An Exploration of the Impact Service Learning has on Students who Engage with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: A Phenomenological Study

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Abstract

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An Exploration of the Impact Service Learning has on Students who Engage with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: A Phenomenological Study

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Service learning as an educational pedagogy has demonstrated the ability to impact positively a student’s identity development, inter-cultural maturity, and self-authorship skills. In this qualitative phenomenological research study, the researcher examined the lived experiences of college students who participated in service learning opportunities with individuals who have developmental disabilities. The emphasis of this study was the impact the experience had on the college students and on their identity development, inter-cultural maturity, and self-authorship skills.

The participants in this phenomenological research study indicate an overall positive experience. Participants reported a transformational experience which increased their learning, ability to address social problems, and a better understanding of people with developmental disabilities. An increase in identity development (understanding and appreciation of community), inter-cultural maturity (sensitivity to others), and self-authorship (ability to define and direct one’s self) was indicated in all the study participants. The negative issues of oppression and disablism (a set of assumptions and practices that promote the differential or unequal treatment of people with disabilities) were also indicated by the study participants in limited amounts.
Dedication

Many thanks to my wife, Leslie, my mother, Rosa, and my father, Henry.

I love you all.
Acknowledgments

This work would not be possible if not for the support and encouragement of my dissertation committee. My dissertation chair, Dr. Charles Lowery has been a great supporter and a huge advocate for my success. I thank you sincerely for this time and effort on my behalf.

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Most importantly, I wish to acknowledge my family. My wife, Leslie Davis, is my biggest supporter and I am grateful for this. I love you dearly. To my mother, Rosa Davis and my father, Henry Davis – you both mean so much to me. I can’t begin to describe how your example has helped guide me over the years. Thank you.
Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................ 3
Dedication ................................................................................................................................... 4
Acknowledgments ..................................................................................................................... 5
List of Tables .............................................................................................................................. 8
Chapter 1: Introduction ............................................................................................................ 9
  Problem Statement .................................................................................................................. 10
  Theoretical Perspective ......................................................................................................... 11
  Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................... 12
  Significance of Study ........................................................................................................... 13
  Limitations ............................................................................................................................. 15
  Delimitations ........................................................................................................................ 15
  Organization of the Study ....................................................................................................... 16
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature ....................................................................................... 17
  Service Learning Defined ..................................................................................................... 17
  Beginnings of Service Learning in Higher Education .......................................................... 20
  Modern Day Service Learning is Born ................................................................................ 22
  The Type of Institution Matters ........................................................................................... 24
  Early Practitioners .............................................................................................................. 26
  Recent Increase in Service .................................................................................................... 26
  Service Learning and Self-Authorship ................................................................................. 28
  Service Learning and Intercultural Maturity ....................................................................... 31
  Service Learning and Identity Development ...................................................................... 33
  Service Learning and Privileged Students .......................................................................... 36
  Service Learning and Students with Developmental Disabilities........................................ 38
  Developmental Disability Defined ..................................................................................... 42
  County Board of Developmental Disabilities ..................................................................... 43
  Need for Additional Research .............................................................................................. 45
Chapter 3: Methodology .......................................................................................................... 47
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1: Themes and Descriptions of Students’ Lived Experiences Regarding Service Learning: Pre-Service</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2: Themes and Descriptions of Students’ Lived Experiences Regarding Service Learning: Post-Service</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1 Introduction

For generations colleges and universities have worked to refine their understanding of how students develop and learn. One solid, evidence-based, programmatic way of increasing development and learning among students is promoting and encouraging participation in service-learning courses (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). “Service learning is often heralded as a pedagogical strategy with transformative potential” (Butin, 2005, p. 3, Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorcki, 2005). Engagement with the local community has been demonstrated to benefit one’s personal conceptualizations of self, others, and societal issues. Involving college students in service learning has long been viewed as a way to help increase learning, student satisfaction, and student retention (Ilustre, McFarland, Mercer, Miron, & Moely, 2002).

Service learning can be defined in a number of different ways. According to Kendall (1990), scholarly literature recognizes over one hundred different definitions, with hundreds more being added in the two decades since. One of the most widely accepted definitions is that service-learning is a form of “experiential learning in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Another useful definition of service learning from an educational pedagogy standpoint is, “learning to promote increased understanding of course content while helping students develop knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities to deal effectively with complex social issues and problems” (Hurd, 2006, p. 1). Service learning must be curricular in nature, or credit bearing, in which students participate in a service activity
that meets an identified community need and reflect on that activity in such a way to help
gain further understanding of the course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline,
and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

Service learning is a pedagogical tool that helps students begin to understand one
of the most central questions of personal development, “Who am I?” Student
development theorists, such as Chickering and Riesser (1993) and Baxter Magolda
(2009a), have detailed their theories on how students learn, develop a sense of self, and
author their identities. Regardless of race, economic background, ethnicity, gender, or
sexual orientation as a college student, the identity question is central to development.
Therefore, helping college students develop their identities should be a primary concern
for any academic institution.

As the current literature illustrates, service-learning courses often change the way
traditional college-age students feel about themselves, their communities, and their place
in their community (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). However, there is
a limited amount of research regarding the impact on personal development for students
participating in a service-learning class with individuals identified with developmental
disabilities.

**Problem Statement**

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived
experiences and perceptions of college students who participated in a service-learning
setting with individuals of any age who are developmentally disabled. Because there is
very limited research on how a service-learning experience with individuals who are
developmentally disabled affects college students’ development in regard to their identity development, inter-cultural maturity, and self-authorship; this issue needs further exploration. It is often taken for granted that an educational administrator is able to critically understand the effects of service learning experiences in order to adequately shape the experience to maximize benefits for the college student participating. As a phenomenological inquiry, this study attempted to help the educational administrator move towards this understanding.

Therefore, the overarching question addressed in this study was: What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled? How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perception of their identity development, self-authorization, and inter-cultural maturity?

**Theoretical Perspective**

This phenomenological study examined the research questions using the lens of a student development theoretical perspective. Student development theory can best be described as “the ways a student grows, develops, progresses, or increases his or her developmental capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education” (Renn & Reason, 203, p. 214). Student development theory guides education practices related to promoting student growth and learning. While practitioners and scholars do not completely agree on what constitutes the body of student development theory, they do agree the core theories display several characteristics such as: moving from a less to a more complex way of being (stages or levels), emphasizing the role of individual
experiences in the development of the student, and focusing on the role of the institution of education in promoting or inhibiting development (Renn & Reason, 2013).

This qualitative study focused on three development characteristics the researcher examined from a student development perspective regarding how the service-learning experience affects students’ identities as related to self-authorship, identity development, and inter-cultural maturity. This study incorporated elements of student development theories developed by Baxter Magolda (2009b), Chickering and Reiser (1993), Kegan (1994), and King (2005). The use of multiple developmental theories is preferred since the development of a whole student is more complex than any one theory can explain (Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, & Renn, 2010). The chosen theories hold explanatory potential related to the growth and development students participating in a service-learning class with individuals with developmental disabilities would experience.

**Definition of Terms**

For the purposes of this study several terms are operationally defined in the following section.

**Developmental disability.** “A mental or physical impairment which is manifested by the age of 22 which is likely to continue indefinitely, and results in substantial functional limitations in at least three of the following major life activities (self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living)” (ORC, Section 5126.01).

**Service learning.** “Experiential learning (in an academic setting) in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with
structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning” (Jacoby, 1996).

**Self-authorship.** Recognition that what happens in the world and in one’s life is often beyond one’s control, however reactions are within one’s control and having the internal capacity to be able to define one’s beliefs, identity, social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Renn & Reason, 2013).

**Inter-cultural maturity.** A process of maturing that evolves in students, given appropriate experiences, and involves a range of attributes including cognitive (understanding), interpersonal (sensitivity to others), and intrapersonal (listen and learning from others (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005).

**Identity development.** The process of becoming comfortable with one’s race, gender, ethnic background, place in community, and sexual orientation (Chickering & Riessner, 1993).

**Significance of the Study**

A review of the literature indicates that service-learning courses often impact the way traditional college-age students feel about themselves, their communities, and their place in their community (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). One research-based, programmatic way of increasing self-authorship, identity development, and multi-cultural identity among students is participation in service-learning courses (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). Service learning is often heralded as a pedagogical strategy with transformative potential (Jones, et al, 2005). Engagement with the local community has been demonstrated to benefits one’s personal conceptualizations.
of self, others, and societal issues and involving college students in service learning has long been viewed as a way to increase learning, student satisfaction, and student retention (Illustre, et al, 2002).

Service learning is increasingly seen as a high impact pedagogical practice (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996). Therefore, it is essential that an educational administrator understand the effects of these experiences so the service-learning experience can be adequately shaped to maximize benefits for the college student participating. However, there is very limited research on how a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled affects college students’ development in regard to their identity, inter-cultural maturity, and self-authorship; and because of this, the issue needs further exploration. This study has the potential to help educational administrators, college faculty, community leaders, and community agencies who engage college students in service with individuals diagnosed with developmental disabilities individuals to better understand the experience and develop supports to help college students through the process of engaging in service and subsequent reflection. This qualitative study attempted to address the following questions: What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled? How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perceptions of identity development, self-authorization, and inter-cultural maturity?
Limitations

Limitations set conditions that acknowledge the tentative nature of any research project and could potentially limit the generalizability of the study (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). The following section identifies the limitation of the present study.

1. The researcher has developed, administered, and engaged in service-learning courses and works as an educational administrator in the developmental disability field. Therefore, I could be biased regarding how students who engages in a service-learning course with developmentally disabled individuals perceive the experience. This was limited by the researcher’s lens as presented in the methodology section of this study. The participants were made aware of this before their unstructured interviews.

Delimitations

1. Participants were enrolled at a Midwestern Appalachian University.
2. Participants were undergraduate students pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree.
3. Participants were enrolled in face-to-face courses.
4. Participants were enrolled in a service-learning class – with service and reflection built into the curriculum.
5. Participants were completing their service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled.
6. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size was determined by data saturation, but at minimum, four students were anticipated to participate or until data saturation was reached.
Organization of the Study

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One consists of the introduction of the literature and research regarding service learning. The statement of the problem, theoretical perspective, limitations of the study, definition of terms, significance of the study, and organization of the study are also presented. Chapter Two contains a review of the literature regarding service learning, identity development, self-authorization, intercultural maturity, and students engaging in service learning with individuals diagnosed with developmental disabilities. In Chapter Three, the research methodology and instrumentation used to collect and analyze data are described. Chapter Four contains the results of the data – including prescription, analysis, and interpretation of the data. In Chapter Five, the results of the study are discussed, including a summary, research results, and recommendations for further study.
Chapter Two - Review of the Literature

The exploration of the issue of service learning and engaging with individuals with disabilities must begin with a review the literature that impacts, surrounds, and frames this critical topic. In this chapter I will examine the definition of service learning, service learning in higher education, the development of modern service learning, pioneers of service, patterns of increase in service learning, the relationships between service learning and self-authorship, inter-cultural maturity and identity development, service learning with the under privileged, service learning with individuals diagnosed with developmental disabilities as the recipients of service, and specifics related to one Midwestern Appalachian County. The literature review concludes with a statement of need for why the research provides valuable contributions to the available literature on students engaged in service learning with individuals who are developmentally disabled.

Service Learning Defined

Involving college students in service learning has long been viewed as a way to help increase learning, student satisfaction, and student retention (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995). Service learning can be defined in a number of different ways. One of the most widely accepted definitions would be that service learning is a form of “experiential learning in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). According to Kendall (1990), there were over a hundred different definitions in scholarly literature, with hundreds more being added in the two decades since. According to Frolow (2010), service learning is a form of student centered
experiential education pedagogy that links theory with practice, as well as academic
study and service, to enable students to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom in a
practical, real-life situation and then reflect back on the situation to impact learning.

Another useful definition of service-learning as an educational pedagogy would be, “learning to promote increased understanding of course content while helping
students develop knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities to deal effectively with
complex social issues and problems” (Hurd, 2006, p. 1). According to Bringle and
Hatcher (1995) service learning is a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience
in which students participate in an organized activity meeting community needs. The
students then must reflect upon the activity in a way to gain further understanding of
course content and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.

Cruz, Giles, and Stanton (1999) define service learning as joining two complex
concepts: community action (the service), and efforts to learn from that action and
connect what is learned to existing knowledge (the learning). Cruz et al. state that
service-learning programs should not just recruit students to volunteer in a soup kitchen,
but should require students to also reflect on why people are hungry. Bringle, Hudson,
and Phillips (2004) state that in service learning, students do not receive academic credit
for engaging in community service, but rather, they receive academic credit for the
learning that occurs as a result of the service experience.

Eyler and Giles (1999) indicate they are not inclined to use a tight definition of
service learning for fear of excluding programs that include some form of learning and
service. Instead, they are interested in an optimal mix of service and learning but not
dependent upon definitions to drive their understanding. Eyler and Giles state they will accept any program that attempts to link academic study with service as being characterized as service learning. That being said, they highlight the following components of a strong service-learning program: students have the opportunity to do important work, close connections between academic subject matter and what the students are doing in the community, reflection about service integrated into the classroom discussions, reflection challenges students to go beyond description of feelings to analysis, students work with people from diverse backgrounds, and projects that are developed with input from the community.

Bringle, Hudson, and Phillips (2004) reference the writings of John Dewey as recognizing pedagogical benefits when it comes to teaching an engaged or practical curriculum as Dewey valued the perplexity students face when confronted with new circumstances and difficult challenges in real-life situations. In *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey (1897) stated the community can be shaped by what takes place in the school learning system and the two (community and education) are closely linked. Furthermore, he described education as the process of living, and not a preparation for future living (Dewey, 1897). He discussed education and school as a form of community but noted that education should not be overly formal or structured into a predetermined set of skills needed by all. Dewey proposed that a community is best served by allowing students to reach their full potential by using their skills for the greater good of the community as a whole, and sharpening these skills while in school. He even states that examinations
should only be used to reveal the place in which a student can be of most service to the community which is where their education should be concentrated (Dewey, 1897).

Dewey linked the importance of social learning in education with success in the community. According to Dewey (1938), the quality of students’ experiences is dependent upon the teacher understanding the students' past experiences in order to effectively design a sequence of educational experiences to allow them to fulfill their potential as members of society. He talked of how social learning benefits the community much more than just preparing a student for a remote future or doing things just for preparation of learning. Dewey even touched on the subject of preparing students for the complex social situations of life and bridging the gap between the home and school life. Both of these social preparations clearly, in his writings, should be conducted to benefit the community as a whole and clearly link the success of the community with the education students are provided in the school settings. Dewey (1897) strongly connected community as a key component to teaching and learning. He indicated that through education, a community should be able to shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it moves, hence tying education and the community.

The Beginnings of Service in Higher Education

“From the beginning, the American college was cloaked with a public purpose, with a responsibility to the past and the present and the future” (Rudolph, 1962, p. 177). Although the existing practice of service learning as we know it can be traced back to the 1960’s, its conceptual beginnings can be traced back to the start of American higher
education. According to Jacoby (1996), since the founding of Harvard in 1636, the goals of higher education have included the preparation of citizens for active community life.

The passage of the Morrill Land Grant Act in 1862 inextricably linked higher education and service (Cruz et al., 1999; Frolow, 2010; Jacoby, 1996), especially as related to agriculture and industry. This linkage between higher education and service sparked by the Morrill Act, was expanded after the turn of the century. In 1902, then Princeton University President Woodrow Wilson would say, “It is not the learning but the spirit of service that will give college a place in the annals of the nation” (Jacoby, 1996, p. 11). The connection was further demonstrated by the University of Wisconsin’s initiative, known as the “Wisconsin Idea” which encouraged faculty to utilize their expertise to address public issues as a form of service and was inserted into the University’s mission statement (Frolow, 2010). The Wisconsin Idea was adopted by many colleges and universities seeking to ground their teaching and research in public service across the nation.

Another watershed moment in the development of service in colleges and institutions of higher education came in the 1940’s with the release of the Truman Commission’s report on higher education and its strong recommendation that universities should serve the public at large. This period, which also saw the GI Bill and the formation of the National Science Foundation, was critical in the development of the federal government beginning to form relationships with research colleges so they could provide outreach and service to the general public (Jacoby, 1996). Community colleges,
which were also being founded in this period, began providing higher education to people once deemed unable to benefit from a college education.

**Modern Day Service Learning is Born**

As Rudolph stated, colleges have been cloaked with a public purpose from the beginning, although the actual term service learning was not coined until 1967 when Bob Sigmon and William Ramsey at the *Southern Regional Educational Board* first used it (Eyler & Giles, 1994; Frolow, 2010). They used the term service-learning to describe an academic program that linked eastern Tennessee college students with development organizations in the area. During the 1960’s and 70’s, many college campuses were in a constant state of upheaval and change. Community activists and college educators were interested in and drawn to the idea that action in communities and structured learning could be combined to provide stronger service and leadership in communities and a deeper education for students (Cruz et al., 1999). In 1969, the *National Center for Service Learning* was established and many campus-based service programs were initiated around the country. Some of these programs included VISTA, ACTION, the *National Student Volunteer Program*, and the *National Society for Experiential Education* whose early director, Jane Kendall (1990), stated, “A good service-learning program helps participants see their service in the larger context of issues of social justice and social policy – rather than in the context of charity” (p. 20).

