p. 153). I used the transcripts themselves to make note of the included terms, which led to the identification of cover terms and domains and ultimately, taxonomies.

**Validity, triangulation and trustworthiness.** A primary goal for any researcher is to present work that is both valid and reliable as well as the utilization of approaches to minimize bias (Thurmond, 2001). It is important to note that, as the researcher, my own epistemological beliefs and selection of a theoretical framework from which to conduct this study served as a kind of bias. As a result, it became essential to minimize that bias based on other choices (e.g., trustworthiness).

According to Neuman (2006), specific measures (e.g., statistical analysis) are developed to understand the data when conducting quantitative analysis. Qualitative analysis, however, becomes more problematic because of the subjectivity of the data and individual decisions made by the researcher during the analytic process. Within the context of this study, validity is understood as being truthful while reliability refers to the consistency of the data. Although the term “validity” is most often associated with quantitative research, an argument is made for its

use in qualitative research by Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle (2001) in that it relates to the “truth” of a study’s findings (p. 523). Additionally, it is suggested by Golafshani (2003) that qualitative research, using “a naturalistic approach ...seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings” (p. 600). Furthermore, Golafshani suggests that the terms validity and reliability are not viewed separately as they would be in quantitative research; rather, they are combined and understood as trustworthiness within qualitative research.

To ensure data are trustworthy, researchers have shown that it is the methodological choice that should allow for the discovery of findings in a context that is appropriate for the study. Furthermore, researchers must consider more than the results of a particular study. Care must be given to the thoroughness of the research to enrich the study’s quality (Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Heale & Twycross, 2015). There are also those researchers who note that validity (as a distinct term) cannot be reduced to only one perspective; rather, it is a concept that is conditional and one that is based not only on the methodological process but also on its intent (Winter, 2000).

Within qualitative research, validity is used to determine accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014). An approach allowing a researcher to strengthen validity is through the use of triangulation (Thurmond, 2001). Open-ended questions were used during the interviews to minimize bias and to allow participants the freedom to fully describe their knowledge and experiences without undue influence from me as the interviewer. Consistent methods were utilized with all participants as data was collected (Beck, 1994; Christensen, Johnson, & Turner, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Leung, 2015; Maxwell, 2013; Söderhamn, 2001; Winter, 2000). It is noted, however, that some of the prepared questions were not necessarily asked of each

participant in the same order due to the nature of the interview content. Furthermore, as themes began to emerge throughout the interviews, validity was strengthened.

To determine reliability, I sought trustworthiness by returning to the transcripts of all audio-taped interviews multiple times to search for errors and verified content with participants as necessary to ensure accuracy. Furthermore, the subjective interpretation of interviews as data was minimized by fully respecting and including the words of the participants during the analytic process. As noted in the literature, the reliability of the data can be found in the data itself; the language of the participants (Chowdhury, 2015; Christensen et al., 2011).

Within a qualitative inquiry, it becomes critical for the researcher to establish a study's credibility. The selection of a framework within which the researcher determines how to approach this choice is grounded in the researcher's lens (Roulston, 2010). Patton (2015) describes this process as one where qualitative analysts repeatedly return to the data to ensure it makes sense. Altheide and Johnson (1994) refer to it as "validity-as-reflexive-accounting" (p. 489), an interaction between the topic, the researcher, and the process of making sense of the data. Creswell and Miller (2000) describe triangulation as, "a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study" (p. 126). It is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher's lens, and it is "a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas" (p. 127). Furthermore, the term relates to inferences from the data rather than the data itself. For this study, I functioned from and through my own epistemological lens using Kolb's experiential learning theory as it served as the foundation for my choices with regard to the purpose of the study, the research questions, and my choice of an analytic approach.

Roulston (2010) explains that the design of the interview is formed by “the theoretical assumptions of the researcher – whether explicit or not” (p. 3). It is understood that this perspective should occur before the interview format is designed and certainly before any interviews are conducted. As the researcher in this study, I worked from an assumption that Kolb’s experiential learning theory framed my thought processes and interview design without explicitly stating so as interviews were conducted. Additionally, it was important for me as the researcher and interviewer to understand my own perspectives regarding knowledge acquisition, learning theory, and graduate education. This involved a self-reflective process prior to the initiation of interviews and throughout their conduct.

Gilgun (2010) explicitly states that within qualitative research, credibility is established when researchers engage in reflexivity. This creates an awareness on the part of researchers as to their individual effect on the selected research process and how that process may affect them as individuals. However, Probst (2015) cautions the researcher against making an assumption that the work is ‘better’ or the data more valid because of reflexivity. She also discusses the issue of how much reflexivity is sufficient to warrant its use and role within the research process. It appears that each researcher must make that determination on his or her own, while understanding its value as well as its limitations.

**Ethical issues.** Prior to the initiation of this study, I became acquainted with the appropriate codes of ethics that were in place at the University, and which were pertinent to the purpose of the study. As previously noted, IRB approval was obtained from the University prior to the time data collection was initiated.

All participants voluntarily contributed to this study; each signed an Informed Consent form that documented the participant’s ability to withdraw from the study at any time without



consequence. All participants were advised as to the purpose of the study in an effort to be as transparent as possible, and there were no incentives (e.g., financial) offered to encourage their participation. Furthermore, to ensure an atmosphere of trust, participants were not identified by name in order to provide privacy and protect confidentiality. Questions were designed to accomplish such a goal as well as to enhance the credibility of the research. Sites to conduct interviews were chosen by the participants at times that were convenient for them. Additionally, as the researcher and as suggested by Creswell (2014), I attempted to remain as objective as possible without interjecting my thoughts and/or opinions and furthermore, all data was documented and reported regardless of their agreement or disagreement with my own epistemological beliefs.

## **Findings**

*The true delight is in the finding out rather than in the knowing. (Asimov)*

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement as well as to understand how they viewed the role of graduate education and the potential benefits of engagement within their environments. The study also sought to explore how community engagement could be developed and integrated into graduate programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. The primary research questions were: How do participants describe the role of graduate education programs with regard to building capacity of students for employment after graduation? How do participants describe community engagement and its place within graduate education at the University?

A qualitative methodology was selected as it afforded me with the opportunity to conduct interviews in order to gain greater focus, leading to a more thorough understanding of the topic as well as the underpinnings of the participants' thoughts and opinions on community engagement and graduate education. An overview of the participants is provided in this chapter, including representations of the analyses. It is recognized that the emerging domains and taxonomies would have been influenced by the questions asked.

Participants for this study were purposefully chosen, considering the lessons noted by Spradley (1979, pp. 45-54); that participants should know their culture, be willing to engage in the interview, and have sufficient time for interviews. All participants were purposefully selected based on their involvement, at some level, with various graduate programs at the University and/or community engagement practices. Furthermore, at the time of the interviews, all had responsibilities involving the conduct of graduate education and/or the potential to influence the

incorporation of community engagement practices at the University. The selection of these individuals was also based on their availability to engage in an extended interview, and follow-up interviews if necessary, as well as their willingness to participate in the study.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured prior to participant contact to ensure their protection and confidentiality (see Appendix A). This approval included the Informed Consent document that was subsequently submitted to each participant (see Appendix B). Interview questions were then drafted and finalized to ensure pertinent issues were addressed (see Appendix C). Identified participants were subsequently contacted by e-mail (see Appendix D). All but one invited individual agreed to participate in the interview process; this person declined, believing there was a conflict of interest prohibiting involvement.

After selection, the participants and I agreed on the interview's date, time, and location. Prior to the beginning of each interview, an explanation of the study was provided, to include the topic and intent. A consent form was also presented to and signed by each participant and the interviewer before an interview was conducted. Ethical considerations (e.g., confidentiality) were discussed before the consent form was signed and before the interview began.

Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted between the dates of April 20, 2018 and May 16, 2018; all were scheduled and conducted on the campus of the University, solely at the convenience of the participant. All interviews were audio-taped using two devices to ensure completeness and exactness. Subsequently, all transcripts were compared to the audio files to ensure accurate transcriptions and representation of the interviews.

## **Analysis**

As noted, the intent for this study was to explore the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement as well as to understand

how they viewed the role of graduate education and the potential benefits of engagement within their environments. Spradley (1979) explains that “analysis...involves a way of thinking” (p. 92). This allows me, as a researcher, to examine the parts of an interview in a systematic way, eventually studying the relationships between the parts and their relationship to the complete story. Spradley goes on to explain that each participant shares their knowledge through their own categorization and it becomes the responsibility of the researcher to discern how these categories may be organized and possibly related. When attempting to understand how participants perceive graduate education and community engagement practice, I am exploring, in a sense, their culture and how they use language to describe graduate education and community engagement.