Unfortunately, the service-learning movement of the 1960’s and 70’s did not last (Jacoby, 1996). Kendall (1990) identified three distinct pitfalls that led to the demise of many programs universities used to engage their students in service. First, most of the
programs were not integrated into the central mission of the schools. Second, there were lessons to be learned about the balance of power in university and community helping relationships. The unequal balance of power in university and community relationships generated tensions over control, ownership, funding and lack of sustainability (Strier, 2011) and the power imbalance must be addressed. Institutions of higher education have much more to gain, more money, and more power than communities, which allows them to drive the agenda of the partnership. The third reason articulated by Kendall was that while the principle of service learning may be sound, the actual service experience itself does not ensure that either significant learning or effective service will occur. Further, Kendall stated that a number of educators, community leaders, and students who truly believed in the potential of service learning continued to support service through the 1980’s during a period of general decline. This small group of faculty pioneers started to experiment with varied service-learning initiatives. Their efforts served to encourage a surge of interest in service learning by institutions of higher education, students, communities and even the federal government that would occur in the 1990’s and 2000’s.

During the 1980’s as service learning was languishing and trying to find its place in the spectrum of higher education curricula, a very critical event helped propel service learning back into the spotlight. In 1985, Campus Compact was founded and began reinvigorating public and community service on campuses and began to move service learning from individual pioneer efforts to a more institutionalized effort (Campus Compact, 2014). Campus Compact was created by a group of visionary college presidents who believed in community service and engagement efforts. It was created to
help colleges and universities coordinate outreach efforts, provide faculty training, and make the institutionalization of community service a priority. Today, according to Who We Are – Campus Compact (2014), the more than 1,100 member institutions enroll more than six million students. According to Cruz et al. (1999), the forming of Campus Compact in 1985 represents a watershed moment in the history of service learning within higher education.

Another critical moment in the history of service learning in higher education occurred in 1994. With the inception of Campus Compact, many universities and faculty began to embrace service learning on an institutional level. Many faculty began to integrate service learning into their research and publications. The number of publications regarding service learning went from almost none in the 1980’s to hundreds by the early 1990’s (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Publications focused on curricular service learning and informed faculty trying to design service-learning courses (Jacoby, 1996). The dramatic increase in publications led to the development of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* in 1994. Having its own refereed journal provided the research, publications, and scholarship of service learning with a credible place to be housed.

**The Type of Institution Matters**

A discussion of the development of service learning must note that the type of institution where a faculty member works is critical. Since the beginnings of higher education in America, colleges and universities have offered both an advancement of knowledge and service to the local community. American higher education has always
had the goal of preparing students for active involvement in community life (Jacoby, 1996). It is also important to note that the history of service learning defines service through a primary goal of the institution and its mission statement (Cruz et al., 1999), however, the enactment of this definition varies across institutions. Liberal arts colleges, research universities, professional schools and community colleges all have different interpretations regarding how service should fit within the institution. The way a college or university interprets education, service, and democracy will impact how it understands its service mission and the types of activities it carries out (Cruz et al., 1999; Frolow, 2010).

Frolow (2010) noted that while each type of institution generally incorporates the elements of teaching, research, and service, there is a differentiation in the enactment of each by institutional type. A liberal arts college often views itself as fulfilling its service mission by emphasizing citizenship training and cultivating thinking skills needed to produce citizens for the public good. A research university has traditionally defined its service mission as the creation of new knowledge that is beneficial for the overall public good. Professional schools provide society with employees and citizens who have the needed skills to be doctors, lawyers, teachers, nurses, social workers, and business administrators. These trained professionals then provide services for the general public thereby fulfilling the university’s mission of service. Community colleges, created to make education accessible to all, provide higher education to people once deemed unable to benefit from a college education. The fulfilling of this unmet need of accessibility can be considered their brand of service.
Early Practitioners

Service-learning’s practitioners of the 1980’s and 1990’s were the early pioneers, preparing the way for others to follow. These innovators often came to the turbulent intersection of service and learning from a variety of directions and with differing motivations. Some were more focused on educational questions; others on issues of social justice; and still others were interested in preparing students for effective, democratic engagement (Cruz et al., 1999). These pioneers included Judy Sorum Brown from Michigan State University, John Duley from Michigan State University, Jane Kendall from the National Society of Experience Education, Bill Ramsey and Bob Sigmon from the Oak Ridge Institute of Nuclear Studies, Tim Stanton from Stanford, Dick Couto from the University of Richmond, Dwight Giles from Vanderbilt University, and Rob Shumer from UCLA. According to Cruz et al., these pioneers helped forge service learning into the powerful and widely accepted educational pedagogy it has become today, even though it remains somewhat marginal in most academic institutions (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Recent Increase in Service Learning

Historically, service-oriented universities had a difficult time with institutional support for service-learning activities. In order for service learning to be sustained on campuses, presidents and deans had to be convinced that a service learning pedagogy could be an effective means of producing serious academic results (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Over the last few decades, service-learning programs within universities have increased substantially. According to Frolow (2010), the increased attention of the past few
decades may partly be due to an increased interest in returning to higher education’s roots of connecting institutions and their community members. Service-oriented initiatives contribute to the institutions and the students that participate in the service-learning programs with two main purposes. The first is student development, growth, and transformation. For generations, colleges and universities have struggled to understand and support student development. Education professionals have asked the question of how they can help students develop, and more specifically help students understand one of the most central questions of any one person’s development - “who am I?”

Engagement with the local community through service learning has been shown to benefit one’s personal conceptualizations of self, others, and societal issues (Ilustre, et al, 2002). Students who participate in service-learning programs learn to integrate theory with practice and to critically reflect upon social problems. They also acquire enhanced social responsibility, critical problem-solving skills, and cognitive, spiritual, and personal attributes (Hurd, 2006). In addition, students who participate in service learning remain enrolled in college at a higher rate compared to students who do not participate, thereby increasing student retention (Bringle, Hatcher, & Muthiah, 2010).

The second reason many institutions have embraced the use of service-learning programs is to provide outreach and support to their local communities. Now, as much as any time in history, universities realize that engagement with their communities is vital to effective achievement of their missions (Wilson, 2004). This realization has led to a push for institutions of higher learning and communities to come together and form meaningful, mutually beneficial partnerships. An institution strives to form community
partnerships because such connections can help administrators promote their mission statements, provide student engagement opportunities, and increase the chances of faculty engaged research with the community. The community and the people who live near institutions can benefit from these outreach efforts through community improvement, better health opportunities, better educational opportunities, and enhanced employment opportunities. Community and university partnerships (of which service learning is a critical link) are now viewed as an integral tool for addressing pressing social problems with important transformative potential to advance social change by focusing university resources on real world issues in the local community (Curwood, Farrar, & Mackeigan, 2011).

Additionally, with the use of public monies, institutions have an obligation to connect and make meaningful contributions to the social welfare of their communities. Due to the pressure for institutions to embrace the priorities of their local communities, institutions began to realize the value in not isolating themselves from or competing with local communities but, rather, partnering with the surrounding community. After all, universities are a part of the local community. Pressure to justify their value to communities has led to a dramatic increase in universities searching for service-learning options for their students.

Service Learning and Self-Authorship

Service learning provides an excellent opportunity to promote students’ development toward self-authorship (being able to recognize that what happens in the world and in one’s life is often beyond one’s control, however reactions are within one’s
control and having the internal capacity to be able to define one’s beliefs, identity, social relations) because of frequent dissonance between previously held conceptions of self, new experiences, reflection, and new learning that can be created as a result (Jones et al., 2005).

Baxter Magolda has written extensively about authoring one’s life. Self-authorship, according to Baxter Magolda (2009a) is in large part, recognizing what happens in the world and in students’ lives is often beyond their control, but their reaction to it is within their control. Baxter Magolda further defines self-authorship as the internal capacity to be able to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations (Renn & Reason, 2013). When we are young, we rely on authority figures, parents, and mentors to help make decisions for us, and they help set the expectations for how we should act. But as we get older and our experiences expand, expectations that have been set for us may no longer be acceptable or adequate. Baxter Magolda (2009b) describes these experiences as crossroads and explains how important it is for students to begin to trust their internal voices when they encounter crossroads.

Service learning may create dissonance with the way students view the world or even perceive themselves, which would be considered crossroads. When one encounters these crossroads, it is necessary to make decisions on how to act, which is what makes crossroads so difficult for some to negotiate. Being able to listen to one’s internal voice, and to further cultivate that voice, are key components in developing self-authorship. According to Pizzolato (2005), it may even be possible to help intentionally create these
crossroads through certain programs or interventions to help with the development of self-authorization.

Kegan (1994) wrote about a concept he deemed a “consciousness bridge.” The “bridge” provides a model for how service-learning courses can help a student move towards self-authorization. Kegan uses the bridge concept to help explain how students make meaning from experiences where they may be “in over their heads.” He explains how it is critically important for the bridge builder to have equal respect for both sides of the bridge while creating a firm foundation for the student to “cross over.” When students are engaged in a service class and encounter situations in which they may feel “in over their heads,” it is critical for the faculty, or the bridge builder, to work with students to develop a firm foundation so they will feel safe to grow and “cross over” the bridge. According to Jones et al., (2005), the journey across this consciousness bridge (to which a service-learning class can contribute) can bring students closer to self-authored identities.

Developing an internal voice varies from person to person and, therefore, it is important to provide students with adequate levels of support to match the high levels of challenge while they travel on these developmental journeys (Mather, Karbley, & Yamamoto, 2012). Service learning can support this process by supporting their internal voice allowing students to develop their identity in ways that a classroom setting simply cannot.

Service learning is often heralded as a pedagogical strategy with transformative potential (Jones et al., 2005). Mezirow (1994) discusses transformation theory and how
an individual is transformed through the process of reflection. According to Mezirow, “reflection involves a critique of assumptions to determine whether the belief, often acquired through assimilation in childhood, remains functional for us as adults” (p. 223). Therefore, transformational learning takes place when we struggle to solve a problem where one’s usual way of doing things does not work, and the individual is called to question the validity of what he/she thinks is known (Eyler & Giles, 1999). This process of questioning and reflecting may lead to a transformation of perspective. Reflection, which has been written about extensively, is a key component and requirement of service learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Cruz, et al, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Frolow, 2010; Hurd, 2006; Jacoby, 1996; Kendall, 1990). This transformed perspective can lead toward developing identity and self-authorship (Chickering & Reiser, 1993; Baxter Magolda, 2009).

**Service Learning and Inter-Cultural Maturity**

As noted earlier, a useful definition of service learning as an educational pedagogy would be, “learning to promote increased understanding of course content while helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities to deal effectively with complex social issues and problems” (Hurd, 2006, p. 1). These required knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities could be enhanced by increasing students’ intercultural maturity. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) introduced the concept of intercultural maturity as a multi-dimensional range of attributes including understanding, sensitivity to others, and a sense of one’s self that enables one to listen and learn from others.
According to King and Baxter Magolda (2005), “understanding” falls within the cognitive dimension, governing how people think about and understand diversity issues. There is a three-step process through which a student progresses from initial, to intermediate, to a mature level of thinking where students consciously develop perspectives and behaviors reflecting a broad worldview. “Sensitivity to others” falls within the intrapersonal dimension, or how students think about and come to understand diversity issues – how students view themselves. In this dimension, developing a mature level of sensitivity to others involves having the capacity for an internal self that openly engages challenges to one’s world views. The third dimension of intercultural maturity refers to the ability to “listen and learn from others” – interpersonal, which relates to a student’s ability to interact effectively and independently with diverse others. Maturity in this dimension is marked by an appreciation for human differences and a willingness to work for the rights of others.

According to Evans et al. (2010), educators can influence and promote intercultural maturity if they consider all the dimensions of development and if the process is one that evolves. It is critical that students be given appropriate opportunities and experiences which is why service learning is so critical because it exposes students to others unlike themselves so they can begin to develop and enhance their intercultural maturity. The development of intercultural maturity varies from person to person and is often a messy path. Therefore it is important to provide students with an adequate level of support to match the high level of challenge while they travel on these developmental
journeys (Mather, et al, 2012). Again, service learning can support the process of developing intercultural maturity in a way that a classroom setting simply cannot.

**Service Learning and Identity Development**

As the literature suggests, service learning is designed to impact both the community served and the students engaged in service. In regards to student learning, service learning purports to enhance students’ academic outcomes and enrich and enhance their personal development. A key aspect of personal development is the development of identity. In fact, Chickering and Reisser (1993) suggested that identity formation is the central task for college-age students. For generations, colleges and universities have struggled with understanding student development and higher education administrators have attempted to shape the lives, experiences, and learning of students. Despite attempts to facilitate student development, higher education and student affairs lack a holistic, theoretical approach to promote the learning and development of the whole student (Baxter Magolda, 2009b). Therefore, the question must be asked how administrators in higher education can help facilitate this growth and development among students. In order to help students begin to understand one of the most central questions of personal development, “Who am I?” service learning is a promising pedagogical tool. Student development theorists such as Chickering and Riesser (1993) and Baxtor Magolda (2009b) have detailed their beliefs and theories on how students learn, develop a sense of self, and author their identities.

Chickering and Riesser (1993) viewed the establishment of identity as the core developmental issue with which students grapple during their college years (Evans et al.,
Chickering described developing identity as the centerpiece of the seven vectors of development as identity builds on the four vectors before it and provides the foundation for the two vectors after it (Renn & Reason, 2013). The seven vectors of student development (developing competence, managing emotions, moving toward interdependence, interpersonal relationships, developing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity) comprise one of the most recognized student development theories still used today (Renn & Reason, 2013).

According to Chickering and Riessner’s (1993) theory, progression through the seven different vectors is not linear and students may advance at different rates of progression. Students may even go back and forth as their individual circumstances dictate. Although the vectors are not linear, students use information and skills gained in one vector to help with further vectors. This basic understanding of the vectors and how students can progress through them is required to fully understand and appreciate how important establishing identity is to Chickering and Reisser. Developing an identity involves becoming comfortable with one’s race, gender, ethnic background and sexual orientation. As stated by Chickering and Reisser (1993), “A solid sense of self emerges, and it becomes more apparent that there is an “I” who coordinates the facets of personality, who “owns” the house of self and is comfortable in all the rooms” (p. 49).

Chickering. Arthur Chickering proposed seven vectors of student development (1969), with establishing identity as a central focus. Regardless of race, economic background, ethnicity gender, or sexual orientation, there is a common struggle for students associated in coming to terms with “who I am” on the same basic level (Baxter
Magolda, 2009b). Therefore, helping college students develop their identities and self-author their lives should be a primary concern of any academic institution.

**Erikson.** An additional development theory applicable to college-age students from which one can gain insights regarding identity development is Erik Erikson’s development theory. Erikson viewed the development of self as being based on the influence of external factors as well as internal dynamics (Evans, et al, 2010). Unlike Chickering and Reisser’s theory which was developed around college students, Erikson’s theory is based on the entire life span of a person but also divided into stages. Stage five, Identity versus Identity Confusion/Diffusion is of most interest to higher education researchers because it deals with the transition from childhood to adulthood, when traditional college-age students are in college (Renn & Reason, 2013). In this stage, students begin to develop their core sense of self, values, beliefs, and lifetime goals.

**Jacoby.** Jacoby (1996) described identity development (the way students view themselves in regards to race, social class, and gender) and the intersection of service learning as critical. Student identities are related to particular characteristics students hold (i.e., race and gender) and are externally defined by society but also internally developed. The specific experiences students could have while engaging in service may affect, trigger, and shape their development in these identity dimensions. In particular, according to Jacoby, social class is a major influence on the way students conceptualize service and how they interact with others. Jacoby discusses the importance of a student being aware that they are “middle” class and how their “privileges” will affect their
identity in regards to comprehending social issues when interacting with community members of a different class.

**Service Learning and “Privileged” Students**

Most research surrounding service learning focuses on the “servers” being privileged college students and the “served” being underprivileged, poor, and people of need (Henry, 2005). One example is the much cited and widely accepted writing by Eyler and Giles, *Where’s the Learning in Service Learning* (1999). Their survey of 1500 college students after a semester of service learning noted several common themes such as: “meeting people that I would have never met,” “I learned the people I serve are a lot like me,” and that “I learned to appreciate other cultures.” These statements help solidify that service learning is designed for students of privilege to serve others who are different, and often less fortunate than themselves. According to Eyler and Giles, “service-learning students often get a chance to work with “others” in the community, and frequently this is the first opportunity they have to work alongside someone quite different than themselves” (p. 26). Eyler and Giles also state “Most students have some involvement in their “home” communities, but when they go to college, these connections are broken, leaving them to form new ties to new communities” (p. 45). Eyler and Giles find that service learning students develop a more positive view of the people they work with, and service learning students often report that the people they work with are “like me”, and service learning students demonstrate a growing appreciation of other cultures. Eyler and Giles (1999) also discuss how an experience with poverty affects students of privilege when doing service.
With their first exposure to poverty, students may tend to see the issues in terms of individual failings or misfortunes – to blame the victim…where programs engage students in important work in the community…service learning may be a catalyst for a dramatic redirection in their lives. (p. 18)

In his book *Service Learning in Higher Education*, Jacoby (1996) discusses how service learning is designed to help or affect students of privilege while interacting with community members of a lower class. Jacoby discusses how social class is a major influence on the way students conceptualize service and how students interact with others, especially those in a less fortunate class. Jacoby stresses the importance of students being aware that they are “middle” class and how their “privileges” will affect their identity. This is critical in regard to comprehending social issues when interacting with community members of a different class.