My choice of an analytic process, domain and taxonomic analyses, is also related to my selection of Kolb’s experiential learning theory as a foundation on which to structure this research. This theory serves as a link between feeling and thinking (Kolb, 1984). The analytic approach provides a certain amount of flexibility to appreciate the feeling and thinking. As argued by Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012), domain and taxonomic analyses allowed me to examine the relationships existing between symbols (cover terms) and the participants’ own words to recognize and understand the various domains. As noted by Brzycki and Brzycki (2016), “understanding knowledge from a range of disciplines” may be understood through establishing a sphere within which to examine how participants think. Kolb made evident his perspective that, “if the central mission of the university is learning in the broadest sense ...it seems reasonable to hypothesize that different styles of learning, thinking, and knowledge creation are the focal points for cultural variation among disciplines” (p. 121). Specific cultures exist within a university setting (Mattingly, 2017), which are in part formed by how students, faculty, and administrators approach learning.

Following the sequential steps identified by Spradley (1979, p. 93), as discussed below, interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analyzed using domain and taxonomic analyses, consistent with Spradley's developmental research sequence. This multi-level analysis is intended to provide an effective means to explore what the shared data looked like and how these participants understood their knowledge and experiences within the overall context of this study. Having previously made the decision to use a case study approach, my next step was to determine what the participants had to say about community engagement and graduate education and their connection, if any, within graduate programs.

Brinkman and Kvale (2015) describe the importance of the interviewer having “an ear” for what is being said as well as “a sensitivity” for the story being told (p. 165). In a sense, this level of engaged listening functions as part of the analysis. Interviewers who develop an expertise in this practice develop an ability to immerse themselves within the situation of the interview; it is a way of learning from my perspective as the researcher. An awareness of ‘situational cues’ drives the conversation forward in a way that helps the participant to answer questions.

**Level one: Interviewing.** The first layer of the analysis began with the interviews themselves. As participants shared their perspectives, I actively listened and as a result of our engagement within the conversation, simultaneous decisions were made about follow-up questions and, at the same time, assessments were made as to a need for further elaboration on specific points. However, as the interviewer, I was not the only one analyzing what was being said. Developing “an ear” for what was said as the interviews progressed, it appears that participants were also analyzing what was being said in the sense that, as they shared their knowledge, they were reflecting back on their own knowledge and experiences, possibly

uncovering new meanings for themselves (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015). An example of this stage of the analysis is shown in Table 1. The first column in the table includes two questions that were asked of one of the participants at the time of the interview and portions of the responses are included in the second column. Follow-up (probing) questions are reflected in the third column and the fourth column reflects the analytic process being used by the researcher at that moment within the interview.

Table 1

*First Layer of Analysis: Interview Questions, Participant Responses, and Follow-up Questions*

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
Interview Question	Participant Response (P2)	Follow-up Question	Analytic Process
How would you describe the purpose of graduate education in general and at this university?	I would put purpose as continuing growth not only emotionally and spiritually but intellectually. And socially. Because I think yes we learn a lot in undergraduate but when we need to focus or learn more about a particular topic or a particular area of interest I think the best place that that can happen is in graduate education. And also because there is a level of maturity that then allows the student who is engaged in graduate education to enter into the experience of acquiring knowledge. And I really mean acquiring. It's not just a superficial kind of pass through but it is taking down and appreciating the wisdom and the learning and then taking all of that and finding a way to creatively use it in life. Whatever that job is, or whatever that vocation or whatever that passion is.	Would you see the purpose of graduate education at this particular university as you would at any university or do you see this university differently?	Actively listening  Remaining engaged
Based on your experiences here at this university, how would you describe the ability of existing practicums and/or internships in graduate programs to fulfill the university's mission of service?	I think they're all wonderful ways to help us understand the needs of the community to engage the community but it also gives the student another level of skill. I think the area for me is the collaboration among and between different agencies. And so then that calls for a real capacity to communicate. And to work as a team. Collaborate as a team. Figure out what's best.	What kind of benefit do you see those having for the student? For the university and for the community?	Maintaining awareness of situational cues; asking probing questions.

**Level two: Transcription.** The analysis continued as all interviews were transcribed, “in itself an initial analytic process” (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 206). Stuckey (2014) asserts that

the quality of the transcription affects the quality of the analysis” (p. 6) and, furthermore, how the messages are understood may have an effect on follow-up questions. As noted by Bailey (2008), the transcription is interpretive as the researcher not only attempts to make meaning of the words themselves but how those words are communicated (e.g., accompanying laughter).

As suggested by Brinkman and Kvale (2015), decisions are then made about the form and content of the transcriptions by considering how much time would be available to complete this phase of the analysis and limited experience in the transcription process. I also had a responsibility to make decisions about what and how to transcribe and, as the transcribing process took place, I continued to decide what to include and what to omit. For example, I made decisions not to include “ahs” and “hms” as I determined they did not appear to have meaning within the context of what was being shared. I did, however, include indications of lengthy pauses or laughter as they may have been representative of the participant’s thought process. Additionally, I made decisions as to where periods and commas were to be inserted, understanding that these decisions could potentially have an effect on how words and phrases would eventually be interpreted (Brinkman & Kvale). Table 2 provides examples of this process.

Table 2

*Examples of Decisions Made During Transcription*

Participant Response without Punctuation	Participant Response with Punctuation	Participant Utterance Not Included	Participant Utterance Included
You can’t just send them out to do internships practicums work with an organization or company if there’s not a reflective part of it reflecting on the theory connecting and talking about it.	You can’t just send them out to do internships, practicums, work with an organization or company if there’s not a reflective part of it. Reflecting on the theory. Connecting and talking about it.	Usually you have class assignments or group assignments to I think that’s an area where the soft skills as well as team building skills could be developed right. I would hope that is actually happening. Because if it is not happening than we’re just you know putting people through without any real thought about what they need to do.	Usually you have class assignments or group assignments too. I think that’s an area where the soft skills as well as team building skills could be developed right. I would hope that is actually happening. Because if it is not happening than we’re just you know putting people through without any real thought about what they need to do. ... [laughter 00:20:06]

In an attempt to simplify the transcription process yet still understand participant meanings, I chose to transcribe the interviews using two different approaches: four were completed using an “as told” basis, similar to a narrative style, and the remaining interview was transcribed using message units and the “as told” approach. While the “as told” style may not have enhanced my ability to meaningfully analyze what was said, these interviews were lengthy and they were the first interviews to be transcribed for my research. With a desire to learn by doing, I also wanted to maximize the time available to spend on other layers of analysis. The single attempt to transcribe one of the interviews using a message unit approach was unfamiliar and uncomfortable. Concerned that there was a potential to do ‘more harm than good,’ I continued the transcription using the “as told” approach. Brinkman and Kvale (2015) noted that there is no single, standard method for transcription and my inexperience in this endeavor clearly dictated and informed my decisions on selection.

During the transcription process, I was re-experiencing the stories shared by the participants. As they described their knowledge and experiences, I understood that the stories were different. My selected methodology functioned as a constant to examine what the participants said during the interviews (Clandinin, 2006). For example, one of the participants stated that, “there is the typical teacher dilemma, you have to cover the content, and you have to make sure that you're addressing specific knowledge and addressing specific skills.” Another participant made the statement, “their transformation has occurred because they've grown in their knowledge, but they've grown in their ability to empathize with individuals, and we'd like to think that, that's happening.” The word “knowledge” is used by both and while used in different contexts, my interpretation determined their similarity in meaning.



The idea of the interview becoming a collaborative effort by both researcher and participant is a way for me, as a researcher, to remain responsible and understand how my engagement in the process adds to the value of the participant's story. As noted previously, the purpose of my research was to explore the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement as well as to understand how participants viewed the role of graduate education and the potential benefits of engagement within their environments. By remaining actively engaged, I was moving forward to accomplish that purpose.

As the researcher, I agree with Maxwell (2013) when he explains that "data analysis may be the most mysterious aspect of qualitative research" (p. 105). Listening to the audio recordings and reading through the transcripts helped me to demystify some of the analytic process. However, this took time and effort, and establishing clear connections between the shared knowledge and stories was often difficult. Maintaining an awareness of the differences and similarities in multiple transcripts assisted me during the progression of the analysis. As I attempted to answer questions about what the interviews could tell me about the participants' knowledge, I continued to believe that domain and taxonomic analyses were the best approach.

The transcribed interviews became "living conversations" (Brinkman & Kvale, 2015, p. 218) and as such, they functioned as a means for me, as the researcher, to interpret what was actually said. Frost (2009) notes that the text can actually guide a researcher to uncover "layers of understanding" throughout the analytic process (p. 23). For purposes of this research, I chose to structure the transcriptions in such a way that key ideas could be captured. This approach enabled me to uncover the layers of what was said as a means of better understanding what the participants were telling me.

**Level three: Identifying key ideas.** For the next step in the analysis, I reviewed all transcripts as a mean of identifying key ideas; initially reading through all transcripts before beginning this level of analysis. As a result of this review, an interview matrix was developed that functioned as a worksheet (see Appendix E for example), as recommended by Spradley (1979). This approach functioned as a clear guide that helped me identify terms that were common across the interviews. Further, the inclusion of emic categories (using the participants' words – their perspective) was representative of how these individuals found meaning and understanding. I then identified cover terms (an etic perspective – my own) based on my understanding of what was said. Together, this process enabled me to create a tool for use during the analytic process.

As an analytic approach, I chose to examine the transcripts one sentence or phrase at a time even though a message unit method was not used throughout the transcription process. Beginning with P1's interview, the worksheet reflected transcription text, included terms, semantic relationships, and cover terms; an example of this approach is shown in Table 3 using P1's transcript. Spradley (1979) explains that using this kind of approach is a good starting point for novice researchers in order to identify types of relationships. I chose to use strict inclusions (*x* is a kind of *y*) as a type of relationship for my analysis (p. 93). For example, during the interviews with P1 and P3, they described their perceptions of barriers that may exist to limit community engagement practice in graduate education. As the researcher, I saw each included term as a challenge, which was identified as a cover term.

Table 3

*Layers Two and Three of Analysis: Included Terms, Semantic Relationships, and Cover Terms*

Speaker	Response	Included Terms	Semantic Relationship Used		Cover Terms
P1	To have the time to devote while you're working and dealing with family issues and the money for graduate education.	Time Family issues Money	x is a kind of y	→	Challenge
P1	...when you're in graduate education, you have teaching responsibilities, you have a significant research agenda ...your own professional development. There are not enough hours in the day.	Not enough hours	x is a kind of y	→	Challenge
P3	...students have so much that they're already doing and putting another layer onto a class where you're taking an actual problem if you don't build it into the curriculum that you're doing that something has gotta give. It's either the curriculum or it's the project that you're doing. So it really takes time and effort	Time Effort	x is a kind of y	→	Challenge
P3	So finding service learning opportunities that occur when the students are available. So it's not just time.	Finding opportunities	x is a kind of y	→	Challenge

**Level four: Domain analysis.** After completing the worksheet discussed previously, I proceeded with a domain analysis of the content. The worksheet functioned as a helpful tool as I moved through this part of the analytic process. It is noted that as this level of the analytic process continued, I began to see some repetition in included terms (e.g., time, effort, resources), which narrowed the number of domains that were identified later in the analysis. Table 4 provides examples of evidence (included terms) for some of the choices made regarding domains and their relationships to each other.

Table 4

*Examples of Evidence for the Identification of Cover Terms/Domains*

Included Terms	Cover Terms	Domain
Finding resources when students are available	Challenge	Kind of challenge
There are not enough hours	Challenge	Kind of challenge
Students learn how to think	Critical thinking skills	Building capacity
Develop different networks	Networking	Collaborative relationships
We make connections	Actualizing	Building capacity
Developing gifts and talents	Practical use	Transferability
Hope that what's learned from the agency - that somehow, some way comes back into the university	Communicating	Reciprocity in learning
Helping others	Serving	Responsibility
Ability to apply theory to practice	Conceptualizing	Content application
How learning made a difference	Examining self	Reflection

Ultimately, 12 domains were revealed for the various included and cover terms as identified in the five transcribed interviews. Those domains are listed in Table 5.

Table 5

*Identified Domains*

Domains		
1. Lack of soft skills	5. Building capacity	9. Kinds of challenges
2. Acquiring knowledge	6. Content application	10. Reciprocity in learning
3. Transformation	7. Collaborative relationships	11. Responsibility
4. Transferability	8. Experiences	12. Reflection (reflexivity)

**Level Five: Taxonomic analysis.** For this final level, a taxonomic analysis was performed based on the identified domains. Onwuegbuzie, Leech, and Collins (2012) explain that this level can be completed by choosing a single domain and “placing it into a taxonomy” (p.

18). This classification system allowed me to understand whether relationships between the domains existed. For example, when reviewing the included terms that formed the domains of building capacity and collaborative relationships, I was able to identify a relationship between them using inductive reasoning (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007), allowing me to classify those domains as fitting within a taxonomy. Table 6 illustrates an example of this approach.

Table 6

*Identification of “Content” Taxonomy from P2’s Transcript Analysis*

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D
Participant Language	Domains	Semantic Relationship	Taxonomy
“I don’t think as an institution we can be not in communication with the larger community.”	Collaborative relationships	“X is a kind of Y” →	Application of learning experiences beyond the classroom
“It (engagement) also gives the student another level of skill...a real capacity to communicate. And to work as a team. Collaborate as a team.”	Building capacity		

This classification process continued across all domains and ultimately, three taxonomies were identified that were determined to best represent the major patterns of the shared narratives. In other words, this approach allowed me to condense 12 domains to a smaller group of terms that are specific and help to better understand the perspectives and stories of the participants. These taxonomies are: (a) barriers to transfer learning, b) development of approaches to improve learning, and (c) application of learning experiences beyond the classroom. Table 7 identifies each taxonomy with the domains that informed each one.

Table 7

*Identification of Domains and Taxonomies*

Domain	Taxonomy
Lack of soft skills, kinds of challenges, reciprocity in learning, responsibility	Barriers to transfer learning
Transformation, transferability, content application, experiences, reflection	Development of approaches to improve learning
Acquiring knowledge, building capacity, collaborative relationships	Application of learning experiences beyond the classroom

To further illustrate these findings, Tables 8-10 reflect examples of interview text that ultimately led to the identification of the stated taxonomy. It is noted that the examples included in Table 8 were purposefully chosen as they presented different perspectives that fit within the same domain. The text examples were taken from three different individuals, each with different responsibilities in graduate education; yet, each addressed a kind of challenge that functions as a barrier to transfer learning from one context to another.

Table 8

*Examples of Interview Text Leading to the Identification of Taxonomy: Barriers to Transfer Learning*

Text	Domain
Graduate education is designed particularly here at this university for working adults. And so when you're adding extra layers onto what they're already doing it doesn't work.	Kind of challenge
[You] have teaching responsibilities, you have a significant research agenda you have to attend to; you have the community service and your own professional development. There are not enough hours ...you have to prioritize.	Kind of challenge
You have to learn to be challenged from an academic standpoint on your scholarship, and that's a learned behavior; you're not just going to— just because you read it, you can do it. You have to be in the environment where someone questions your hypothesis or your assumptions.	Kind of challenge

The text examples included in Table 9 are seemingly quite different. However, when analyzing the text through the use of *x is a kind of y*, the connections between the examples become more evident, as illustrated.

Table 9

*Examples of Interview Text Leading to the Identification of Taxonomy: Development of Approaches to Improve Learning*

Text	Domain
...faculty have taken on problems from the business world and as a class worked to solve those problems...getting actual experience in the skills that different companies, different organizations actually need.	Experiences
...people can learn skills in an academic setting, but they're not able to turn around and apply those in the real world or in a different context; if the context changes, then they don't make that connection.	Transferability
...it's a process. In the best of all possible worlds, it's a transformative learning process. But it is about learning more about yourself, and I think reflection is the key to learning more about yourself. Being better able to draw from experience.	Transformation
You know you can't just send them out to do internships, practicums or work with an organization or company if there's not a reflective part of it. Reflecting on the theory. Connecting it and talking about it. ... and having the instructor kind of help them make those connections from the theory to the practice.	Content application

Within Table 10, the text selections are intended to reflect how different participants, with different roles and responsibilities, viewed opportunities for learning that went beyond traditional classroom environments.

Table 10

*Examples of Interview Text Leading to the Identification of Taxonomy: Applications of Learning Experiences Beyond the Classroom*

Text	Domain
We learn a lot in undergraduate but when we need to focus or learn more about a particular topic or a particular area of interest I think the best place that that can happen is in graduate education. ...there is a level of maturity that then allows the student who is engaged in graduate education to enter into the experience of acquiring knowledge. And I really mean acquiring. It's not just a superficial kind of pass through but it is taking down and appreciating the wisdom and the learning and then taking all of that and finding a way to creatively use it in life.	Acquiring knowledge
If you're looking at the Practicum, what was successful about it? What was problematic about it, what challenges did I face? What was my relationship with my mentor, if it didn't work, why didn't it work? What could be done differently?" So, in terms of building capacities, I think it's building professional capacities, but also building personal capacity.	Building capacity
There is a general desire to connect to the larger community... And I don't think you can have graduate education without being in relationship to what's happening in the medical profession or what's happening in the business profession. Or what is happening even in the educational profession.	Collaborative relationships

## Summary

The primary finding in all interviews was the agreement that community engagement is important and that graduate programs could be enhanced by incorporating community engagement within graduate programs. In the words of one participant,

I think we could do a better job. I think we are striving to meet the social justice, to meet the service...I think there are ways to get more students involved and more students engaged through the classes, through some of our student organizations. And so we have to seek out those and we're so busy. Faculty are busy. Everyone is busy all the time. It's hard to step back and find those opportunities where you can sit down and explore some of the things that you might want to do.