As previously mentioned, service learning is often focused on the “servers” being privileged college students and the “served” being underprivileged, poor, and people of need (Henry, 2005). How individuals and groups make meaning of their experiences is critical in service learning, especially since it is designed for students to serve or “lift up” other groups of people who are in need or may be of a lower social class (Dacheux, 2005; Henry, 2005; Jacoby, 1996). For this reason, faculty using a pedagogy of service learning must consider the issues of oppression and privilege. Oppression can be defined as “attitudes, behaviors, and pervasive and systematic arrangements by which members of one social group are exploited while members of another group are granted privileges” (Evans et al., 2010, p.236). Oppression can be hard to recognize when examining its
elements and not focusing on the structure as a whole (Evans et al., 2010). In service learning, can a group of college students helping to lift up a class of individuals in need be oppressive? The literature would indicate yes, service learning could have a very oppressive aspect even if unintended. It allows “privileged” students to gain greater insight into the life experiences and perspectives of “others”, namely those served (Henry, 2005). This gaining of “insight” at the expense of others can certainly be construed as a higher class oppressing or exploiting a lower class for educational gain.

Another example that points to the issue that service learning is designed for “privileged” students and may oppress less fortunate others is social class privilege. Many who are privileged unknowingly take advantage of it, often without thought for the inequity or even cruelty they inflict on those without privilege (Evans et al., 2010). Service learning is designed and constructed around the issue of social class – one class of individuals helping or serving a lower or at need class of people (Dacheux, 2005; Henry, 2005; Jacoby, 1996). Therefore, instructors who incorporate service learning into their classrooms, must attend to issues of social class and privilege and discuss entitled privileges (privileges we should all possess) and conferred privileges (giving one group power over another).

**Service Learning with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities**

As demonstrated in the reviewed literature, service learning is used often as an instructional tool designed to help “privileged” students gain insights into the lives of “others” who often need assistance and are lifted up by a more capable other (Dacheux, 2005). The literature discusses at length service learning and how it can impact students
of privilege such as: helping them get along with others they may have never met, viewing and appreciating other cultures, learning the people they serve are “like me,” exposing them to individuals in poverty, helping them not blame individuals for their poverty situations, and considering the issues of oppression/privilege, and social class (Dacheux, 2005; Evans et al., 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Henry, 2005; Jacoby, 1996; Jones et al., 2005). Service learning is increasingly becoming more common place with students with disabilities (Chun, Dymond, & Renzaglia, 2008). Interestingly, although there is a substantial amount of research on how service learning affects students with disabilities, there is little research examining the effects on participating college students.

Alexander (2015) published a study investigating the effects of a service-learning class on her students after they engaged in a semester-long class with individuals who have developmental disabilities. She questioned whether the service-leaning experience would make students more civic minded after a semester of engagement. In preparation, Alexander spent the first portion of the course talking about developmental disabilities, service learning, and engaging in class discussions. The service experience consisted of art-making therapy sessions for individuals with disabilities and 18 college students. The service experience itself was comprised of three different art-making sessions with individuals with disabilities. At the end of the service experience, all but one student indicated an increase in satisfaction in working with individuals with disabilities over the course of the semester. Overall, members of the class indicated positive changes in perceptions regarding personal anxiety, knowledge about people with developmental disabilities, leadership development, self-confidence, and relationship building. Most
reflections illustrated increased knowledge and awareness of the community of individuals with developmental disabilities, expressed an interest in repeating the experience, and desired to continue working in this setting. The majority of students responded that an increased civic-mindedness was the norm after the service-learning experience. Many students wrote they wished to be more involved in their communities.

In Alexander’s study (2015), it is noteworthy that all but one student rated his/her level of service-learning experience as “rarely” or “never.” The posttest results showed that students’ perceptions were overwhelmingly positive, confirmed their majors through this experience, increased their awareness of individuals with disabilities, and learned about people different from themselves. The posttest results also demonstrated a more favorable awareness of long-term civic engagement, and a willingness to participate in service in the future.

Most importantly for the current research, Alexander’s study (2015) also indicated that participating students learned more about themselves, developed confidence, clarified their values, realized their own capacity to give, and developed patience and compassion. Students also increased their understanding of the importance of future community connections, increased their competence and efficacy, developed leadership roles, believed they could bring about change and become civically responsible, and had a moral obligation to do so.

In 2001, Gent and Gurecka highlighted how service-learning classes that engage individuals with disabilities often reinforce common stereotypes and promote disablism (a set of assumptions and practices that promote the differential or unequal treatment of
people with disabilities) (p. 36). They argued service learning (with individuals having developmental disabilities as the recipients of service) could actually be a disservice to the population. These stereotypes, which can be enforced through a service-learning program include: seeing individuals with disabilities as being child-like, broken and in need of repair, victims of their disability, and having a poor quality of life. Given these stereotypes, the authors argue it is understandable that teachers/faculty wish to do service projects for individuals with disabilities, but are often underprepared which results in students who go out and perpetuate these stereotypes.

In response, Gent and Gurecka (2001) outline a teacher-training program to help prepare students to avoid the perpetuation of disabilism. The training program has four different steps. First, teachers need to be trained on disability issues and need to help their students respect, value, and celebrate people with disabilities. Teachers must help their students understand that everyone, at some point in their lives need assistance and that society is interdependent. Second, teachers should be trained on service learning. Without it, they may not understand the importance of reflective activities and actually perpetuate stereotypes regarding people with disabilities. Third, service-learning experiences need to be shared with individuals with disabilities. Teachers and students need to be able to reach out to individuals with disabilities and reassure them that they will not be seen as needy people, but as valued, equal partners and potential resources (p. 40). Fourth, teachers must be trained in a well-structured reflection process, which addresses common stereotypes regarding individuals with disabilities through well-structured activities. Gent and Gurecka argue that while a traditional service-learning
program can be a disservice to individuals with disabilities, through a thoughtful dialogue and teacher training, service learning with individuals with disabilities can be a vehicle that strengthens all parties involved.

**Developmental Disability Defined**

“A developmental disability is a mental or physical impairment manifested by the age of 22, likely to continue indefinitely, and results in substantial functional limitations in at least three of the following major life activities (self-care, receptive and expressive language, learning, mobility, self-direction, capacity for independent living)” (ORC, Section 5126.01). A developmental disability causes a person to need a combination and sequence of special, interdisciplinary, treatment, or a provision of care for an extended period of time that is individually planned and coordinated for that person. In 1991 in Ohio, House Bill 569 established the procedures and definitions for individuals to become eligible for services. Children ages 6-15 years old must be assessed with the Children’s Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument (COEDI). If an individual is age 16 and over, they must be assessed using the Ohio Eligibility Determination Instrument (OEDI). A certified and trained rater who is employed by a County Board of Developmental Disabilities must perform the COEDI or the OEDI Determination assessment.

According to Ohio Revised Code (Section 5126.02), each county in Ohio must have its own County Board of Developmental Disabilities. The board must be operated separate from any other county entity and its functions cannot be combined with the functions of any other government agency. The board must be made up of seven
members with five being appointed by the county commissioners and two appointed by the senior probate judge.

Ohio Revised Code (Section 5126.05) details the responsibility of each County Board of Developmental Disabilities. Boards are responsible to assess the needs of county residents, administer and operate county programs, plan and set priorities, establish board policy, hire a qualified superintendent, adopt a budget, and approve all board expenditures. Services generally include service and support administration, early childhood and school age services, family support services, residential supports, adult services, work training and employment, transportation, and housing (Ohio Association of County Boards, 2013).

**County Board of Developmental Disabilities**

For this study, one particular County Board of Developmental Disabilities was used as the location for study. This County Board will be called the Midwestern County Board of Developmental Disabilities to protect confidentiality. The Midwestern County Board of Developmental Disabilities is a 10.7 million dollar a year public agency that serves an estimated 568 individuals with disabilities a year (Annual Report, 2015). The Midwestern County Board of Developmental Disabilities is legally mandated to assure the health, safety, and welfare of eligible county residents who have developmental disabilities. The Board is also required to provide an array of services necessary to meet individual’s needs by facilitating learning, growth, and independence. The Board offers:
• Early Childhood Intervention – Provides services and supports to infants and toddlers ages 0-2 and their families who have a developmental delay or are at risk. In 2015, the Early Intervention program served 75 children and their families.

• A School Program – In Ohio, developmental disability boards are not mandated to offer pre-school and school-age programs. According to the Ohio Association of County Boards (2014), 39 out of Ohio’s 88 counties provide separate school-age services through their developmental disabilities board. Midwestern is one of 39 counties that provides pre-school and school services through the County Board. In 2015, the School provided services to 51 students.

• Employment Services – Provides services that assist individuals with disabilities in finding and maintaining employment. In 2015, Midwestern Employment Services provided job-training services to 119 individuals.

• Adult Services – Provides day services to adults that include community integration, life skills classes, sensory integration, habilitation training, life skills training, and personal care assistance. In 2015, Midwestern Adult Services served 54 adults.

• An Art Studio – Provides a collaborative art studio for individuals with and without disabilities to design, make, and sell their artwork. In 2015, the Art Studio served 39 individuals with disabilities.

• Transportation Services – Provides transportation services (employment, adult services, school age, recreational, and medical) to individuals with disabilities in
Midwestern County. In 2015, the transportation department provided services to 85 people.

- Service and Support Administration Services (SSA) – formally known as case managers, the SSA department is the initial point of contact. The SSAs collaborate with other agencies and providers to provide the supports individuals need to live, work, and recreate in their preferred living environment. In 2015, the SSA department provided services to 427 people with disabilities.

In addition to the above listed direct services, the Midwestern County Board of Developmental Disabilities also distributes funding to a wide assortment of agencies that provide in-home staffing, transportation, and day programs to individuals with developmental disabilities including (The Athens News, 2016):

- Company #1 – residential and day services
- Company #2 – residential and day services
- Company #3 – residential and day services
- Company #4 – recreational services
- Company #5 – residential services
- Company #6 – residential and day services
- Company #7 – day services
- Company #8 – residential services
- Company #9 – residential services

**The Need for Additional Research**

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to determine the lived
experiences of college students who engage in service learning with individuals who are developmentally disabled. There is very little research on how a service-learning experience can impact the identity development, self-authorization, and inter-cultural maturity of participating college students. Therefore, due to this lack of research regarding the impact of service learning on students who are engaging with individuals who are developmentally disabled, the need for additional research is clear. The overarching questions addressed in this study were: What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled? How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perceptions of identity development, self-authorization, and inter-cultural maturity? This study has the potential to help educational administrators, college faculty, community leaders, and community agencies who engage college students in service with individuals who are developmentally disabled, to better understand the experience and develop supports to help college students through the process of engaging in service and in-depth reflection of their experiences.
Chapter 3 Methodology

The primary purpose of this qualitative research study was to explore the perceived impact of a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled on the development of college student participants. The present study is a phenomenological by design due to the fact that I am interested in the lived experiences and perceptions of college students’ who have participated in service learning experiences. According to Moustakas (1994), the aim of a phenomenological study is to determine what an experience means for the person who has had the experience and to provide a comprehensive description of it. In phenomenological studies, the investigator abstains from making suppositions, focuses on a specific topic freshly and naively, constructs a question or problem to guide the study, and derives findings that will provide the basis for further research and reflection (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47).

This study has the potential to help educational administrators, teachers, community leaders, and the community agencies who engage college students in service learning to better understand the lived experience and develop supports to help students through the process of engaging in service with individuals who are developmentally disabled. This study attempted to answer the following questions: What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled? How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perceptions of identity development, self-authorization, and inter-cultural maturity?
Qualitative Research

According to Creswell (2014) qualitative research can be defined as a process used to explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The process of gathering this research involves emerging questions and procedures; collecting data, analyzing the data, building on themes, and making interpretations. According to Rallis and Rossman (2012), a qualitative researcher seeks to answer questions in the real world. Qualitative research takes place in the natural world, uses multiple methods, focuses on context, is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and is interpretive (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).

Phenomenology

The method of qualitative research used for this study was phenomenology. Phenomenology seeks to explore the meaning of individual lived experiences. In phenomenology, the researcher seeks to understand the deep meaning of a person’s experiences and how the person articulates these experiences (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). According to Moustakas (1994), the aim of a phenomenological study is to determine what an experience means for the person who has had the experience and provide a comprehensive description of it. Phenomenology can be viewed as the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience. Phenomenological research, according to Creswell (2014) is a strategy in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by the participants in the study. The phenomenological processes used included epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis.
**Epoche.** It was critical to describe the experiences as told to me and not let my past experiences allow me to pre-judge, be biased, or have pre-conceived ideas about how students experience engaging in service with individuals with developmental disabilities. This process of not pre-judging, being biased, or having pre-conceived ideas is called practicing epoche (Moustakas, 1994). Epoche is critical for a researcher in order to obtain qualitative phenomenological research that is from the participants’ experience, not that of the researcher. Despite the fact that I have both experience with service-learning courses and working with individuals who have developmental disabilities, I described the phenomenon as I understood it from the participants’ view; as Moustakas (1994) states, “evidence from phenomenological research is derived from first person reports of life experience” (p. 84). This epoche is prevalent throughout this study and was embedded in the analyzing and reduction of the data.

**Phenomenological reduction.** The process of phenomenological reduction involves sorting the data into brackets to begin looking for themes or patterns. Horizontalization also occurs, which is treating all the sorted data and statements as having equal value (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenological reduction is similar to coding. Coding is the process of attaching labels to segments of data that depict what each segment of the transcription is about (Charmaz, 2006). Coding distills data, sorts them, and provides a basis for making comparisons with other segments of data. Researchers use coding to emphasize what is happening in the scene (Charmaz, 2006). According to Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) “codes are labels that assign meaning to descriptive of inferential information complied during a study” (p. 71). Rallis and
Rossman (2012) describe a code as a word or short phrase that captures or signals what is going on in a particular piece of data in a way that links it to some more general analysis issue.

**Imaginative variation.** Imaginative Variation is the process of exploring all possible meanings of the data through the use of imagination, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives. The aim of imaginative variation is to seek how the phenomenon became what it is. It is through imaginative variation that the researcher understands there is not a single inroad to the truth, but countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

**Synthesis.** The final process in phenomenological research is synthesis which occurs when the researcher puts it all together in a unified statement of the essence and experience as a whole. This is where the researcher describes the lived experiences or perceptions of college students who are engaged in a service-learning experience with individuals who have developmental disabilities.

**Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this qualitative phenomenological study was critical to the success of the study. A conceptual framework is simply the current version of the researcher’s map of the territory being investigated (Huberman, et al, 2014). The framework should show, either graphically or narratively, the main things (who and what) the researcher wishes to study. Qualitative researchers do not want to impose too rigid of a framework because they want to learn what constitutes important questions
form the participants themselves (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). While researchers certainly do not want their framework to be too rigid, having a well-designed study provides less opportunity for error or straying off course. This “tightness” (Huberman, et al, 2014) provided clarity and helped guide my actions. While the idea of the highly emergent possibilities that can come from a loose design is attractive to many qualitative researchers, for this study, the idea of a more rigid framework was utilized.

For this research project, the conceptual framework of what I wished to study regarding how service learning affects students who engage with individuals who have developmental disabilities was limited within the parameters of:

1. Participants were enrolled at Midwestern Appalachian
2. Participants were pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree – undergraduate students
3. Participants were enrolled in face to face studies
4. Participants were enrolled in a service-learning class – with a curriculum built into the syllabus for service and reflection
5. Participants were doing their service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled and receive service from the Midwestern County Board of Developmental Disabilities
6. Due to the qualitative nature of this study, a sample size of six was determined by data saturation and availability of participants who completed the pre and post interviews.
Variables

There were many variables to consider prior to conducting the study. They included the students’ backgrounds, their families, their communities, the classroom, the instructor, their peers, the community organization or group of people the students serve, level of experience with service learning, pre-service-learning class feelings, and post service-learning feelings.

Researcher’s Reflection

At the present time, I am employed as the superintendent of an agency that serves individuals with developmental disabilities. I have obtained both a master of public administration and a master of educational administration to help further my credentials in this field. I was formally employed in the area of service learning and higher education for several years. I was the director of the Center for Campus and Community Engagement for a Midwestern Appalachian university and a large focus of my duties included encouraging service learning across campus. I have also engaged in service in the area in which I work, therefore I feel I have a general understanding of the issues confronting students as they engage in service with individuals who are developmentally disabled. Therefore, I could be biased on this subject and the participants were made aware of this before their unstructured interviews.

The Sampling Strategy

Qualitative studies call for continuous refocusing and redrawing of study parameters during the fieldwork (interviewing) process, but some initial selection and narrowing is required (Huberman, et al, 2014). When it comes to interviewing for a
study or research question, the step of selecting participants is critical (Seldman, 2013). According to Rallis and Rossman (2012), when it comes to selecting a population and participants, two basic decisions must be made, 1) identify the setting or population, and 2) identify the participants from that population.

**Setting.** Identifying the setting (a Midwestern Appalachian County) is critical because a qualitative researcher wishes to choose participants who would give the researcher the richest data. Choosing the type of people to be interviewed in a purposeful way is referred to as purposeful sampling, which is in direct contrast to random sampling, in that all participants selected should in some way reflect the wide range of the larger population so the researcher can generalize the findings of the interview population to that of the broader population (Seidman, 2013).

**Participants.** According to Seidman (2013), several issues to be aware of while selecting the interview pool includes those who are reluctant to be involved, too eager, could be considered experts, or friends. When subjects are reluctant, it is best to not push them into an interview. It is likely that if they are reluctant, they will not provide the rich data being sought. Often people who are too eager to be interviewed may have an axe to grind, offering a biased perspective. They may have had a bad experience which relates in some way to the project, and only wish to participate as a way to retaliate against a perceived wrongdoing to them. Interviewees, who are experts or stars, sometimes fail to recognize that any one person would not see the value in what they are doing and may provide a strongly biased interview. The interviewing of friends can be a very difficult situation, as the interview can often be affected by the friendship. One of the most
common ways, is that friends know each other and therefore will assume they understand what is being said, as opposed to exploring further (Seidman, 2013).