There were, however, differences as to how the participants viewed best practices to provide educational opportunities through engagement. For example, one of the participants indicated there were existing approaches to improve critical thinking and build on the foundation of instructional knowledge. However, because of a lack of resources and lack of time by student and faculty, there was a limit as to what could be done to expand engagement practices; "the two



greatest challenges ...to have the time to devote while you're working and dealing with family issues and the money for graduate education." Another participant, however, made the statement: "I don't see any barriers to having the inclusion of service-learning, where it's integrated into the course; it's part of the objective ...it has been done." These issues are further discussed in the following chapter and recommendations are made that address this dilemma.

## **Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, and Conclusions**

*I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand. (Confucius)*

### **Discussion**

This study emerged as the result of my curiosity about the inclusion of community engagement practices within graduate education programs. It was understood that the University involved in this study required a specific number of service hours for all undergraduate students to receive their degrees and that undergraduate and graduate programs within health-related disciplines also required a specific number of service hours. I wanted to know why a similar requirement did not exist for graduate students in other disciplines.

I began this study to determine how community engagement could be developed and integrated into graduate programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. Toward that end, I explored the intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate faculty and staff on community engagement. I also sought to understand how they viewed the role of graduate education and the potential benefits of engagement within their environments. The following questions guided the study:

1. How do participants describe the role of graduate education programs with regard to building capacity of students for employment after graduation?
2. How do participants describe community engagement and its place within graduate education at the University?

Findings in the previous chapter were revealed and discussed following a series of sequential steps outlined by Spradley (1979) to conduct analysis with the qualitative data. While the analysis identified three taxonomies, those taxonomies are included in this chapter as part of the discussion on five emerging topics as they relate to Kolb's experiential learning theory and

the reviewed literature. Those topics are: the purpose of graduate education; how practicums provide engagement opportunities; serving others; the role of reflection; and, barriers limiting further engagement practice.

**The purpose of graduate education.** While all participants spoke to the topic of graduate education and its purpose, there were interesting differences in their descriptions. For example, one of the participants, who is a Dean with one of the graduate schools, described graduate education's purpose as "exploring interest. Exploring expertise knowledge. ...an exploration in general. ...exploring not only the expert areas of the field but also our service component." However, another participant, who is involved in a health-related discipline, viewed graduate education as an opportunity for

[S]tudents to learn how to think beyond what they did as an undergraduate. We want to equip them with the ability to continue learning beyond the time that they're in school. ...So, it's all about the application. ...We want to foster any kind of sense of lifelong learning.

Continuing to elaborate on the topic, this individual also stated that, at the University involved in this study, "we really want them [students] to think ...within what we believe, the values that we have. So, they're in a position to be changers, or to make things different."

Additionally, one of the participants with administrative responsibilities, had a perspective that differed from others.

I would put purpose as continuing growth not only emotionally and spiritually but intellectually. And socially. Because I think yes we learn a lot in undergraduate but when we need to focus or learn more about a particular topic or a particular area of interest I think the best place that that can happen is in graduate education. And also because there is a level of maturity that than allows the student who is engaged in graduate education to enter into the experience of acquiring knowledge. And I really mean acquiring. It's not just a superficial kind of pass through but it is taking down and appreciating the wisdom and the learning and then taking all of that and finding a way to creatively use it in life. Whatever that job is, or whatever that vocation or whatever that passion is.

A faculty member within one of the graduate programs described graduate education as “preparing practitioners. It should be a professional degree where people will develop research skills, critical thinking skills, and strengthen the ability to apply theory to practice.” Moreover, a fourth participant, with administrative responsibilities, described graduate education as “a higher level of learning in which the students choose a particular pathway and begin to engage in the critical analysis of data for their particular area.” Later in the interview, this individual elaborated on the topic to indicate that graduate education provided students with opportunities “to be rigorous in their learning ... being able to be critical thinkers, but within the context of the communities in which they are living.”

Although these perspectives were different from each other to varying degrees, they all had commonality in the sense that they used words and phrases that ultimately related to four of the domains and two of the taxonomies made evident during data analysis. The domains of acquiring knowledge and building capacity relate to the taxonomy, development of approaches to improve learning. The domains of transferability and content application share a relationship with the taxonomy, application of learning beyond the classroom.

The descriptions by participants of graduate education are also, in many ways, related directly to the reviewed literature. For example, the literature suggests that a purpose of graduate education is to provide students with opportunities to think more critically. Furthermore, institutions should be providing graduate students with the skills necessary to function within the marketplace after graduation. Despite any differences expressed by the participants on this topic, because of the similarities it is reasonable to conclude that there is a degree of unanimity among the participants as to the purpose of graduate education.

**How practicums provide engagement opportunities.** All participants described practicums within existing programs, albeit from different perspectives. While they did not speak to each other on this topic, it is reasonable to see their comments almost as a debate on what engagement might look like in graduate programs. Two of the participants spoke directly to the ways in which current practicum structures provide both means and opportunities for students to translate their knowledge of theory into practice, and to build capacity in skills such as critical thinking. As discussed, by P1 (who is a faculty member in one of the graduate programs):

...the practicum ...is a strong opportunity to build capacities in the real world. ...And the privilege I see of being involved with the practicum is that it is very much an individual process and people develop all kinds of skills; they develop many different networks. But to me, it is all about self-direction and the person being clear; and often people are not clear at the beginning, “What is it that I want from this degree, and what will I have to contribute after I earn this degree? So, I think it's a process. In the best of all possible worlds, it's a transformative learning process. ...in terms of building capacities, I think it's building professional capacities, but also building personal capacity.

People can learn skills in an academic setting, but they're not able to turn around and apply those in the real world or in a different context; if the context changes, then they don't make that connection. ...And there is a long history, in my opinion, in our educational system of things being compartmentalized and that probably one of the most difficult skills in graduate education is synthesis and being able to connect and see things and patterns and pull it all together.

This individual acknowledged, however, that practicums may not be experienced in the same way by all students as partnering agencies sometimes agree to a student working off-site rather than with and among those who are at that agency.

Another participant with responsibilities in one of the graduate programs stated, “We purposely have practicums and internships built into our graduate program so that ...connections are made while the students are here with us ...there are benefits to both the university and the organizations.” She also noted that “practicums and the internships are where we try to build in

the service ... we're hoping that through the practicum experience or the internship ...that we'll light a fire in them for service." Additionally, this individual indicated that

The faculty would like to do a lot more of that, where we make connections and we're actually teaching courses based on real world problems. ...I know a couple of our faculty who have gotten into that. And I would really like to see a lot more of that.

Another of the participants, who is involved in an administrative role, viewed practicums, capstone courses, and internships in a similar way:

...they're all wonderful ways to help us understand the needs of the community, to engage the community but it also gives the student another level of skill. I think the area for me is the collaboration among and between different agencies. And so then that calls for a real capacity to communicate. And to work as a team. Collaborate as a team. Figure out what's best.

I think for the student to step out of the academic environment and ...go into the real world ...That allows the student to look at what he or she has been learning. The thing for me is: Am I able to apply that knowledge? Am I able to critically analyze things? Am I able to pull it together in such a way that I can be of service to whatever agency I am working in? So I think for the student, there are a lot of benefits. I think also for the agency, whatever agency they are working in, I think for me there is a lot to be learned. And one of the questions I would probably be saying is, what is the student learning from that agency that might be also important to be incorporated into the curriculum here at the university? ... We think we're preparing people but to prepare people that means the critical ability to think, to analyze, to synthesize and then to be able to give back and contribute in a thoughtful, intelligent way.

In contrast, one of the participants who also has administrative responsibilities viewed practicums, capstone courses, and internships from a slightly different perspective as she observed that "there is a lot of latitude and ability for the student to shape" the experience. Although this individual acknowledged the availability of service opportunities for students at the University, she viewed "community service, which is learning but it's not connected to an objective." Furthermore, she commented that service, even when it is not connected to a specific "course and objective ...is transformation as well, but more student managed."

Yet another perspective was offered by someone who is involved with one of the health-related disciplines. She noted that for their programs, the practicum concept really functions as part of the curriculum with hours spent in clinical settings. There is a requirement of 1,000 hours for all graduate level students, regardless of their enrollment as a traditional or online student. As she noted, “they are more often than not caring for individuals who need care either in clinics, or offices, or hospitals, and of course they are there for a reason. They're seeking something even if it's something like health promotion.”

It was previously noted that the various comments made by the participants functioned almost as a type of debate on what engagement might look like in graduate programs. Even so, there was a common thread expressed by the majority even though practicum opportunities were not described in exactly the same way. The commonality can be found through the awareness that participants viewed these opportunities not only as a means of building knowledge but also applying that knowledge in a tangible way. It is also important to note that even though all participants agreed on the value added by engagement practice, they were not all ready to act.

The words and phrases of the participants on this topic fit within multiple domains and two taxonomies made evident in the previous chapter. The concepts of transformation, transferred learning, content application, and experiences lead to the taxonomy, development of approaches to improve learning. Knowledge acquisition, building capacity, and collaborative relationships relate to the taxonomy, application of learning experiences beyond the classroom. When examined from a taxonomic perspective, it becomes clearer to see the semantic relationships between the terms. The identified domains are *kinds of* approaches that can create learning opportunities and apply learning beyond the classroom.

The perspectives shared by the participants are consistent with what was suggested in the literature; that engagement activities provide students with opportunities to transform their learning and themselves. Because there may be some differences on extending community engagement practices beyond the practicum experiences, understanding differences more completely and resolving any conflicts that may exist in how practicums are structured would be an important first step toward achieving a fully engaged campus.

**Serving others.** All participants discussed how existing programs provide students with opportunities to accomplish more than just increasing their knowledge. They also discussed how serving others connects the student to what the founding Sisters of the University hoped to achieve when they arrived in this country; the idea that serving others provides value to the one who is serving as well as to the one being served. The discussions, both implicit and explicit, focused on the need to support the University's tradition of service and for students to be concerned with social issues in two primary ways: how service helps students understand the needs of others and how service broadens their world view as to why those needs are so pervasive. Moreover, they expressed the importance of creating opportunities for students to realize the value of using their abilities in ways that serve the needs of others.

For example, one of the participants stated that when students "step out of the academic environment," they can look back at what they have learned "to pull it together" in a way that is of service to the partnering agency. Furthermore, she noted that there is an anticipation that, through service, students understand societal needs;

[They take] their gifts and talents, developing them and using them not just for themselves ...they are serving the community ...taking the person and developing the human heart in a very holistic way so that when they go back in the community, they become natural leaders. And to me that's true engagement. ...we become engaged in a very thoughtful way.



As indicated by a graduate faculty member, service to others connects “our scholarship, our teaching together, so it’s holistic; it’s not compartmentalized.” Additionally, a dean with one of the graduate programs, viewed serving others as an opportunity to

help and seal that idea of social justice. Of service. Of helping. You know when you get out of here you’re helping others ...Going out to these other organizations that are helping people. Having them [students] internalize what is happening. ...it’s not all that you’re just looking to what your career is going to be. It’s enlightened citizens. It’s helping others. It’s a whole array of things that you’re trying to get the student to understand. So the benefits of doing service and doing the connection out on the community is vital.

Moreover, according to a participant with administrative responsibilities, the University involved in this study

seeks to have students ...focus on what are the social justice issues ...that might be affecting a population. ...So, we ...want students to be rigorous in their learning, and ...to be critical thinkers, but within the context of the communities in which they are living.

Similarly, as noted by a participant from one of the health-related disciplines, serving others not only “impacts the community” but it also provides an opportunity for students to reflect and determine “how it made a difference” on them, as individuals. As she described, “did it make you aware of different things in providing this service, and did it make a difference for the individual who was a recipient of the service?”

The consistency in the statements made by the participants was not particularly surprising when considering they are all involved in programs that are part of a faith-based university and one that is founded on the principle of service to others. As suggested in the reviewed literature, serving others provides opportunities for students to add value to their communities and meaning to their own lives, through service.

**The role of reflection.** All participants discussed the importance of reflection in the learning process but they described their views in three distinct ways: reflections as a means to

connect learning; reflection as a means of personal development; and, reflection as a means to affect attitudes and values.

***Reflection as a means to connect learning.*** More than one participant discussed the role of reflection as a process that enables students to connect learning to various aspects of their academic lives and the experiences encountered. For example, a faculty member with one of the graduate programs described reflection as a component within the practicum experience and one with the opportunity to build professional capacity. With regard to the practicum, she asked, “what was successful about it? What was problematic about it, what challenges did I face? What was my relationship with my mentor, if it didn't work, why didn't it work? What could be done differently?” She suggests that these types of questions are part of the reflective process that enable students to learn more effectively. Another one of the participants, a dean within one of the graduate programs, described reflection as an “opportunity in the curriculum for them to go back and reflect on what they have seen and reflect on the theory and having the instructor kind of help them make those connections from the theory to the practice.”

Both descriptions have similarities in their descriptions of students to re-examine an experience to better understand what they have learned. Additionally, both descriptions have a semantic relationship to the taxonomy identified as, the development of approaches to improve learning in that reflection functions as the link between the theory and the learning.

***Reflection as a means of personal development.*** As noted by one of the participants who is a faculty member, she views reflection as a process that provides a “key to learning more about yourself.” Furthermore, while she described the reflective process as a means of helping students build professional capacity, she also believes it helps students build “personal capacity.”

Both, from her perspective, involve examining experiences through their own lens – how the individual views the world in which he or she lives.

A similar perspective was described by the dean who viewed reflection as a means of “seeing yourself in a different way.” As a result of that reflection, the individual will hopefully “be honest” with themselves; “that exploration of yourself in addition to the exploration of the content and in addition to the exploration of others” also contributes to the learning process.

Again, these descriptions, while slightly different, have a similar intent – both connect the idea of reflection to self. Moreover, both have a semantic relationship to the taxonomy identified as, application of learning experiences beyond the classroom.

***Reflection as a means to affect attitude and values.*** Reflection is an ongoing process, according to one of the participants with administrative responsibilities. She views the process as one where students ask themselves what insights are gained from experiences, expressing the hope that students will reflect sufficiently so that, “one day that person may have an experience where he or she can reflect on it and changes what they’re doing ...maybe the person hasn’t yet realized how much he or she is being changed.” Furthermore, because of the reflection, “something happens or the spirit of God is active and then there is a different kind of engagement.” This individual also described reflection as offering an approach to help each individual understand how he or she sees the world and his or her place within that world. Part of that reflection involves, she believes, leaving “a bit of space for the spirit of God to act.”

Because of the way the University involved in this study was founded and how it continues to function within its community, one of the participants viewed reflection as a means of ensuring students are connected to one another through a transformative process. As she

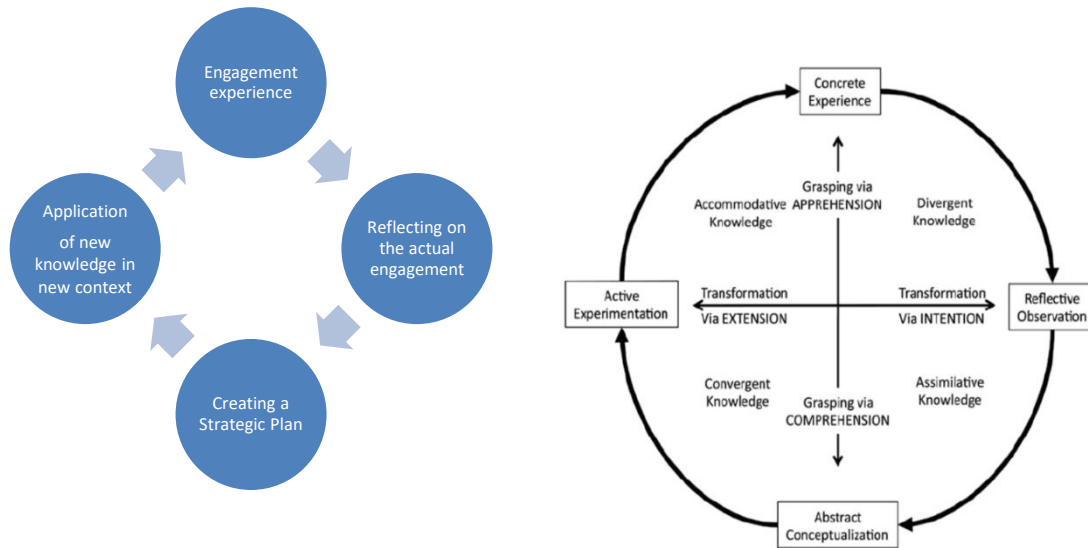
described, “you are not only to be transformed but you’re also to transform” others within communities. Yet another participant described reflection as an opportunity to provide healing;

the students would not just do something without them reflecting on it, and how it impacts the community, how it made a difference for yourself, did it make you aware of different things in providing this service, and did it make a difference for the individual who was a recipient of the service? ...We don't want them to just do things and not have some kind of a transformative effect on them.

Additionally, this participant shared her belief that as students understand the benefit of reflection, that “they have that as part of who they are now, and they hold onto that, which is what we want.”

Regardless of how these participants described reflection, the prevailing message that came from their descriptions related to the idea that reflection has the ability to create some kind of transformation. This is consistent with the reviewed literature which suggested that reflection functions as a means of allowing individuals to transform their thinking and make learning more meaningful.