**Sample size.** The issue of sample size is always one with which interviewers and researchers struggle. How does a researcher know when enough is enough? This is a difficult question that varies and the best answer is – it depends. It often depends on the conceptual framework, the research question, the genre, the data-gathering methods, in addition to available time and resources (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Seidman (2013) outlines two key criteria for developing sample size, sufficiency, and saturation. With sufficiency, adequate numbers are needed to reflect the range of participants that make up the entire population. Saturation refers to the point in the interviewing process where the interviewer starts to hear the same information over and over. When sufficiency and saturation have been reached, an adequate interviewing sample size has been achieved.

For this study, I interviewed six students, or enough to ensure sufficiency, ending once saturation occurred. The sample was recruited through connections with faculty at a Midwestern Appalachian University by reaching out to them for students who are currently enrolled in service-learning classes in which the students are working with individuals with developmental disabilities at program sites administered by the Midwestern Appalachian County Program. The interviews were conducted in a face-to-face manner allowing me to hear and view participants as they responded to the questions.

For this research study, the setting, population, and sample size were purposely determined in order to vary the pool to the greatest extent possible to be able to
generalize the findings across the general population of students who engage in service with individuals who are developmentally disabled. Therefore, I did not have a relationship with participants, where the possibility of friendship or taking each other’s actions for granted would be an issue. The participants interviewed were:

1. Enrolled in a Midwestern Appalachian university;
2. Pursuing a Bachelor’s Degree – undergraduate students;
3. Enrolled in face to face learning classes;
4. Enrolled in a service-learning class – with a curriculum built into the syllabus for service and reflection;
5. Doing their service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled; and

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, the sample size was determined to be six participants. This was based on both data saturation, and the availability of participants.

**The Semi-Structured Interview Process**

A qualitative researcher seeks to answer questions in the real world. Qualitative research takes place in the natural world, uses multiple methods, focuses on context, is emergent rather than tightly prefigured, and is interpretive (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Qualitative researchers do not want to impose too rigid of a framework because they want to learn what constitutes important questions from the participants themselves (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). According to Moustakas (1994), the aim of interviewing is to determine what an experience means for the person who has had the experience and to
provide a comprehensive description of it, often viewed as the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one’s immediate awareness and experience (p. 26).

In depth interviewing has become the hallmark of qualitative research (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). The purpose of interviewing is simply an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of the experience (Seidman, 2013). Being interested in others and demonstrating their stories are of value is at the heart of interviewing. In order to be an effective interviewer, one must realize he/she is not the center of the world, but that one’s actions indicate that the interviewees and their stories are important (Seidman, 2013). While interviewing takes a great deal of time, patience, resources, and energy; it is a powerful way to gain insight into the experiences and meanings of others. Interviewing can help a researcher understand individual perspectives, deepen understandings, generate rich data, gather insights into one’s thinking, and learn more about the context of a subject (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Interviewing can also be extremely satisfying to the researcher who is genuinely interested in others (Seidman, 2013). It is important to note at this time, that strong interviewers are superb listeners, deeply interested in other people, and skilled in interpersonal interaction (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).

**Guiding Questions (Questionnaire)**

The first step in a guided approach is to develop a questionnaire to help with the interview process. According to Moustakas (1994), an interview guide or topical guide with broad questions may facilitate the obtaining of rich, vital, and substantive descriptions. When developing a questionnaire for interviews, the researcher desires to
capture the best possible results possible. I used a guided approach to help elicit the participant’s world view, beginning with broad topics and allowing the interviewees to elaborate from their perspectives (Rallis & Rossman, 2012). Therefore, information from several different sources was used to help develop, guide, and direct the questions. According to Seidman (2013), there are several key factors at play in a qualitative interview which are included in the process - 1) ask only real questions, 2) avoid leading questions, and 3) ask open-ended questions.

By real questions, Seidman (2013) simply means the interviewer should not ask a question to which he/she already knows the answer. This generally can take up valuable time and give the impression to the interviewee that he/she is asking questions only to be asking questions. A leading question is one that influences the direction or answer the interviewee will provide. The wording of the question or even the intonation of the interviewer’s words can lead or influence the answer. The best possible type of questions, according to Seidman (2013), is simply open-ended questions. Open-ended questions allow the person being interviewed to follow the territory that the interviewer establishes but allows the person to take any direction with his/her answer. There are two main types of open-ended questions – a grand tour question (where the interviewee describes a significant segment of an experience) and an open-ended question where the participant describes how the experience affected or made him/her feel.

Another useful source when developing an interview protocol is suggested by Charmaz (2006). In *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Research*, she writes about developing sample questions and advises the
“questions must explore the interviewer’s topic and fit the participant’s experience” (p. 29) and must emphasize learning the participant’s views, experiences, and actions. Additionally, Charmaz emphasizes the need for quality open-ended questions and recommends developing the questions or an interview guide prior to the interview. This is crucial, especially for novices or those who do not have much experience with interviewing as the guide will help the interviewer stay on task. Another recommendation is to trim the list of questions to as few as possible and to never go beyond the initial set of questions in one setting.

Based on research and direction from Seidman (2013) and Charmaz (2006), I developed my interview protocol. See Appendix A (Pre-service questions) and Appendix B (end of service questions). Even with a strong interview guide, developed using recommendations from leading research and experts in the field, I also understood that for my interviews to be successful, I had to convey an attitude of respect and acceptance while establishing that the participants’ views were valuable and useful (Rallis & Rossman, 2012).

**Data Analysis**

Analyzing and interpreting qualitative data is a complex and exciting process of giving meaning to the data a researcher collects, as a single piece of data itself has no real meaning (Ralls & Rossman, 2012). It is important to note, that qualitative research often produces data that is rich and dense, therefore the researcher must winnow the data (i.e., the process of focusing on some of the data and disregarding other less critical portions) (Creswell, 2014, p. 195). For this phenomenological research study on the experiences of
students who engage in service learning with individuals who are developmentally disabled, I utilized the process of organizing and analyzing data offered by Moustakas. These processes include horizontalizing, developing meaning units, clustering, and developing textural descriptions of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) offers a more detailed method of analysis of phenomenological data, a modification of the van Kaam method, listed below.

1. Listing and Preliminary Grouping: List every expression relevant to the experience. (Horizontalization)

2. Reduction and Elimination: To determine the Invariant Constituents: Test each expression for two requirements:
   a. Does it contain a moment of experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?
   b. Is it possible to abstract and label it? If so, it is a horizon of the experience. Expressions not meeting the above requirements are eliminated. Overlapping, repetitive, and vague expressions are also eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience.

3. Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents: Cluster the invariant constituents of the experience that are related into a thematic label. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.

4. Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application: Validation. Check the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme
against the complete record of the research participant. (1) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? (2) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (3) If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the co-researcher’s experience and should be deleted.

5. Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, construct for each co-researcher an Individual Textural Description of the experience. Include verbatim examples from the transcribed interview.

6. Construct for each co-researcher an Individual Structural Description of the experience based on the Individual Textural Description and Imaginative Variation.

7. Construct for each research participant a Textural-Structural Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, incorporating the invariant constituents and themes. From the Individual Textural-Structural Descriptions, develop a Composite Description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole. (pp. 120-121)

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

I desired to ensure that my study was high in credibility and that it met any level of scrutiny in regards to trustworthiness. In order to guarantee trustworthiness, I ensured that my study was conducted according to the norms for acceptable and competent qualitative research. I ensured the study was conducted ethically, in that the participants were honored and treated respectfully. As the researcher, I remained sensitive to the politics of the setting and topic (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). To further promote
trustworthiness and reliability, I checked the transcripts to ensure there were no mistakes and no shift in the meaning of codes during the process of coding by constantly comparing data with codes and by writing memos about the codes and their definitions (Creswell, 2014).

To ensure the credibility of this qualitative study I wanted to help guarantee its validity. In qualitative research, validity is achieved by checking for accuracy by employing certain procedures (Creswell, 2014) which can include triangulation, “being there,” participant validation, using a critical friend, using rich and thick descriptions, and clarifying bias (Creswell, 2014; Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

Triangulation refers to the process of using multiple sources of data and multiple points of time to build the justification for the research. Being there, or spending extended time in the field ensures the researcher has more than just a snapshot view of the participants in the study. Participant validation, also known as member checks, allows participants to review any final transcripts and make any changes they feel necessary to their interviews to ensure accuracy. Using a critical friend, also known as a peer debriefer, allows the researcher to have an intellectual watchdog who can help the researcher modify any coding or category issues. These tactics were employed in my study.

Using thick and rich descriptions, as I did in this study, can convey the research while adding validity to the findings, and the more realistic and richer the descriptions, the better the results. Additionally, the validity of the findings was substantially increased by clarifying any bias I may have regarding the subject of study. Good
qualitative research contains comments by researchers about how their interpretation of the findings is shaped by their background, such as gender, culture, history, and socioeconomic origin (Creswell, 2014).

Summary

In this qualitative study, I employed a phenomenological methodology to study the experiences of traditional-age college students who participated in a service-learning course with individuals who have developmental disabilities. I utilized the processes which are the hallmark of strong qualitative studies such as interviewing, transcriptions, coding, memo writing, and making interpretations to help me understand the experiences of the participants. The methods described in this chapter helped ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study.
Chapter Four: Organization, Analysis, and Synthesis of the Data

This chapter focuses on the organization, analysis, and synthesis of the data gathered as described in Chapter Three. Analysis was accomplished using a modified version of the van Kaam method for analyzing phenomenological data offered by Moustakas (1994). The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences of college students who chose to participate in service learning experiences with individuals who have developmental disabilities. This research explored the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled?

2. How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perception of their identity development, self-authorization, and inter-cultural maturity?

Participants

Data was gathered through six pre-service interviews and six post-service interviews (the same six participants were interviewed for both the pre-and post-interviews). To help protect the identity and confidentiality of the interviewees, all have been assigned a pseudonym. A brief description of each participant is included below.

Sara. Sara is a junior majoring in child and family studies with a minor in psychology. She indicated she is uncertain and has changed her major four times, but is happy with her current major based on her desire to help others and have career options. Sara is also the president of her sorority. She described herself as friendly and outgoing.
Sara also indicated that she is very organized and likes to map everything out with to do lists and calendars. She indicated that she likes to be helpful and when people come to her for help and described herself as a sister, daughter, and friend to many.

**Tara.** Tara is a senior majoring in community and public health. She indicated she changed her major three different times. She began as a nursing student, but quickly realized that she was not a “science girl” and did not want to have to do a fifth year. Tara switched to nutrition, because it was something she was really interested in, but chemistry was challenging. In response, she switched to community and public health and is really enjoying it. Tara described herself as outgoing, kindhearted, passionate, and hardworking. She indicated that she didn’t want to brag, but felt she was an “amazing type of girl” who cared a lot about herself and others. Tara did not mention her family structure in regard to parents or siblings.

**Janet.** Janet is currently a junior majoring in child and family studies and was undecided coming into college. She wanted to work with children but not as a teacher. One of her professors introduced her to child and family studies and she “ended up loving it.” She is from a large city and would like to go back after graduation. Janet described herself as hardworking and a very friendly person, open to talk to anyone. Janet described herself as liking to try new things and likes to put herself “out there” just to see what happens. She likes to work out and be active. Janet likes to think of herself as very family-oriented. She has two sisters and loves being part of her family.

**Amy.** Amy is a senior who is planning to graduate this summer. Her major is community and public health and her career goal is to work with children. When asked
about herself, Amy didn’t hesitate and described herself as easy-going, open-minded, outgoing, and a team worker. She indicated that although she is task-oriented, she often struggles with time management and prioritizing, but in the end, she is hard working and knows what she is here for (referring to college). Amy indicated that family is huge for her and that she takes every chance she can to spend time with them, as they are close-knit. Amy has an older sister and a younger brother who do a lot of things together. Her brother attends the same university which allows them to see each other often. Amy offered that she felt “very blessed” growing up and she likes to give back to the community as much as she can.

**Cindy.** Cindy is a senior majoring in community and public health. She plans to graduate this summer and go on to nursing school. She would like to get her registered nursing degree along with bachelor’s degree in community and public health. She indicated that she loves school and the surrounding community very much and doesn’t want this time in her life to end, adding, she would stay in school forever if she could. She described herself as very outgoing, and that organization was important to her. She further described herself as a family person and that she was a big part of her household because her parents were divorced and it was just her, her mom, and her younger brother. She indicated she is the one who makes sure everything is in order and that she gets everything done and further offered that her brother has attention deficit disorder and has an “Individualized Education Plan.”

**Beth.** Beth is a senior who will be graduating this May with a degree in community and public health. She described herself as a fairly typical college student
who doesn’t like to get into trouble and that she doesn’t miss many classes, indicating she was pretty independent and “just normal.” She works in a local bar which provides her with good money. She is a middle child with an older brother and younger brother and her parents are divorced. Her older brother is much older, so Beth indicated she is much closer to her younger brother. As a result, she feels her younger brother looks up to her quite a bit.

**Horizontalization and Coding of Student Interviews: Listing and Grouping**

The data were gathered, organized, and analyzed in two different categories – pre-service (beginning of service) interviews and post-service (end of service interviews). The two categories were used in the horizontalization, coding, reduction, elimination, clustering, thematizing, and final identification of the invariant constituents. At the time of the final level of analysis (the composite thematic textural-structural descriptions) the pre-service and post-service data was combined and analyzed together, exploring the students’ experiences as a group, and focusing on the meanings and essence of their combined, lived perceptions.

**Horizontalization.** The first step of the analysis included horizontalization or coding that began with an in-depth review and study of the student interviews by way of the verbatim transcripts. Also included were meetings with the study’s critical friend, or peer debriefer, which allowed me to have an intellectual watchdog to help modify any coding or category issues. This was done to help ensure the credibility of the data and to ensure validity throughout the process. During this time, epoche was also practiced. Epoche is the process of not pre-judging, being biased, or having pre-conceived ideas.
(Moustakas, 1994). A significant amount of time was spent reflecting upon the transcripts, making notes, and accurately coding to adequately gain familiarity with the data, which enabled me to group the data in ways that would highlight students’ perceptions from their service learning experiences.

Invariant Constituents: Reduction and Elimination

Through the horizontalization and coding process, I was able to formulate the invariant constituents. To help do this, I employed coding by the questions. Determining the invariant constituents is the second step of the modified van Kaam method of phenomenological analysis (Moustakis, 1994). The invariant constituents are essential because they help identify the students’ experiences of service learning. Through reduction and elimination, the following invariant constituents were gathered and taken directly from the responses of each interview participant. I begin with the pre-service invariant constituents followed by the post-service invariant constituents.

Pre-Service Student Responses

In the next sections, student responses are presented by theme. There were eight different thematic groupings for the pre-service responses which included: how prospect of working with individuals makes you feel, definition of developmental disabilities, experiences with individuals with developmental disabilities, feelings about these experiences, identity development, self-authorship, inter-cultural maturity, and the projected impact this experience will have on the individual.

How the prospect of working with individuals with disabilities makes you feel.

The first theme focused on the issue of how the anticipation of working with a person
who has developmental disabilities made participants feel. The answers were fairly consistent and centered on feelings of nervousness, excited, a good or great opportunity, fulfilling, and a great learning opportunity. The individual responses are listed below.

(Sara 1) There’s a lot of different options. When I was reading through the packet of possible places, this appealed most to me. I have a cousin who actually has autism. I wanted to work with children with disabilities. It’s something I’ve not really done before, so I wanted to expand my experience and challenge myself, because I really haven’t worked in an environment like this before.

(Sara 2) Yeah, so I selected …I'll be here to learn how to work in an environment with children with disabilities. It's one of the places that I could have picked just to give kind of an intro into what I could be doing when I'm older. For me, it's going to be a really good experience to see how I can be a better professional later in life. It will definitely give me more insight into once I graduate, this is the type of environment I'd like to be in.

(Sara 3) At first, it makes me nervous, because since I haven't worked with them before, I want to know how to respond to certain behaviors. I don't know if one of the kids sitting in the class started running around, I wasn't sure if I was allowed to let him run around or something. First, it makes me nervous, but they're so cute. You can tell they just want to learn. It's exciting to watch them. I'm excited to get more confident in being with them.

(Sara 4) I just didn't know what to expect. Then once they behave in certain ways, since I have never been here, I haven't seen it or learned how to respond to certain behaviors or anything. I didn't want to cross over any boundaries or not help enough. I was just nervous on how much I can be helpful to them.
(Tara 1) This was actually my first choice and I was really, really thrilled that I got it. I'm going to be working with children with disabilities. This is something I've never done before so that's why I was really intrigued by it and I thought it was just going to be a great opportunity. Today is my first day and I'm working with ... I forget what they called it.

(Tara 2) If I'm being completely honest, at first I was like, "Oh my gosh." I was a little nervous but like I said, this was my first choice so I kind of knew.

(Tara 3) I was nervous because I've never done anything like this before. I don't even think I've ever volunteered at a school with children in general, so was like a completely new experience. I was very nervous. Very excited. I just didn't know ...

(Tara 4) I was nervous about just doing the right thing or saying the right thing or like, "Should I do this, should I do that?" I don't know ... I was just nervous if I would be able to fit into the environment. If it was just going to be a good fit for me and if I was going to be able to what I was asked. I was just nervous in that sense. I just really thought it was going to be something different for me to do. As I said, it's just nothing I've ever done before. I've volunteered at my school. In high school I used to volunteer. I was a cheerleading coach for these little girls. I feel like it takes a certain kind of person to do something like this and I just thought [for] me personally [it] could be a good fit and I really did think I could benefit from it. Get just a really good overall experience.

(Tara 5) Right. Mostly nervous about what the teachers were asking of me but I also was nervous to work with children with disabilities only because like I said, I've never done it before. It's just something foreign to me and I just don't know how it works.
(Janet 1) Excited and makes me feel good knowing that I'm engaging with these
individuals who I feel like have a lot to offer.

(Janet 2) Because I think they are...I think that they're like so unique. Not that they have a
disability, but the fact that they are still, even though they have a disability, they come in
with a smile on their face.

(Janet 3) They really enjoy everything they do, and I think that's awesome.

(Janet 4) Fulfilling, that I can hopefully learn from them. I feel like-

(Janet 5) Fulfilling that I can hopefully learn from them and take what I learn from them
into my field if need be, and that I do feel excited to work with them, so that's really
fulfilling knowing that I'm able to work with individuals with disabilities.

(Janet 6) The one thing I was nervous about coming in is finding out that some of the kids
are nonverbal and not being able to fully engage with them.

(Janet 7) Yes. I know the teachers know their way about how to communicate with them,
but I don't yet, and I think hopefully maybe seeing how they use sign language and
engage with them, my nerves will go away.

(Amy 1) When I first came, I was a little bit nervous because I've never had really any
interaction with kids with disabilities. In my high school, we didn't have programs for
them or anything like that. I went to a private, small high school so I was kind of nervous,
but at the same time really excited. Definitely going to be a learning experience for me.

(Amy 2) Part of it was I was going to be asked to do something I didn't know how to do
and then I didn't know what age I was going to be working with so I guess I didn't want
to feel like I was belittling anybody by the way I would be talking to them or anything like that.

(Cindy 1) It makes me feel great that I can be able to be a part of children's lives without ... Just being a part of their life, and giving me that opportunity to grow, and giving me that experience that I can take out into the community.

(Cindy 2) I feel good, great. Yeah.

(Cindy 3) I guess it's just interacting with the children that are in the room, and just learning their different disabilities, and kind of what makes them them, and what triggers different emotions.

(Beth 1) Excited. I did something in high school my senior year with...which is developmentally disabled children also, and that kind of just shed the light and I knew it was something I could be interested in. I have family who are mentally disabled and so I'm- It doesn't make me uncomfortable. I know some people- It takes a certain person to work with them, so it doesn't make me uncomfortable.

(Beth 2) I guess working with the preschoolers, like today, it's kind of nerve-wracking because kids can choose to like you or choose to not like, just knowing from my family and all that.

(Beth 3) But, all the kids that I've met today have been so nice and it doesn't make me uncomfortable or scared. I guess a little bit nervous because you want everyone to like you.
(Beth 4) Maybe a little bit. I guess maybe I don't know how to react to it. I'm not used to it so much, so maybe scared that I won't react correct. Like, today, I got applesauce thrown on me.

**Definition of developmental disabilities.** The second theme focused on how participants would define developmental disabilities in their own words. Responses focused on the person’s learning abilities, would be unique, not typical, could have trouble learning, a cognitive issue, and someone who has challenges. The individual responses are listed below.

(Sara 5) I would just define it as someone who has something that requires them to learn in a way that's different than most children. Most children can go to school, and they can have their lessons as normal. Kids with developmental disabilities, they can learn just as much. They just need different methods of it. I think that just means whether take it slower or do different sorts of lessons, I think it's just different.

(Sara 6) I don't know. They're still people. I still see them as human. I don't think I treat them any differently, other than adjusting to what they need. They're human. They're awesome, and they deserve any chance any other person gets.

(Janet 8) Okay. I mean, I took a class on special ed, and after taking that I understand the using words of typical and atypical, and that there's no ... no one is normal. It's not right to say someone has disabilities and then someone else is normal.

(Janet 9) I totally agree with that. I don't think it's right to use normal, because no one's normal. Someone that has disabilities, I think they are unique to themselves, and they
may not be typical. They may be atypical, and that's fine. They may need help learning or speaking, eating, walking, and that's okay.

(Janet 10) Yeah, no one's normal and that it all varies in degree too.

(Amy 3) I would say something ... A cognitive issue.

(Amy 4) They have trouble learning. Understanding how to act in situations.

(Amy 5) Well, I guess there is one student in my classroom who has more of a physical, but she was the only one so in my mind be defined as physical as well.

(Cindy 4) I would say challenges or obstacles that are put in place for certain individuals. They have to overcome those. Or, it's learning to help them adapt and finding different ways that help them learn or just interact.

(Cindy 5) They're just a little bit different. They have a different learning style than I do. Or, maybe they're not capable of doing things I'm able to do, but they might be capable of doing things that I can't do.

(Cindy 6) Yeah. It could do with physical, as well.

(Beth 5) I guess maybe just learning in a different way. I think people, for the most part, think of one way to learn and that might not be the case for kids here. Just even with talking, like sign language, I've noticed, has kind of been prominent, so I guess I would say just maybe having a different way of learning and looking at things. Challenge. It could be a challenge for them to do certain things that we could do very easily.

(Beth 6) I think it depends on the case. It definitely could be one or the other or both.

**Experiences with developmental disabilities.** The third theme focused on participants’ past experiences with individuals who have developmental disabilities. The
answers were consistent and ranged from family members, experiences at school, volunteer opportunities, family friends, to no experiences. The individual answers are below.

(Sara 7) My cousin has autism. He was pretty severe when he was younger. He had a lot of treatments and help. He's mainstreamed now. He's very low on the spectrum now. Yeah, he's awesome, and he's really the reason I wanted to go into working with kids.

(Tara 6) No.

(Tara 7) The only ... My one very good friend from home, who's actually kind of my neighbor. A couple houses down. His brother has autism and I've just kind of grown up with him and that's pretty much the only interaction I've had with something like that.

(Tara 8) I grew up with this kid and just all through my life I just always have known him to be there. Even when I would have friends over my house he would bring his brother. It was just completely normal and he was a really good kid. It wasn't anything out of ... He didn't do anything that we were like, "Oh my God." He was just completely normal. That and he was always at sporting events and this and prom pictures and this. Actually, he was in school when I was in school for a while then he graduated. I can't remember when. I think two years before I got into high school I think. It actually [was] a really good experience.

(Janet 11) Yeah. This is the first opportunity I've had to have this one-on-one experience for this much time with individuals with disabilities.

(Janet 12) Yeah, again this is the first chance I've had to have this one-on-one experience with individuals with disabilities.
(Janet 13) One of my cousins, we don't know what she's diagnosed with, but she does have an IEP in school. I don't know. We don't know what exactly she has, but she's like my third cousin or something, so not like first cousin or anything, but still considered a cousin and everything. That's the closest to me, but other than that it was going through high school, middle school, all my public education.

(Janet 14) Yeah. Yeah, growing up we were always really close. Then she moved to Florida, so I didn't get to see her as much.

(Janet 15) But then she actually moved back home and went to my high school with me. She was a year younger than me through the school, even though she's older than me. I saw her every single day.

(Janet 16) She was in a separate room with other individuals, but I would still see her every day and everything, and family functions.

(Amy 6) No.

(Amy 7) No.

(Cindy 7) My brother has ADD, and he also as an IEP, so I figured that, I know he's not as far off, he's capable of doing a lot of things by himself, but I've also watched him struggle and have different learning, the way you have to teach him to do things. So, I figured, you know, going a step further and seeing kids that cannot do those things, and seeing the different varieties within a classroom.

(Cindy 8) Family members, yeah. My brother. I mean, he's not as far, but helping him with homework and learning to study, and just different things.
(Beth 7) I did the one thing when I was in high school, where the senior class got together and then the …… kids came in and we just did crafts and hung out with them, but that was only for a day.

(Beth 8) Some of the kids were fine with just one. I think I had two kids at one point, but we got to partner up so it was …

(Beth 9) It's a family friend. Her name's Chrissy. Her sister is my mom's best friend, so we kind of grew up around her. She is autistic and I think she's like 40 now, but she's like the funniest person I've ever met. We love when she comes around.

**Feelings about these experiences.** The fourth theme focused on participants’ past experiences with individuals who have developmental disabilities and how those experiences made the participant feel. The answers were consistent and ranged from grateful, happy, fortunate, compassion, guilt, sorrow, and that the experience was difficult. The specific answers are included below.

(Sara 8) I just feel happy when I'm around [him]. He's so cute. He gets so excited about the little things. I think that's so important to celebrate the little things. I think he always reminds me of that. I always like being around him.

(Sara 9) Just made me love him even more. He's the greatest.

(Sara 10) It makes me, what's the word I'm looking for? I don't know how to say it. Confident that he can continue and he can grow and have this normal life that every kid strives to have.

(Sara 11) We went bowling one time. There was a lot of, "Oh my gosh, can he lift the ball up? Can he roll it by himself?" Maybe he needed a little push and needed someone to
help him, but he could do it. He got excited about it. Just because it takes a little bit longer, he can still do it. It makes me feel good that I know that he can still have the same opportunities as people, whether or not it takes a little longer.

(Tara 9) It made me feel ... I don't want this to come off in the wrong way, but almost like privileged a little bit.

(Tara 10) [He's] a great kid. They're amazing. His whole family is so good with him. I literally consider him one of my good friends. He really is a lot of fun. It makes me feel happy to be around him. He's really a sweet kid.

(Tara 11) Occasionally I would feel sorry for him because when he was trying to communicate you could tell he was getting frustrated. He was trying to tell us something and you just don't know what he's trying to say. It made me feel sorry for him but also feel happy for him that he's blessed to live with this kind of family. His family's amazing. They're so good to him. He really does have a good life so, in that sense.

(Janet 17) It made me feel good. It's always fun to hear [her] stories and what she's doing, because through my school she was able to go to different locations to work part of the school day. It's fun to hear her side of what she's been participating in. Yeah.

(Janet 18) It made me feel good hearing that she's enjoying what she's doing.

(Janet 19) Yeah, and that she loved the high school that we both were at. That was good to know that, because I loved my high school, so it was reassuring to know she liked it as well. It made me feel good knowing that she feels good as well.

(Amy 8) I think the experience is definitely going to be eye-opening to me and humbling at the same time to realize how lucky I am for me and my family and that I'm able to do
all these great things and hopefully be able to give back to these students and help them accomplish what they want to do and progress forward.

(Amy 9) Yes. Since I haven't worked with anybody with disabilities that it's going to be eye-opening to how differently they have to live their lives compared to us who I feel like I probably just take these everyday things for granted and just interesting how differently things are between us and how maybe things I don't even think twice about that are super easy for me, might not be for them.

(Cindy 9) It's difficult, but you have to be down on his level and understand that he doesn't get it the way that I do. Just like there are things that I don't get the way he gets it. So, it's just breaking it down. For him, it's short term memory, so you could say something and then he completely forgets it five seconds later. So, it's just re-instilling it over and over and over.

(Cindy 10) Grateful that I don't have some of those difficulties. But, as I was growing up, I had a lot of ear infections, so when I was little I had trouble with reading because I couldn't hear everything.

(Cindy 11) Yeah. I can understand where he's coming from.

(Beth 10) I don't want to say lucky, but ...

(Beth 11) You feel fortunate for yourself and kind of sad for ...

(Beth 12) I guess I can't really imagine ... I just think people take things for granted a lot and then you just get into that experience and you see how it might not be so easy for someone else and it just makes you kind of sad.
(Beth 13) It makes me- Not sad for them, but just sad in general that people aren't-
Everyone's not so lucky.
(Beth 14) No. It's no one's fault. It just happens, so I obviously feel compassion and I
want to help however I can, but I know it's just different for them and I guess it makes me
sad.

Identity development. The fifth theme focused on identity development and
participants’ perceptions of their own development regarding their perceived place in the
community. The answers were consistent and ranged from comfortable, confident, fitting
in, happy, satisfied, and feeling equal. Individual responses can be found below.
(Sara 12) As a student, I like to consider myself confident, but I'm not sure that I always
am. I have changed my major several times, as I mentioned. I work really hard to make
sure that I'm meeting all of the requirements and making sure that I'm staying on track
with what I think I need to be doing for my major. So far, I am confident in it. I really do
like it, but I do love being a student. Yeah. I work really hard to get where I am.
(Sara 13) Yeah, I think so. I'm always thinking about whenever I make a decision, I
always think about, "What would my mom say about that? What if my siblings wanted to
do something like this?" I always end up sharing things with them. Every time I make a
decision, they're always in the back of my mind.
(Sara 14) I'd say I fit in as a leader.
(Tara 12) I would say so. My community is a lot like myself. We're all kind of the same
person.
(Tara 13) We're all kind of the same. I don't know. I do feel comfortable where I'm at, seeing as my surroundings are just similar to me, if that makes sense.

(Tara 14) Yeah. I feel comfortable.

(Janet 20) Okay. Place of my community, I think that ... I mean, I'm a college student. I live in a college town with...and...I'm trying to put myself out there in the community both through...School and hopefully volunteering. Then going back to Cleveland, that community, I live in a small town. So, I feel like very part of almost like a close town.

(Janet 21) Correct. Yeah, I feel comfortable with all of that, and I think that makes me ... That is why, partially why I'm comfortable with both communities I'm at in...and Cleveland.

(Janet 22) Okay. I feel good. I feel comfortable. I accept me for who I am with my race, gender, and ethnic background. I think because I'm comfortable with that, it makes me love who I am and feel comfortable than with how I feel in the community and everything around me as well.

(Amy 10) I just feel like lately with everything that's going on in the world, the minorities and things like that, I personally view everyone as equal and everyone should be treated equally so as my member in society, race, ethnic background, everything like that, I don't really compare myself to others in that aspect because I just view everyone as equals so I guess I'm happy with my place in society because I don't favor one side or the other.

(Amy 11) I feel fortunate how I was raised, the way my parents raised me, they did a really good job. Just, my values. They align right.
(Amy 12) I guess the right way. I view everyone as equal. I treat others how I want to be treated. I like to give back to people who are less fortunate than I am.

(Amy 13) I'm interested in bettering myself along with the community.

(Amy 14) I think I fit in well.

(Amy 15) I'm pretty much, I could be friends with anybody. It doesn't matter about ethnic background, race, what you look like, what you believe in religious values, anything like that. I'm not really close-minded to anyone.

(Cindy 12) Yes, I do. I feel comfortable with, you know, being a female. I know there's a lot of ... Back in the day, and still today, I know there's a lot of...For females, it's not as equal as it needs to be, but I feel very comfortable with it. If I want something to happen or if I need something to happen, I'm able to confront it as being a female and not being worried that I'm going to be judged.

(Cindy 13) My race. Yeah, definitely. I mean, I'm not, as I would say, with Donald Trump right now and the whole Muslim thing, I'm not scared. I'm more comfortable with my race and what I am. Ethnic background? Yeah, I mean, I know who I am. I'm fine with everything. Yeah.

(Cindy 14) Being a student, being a part of the community of being a student at OU. I'm part of Power/Gamma, which is a peer health organization on campus, and I stand up for what I believe in, whether it's ... A lot of the gender stuff, we work with the LGBT community, and I'm very comfortable with having conversations with other people and stand up for what I believe in and what they believe in.
(Cindy 15) Yes. Definitely. Yeah. I'm able to just communicate with everyone, but be on their level, and that level of understanding and not judging them.

(Beth 15) I'm comfortable with all of it.

(Beth 16) Oh, yeah. For sure. I think there's a lot more ahead, but for now, I feel fine and I fit.

(Beth 17) I feel ... I mean, obviously, I'm comfortable at both places, but I feel like OU is my element. I'm happiest here.

(Beth 18) I like living with like ... Just having all my friends around me all the time is so nice. When we go home for a break, I just text them in the morning, like, "Oh, it's so sad." Waking up and going to the couch and no one's sitting at it. It's just fun to be around all the people that you love.

(Beth 19) Yeah. I feel like every experience kind of builds you as a person.

(Beth 20) How I view myself. Yeah. Like I said, just seeing how they, or somebody with a developmental disability, may react to certain situations. I guess that would shed light to maybe how I- I feel like I could learn from them.

(Beth 21) No. I think maybe it'll give me a different view of the world and how I can look into it, but I think fitting in, I'm sure how that would relate.

**Self-authorship.** The sixth theme focused on self-authorship and participants’ perceptions of their ability to author their own lives. The answers were consistent and ranged from comfortable, confident, allowed me to be who I wanted, I have control over my reactions, make own decisions, mature, responsible, and in charge. Individual answers are found below.
(Sara 15) I'm comfortable with where I am.

(Sara 16) I think for the most part I would be comfortable stepping in, being like, "No, that's not how it is," but I think there are situations when that could probably be challenged.

(Sara 17) I just know when a lot of people are on one side and you're left on your own, sometimes I start to think, I guess especially because I could use being president [student organization] as an example, we have to make a lot of decisions that aren't very popular. If I maybe decide something and everyone is like, "Are you sure that's the best decision? We all agree maybe this would be better," maybe I'll start to think, "Is what they're saying better than what I'm believing?" Other than that, I would probably wave back and forth, but I would probably stand with what I originally believe and think.

(Sara 18) Yeah, I wasn't at first. When I first started school, I was a pharmacy major, which is not even close to what I'm in right now. That was because my parents really kind of pushed that on me. They wanted me to be that. Then I think the reason I changed so much was because I wasn't in charge. Now I am, and now I'm happy with my major. Yeah, so I don't think I was before, but I am now.