***Connecting the practicum and reflection.*** These topics directly relate to Kolb’s experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984). Practicums are designed to provide students with experiences through relevant contribution of skills. As a result, students gain practical experience while providing value to a partnering agency. As suggested by Kolb’s experiential learning model, the student’s experience, followed by reflection on that experience, flows to the phase where the student begins to understand the learning received from the experience. At that point, students are better able to appreciate new knowledge and are better prepared to apply that knowledge within a specific context. Figure 6 represents this process in a manner based on Kolb’s model for a student whose practicum hours are spent with a local non-profit, helping them develop a strategic plan.



*Figure 6.* Example of learning process based on Kolb's experiential learning model.

The student begins with a specific experience at a partnering agency that likely involves learning about that agency, its purpose, its needs, the populations it serves, the needs of those populations, and other areas that may become evident as the experience progresses. As the learning develops and the student begins to interpret new knowledge, within their existing knowledge frameworks, this student becomes aware of this environment in a way that has changed from what it was at the beginning. It is likely that at the beginning of the experience, she was on the outside, looking in. As the experience continues, the view likely changes; partly because of where she is now positioned and partly because new knowledge may be changing her perspective.

Through a reflective process, this student then has the opportunity to realize how her engagement experience links to her learning, her perceptions of learning, and her own participation in the learning process. The student moves through this learning cycle from reflection to a point where the knowledge gained leads to an improved understanding of concepts

that can then be applied within a specific setting – applying theory to practice. The learning cycle continues as each experience brings new knowledge that can then be applied in a different context.

As previously noted, one of the interview participants considered reflection to be “the key to learning about yourself.” An increased awareness of self can then lead to a change in how learners process and incorporate learning into their framework of self in order to more effectively engage in the process, as suggested in the literature. Additionally, reflexive practice provides the opportunity for those who engage in its process to explore paths to making meaning of experiences. Kolb was clear as to his belief that reflection provided the connecting link between the experience and the ability to conceptualize what was learned. As noted by one of the participants, reflection provides the opportunity for students to understand “how theory ...is connected.” Also of importance when examining the reflexive process is the outcome of understanding both the *how* and *why*, as was suggested in the literature. As one participant explained, “we want our students to know well why are we doing this [sic].” Ultimately, reflection functions as a transformative process that allows those who engage in its practice to better appreciate their own learning and how that learning affects others.

**Barriers limiting further engagement practice.** All participants discussed the topic of barriers to the integration of engagement practice in graduation education. However, their views and perceptions of barriers appeared to be related to their roles and responsibilities in the conduct of programs. Those who viewed barriers as seemingly insurmountable are more directly involved in the graduate program from inside the classroom. Those who saw barriers as representing challenges that could be overcome are either engaged in a health-related discipline or have

administrative responsibilities that do not engage them within a classroom environment. The issues raised by the participants include time, placement, resources, and disciplinary differences.

When discussing potential barriers that may limit additional engagement practice, one of the participants stated that, “I think it’s always in how we frame something. I do believe that there is always enough time to do what’s really significant and important.” Another participant stated, however, that students have limited time and financial resources available to them because of multiple responsibilities (e.g., jobs and family). Furthermore, this participant felt that extending engagement practices would require additional time from both administrative staff, who would be tasked with finding placement opportunities, and faculty to manage the additional work that may be involved. It is of interest to note that the first participant is engaged in an administrative capacity and the second, as a faculty member in one of the graduate programs.

Furthermore, another participant who is involved with one of the graduate schools, did not view additional time on the part of the faculty as being a barrier. She did, however, describe limitations relating to time, resources, and placement opportunities.

Students have so much that they’re already doing and putting another layer onto a class where you’re taking an actual problem if you don’t build it into the curriculum that you’re doing that something has gotta give. It’s either the curriculum or it’s the project that you’re doing. So it really takes time and effort to integrate those so that your curriculum and your outside problems that you’re bringing in match. ... Our students are too busy to add on. ... we are dealing with working adults that have families. That have other obligations. And so when you have service learning that they do outside of their classes it’s very, very difficult. ... The other barrier is having things available when the students are available.

However, one of the participants who works within one of the graduate health-related disciplines referred to barriers as “challenges.” According to this participant, all graduate students in this discipline, to include those who are working on their degree online, face the same challenge of completing a thousand clinical hours. This is an established and declared

expectation when students enter any of the graduate level programs. As this individual noted, “it doesn’t have to be a barrier, but it does take a little more work.” Yet another participant, with administrative responsibilities, stated that she did not “see any barriers to having the inclusion of service-learning, where it’s integrated into the course; it’s part of the objective. I really don’t see any barriers because it has been done.”

Additionally, as with other topics, it is noted that these individuals did not speak with each other on this topic. Yet their comments may appear as if there is an extension of the previous debate on practicums as to the practicality of overcoming barriers to expand or extend engagement practices. Regardless of their perspectives, their existing realities within graduate education are distinctly different from each other.

## **Implications**

The literature made evident that the inclusion of community engagement within higher education adds substance and value to a student’s learning. Furthermore, research indicates that engagement programs affect a student’s ability to gain and strengthen essential skills that are needed in the marketplace. When considering the research that shows how universities are continuing their efforts to identify approaches to attract and retain students, it seems reasonable to make a connection between those efforts and a program shown to have clear benefits to students and communities; that being, community engagement. How the University involved in this study chooses to conduct graduate education in the future may likely have substantial and long-lasting effects on students, faculty, administrators, the communities being served, and the institution itself. While the findings from this study may not be generalizable to all higher education institutions, they do benefit those in the field to better understand some of the issues involved when structuring community engagement programs at the graduate level.

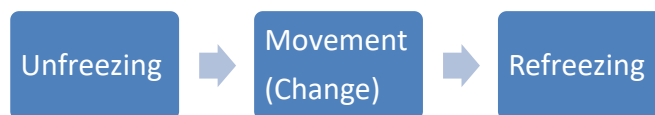


The data from the conducted interviews revealed that engagement makes a difference in what and how students learn. This study was intended to provide insight on the topic of community engagement in graduate education. The data provided a better understanding of how individuals with different responsibilities in the graduate environment viewed graduate education and more specifically, community engagement and its ability to provide student with the means to strengthen those skills needed by students following graduation. Additionally, the data showed that there are reciprocal benefits between students, the University, and the communities being served.

Moving forward, the University will likely need to examine multiple approaches to engagement. Unavoidably, advocates of greater engagement will need to address differences, but they may also find it helpful to assess those areas where there is common ground. The identified topics – graduate education’s purpose, practicums, reflection, service to others, and barriers – express complex perspectives as to how engagement should function within graduate programs. Continued exploration on these topics is likely to yield benefits to students with corresponding and reciprocal benefits to the University and the communities it serves. Recognizing that it has been done within undergraduate programs and specific disciplines at the graduate level provides evidence that engagement can be achieved within graduate education programs. As one of the participants stated, “It has been done.” While there is an underlying agreement that engagement is important, there are important differences in how participants view the delivery of educational practice.

Furthermore, it is also recognized that various graduate programs likely have different goals with different needs. As a result, an answer on how to achieve engagement within all graduate programs is not clearly evident. As the University examines and explores approaches to

more fully develop engagement programs, some element of change is likely to be involved. A change process can help an organization identify what needs to be improved and methods to accomplish improvement. However, such a process is primarily intended to function as a tool to explore what *is* in order to assist those who are tasked with the responsibility to determine what *could be*. As the University begins to explore multiple approaches, some element of change is likely. Using Lewin's change model (Robbins & Judge, 2013, p. 584), or others that may be similar, may provide an approach to help those tasked with exploring a means to identify best practices.



*Figure 7.* Lewin's three-step change model.

Lewin's model (see Figure 7) is deceptively simple in appearance but what the steps represent is complex. For any organization, making changes to existing structures and programs can be a daunting task, particularly when considering that the first step of the model requires users to examine the foundation of an organization, to include its values, behaviors, and beliefs. The literature suggests that, within higher education, changes need to be bold and innovative to ensure students are inspired and equipped with an ability to engage themselves in a world that has become increasingly complex (Medley & Akan, 2008). As suggested by one of the participants (P2), the inclusion of community engagement across programs "could be really a wonderful change agent for ...changing the way we think about graduate education." I would agree.

It is recognized that challenges do exist to achieve a fully engaged campus. However, there are graduate programs at the studied University that have managed to integrate community engagement practices. The individuals responsible for that achievement may not have removed the barriers they discovered, but they were able to find ways to work with and around them. I would suggest that developing a more thorough understanding of how those programs achieved comprehensive inclusion is a significant step toward developing approaches to accomplish the same in graduate fields outside the health disciplines.

### **Limitations**

The limitations of the present study need to be acknowledged. The study sample consisted of five faculty and administrative staff within graduate programs. While this work does not include a significant sampling of the available population of graduate faculty and staff, I would argue there is value in the findings in light of the study's purpose, particularly as a building block for a more comprehensive study using a larger sample size. There are also opportunities to increase an understanding of community engagement practice within graduate education by narrowing the focus of the research, such as the use of reflection as a means of transforming student learning.

Additionally, a limitation of this study is that it was conducted at a faith-based private university in south Texas and the graduate programs offered by the University may not be typical of the programs at similar schools. Furthermore, it is recognized that those faculty and administrative staff who were participants in this study are not necessarily representative of all graduate faculty and staff within the University, or with other faith-based institutions. In addition, this study involved a University founded on Catholic principles and while there may be some applicability of the findings to other Catholic universities of similar size, the results may

not be generalized to all faith-based institutions. I also had to be cautious with regard to my own bias as to what constituted knowledge and how knowledge is acquired and incorporated into daily use.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

During the interview process, some of the participants discussed the importance and influence of the original mission of the University – how it was perceived and subsequently translated into educational practices. One topic to investigate in the future would be the exploration of engagement practice in higher education through the lens of a mission of service and/or a social justice lens to include the question of how such a mission might influence engagement practices, both from faculty and student perspectives. This could be achieved using a quantitative approach (e.g., use of survey), a qualitative approach (e.g., selective interviews), or a mixed-methods approach (e.g., an exploratory sequential analysis). The argument for inclusion of service-learning as a means of raising awareness of social justice was noted earlier in this study's review of the literature (Klentzin & Wierzbowski-Kwiatkowski, 2013; Ostrander, 2004). Additionally, Warchal and Ruiz (2004) made a similar argument relating to a mission of service. As noted by Connelly (2003), the mission of the subject University has been continually reviewed over the years and he noted more than a decade ago that there was a need for greater clarity, not only with regard to the mission of service but also the mission of social justice. He acknowledged the challenges associated with such a task, with the awareness that the University must also stay competitive in a constantly shifting educational market.

One of the guiding questions asked of the participants pertained to the existence of barriers that would limit or prevent the inclusion of community engagement in graduate education programs outside of health-related disciplines. While the question was not intended to

elicit or suggest bias, the general topic of barriers was addressed within the literature. It is suggested that the topic of barriers warrants further research as gaining knowledge would assist those seeking remedies to overcome them. Establishing approaches to overcome barriers also has the potential to persuade opponents of the viability of inclusion of additional and/or enhanced engagement programs.

As noted earlier, this study involved graduate faculty and staff regarding their knowledge and perceptions. I would suggest an extension of this research through the query of a larger group of faculty and staff across all graduate disciplines, as well as further research that examined the perspectives of graduate students. Considering that participants have different *a priori* knowledge and arguably different goals, data from these studies could potentially provide decision makers with diverse perspectives on best practices to develop and integrate community engagement into all programs. For a study with graduate students, for example, this would involve discovering their intentions, perceptions, and understanding of graduate education and more specifically, their perceptions on the potential benefits of community engagement within their fields of concentration.

When considering where the University began more than 100 years ago, growth and change have been significant. As Beere et al. (2011) noted, change is never easy but when accomplished, the results can be powerful. These authors noted that becoming a fully integrated campus does not mean that engagement dominates the educational landscape; it is only a dimension yet one with the ability to raise engagement to a parity with research and scholarship. It also provides the communities both on and off campus with opportunities to continue the transformation of their educational identity to reach its full potential.

## Conclusions

When considering an expansion of community engagement practices into all graduate programs and disciplines, it may be helpful to consider the words of Jacoby (2015): “service-learning requirements should also be grounded in partnerships intentionally designed to address critical shared issues and involve capacity-building on the part of both the institutional and community partners” (p. 230). Jacoby questions whether the practice of engagement in universities can continue into the future. She believes in its potential, yet she remains cautious in her optimism due to research indicating some resistance by students and faculty as well as a lack of funding for engagement activities. The findings in this study support Jacoby’s cautious optimism to a limited degree. However, they have also reinforced my own epistemological beliefs, particularly those relating to experiential learning. As a result of the findings discussed in this study, the review of the literature, and my own reflections throughout this process, I am also cautiously optimistic that the University can become a fully engaged campus, affording every student the opportunity to become what Mitchell (2008) described as an agent of change. Because of the findings in the data indicating agreement on the value of community engagement practice in graduate education programs as well as the support of those findings in the literature, it may be reasonable to conclude that change is needed.

There are multiple challenges associated with the development of new initiatives within a university setting, yet those challenges should not prevent transformation from taking place when it can be established that transformation has the potential to make a difference. The data revealed a willingness to support the inclusion of community engagement practices in graduate programs at a private faith-based University in south Texas. Working from a framework of Kolb’s experiential learning theory, that learning from experience remains grounded in the

concept of learning through the reality of the experience itself, the connection between doing and learning is evident (Kolb, 1984). This connection is recognized by those who were interviewed and, I would suggest, that knowledge will be created through the transformative experience in creating change.

A clear message from this study was the idea that what students learn and the experiences that are part of that learning *should* change them. I would suggest that if there is an expectation that graduate students undergo a level of transformation during their educational journey, it seems appropriate to conclude that universities should continue to transform, particularly with regard to practices that meet student and community needs. The literature suggests the question is raised as to whether graduate education was broken. It may not be broken but I do believe change is necessary – not for the sake of change but change to create something more powerful and meaningful to the graduate education environment with corresponding benefits to students, institutions, and communities.

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## Appendices

## Appendix A IRB Approval



April 10 2018

To: Ms Patricia Noske

From: University of the Incarnate Word Institutional Review Board, FWA00009201

Patricia:

Your request to conduct the study titled "The Integration and Development of Community Engagement in Graduate Education" was approved by Exempt review on 04/10/2018. Your IRB approval number is 18-04-004. You have approval to conduct this study through 4/10/18 at which time you will need to submit an **IRB Study Status Update**.

Please keep in mind the following responsibilities of the Principal Investigator:

1. Conducting the study only according to the protocol approved by the IRB.
2. Submitting any changes to the protocol and/or consent documents to the IRB for review and approval prior to the implementation of the changes. Use the **IRB Amendment Request** form.
3. Ensuring that only persons formally approved by the IRB enroll subjects.
4. Reporting immediately to the IRB any severe adverse reaction or serious problem, whether anticipated or unanticipated.
5. Reporting immediately to the IRB the death of a subject, regardless of the cause.
6. Reporting promptly to the IRB any significant findings that become known in the course of the research that might affect the willingness of the subjects to participate in the study or, once enrolled, to continue to take part.
7. Timely submission of an annual status report. Use the **IRB Study Status Update** form.
8. Completion and maintenance of an active (non-expired) CITI human subjects training certificate.
9. Timely notification of a project's completion. Use the **IRB Closure** form.

Approval may be suspended or terminated if there is evidence of a) noncompliance with federal regulations or university policy or b) any aberration from the current, approved protocol.

If you need any assistance, please contact the UIW IRB representative for your

college/school or the Office of Research Development. Sincerely,

*Ana Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA*

Ana Hagendorf, PhD, CPRA  
 Research Officer, Office of Research Development  
 University of the Incarnate Word  
 (210) 805-3036  
 wandless@uiwtx.edu

## Appendix B Informed Consent Document

### Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study of The Development and Integration of Community Engagement in Graduate Education University of the Incarnate Word

#### Authorized Study Personnel:

Principal Researcher: Patricia Noske, Ph.D. Candidate  
Dreeben School of Education (Ph.D. Candidate)  
Telephone: 210-887-4176  
Email: [noske@student.uiwtx.edu](mailto:noske@student.uiwtx.edu)

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Arthur Hernandez  
Email: [aeherma8@uiwtx.edu](mailto:aeherma8@uiwtx.edu)  
Telephone: 210.283-6409

**Key Information:** Your consent is being sought for a research study. This proposed study seeks to collect data from purposefully selected key informants in order to identify those necessary elements to create a framework within which community engagement may be integrated within graduate education programs at a private Catholic university in South Texas.

If you agree to participate in this study, the project will involve:

- Procedures will include participating in one or two interviews during which you may describe your role and responsibilities in the area of graduate education at UIW and/or any other institution of higher education of which you have been a part. You may also be asked to provide your thoughts on the intentions of graduate education as well as to describe your perceptions and understanding of how graduate faculty and staff function within the university environment, how you view the needs of graduate education in general and more specifically, the potential benefits of community engagement within that environment. If you agree to participate in the study, you may also be asked your views on best practices when incorporating community engagement into graduate education programs. You will be asked to meet at a location, and on a day and at a time, that is mutually agreeable to you and the principal investigator, and that is convenient for you.