(Tara 15) In some cases, if someone were challenging me and it wasn't really anything too big or whatever, I'm sure I would just brush it off, let it go. Other things, sometimes people push your buttons and if I were to be challenged on something I felt extremely strong or passionate about, I might retaliate slightly. Yeah, in that sense.

(Tara 16) I would hope so, but like I said I guess it depends on the situation. If it were something extreme, I don't know but knowing the person that I am, I do tend to have
pretty good self-control. I don't think I would do anything that would be like, "What the heck."

(Tara 17) Yes. I do. For the most part. I'm sure there are things I definitely could do to strengthen my self-control, myself, my I.

(Tara 18) Yeah, I do feel comfortable where I'm at but there's always room to grow. Who knows, maybe somewhere down the line I'm desperately looking to find that self-control again. As of current state right now, I do feel comfortable and confident within myself.

(Janet 23) Definitely with my identity and social relations, I'm very confident with.

(Janet 24) My beliefs, I feel like I am, but I'm also open for interpretation and I'm open to hear other's, other people's beliefs. I think even though I have my own beliefs, hearing someone else's may sound interesting to me as well as I may like that as well. Not that I don't think anything's wrong with my beliefs, but I like hearing other's as well.

(Janet 25) Just seeing what others believe too. I'm very confident in my own, but I also like hearing others to interpret as well, and maybe I like that too.

(Janet 26) I mean, my parents were never ... never put pressure on me to be someone else.

(Janet 27) I think that's huge growing up and with my sisters that they never pressured us to be anyone that we're not. They let us be who we are, and I think that's also why I'm so comfortable with myself and my belief, my identity, and my social relations because I chose them. They weren't forced upon me.

(Janet 28) I think that's why I'm so comfortable with who I am that I wasn't pressured into anything growing up. I've seen some people be pressured, and I think that's maybe why they're maybe not so comfortable with-
(Janet 29) Yeah, along with the like the beliefs, identity, and social relations.

(Amy 16) Well, just because I feel like I understand that you can't always control what happens around you, but like you said, in self-authorship you have full control over how you react to the situation. I know that it's hard sometimes when you are overcome with emotions and everything like that, but no matter the way that you do react if it's good or bad, I do believe you're in control.

(Amy 17) I don't know about [a] specific example, but I do think me personally, as much as I don't want to, I sometimes care what people think of me so I think that affects how I react to situations in ways.

(Cindy 16) Yes. I feel like I am, to a point. You know?

(Cindy 17) Just like the decisions that I make, yes, I'm in control of. But, you know, decisions that other people make it affects me, but there's nothing ... There's times that I can do stuff about it, and there's time that I absolutely cannot, and I just kind of let it go as it does and go from there.

(Cindy 18) I would say consistent. Sometimes it might be under a certain situation where I'm like, "Oh." Yeah, maybe I should watch the way that I word something.

(Cindy 19) Yeah. Confident, but never really-

(Cindy 20) Yeah. Never changing my beliefs, but changing how I view something.

(Beth 22) I think that everyone has their own decisions to make and ... I feel like everything you do is ... I don't know how to word it. I'm definitely in control of my body, so I feel like, for consequences and stuff like that, I never get too beat up about it because I did it to myself.
(Beth 23) Get a bad grade on a test, it's probably because I didn't study enough. I don't really blame outside sources for that.

(Beth 24) Yeah. I think it makes- If you can't recognize that it's your fault or whatever the case may be, that shows kind of immaturity, I feel like. If you're mature, you can own up to your own mistakes or whatever.

**Inter-cultural maturity.** The seventh theme focused on inter-cultural maturity and participants’ perceptions of their ability to be sensitive to other’s needs. The answers were consistent and ranged from open, sensitive, accepting, emotional, learning from others, needing to grow, compassionate, empathic, and mature. Specific answers are included below.

(Sara 19) Completely open. I could talk to anybody. I think everybody, we're all human. We all deserve chances at everything. Yeah, I'm definitely a very open person to anybody.

(Sara 20) Accepting, yep, yeah.

(Tara 19) I personally think I'm extremely sensitive to others. I always try to hear people out and I sympathize for others.

(Tara 20) Even walking in today, I do feel like I was just sensitive to others and how they behave.

(Tara 21) It does because it is alarming to just see this. As I said before, I haven't been really exposed to this that much. I do feel like I was personally sensitive to who they are and trying to just really understand them and just treat them as a normal human being rather than someone who ... I don't know.
(Janet 30) Yeah. I mean, I think I'm a fairly emotional person. I mean, if I see someone hurt, I instantly feel bad and want to help.

(Janet 31) Anyone in my family, if I know they're feeling down or sad or something, it always kind of affects me too. I think that shows I'm very sensitive to others, but at the same time I'm also ... If someone is down or hurt or something, I also feel the need to be strong for them, to be there for them and stuff like that. I am sensitive to them, but then I also know to be strong too in times of need.

(Janet 32) I think that causes a challenge with trying to talk to her about it, but also hearing her side to it, because she's of course emotional about it. That posed a challenge, but knowing I could call her, and text her, and just let her know that I'm there if she needs to talk or anything like that, I did that, but I also knew that I was hurting too. That was the challenging part of wanting to be there for her, but then my own emotions to the situation as well. That was what posed the challenge for me.

(Janet 33) Not saying that being sensitive is bad, but I think it's also good in a workforce or workplace and everything. While dealing with individuals is disabilities, it's kind of hard to get that sensitive and emotionally attached to them.

(Amy 18) I think I'm very sensitive, and I think sometimes I feel strongly for other people, their emotions. If they're going through something, I feel like I take it upon myself. I almost put their emotions on me too.

(Amy 19) I would say yeah, if anything I struggle with maybe understanding others.

(Amy 20) I feel like I'm gaining a better understanding of what's really going on in someone who has disabilities. So for in intercultural maturity, because I don't really know
much even about disabilities or what causes them or there's all different reasons, different types, things like that so I think that will give me a better understanding for that. Also, probably increase my sensitivity to others and listening and learning from others too. I think I could definitely learn from them.

(Cindy 21) Sensitivity? I am a very sensitive person.

(Cindy 22) I guess it's the situations that I am put in. I'm always going to be sensitive, I'm always going to be compassionate and caring and try to understand.

(Cindy 23) I do. Yeah. I remain understanding and not judging, but I also try to fix the problem or look at it from a different perspective, just to grasp that. Not judging, honestly.

(Beth 25) I would say I'm...Just because I'm- Not used to it, but semi used to it, I'm say I'm a pretty sensitive person.

(Beth 26) Yeah. I mean, no one's alike in every way and I understand that, so I would say I would be open to-

(Beth 27) -trying to understand and look at things differently.

(Beth 28) I guess every situation would be different, but I would most likely feel pretty empathetic. I think that's just how I was raised.

Projected impact this experience will have on the student. The eighth theme examined how participants thought the upcoming experience would affect them and what they hoped to gain from this experience. The answers were consistent and ranged from gaining greater communication skills, and understanding of others, becoming a better
person, more comfortable, more mature, and more appreciative. Individual responses are included below.

(Sara 21) Yeah, a better person. I think-

(Sara 22) I think they'll just give me more insight into their world. I think that's a very good thing to have when you're just working with anybody even. I think just as a person, with that insight and with all the skills that I'll gain on working with them, I think I'll just be a better person in general to work with anyone.

(Tara 22) Already, I've only been here a couple hours and I just feel like I've just grown so much. I feel like I've already viewed myself as someone more mature than the person I walked in today. I'm not even kidding. It's only been a couple hours. I just feel like me personally, I feel more mature and more accepting.

(Tara 23) I think it'll be a really big growing process and have to like growing up and responsibility and that kind of stuff and I do think I'm just going to mature more as the weeks go on.

(Tara 24) I do think it's going to help me fit in because I have a whole new background now I could share about myself and seeing these new experiences and I'm doing a bunch of stuff I've never done before and communicating differently. I feel like it's going to help me just really accept others and be able to understand people differently, if that makes sense?

(Tara 25) Just because I feel like working with these children, you have to kind of have an open mind and a different understanding of how they work which might translate into
like you said the workforce maybe. Just having that ability to understand and be sensitive to others. I don't know. I'm having a hard time explaining myself.

(Tara 26) Yes, pretty much. Just makes you look at a situation differently I guess, because you're working with these kids and getting to know them and just trying to understand them and maybe working with future employer. Getting to know them. Trying to understand them. Those kind of skills that might go hand and hand with volunteering and working and friends. Maybe having better listening skills, communication skills.

(Tara 27) Stuff like that.

(Tara 28) I think it will strengthen my ability to be in charge of my own self, my I like you said. I think it will only enhance it and make me a stronger person, more comfortable with myself. More proud of myself.

(Tara 28) I thought it was a really good opportunity. I don't think I'm ever going to get the chance to do something like this again. It really does just get you in there. Gives you the experience and I want to be able to...Not give back but just be able to do something like this. Do this for myself. It's really rewarding, very fulfilling. I hope something I can get out of it is just a very good overall feeling of worth or appreciation.

(Janet 34) I think it's going to put me in a new situation that I haven't had much time with, and I think it's going to really open my eyes to individuals with disabilities since I haven't had much experience with them, and I'll be able to see how they go day to day in a classroom.

(Janet 35) Well, I mean I'm here one day, but to know that they have like a kind of rough schedule that they go by I can learn, or I can see how they lean, and even just through
sign language how they communicate, and like music and all of that that's I think going to affect me knowing how these individuals are like participating in school and stuff, because I'm also going through school. I've been through school, so it's interesting to see how they do about.

(Janet 36) I do because I do think it will affect how I fit in just because I do, I will have a better understanding of these individuals, and I think it also kind of gives me a leg up knowing that I can work with them and understand them. I think it depends on which group I would be trying to fit in with, but I think I...I don't know.

(Janet 37) It gives me the...After this, I think I will have a better understanding of how to engage with individuals that I'm not normally used to engaging with.

(Janet 38) Being that these individuals here do have disabilities, I think that kind of gives me the opportunity to be able to engage with almost anyone then.

(Janet 39) Hopefully learning sign language from them, if I come across someone who is nonverbal or doesn't understand, if they know sign language, I think that would be helpful for me to be able to communicate with them and even just ... Yeah.

(Janet 40) Because they go through different struggles that we go through, and you can't get down upon that every day when they do. It's kind of best to look okay the bright side and help them get past that. Hopefully I can ... Seeing them go through hard times will hopefully make me stronger and be able to help them while they go through hard times.

(Janet 41) I think it would be challenging for me being around individuals that aren't in control. It may be something I'm not sure to, and even if they have different beliefs or understandings of things, it may challenge me for what I think too. I think it would also
have me almost ... I think it would almost have me believe in what I do believe, I don't know how to say it, but like stronger.

(Amy 21) Because I will be able to feel more towards others and understand more. If anything, it'll make me a better person.

(Amy 22) Yeah. If anything, I feel like it will...This experience is going to teach me how to interact with people with disabilities so maybe if I saw someone in public, I would feel comfortable being open to going and talking to them or interacting with them whereas before I would be standoffish because I didn't really know how to interact with somebody.

(Amy 23) It will give me, first a little bit of insight. Maybe this will incline me to want to work with students with disabilities when I graduate.

(Amy 24) So, that's one reason or one thing I'm hoping to gain out of this. Another thing would be insight to disabilities in general. Like I said, how to interact with them so I can be a better member of community and basically just, if I would be able to help the students in any way for them to progress forward or to make them happy or anything like that, I would absolutely love that.

(Cindy 24) Okay. I just think it will it change me inside, it'll change the way that I look at other people.

(Cindy 25) It makes me appreciative of just everything that I have, but being able to help another student and maybe get them a step further with whatever they're working on.

(Cindy 26) Yeah. It'll make me very open-minded when I do go out in the community and I see different levels. I mean, say if I was working in poverty, and it just makes me more
appreciative, but also being able to get on their level and to understand and not be judgmental, because I feel like that's a big thing with community and public health. I feel like you have to get down on their level, especially I know in …, like me going to the grocery store, people kind of look at me like, "Okay, you're a college student."

(Cindy 27) I think it'll help me fit in, but I don't think I'll ever fully be a part of the whole community. But, it will give me the opportunity to get on their level, and to understand the things that they go through, especially if I'm going through them with them.

(Cindy 28) Yeah, I'm glad I chose …, because it's going to change what's inside of me and give me a better understanding of what they go through on a daily basis, because I'm capable to do a lot of things that they are not, so that makes me grateful to have that experience and to understand that.

(Cindy 29) I haven't had a lot of experiences with kids that have developmental disabilities or people that live in poverty. I haven't had those different experiences, so I feel like it's going to give me a better learning and understanding of just what they go through on a daily basis.

(Beth 29) Yes. For sure. I think just getting comfortable with the children or young adults and just actually- Because, I mean, everyone knows what developmentally disabled is, but not everyone gets to experience being around them, so I feel like it's a new type of learning when you get to experience it.

(Beth 30) It's definitely- I'm assuming and hoping that it's gonna increase my sensitivity.
(Beth 31) Just being more understanding, maybe, because, like I said, not everyone learns the same or does things the same, so I guess it would just help my understanding and maybe raise my empathy towards them.

(Beth 32) Right. Yeah. I think ... Since I obviously don't have any disabilities in that regard, I still would say I'm responsible for my own I, but I understand that they may not be.

(Beth 33) Just empathetic, I guess. Trying to understand that not everyone can be, so just trying to understand where they're coming from and keep an open mind about it.

(Beth 34) I guess I just want to be able to ... Not be open, but be comfortable in all situations because I feel like this is something that not everyone is used to and a lot of people are uncomfortable in this type of situation, so I just want to be able to be a whole person and like ...

**Post-Service Student Responses**

For the post-service responses, there were eight different thematic groupings. Themes after the experience include a definition of developmental disabilities, characteristics of the students, feelings about the experience, identity development, self-authorship, inter-cultural maturity, goals for the experience, and take away from the experience. A summary of each is included below.

**Definition of developmental disabilities.** The first theme focused on participants’ definitions of developmental disabilities and whether it changed during their experience. The answers were fairly consistent and included: unique, not negative, needing an extra push, no one is normal, slower, variations, and mental, physical, social,
and challenges. The term different was used multiple times and referred to learning, course, track, ways, obstacles, and coping. Individual responses are listed below.

(Sara 23) The first thing, when I looked at the question, I thought about was, how I define, it's just a different track of life, but it's still something that you can live and succeed with

(Sara 24) I don't know, it's just something about how it's not a negative thing. It's just, I don't even know what to call it, a thing that people have, and it just, like I said, you just need a different course of action. You need a different track

(Sara 25) So, in our classroom there's five kids. Some are non-verbal. And working with one kid, he needs a lot of prompting, but he can do the things on his own. While the other kids, you need to put your hand over their hand and literally help them move it around. It's just ... And they know what they're doing, and they can do it with you, but sometimes they just need that extra push. So they need the same thing, just in different ways

(Sara 26) I never even thought about all of the different ways that people would need different, I guess you could call it promptings to help them, but, it's so different

(Tara 29) I kind of had a feeling you were going to ask me that. I was thinking to myself, I cannot really define it, because I don't want to sound uneducated, but I just know. I don't know.

(Tara 30) Okay, I would just say it is somebody who doesn't perform or operate, for lack of a better term, on the same level as someone who is not categorized as having a developmental disability. Someone who just cannot necessarily perform normal day to
day tasks without assistance. But also ... Just learning at a slower level and operating at a slower level if that makes sense.

(Janet 42) I think it definitely still holds true that, I mean everyone is so different that no one, what I said before, no one's normal, I don't think there's a total definition of "normal" for anyone, but I mean definitely being around children with disabilities each week, I've learned the different views that they have, but like in their own way, and that they're also unique too, and just the outlook they have on life I feel like is great. They'll always come to school so happy. I don't think that's me defining it, I'm just talking about that

(Janet 43) I definitely have a better understanding, and I think it's broadened my understanding of, if there is a definition of disabilities, I think it has definitely broadened. Because I have learned that there are so many variations of the disabilities that these children have, but they all are still so one with themselves, and they definitely try and work with everyone, and I think that makes them all very unique too

(Janet 44) I think all three, but varying degrees of all of those. I think someone could have a disability with all three of what you named, but it also depends on how severe or not, and how they work with it I think is huge too, so yeah

(Janet 45) Yeah, I think so. I mean, I definitely notice more with, I think you mentioned physical and mental

(Janet 46) Yeah, I've seen those too. I think social kind of goes along with it too. It's hard for me to sometimes notice that with them being nonverbal, but I've also noticed them interacting though just through playing, even if they're not speaking, which that's really cool to see. Yeah, I think I've seen all three in the classroom.
(Amy 25) I would say, someone with either a mental or physical or both.

(Cindy 30) I think it's just challenges and obstacles that they face on a daily basis. They could have the minor issues versus major issues of not being able to do things by themselves. But it makes them special. It's a whole different view of life. That's kind of how I would define it.

(Beth 35) I think my understanding has changed, like completely.

(Beth 36) I think that my definition still holds pretty firmly. I guess the only thing I would add, actually I don't really know if I would add anything, I think I did pretty good on that.

(Beth 37) It could be mental, it could be physical.

(Beth 38) Even social.

(Beth 39) Right, right. Different ways of learning, different ways of coping with stress, anxiety, whatever it may be.

**Characteristics of the students you worked with.** The second theme focused on the observed characteristics of the individuals with disabilities with whom the students worked during their experience. Responses included sick, non-verbal, entertaining, wheelchair, frustrated, runner, hands on, and autism. Individual and specific responses are listed below.

(Sara 27) I guess I kind of, I was never exposed to an environment like this, so I just kind of assumed they all struggle the same way and everything. But it's so different. Every single kid in my classroom completely needs different things to calm themselves down,
different things to stimulate themselves, just, it's a whole different world. Definitely, something that's opened my eyes.

(Sara 28) They're ages eight through 12. And, I never worked with students with disabilities before. Characteristics. They're all funny. I think they're all very entertaining, they keep me laughing. Sometimes, when I started, I didn't know if I was allowed to laugh at what they did or not, because I didn't know if they were supposed to be working on something. But, they're all just, you know that they want to learn. They ask questions all the time. I love when I walk in and they're like, what are you doing today? Where are you going later? Why do you do that? Why that?

(Sara 29) Two of them are non-verbal, but when we do things where we put out two shapes and tell them to point, they normally go to the right one and you can tell they're trying to learn because they get frustrated when they maybe don't do it right on the first try. Or if they need extra help. But, they all make it really worthwhile.

(Sara 30) There's bad days and good days. I get kind of sad when ….., sometimes if he doesn't do something right on the first try it's like, no, no, try and pick another one. He's like, oh, I'm done. I'm not doing this anymore. I'm like, don't get frustrated, you can do it. That just makes me sad because if we had maybe put a student without disabilities, might just go back and try again. But that just reminds me, he just needs an extra push, extra reinforcement.

(Sara 31) I think I'm more drawn to the boys, but I'm not sure why. I think the girls tend to be a little quieter, and I just like more interaction. But I mean there is one girl that's
non-verbal and there's one guy that's non-verbal. But, I don't know. I've never, I guess, really thought about it that way.

(Tara 31) Yeah. All of them are pretty much, I'm not sure the exact age range, but I know they are within 17 to ...

(Tara 32) Yeah. I'm 22 years old, so it's kind of cool for me because I feel like I'm ... Not like their teacher or their mentor, but I'm almost just like one of them.

(Tara 33) Yeah, exactly. We are just friends. It's cool for me that I got to work with kids ... Or not kids, but people my age. I thought that was cool.

(Tara 34) Honestly the main thing is just they need slight assistance in performing day to day tasks.

(Tara 35) she just needs help. Just a little bit of help. She can do pretty much everything. She is extremely intelligent, she recognizes the materials, she can read, I mean she can write. She just needs a little bit of help.

(Tara 36) Just slightly delayed. Honestly she could do everything by herself. ... is the same way, she can do everything by herself, and she is verbal. ..., he is… he is non verbal, almost in a social aspect.

(Tara 37) He can pretty much perform all of his normal day-to-day tasks except he cannot really speak that well, and has a hard time communicating, and stuff like that

(Tara 38) Yes, just has a hard time delivering I guess the message he is trying to portray, or trying to give you. Then who else ... sleeps for most of the class actually. When she is awake, she is very smart. She is able to ... right now they are working on identifying signs, street signs or whatever.
They're preschool, so I forget the age range, three to five maybe I think it is

I think there's a wide range in that room, but they all interact well. One of the boys has Autism, and he tries to say some of the words, you can sometimes make out some of them, others are harder to understand. He loves playing with others, which is really neat to see him interacting with everyone. There's another girl, I don't know what she's diagnosed with, but she's more nonverbal, but she loves to sing and listen to music. I love hearing that, when music comes on, she'll just sit there and listen to it. Another individual loves hugs and being, like having his arm rubbed or something. They're all very hands on with each other, some maybe not as much, but they're all willing to definitely engage with each other.

I think the only one that would stand out to me is one of the individuals, he likes to run, and I have gotten nervous sitting with him at lunch that when he's done eating, he gets antsy. I was nervous that he was going to run, and I'd have to go run after him in the cafeteria.

He didn't try to run, but he's tried to get out of his seat, and I've been able to try and have him sit down. I don't sit with him as much in lunch to experience that, but I have sat with him before, and that was I think the only time I was nervous

One of the boys, when he comes in and he starts to find a toy to play with, sometimes I've noticed he will come and grab my hand and take him to where he's playing. I liked that, that he wanted to play with me. Another girl, I noticed if we're lined up at the door, she'll grab my hand to have me walk with her.
(Janet 52) Get my attention by grabbing my hand or touching my arm, just for me to notice them, and then sometimes they'll give me their toy to show that they want me to play with them, since they are mainly nonverbal, they can't say, "Can you play with me?" It's more of them grabbing my hand or something.

(Janet 53) A boy was playing and I came over, and I think he wanted to be by himself, and so I think I may have picked up a toy, and he grabbed it from me. I got the hint that he wanted to play with that, and so I gave him his space, and then he just continued to play by himself.

(Janet 54) I noticed maybe sitting down at lunch or when we all sit at the table together in the classroom, some students aren't as willing to sit and sit there for a couple of moments with the rest of the class. I think looking back to when I was maybe their age, or even just a lot younger, maybe being asked to do that when you don't want to, because some of them want to continue playing or something.

(Janet 55) Two of the children in my classroom have talkers, so the electronic devices to push buttons to say certain words. I think that if they're upset, they will try and let you know, and I think that they don't give up on that. I think that that's good that they are determined to let people know how they're feeling, that they have that good sense of self that, "Hey, I'm upset, and I want you to know."

(Janet 56) Yeah, I mean even the other students that don't have talkers but are more nonverbal, they cry or act out in a certain way to let you know that they're upset, not just to get your attention, but just because.
(Amy 26) We have a student in my classroom and she is in a wheelchair. She has a hip displacement, and so she is in a wheelchair and she needs a feeding tube, and things like that, so I would consider that physical.

(Amy 27) I guess one little girl in my class, she talks occasionally, but only on her terms. Like, if you try to talk to her, she won't have it. But sometimes if she wants to talk to you, she'll come up to you and talk to you.

(Amy 28) Yeah, it was kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade. So I think the youngest is four. And then the oldest is, I want to say seven. And a lot of the characteristics are, like, hard to pay attention, like when we're doing learning time. We have to stop and redirect their focus a lot of the time. Another characteristic I would say, they all become a little bit, I want to say irritable. Like when we want to do writing activities they'll start off okay and then towards the end they're done with it.

(Amy 29) And the one little boy, he is really high energy, so he's always up, and he does this thing where he jumps around and flails his arms, like when he gets excited about something. And another little boy rocks back and forth when he's really happy and excited. And then the one little girl loves looking at herself in the mirror.

(Amy 30) Yes, so she's always looking at herself in the mirror, and at her desk ... The desks are a half-circle, and they all sit around, but hers is up against a wall next to the teacher with a mirror in front of it because that's one way to get her to sit down and focus.

(Amy 31) Like I know music makes them happy, like I know music makes a lot of the students happy. So when we're learning, will incorporate music into counting and the alphabet and things like that. Seems like all the students love that. And then, yeah the one
little boy who flailed his arms a lot, he hits his head when he gets mad, with his hand. And if you just hold his hand and rub it, he'll calm down a little bit.

(Amy 32) Me and the teacher would talk about sometimes the little boy would come to school and he would be sick and have to go home, and then the teacher would say he shouldn't come back the next day or whatever, and the parents would still not take him to the doctor, just sent him back and he's still sick. And that's another thing I noticed, like when he's not feeling well is when he starts acting up a lot. But he doesn't really talk much.

(Cindy 31) One of the boys, I know he does a lot of, he doesn't speak, but he uses his talker, but he does a lot of, "Uh-uh," noises, and they do a lot of the sign language stuff. To me, that's like mentally, he's physically, mentally there. Socially, kind of social skills are lacking. But he's able to do certain hand motions to communicate. That would be his form of characteristics of what he does.

(Cindy 32) 17, 16 through 18, sometimes like that.

(Cindy 33) Yeah, mostly boys, there was only two girls in there.

(Cindy 34) I would say the boys, just because there is more of them, but they are able to do more than what the girls are able to.

(Beth 40) He's just ahead with learning and stuff like that, but he's more of the social aspect where he's really shy and has problems just talking with the other kids. I've learned that's another addition to it.

(Beth 41) Help with opening their foods. [...] can't really eat, so I help her eat. I mainly sit with …., so she's pretty.
(Beth 42) She likes me to sit with her every day, she always asks that I sit next to her, so I
do that. I just open their food for them, because most of them can eat pretty well, except--
(Beth 43) Yeah. I think she has more just of a separation anxiety from home. We've
learned that we have to just stop her when she's talking about it, which is hard because
sometimes I don't know my place there, but I've learned that I just have to do it.
(Beth 44) Probably the one that sticks out to me the most is..., she can't really talk at all.
She only knows a few words and that's when I think back to like the I control my I, or
whatever.
(Beth 45) Nothing could set her off and you don't know what she wants or what she needs
because she can't communicate to you, so it's tough.
(Beth 46) I think I would, but mainly just because they're adorable.

**Feelings about the experiences.** The third theme focused on the feelings
participants experienced during their service learning experience. The answers were
fairly consistent and included happy, grateful, great, good, worthy, sad, connected, love,
and positive.

(Sara 32) Yeah, and I've talked about, obviously, my placement with people and they're
always like, oh my gosh, how do you do that? I could never, it's just ... I don't know. It
makes me feel good when people say that, because I love it here, and I wouldn't trade it
for anything. I'm so glad I had my placement here.

(Sara 33) Just kind of like, maybe they're addressing themselves, but it kind of makes me
feel like maybe I'm more tolerable. Maybe I'm just in the right place. Doing the right
thing that I need to do.
(Sara 34) I think pretty positively. I know …., I've come in before on Thursdays or Fridays, days that I don't normally come in to pick up papers or drop off evaluations. And every time I come in, he's like what? Why are you here today? Can you stay? That always makes me feel good. That he wants me there. And he knows my name, and says my full name, too, which is pretty impressive.

(Sara 35) Because I feel like I'm making ... They obviously are happy and I feel like maybe I'm contributing to that. They seem me and smile, maybe I'm a little part of the happiness. And that makes me feel good.

(Sara 36) It means everything. I've changed my major a couple of times, but actually being in an environment that is potential work for us later in life, and just seeing everything has meant everything, because it just makes me feel like I'm in the right place when I come ... No one loves waking up at six in the morning to get ready for school, or anything. But every Wednesday, I get right up, I'm ready to come, I'm so happy, so excited. And it just really helped me figure out that this is what I'm supposed to be doing.

(Sara 37) When I come and I enjoy my days here when I leave and go home and I'm like, wow, that was a good day. That just reminds me I've found the right thing.

(Sara 38) It makes me sad, especially since I do believe they have the same opportunities that any other student could have, typical or not. I guess I just hope that it could eventually turn into them being completely in charge.

(Tara 39) It made me feel good honestly, because I wasn't expecting them to ... I didn't really think I was going to have, not like a connection but…
(Tara 40) Yeah, I just kind of thought it was going to be me standing there maybe helping them eat food. It's actually way more than that. They know my name and like you saw, we were hanging out, we do fun stuff. I don't know, it made me feel good working with them. Yeah, I don't know, it just made me feel good.

(Tara 41) It makes me feel good in the sense that they are able to recognize who I am and remember me. I didn't think they were going to be able to remember me. I'm only here two times a week, I just kind of thought I was almost going to be just like we said earlier, just someone standing in the back observing. But I just feel like they are my friends.

(Tara 42) Today we were playing on the playground and I was swinging with them and stuff. They were like, "Come play with me."

(Janet 57) I like them noticing me and wanting me to engage with them, because of course I want to engage with them too, so I'm glad that it's a two-way street.

(Janet 58) Good. I wanted to have as much experience with them as I could, and so knowing that they wanted to engage with me was a good feeling.

(Janet 59) It feels great. I haven't had this much experience before, and so seeing how much time I have to engage with them is awesome, and it makes me feel good that they, even though they can't fully tell me that they want to play with me or engage with me, they still show me that. I think that's awesome to have that one-on-one time with them.

(Amy 33) It intrigues me, because it's just like, every student is different, like with what calms them down. So, I found that really interesting. I feel like in that sense, it makes me happy that they do have those things and they know what does calm them down and make them happy.
(Amy 34) They were all coming up to me and were so excited to talk to me and hugging me, and it was just so much fun because a lot of my students don't really talk. So, them just talking to me and them being so excited to meet me, it just made me feel so happy.

(Cindy 35) Makes me sad, it does. But at the same time, looking at them differently than the boys, they do a lot of the reaching and stuff, so I feel like that's their form of communication versus anything else.

(Cindy 36) Yeah, sad, but it also makes me feel grateful, that I'm able to be a part of all of it, and see what they go through every single day.

(Cindy 37) Some of it, yeah, partially. Another is that my brother, he has his ADD, but it's not as severe as what they have. But it also, I don't know, it just opens my eyes to everything.

(Cindy 38) I think it's just the conditions that they have to go through. But also, we were also talking about the teachers, and where they live, and how their parents interact with them, or treat them, and it's not the greatest. It makes me, you say sad, but it also makes me angry that they have to go through those things.

(Cindy 39) Yeah, I feel like they are. Just the simplest things, like at lunch, opening a straw and putting it in a juice box. Or one of our boys, he doesn't like cheese on his pizza, so taking that off. I feel like they're very dependent of just like the littlest things, and same with the teachers. That's one more they have in the room to help out with.

(Cindy 40) It just makes me feel wanted, because I am here, instead of me just sitting in a corner not doing anything. I'm actually a part of something.
(Beth 47) There's been several like little moments that I know that they know I'm here to help. Like the other day when we were doing, separating for Spring Break, I was saying bye because I leave on Tuesday, I do Monday/Tuesday. They see me for two days in a row so I feel like they get all excited and then I'm gone. I was saying, to …, I was saying I wouldn't see her for two weeks and she got all emotional when I was walking out and it really hit home. It was cute to know that they do actually recognize that I'm here and care.

(Beth 48) It made me feel great. I've volunteered before, but not with this type of community, so like going home I would tell my roommates about it. Like right away, like my special moment of the day. Kind of brag about it almost because it's fun.

(Beth 49) It makes you feel like you're worthy almost.

(Beth 50) I just think, I don't know how to put it exactly. I know not everyone could deal with being here, so…

(Beth 51) I guess I didn't really even know if I would be able to handle it because it is difficult. Just seeing, you have to have a big, I feel like you have to, everyone that works here obviously has a huge heart.

(Beth 52) I mean I know I'm a good person.

(Beth 53) I just, it takes a certain person to be able to handle it.

(Beth 54) I didn't know, but now it's like opened up a new door. It makes me feel good.

(Beth 55) I mean I definitely connected with all of the students I worked with.

(Beth 56) Just makes me feel grateful.
(Beth 57) Just understanding for when they're having their issues, like you have to be a little bit more patient and you have to try to understand what they're trying to say because they don't know how to communicate it to you.

(Beth 58) I mean I do struggle with anxiety, not separation, but I guess I can relate that back to me. Knowing, like if I don't even have a developmental disability and I'm struggling with this, I can't imagine like the scale that they're on.

(Beth 59) That makes me think like how I can handle situations like that. Maybe I'm having a stressful day or whatever, like I know how to cope with it, or at least can figure it out, but they might not know how.

**Identity development.** The fourth theme centered on identity development and if the students’ feelings about their place in the community changed or was altered during their service learning experience. The answers were consistent and included more aware, more open, feeling more a part of it, altered my view, now want to impact my community, and more well-rounded. The individual and specific responses are listed below.

(Sara 39) So we are surrounded by a lot of families that are definitely struggling. So, I think being able to kind of be submerged in families which are not struggling in the same ways, children with disabilities, which is obviously something you have to handle as a family. Being submerged in that culture has made me more aware of where I am and how I can maybe help more.
(Sara 40) Yeah, I definitely feel fortunate to not have grown up with thinking about how another place might be struggling when I was always okay. It's definitely made me more aware and just think that maybe I can help. I can give back.

(Tara 43) I never really saw myself in this environment, and this experience has changed that because now I can see myself working in something like this environment, and I feel like my role in the community has changed because I want to work with others and make an impact on a community and help others, and be an assistant to others.

(Tara 44) I don't know, I've just never really thought that was something that I would do. I never saw myself working in a school or anything like that. I don't know, I just feel like that kind of altered my view on where I would stand in the community.

(Janet 60) I think coming in, I was pretty set on my beliefs for all of those, and it's after having so much experience with them, I think I still feel the same on everything. They didn't make me question anything. If anything, for place in community, I feel like that would be the only thing because now I feel like I've semi-broadened my sense of community by having more experience with them, because I didn't have as much before.

(Janet 61) I think it kind of made me more well rounded of knowing individuals in the community.

(Janet 62) I've said before, much experience with individuals with disabilities, but now that I have, I feel like I have a better sense of the community that I'm living in, which makes me feel good that I can relate to them and understand them, because they are in my community, and I think it's important to know that.
(Amy 35) I feel like yeah, because I feel like if I was out in public and somebody with disabilities came up to me, I feel like I would be more confident in being able to interact with them, hold a conversation with them.

(Amy 36) because, yeah I feel like I'm just more rounded now. Like I would, before I think I would be intimidated if somebody with disabilities and I wouldn't know how to properly interact with them.

(Cindy 41) Yeah, I think it has, I mean especially with, I mean I know I go to OU, I'm not really a part of Athens community, and I know a lot of people will say that, but me having the experience and being here, makes me feel a part of it.

(Beth 60) I mean yes, obviously. I don't know how exactly as a student, but just as a member of society I guess my service here as just opened me up to new, I guess a new way of seeing things, so I guess that would change who I would be as a member of society because I'd be more open to different people and different ways of living and learning and all that. I'm not sure how I could relate it to as a student.

(Beth 61) I've never really had an issue with fitting in.