#### What will be done during this research study?

- You are being asked to participate in one or two interviews, lasting no more than 90 minutes each. I would like to audio-record the interview(s) to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. I will keep these recordings in a locked file cabinet at my residence and they will only be used by the principal researcher. If you prefer not to be audio-recorded, I will take notes instead; however, audio-recordings are preferable to ensure accuracy.

- I may quote your remarks in presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

**How will my data/samples/images be used?** The data collected during interviews could potentially be used in future research studies. You are given the option to choose whether you will allow your deidentified data to be stored indefinitely for further analysis or other relevant research studies.

**What are the possible risks of being in this study?**

- The possibility exists that you may feel emotional or upset when answering some of the questions. Tell the interviewer at any time if you wish to take a break or stop the interview.
- You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions and topics we will ask about. If you are uncomfortable you are free to not answer or to skip to the next question.

**What are the possible benefits to you?**

- You will not likely receive any benefit on an individual and personal level from participation in this study.

**What are the possible benefits to other people?**

- An original intent of community engagement within graduate education was to encourage students to recognize the significance of their programs to professional environments through direct application of knowledge (O'Meara, 2008).
- It is expected that an exploration of the topic will not only add to the body of knowledge it will also provide insight as to potential methodologies designed to improve the quality of graduate education.
- It is also anticipated that this study will support the premise that by incorporating community engagement into the graduate education curriculum students will become more engaged scholars, enhancing their ability to function as professionals in real world settings. There appears to be a lack of awareness and understanding as to how reciprocal relationships between graduate education and communities benefit both environments. This study is intended to clarify these connections, while describing and recognizing barriers currently existing that potentially limit such engagement.

**What will being in this research study cost you?** There is no cost to you to be in this research study.

**Will you be compensated for being in this research study?** You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

**How will information about you be protected?**

- Everything we learn about you in the study will be confidential. The only persons who will have access to your research records are the principal investigator, her Faculty Advisor, the Institutional Review Board (IRB), and any other person, agency, or sponsor as required by

law. If we publish with results of the study, you will not be identified in any way unless you provide explicit permission for this below.

- Should any relevant artifacts be made available, data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's residence and will only be seen by the principal investigator and her Faculty Advisor during the study and for ten years after the study is complete.
- All data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the principal investigator's office and will only be seen by the research team during the study and for ten years after the study is complete.
- Audio-taped recordings will be stored electronically on a secure server and will only be seen by the principal investigator and her Faculty Advisor during the study and for ten years after the study is complete.

**What will happen if you decide not to be in this research study or decide to stop participating once you start?**

- You can decide not to be in this research study, or you can stop being in this research study at any time, for any reason. You do not have to answer any question you do not want to answer. Deciding not to be in this research study or deciding to withdraw will not affect your relationship with the investigator or with the University of the Incarnate Word.
- Your participation in this research is in no way part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university, or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at the University of the Incarnate Word.
- If you decide to withdraw from the study, the principal investigator will ask you if the information already collected from you may be used.

**What should you do if you have a problem or question during this research study?**

- If you have a problem as a direct result of being in this study, you should immediately contact one of the people listed at the beginning of this consent form.
- If you have any questions now, feel free to ask us. If you have additional questions about your rights or wish to report a problem that may be related to the study, please contact the UTW Office of Research Development, (210) 805- 3036.

**Consent for future use of data**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I give permission for my deidentified data to be used in the future for additional analysis or other relevant research studies. I understand that no additional informed consent for this use will be sought. I understand that my deidentified data can be stored indefinitely.

\_\_\_\_\_ I give my permission for my data to be used for this research study only. I do not give permission for any future use beyond the scope of this research study. I understand that my data will be destroyed within ten years after completion of this study.

**Consent for use of contact information to be contacted about participation in other studies**

Initial one of the following to indicate your choice:

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to allow the researchers to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research studies.

\_\_\_\_\_ I do not agree to allow the researchers to use my contact information collected during this study to contact me about participating in future research studies.

**Consent**

Your signature indicates that you (1) consent to take part in this research study, (2) that you have read and understand the information given above, and (3) that the information above was explained to you, and you have been given the chance to discuss it and ask questions. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Principal Investigator/Designee



## Appendix C List of Interview Questions

### *The Development and Integration of Community Engagement in Graduate Education*

Principal Researcher: Patricia Noske

Department: Dreeben School of Education (Ph.D. Candidate)

Telephone number: 210-887-4176

Email: [noske@student.uiwtx.edu](mailto:noske@student.uiwtx.edu)

#### **Guiding Questions:**

1. How would you describe the purpose of graduate education in general and at this university?
2. From the perspective of your experience with the conduct and development of graduate education programs, how would you describe this university's graduate education programs' role with regard to building capacity of students after graduation?
3. Based on your experiences here at this university, how would you describe the ability of existing practicums and/or internships in graduate programs to fulfill the university's mission of service?
4. How would you describe or define community engagement in general and as it relates to this university?
5. Do you feel there is a difference between the inclusion of embedded community engagement in graduate programs and the concept of connected learning and if so, how would you describe the difference?
6. How do you understand this university's mission of service?
7. How would you describe any potential benefits of community engagement to this university and students within the graduate education environment?
8. What barriers can you identify that would potentially limit the inclusion of community engagement in graduate programs, across disciplines, at this university?
9. What opportunities for community engagement would you foresee as being effective in this university's graduate education programs across disciplines, excluding professional programs such as the DNP?
10. How would you describe your role in terms of the development of graduate education programs at this university?
11. What other thoughts on this topic would you like to add?

## Appendix D Email to Potential Participants

### *The Development and Integration of Community Engagement in Graduate Education*

Principal Researcher: Patricia Noske  
 Department: Dreeben School of Education (Ph.D. Candidate)  
 Telephone number: 210-887-4176  
 Email: [noske@student.uiwtx.edu](mailto:noske@student.uiwtx.edu)

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Email to Potential Participants:

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a Ph.D. candidate who is currently in dissertation on the topic of *The Development and Integration of Community Engagement in Graduate Education*. I am sending this email to you as I believe your participation in my study would be extremely valuable. In your capacity as (title of UIW position), you have insights and knowledge that will enhance the scope of my research and which will also enhance the ability of the University to encourage students to become more engaged scholars and active members of their community.

For purposes of my study, it is understood that community engagement involves collaboration between emerging student scholars and their communities to promote the exchange of knowledge and skills within a framework of reciprocity (Carnegie, 2012). It is expected that an exploration of my topic will provide insight as to potential methodologies designed to improve the quality of graduate education. It is also anticipated that this study will support the premise that by incorporating community engagement into the graduate education curriculum students will become more engaged citizens, enhancing their ability to function as professionals after graduation. Within the literature, there appears to be a lack of awareness and understanding as to how reciprocal relationships between higher education institutions and their surrounding communities benefit both environments, particularly within the area of graduate education. This study is intended to clarify these connections, while describing and recognizing barriers currently existing that potentially limit such engagement.

I truly believe that your participation will contribute significantly to this research and I am hopeful that you will accept this invitation to participate. Should you accept, I will provide you with the appropriate Informed Consent letter.

Sincerely,

Patricia Noske  
 Ph.D. Candidate  
 Concentration: Organizational Leadership  
 Emphasis: Adult Education  
 Dissertation Chair: Dr. Arthur Hernandez  
 Dissertation Committee: Dr. Susan Hall and Dr. Letitia Harding

## Appendix E Interview Matrix

Speaker	Interview/Responses	Included Terms	X is a Kind of Y	Cover Terms
Interviewer	How would you describe based on your perspective the purpose of graduate education in general and also here at this particular university?			
Participant 2	I would put purpose as continuing growth not only emotionally and spiritually but intellectually.	Growth - Emotionally, spiritually, intellectually	Is a kind of	Building capacity
	And socially.	Socially	Is a kind of	Building capacity
	Because I think yes we learn a lot in undergraduate but when we need to focus or learn more about a particular topic or a particular area of interest I think the best place that that can happen is in graduate education.	Learn	Is a kind of	Acquiring knowledge
	And also because there is a level of maturity that than allows the student who is engaged in graduate education to enter into the experience of acquiring knowledge.	Experience	Is a kind of	Acquiring knowledge
	And I really mean acquiring.	Acquiring	Is a kind of	Acquiring knowledge
	It's not just a superficial kind of pass through but it is taking down and appreciating the wisdom and the learning and then taking all of that and finding a way to creatively use it in life.	Finding a way to use	Is a kind of	Transferability
	Whatever that job is, or whatever that vocation or whatever that passion is.	Job Vocation Passion	Is a kind of	Acquiring knowledge
Interviewer	And from that perspective would you see the purpose of graduate education at this particular university as you would at any university or do you see this university differently?			
Participant 2	I think in general that applies to any university but what I have noticed about the graduate education here, there's a real desire to support students as they move through the graduate program in creative ways.	Support	Is a kind of	Responsibility