(Beth 62) I guess it makes you think about, like even in the classroom you see some of the kids don't talk to other kids. They don't, some of them may not like the other ones, because of just the way they act. I could see the other side of it, but I personally don't think I ever had an issue with that.

(Beth 63) Yeah I mean definitely more, it would, I guess I would be more empathetic now after experiencing this, so if I see somebody who may, which I already did that before actually.
Self-authorship. The fifth theme focused on self-authorship and participants’ perceptions of their ability to author their own lives. The answers were consistent and focused on more confident, value the fact that I am in charge, makes me appreciate the fact that I am in charge when some people aren’t, and a stronger sense of I. The individual and specific responses are listed below.

(Sara 41) Yeah. I guess what makes me more confident in myself is this is what I want to do when I'm older, so maybe I can make a difference and make them all in charge of their I’s.

(Tara 45) It made me value that I had that ability to.

(Tara 46) Well it's so hard to watch these kids not being able to ... What am I trying to say, be able to do it. I value the fact that I am able to do it.

(Tara 47) I would say just really appreciate it. I'm trying to elaborate on this and I don't really know how. But it just was really eye opening, and it really did make me just value and appreciate the fact that I'm able to define my own beliefs.

(Janet 63) I think so, yeah maybe. I think I had a good sense coming in, but I think maybe now I have a different outlook on my sense of "I", a better outlook that I can relate to others more than what I initially thought, and that even with children with disabilities, I can somehow find a way to relate to them in some way, because they're all different, they all have different disabilities, I can still find a way to somehow relate, which helps create a better sense of "I" for me.
(Amy 37) Yeah, I kind of feel like, I know I do choose my own path and I feel strongly that I do do that. But I feel like it makes me realize I need to take advantage of it more, I guess, and really appreciate that I can.

(Amy 38) I think I need to take even more advantage of being able to do that. Like, even for instance, I don't know what I want to do with my career, but knowing that I do have options to determine what I do want to do, I think I need to take full advantage of that and actively look for something I want to do instead of just whatever falls into my lap.

(Cindy 42) Yeah, because I have a voice and I can actually speak and say what I believe. So yeah.

(Cindy 43) Just because I am able to say it, and I'm able to speak my mind.

(Beth 64) Now knowing, I think when I came here, I mean I know my answer was pretty much I'm in control. I mean that's still true, I know I am, but it really just opens your eyes up, like completely, that some people don't even have like the slightest control.

(Beth 65) I mean yeah, for sure. I wasn't even really thinking about the other side, but like when you were asking me earlier in the year, like yes personally I am, but I guess knowing that some people aren't makes you feel more confident.

**Inter-cultural maturity.** The sixth theme focused on the interview participants’ inter-cultural maturity and their perceptions of their abilities to be sensitive to other’s needs. The answers were consistent and largely indicated an increased sense of sensitivity due to this service learning experience. The individual and specific answers are below.

(Sara 42) Yes, definitely more sensitive.
(Sara 43) I mentioned this in the beginning. I'd never really been around students with
disabilities, so I kind of not assumed, but I just thought all the disabilities are kind of
similar, they all just have a slower learning schedule. When really, it's completely
individualized and completely different. So I guess being around this has helped me to
kind of realize and be more sensitive to the fact that I might be able to help you this way,
but I can't help him that way, too. Everyone's different. You just need to accept
everyone's different position.

(Sara 44) I don't think you need to treat anyone ... I don't know how to word this. I'm not
just going to not baby them, but be super like, almost speak down to them just because
they do have disabilities. But definitely more sensitive to if they say hi to me, of course
saying hi back and being very friendly. If anything at all, if there's a situation with any
sort of conflict with anyone, I would 100% be sensitive enough to step in and help.

(Tara 48) I do, because I realize now that ... I don't know, I'm trying to figure out how to
say this. I have but I just cannot really describe it.

(Tara 49) Yeah, I do, because I definitely did take away a lot from this. I just feel like ... I
don't know I just feel like I have more patience for people now.

(Janet 64) Yes, it has.

(Janet 65) I think I mentioned from our previous interview that I am a sensitive person. I
mean, that still holds true, but I think being around these individuals has made me almost
stronger, and seeing that everyone goes through hard days and hardships and stuff, but it's
okay, and that everyone does. They almost make you stronger to be sometimes
vulnerable. I think it's definitely made me stronger, but I still have that sensitivity, and I
am sensitive towards other, I do feel sad when people are down or upset, it still affects me, but I think I've learned how to maybe work with that better. When others are upset, I think I've definitely become better at working with it.

(Janet 66) Yeah, and seeing how some of them react in certain ways and cry. It's hard to see that, and it makes me want to be able to see what's wrong, but that's the hard side too is that because they're nonverbal, they can't directly tell you. Yeah, it definitely has increased that for me.

(Amy 39) I'm probably more sensitive now.

(Amy 40) I guess just because I see more of what people go through. And not even just the disability aspect of it, but just working in Appalachia, and seeing that not everybody has the luxuries in life that I've been presented with. So I think it makes me sensitive in that aspect, too.

(Cindy 44) Yeah, I think it has. Just being able to see what they go through, and being a part of all of that. I know they have their outbursts and stuff like that, but being able to be calm and realize why it is happening. So being sensitive towards their feelings, and what you say, and what you do, and how you react to it.

(Cindy 45) I'd be sensitive. I'd go up to them, and be like, "What can I help you with? Are you lost?" Just being able to have that communication with them, but also being sensitive, because they're in a surrounding that they may not know.

(Beth 66) Completely. I feel like there's different ways of thinking of sensitivity …

(Beth 67) Right, and for this, for this service learning here, I would say that there's just, there's different ways to approach different situations and to be sensitive may not mean
like emotional. It could be just be more understanding to what they're going through. I think that understanding and sensitivity kind of go hand-in-hand.

(Beth 68) Yeah, I couldn't see it going the other way really.

(Beth 69) Obviously if I saw somebody on the street it wouldn't intimidate me anymore. I would definitely be more sensitive to that and to the fact that whatever they're doing may not be completely their fault or whatever.

(Beth 70) Yes. Just opening your mind to, because we're all used to one way of living and coming here and seeing that not everyone's the same, really does open right up your understanding.

Goals. The seventh theme focused on the stated pre-service goals and if students felt they accomplished their goals during the course of their service learning experience. Everyone felt they achieved their stated goal (with one exception regarding the use of sign language). The individual and specific responses are listed below.

(Sara 45) Yeah. I definitely feel that I've accomplished all those.

(Sara 46) I guess going back to the last one, being able to be more sensitive and more understanding of all the different disabilities and the different ways that they need help and they need teaching.

(Sara 47) That's definitely just made me a better person, because I can identify that now. And I can, going back to the last one, have the skills to help with that now. So that's definitely helped.
(Sara 48) Absolutely. Especially, one of the large insights is that everyone, I've mentioned this multiple times already, every disability is different even if it's the same disability. Your autism isn't the same as that autism.

(Sara 49) I mean, I knew obviously there's a spectrum and things, I just, I guess I never really thought about all of the disabilities and how honestly different they could be. Because I've just never seen it. But the insight on that is definitely going to help me if I'm working in an environment like this again. Because I'll know, even if I've worked with this population before, it's not going to be the same.

(Sara 50) I would consider myself a patient person. I've definitely gained some more patience, because I've never really been even in a classroom setting because I'm not an education major. But when we'll do crafts or something, it's like, okay, you've got to glue this, and they're going like ... I just want to grab their glue stick and make it. But I'm like no, let them do it.

(Tara 50) Yes. I would say prior to starting this whole thing I was kind of immature in the sense of I just didn't really know. I didn't really know how to act or if I was going to be weird. I matured in the sense of I am able to communicate with these kids now, and I know what to do ... I don't know, I've matured. I know what to do if someone is freaking out, how to keep them calm.

(Tara 51) Yes, yeah, I'm more comfortable and able to fit in with people with developmental disabilities.

(Tara 52) I was like, "I 100% feel confident that I would be able to communicate." But I wasn't able to say that before, but I mean absolutely 100% now I am.
(Tara 53) I’m very proud of myself.

(Tara 54) I'm just proud of myself that I was able to make it the whole semester and not freak out or anything like that. There was situations that got uncomfortable.

(Tara 55) I mean yeah, it was weird, you know. I just stuck to it, and I ended up absolutely loving it. At first I was a little bit overwhelmed, you know what I mean? I was able to just stick it out, and I'm just proud of myself in that sense, and now I'm proud that I can say that I did this, and I can connect with it.

(Janet 67) I think I accomplished almost all of them. The only one is the sign language, we do incorporate some sign language, but it's bare minimum, I think, of what's out there. I don't notice the kids using it that much to where I think I need to know it, or most of it for this classroom, but I did some learn some simple words that I think are beneficial to know. I actually did, I'm trying to take a sign language course next semester, so I hope that will further what I've learned.

(Janet 68) I think I learned how to engage with them, or a better understanding. I think because every disability is different, there are different ways to engage with them, but I think with the classroom I was in, it was definitely a learning experience for me to be able to put myself out there and engage with them for six hours out of the day.

(Janet 69) Exactly, I mean when I first came here, I didn't know how to engage with them, but now being with them, I've learned, I think how they react to certain things and how they like to engage. I think that that was huge for me to be able to understand that for each individual here.

(Amy 41) Yes.
(Amy 42) Because, yeah I feel like I'm just more rounded now. Like I would, before I think I would be intimidated if somebody with disabilities and I wouldn't know how to properly interact with them.

(Amy) I am probably more sensitive now.

(Cindy 46) I think I have, yes.

(Cindy 47) Yeah, it has, and it's made me want to work with people with disabilities versus when I first came in, not knowing a lot. And I feel like I see a lot of people with disabilities, out and about, and I really don't think about it, or I guess acknowledge them before hand.

(Cindy 48) Yeah, I'm more aware, yeah.

(Beth 71) I definitely think I have accomplished all three of those.

(Beth 72) For comfortability, in the beginning, not even just with the disability part, but just being able to tell, because you don't know exactly your place when you get here. Like you don't know what you can and can't do, so I guess getting comfortable with being like a person in charge, not that I'm in charge, I'm just helping, but being able to punish them when they do something wrong and let them know what's wrong and what's right. I think in that way I've become more comfortable. Definitely with the disability portion of it.

(Beth 73) Oh yeah, completely. I don't look at them any different than I would from my typical students.

(Beth 74) I do. I'm already a really sensitive person. I think I'm definitely.
(Beth 75) Just seeing like certain, like [student] for instance. Like how she's so, gets so distraught like when her Papa drops her off and it just makes me sensitive to the fact that, I don't know exactly how to say it, but I think my, just my understanding and, like knowing she, I don't know how to say this.

(Beth 76) I don't know how to say it. Yes, my sensitivity has increased just from being around them.

(Beth 77) Obviously if I saw somebody on the street it wouldn't intimidate me anymore. I would definitely be more sensitive to that and to the fact that whatever they're doing may not be completely their fault or whatever.

(Beth 78) Yes. Just opening your mind to, because we're all used to one way of living and coming here and seeing that not everyone's the same, really does open right up your understanding.

**Student take away from the experience.** The eighth theme focused on what students felt they would take away from their service learning experiences. There were a wide range of answers, but all stated they could see themselves working with children with disabilities after this experience. The individual and specific responses are listed below.

(Sara 51) It's really made me I'd say appreciate working with them. I think it's really unpredictable, but I like that because it's boring if you do the same thing every day.

(Sara 52) And it's definitely, after being here, an environment I'd be interested in working in in the future.
(Sara 53) So I always knew that I was someone who could work with children, wanted to work with children. But I never knew myself as someone who would feel confident working with children with disabilities. But now I definitely think that's affected that. I can say now confidently, yeah, I would love to work with children with disabilities. I feel OK doing that. I'm not nervous about that.

(Sara 54) Well, it's definitely made me interested in working in an environment like this. I would totally be happy working with kids with disabilities, which is good because before I started this, I was like, do I want to work at a school, or a hospital, or who knows what? But this is a nice thing to know that I would be happy doing this. So anything else, I could always look for something like this.

(Tara 56) Oh my gosh, yeah. Well first of all, thank you for allowing me to come. I absolutely love it. Yeah, I'm working with the young adults.

(Tara 57) I love it, it makes me feel really good. I actually ended up fitting in really well with them. The students are all very much accepted me, and so did the teachers and the aides. It was really good, I felt really comfortable. I learned a lot, I mean learned a lot about myself and the students.

(Tara 58) I would love to. I tell my mom all the time, I mean I highly recommend it.

(Tara 59) I'm so actually just beyond thrilled that I did as compared to some of the other sites.

(Tara 60) The stuff I do here really ended up turning into my own personal career objectives in the future. Like I said, I want to help people and work in the community and
give back, just know that I made a difference in someone's life. That's kind of the stuff that I'm looking for.

(Tara 61) It made me want to work with kids. I have never worked with kids in anything other than volunteering in high school cheerleading coach. I never really felt like this would be something for me, and I really do think it is. I just really ended up connecting with these kids, and like I said, they are my friends.

(Tara 62) Yeah, I have to give a presentation on this too, an overall presentation. One of the things is like, "Would you recommend this?" I absolutely would recommend it. Like I said, this had nothing to do with what I wanted to do. I knew I kind of wanted to work with kids, but I just didn't ... I love kids obviously, but it really just put into perspective what I think I'd like to do. I would recommend this to people.

(Tara 63) I just feel like I learned so much from it.

(Janet 70) Well, being placed here, I've been able to see firsthand how children with disabilities learn, and kind of like what their daily routine is at school. I had gone through a public school with children with disabilities, but I didn't get to see firsthand as much as I have here, so that was an awesome experience to see. Talking with some of my teachers, I've gotten to hear how they've grown since the beginning of the year and even last year, so that's interesting to see how they've grown as well. I've gotten to take away just how smart they are, and how they learn in different ways, but that's okay, and how unique each of them are.

(Janet 71) Yeah, so it's unique to see too how the peers interact with the children with disabilities, how they play together. That also was neat to take away.
(Janet 72) I don't think I really questioned myself coming into this, it kind of just maybe broadened my idea of individuals, because I have I think a better idea for individuals with disabilities. Not that I didn't before, but it kind of just reaffirmed that for me, that they are like everyone else, even though they do have a disability, I think they are just as much like everyone else. It definitely showed me that I'm more understanding to those individuals, and that I do enjoy being around them so much ...

(Janet 73) Coming into my field placement, I was hoping that I'd be able to get a sense of maybe what job I want in the future, because I knew I wanted to work with children, and I could eliminate being a teacher and stuff like that, but I didn't know exactly what I wanted to do. Now, I think I have a good sense of saying I would like to work with children with disabilities in the future, and hopefully pursue a job with that. I think that being here has been a huge factor in that, because I've enjoyed it so much.

(Janet 74) I've had an awesome experience here, and I think that's kind of pushing me towards going in that direction, so hopefully I can.

(Janet 75) It's definitely been very changing for me in a good way, that it's kind of leading me towards maybe a future. That's exciting to think about, so yeah, I've had a great experience and I'm glad I was able to help you.

(Amy 43) I've enjoyed, in general, just interacting with the kids. But also, I feel like it's taught me that the students are just like everybody else. They just need more guidance and help to do daily things that just come so easy to us.

(Amy 44) Well, like I said, I think it's affected my sensitivity levels. And in the future, like I said before, just about Appalachia in general, I feel like ... I even talk about it with
my mom all the time, I feel like I want to just give back to the community more. Not even as a job, but just like by being a good person, like offering what I can to people, either with disabilities, or just people in Appalachia in general.

(Amy 45) Yeah, but I feel like it's kind of guided me even if it's not with disabilities in particular. Just kids in general, maybe kids in poorer areas. I would like to work with people with disabilities, I don't know, right off the bat, but in the future I would like to, even if I'm just volunteering somewhere on the side.

(Amy 46) It was just overall really good, like eye-opening experience and I'm definitely glad I did it.

(Amy 47) I feel like I would have never known half the things that I've gained out of this if I wasn't having hands-on experience.

(Cindy 49) It's been very eye opening. My brother, he has behavior issues himself, but being in the classroom, most of them do tell, and it's just the same behavior issues. But they're awesome to.

(Cindy 50) It's a good learning experience to see what each one goes through and how the teachers handle it. A lot of them have been very opening, and I know a lot of them can't speak, but it's that communication and the touches and stuff like that.

(Cindy 51) Yeah, definitely. Because eventually I mean, if nursing doesn't go the path that I want it to, I would always want to work with kids with developmental disabilities. Or taking nursing and then using it with that.

(Cindy 52) Just the experiences that I've had with the children, and being able to see what they go through. That's really it, just the connections.
(Cindy 53) Professionally, yeah, wanting to work with people with disabilities.

(Cindy 54) Yeah, definitely, yeah. Just being able to talk about. You have to do a presentation next week, so kind of the struggles that they go through. And then, just even being a part of, feeling a part of the community.

(Beth 79) My understanding to different groups has definitely broadened and my empathy has increased. Sensitivity increased. I think it'll, it's definitely made me a better person and more understanding to the different circumstances people might be going through. I think, I mean that's had nothing but positive, for sure. Yeah.

(Beth 80) I mean I personally had a great time. I could see myself definitely working with children. I have no issues with working with developmentally disabled, I don't know how that would fit in with my degree, but it would be something fun to do for sure.

(Beth 81) No. Not at all. It's turned me towards it actually.

(Beth 82) I think my understanding has changed, like completely.

(Beth 83) I guess coming into it I didn't really know what, I mean I knew I would learn, but I didn't know what exactly I would learn. I guess I learned to be patient, that's probably the key word I've learned.

(Beth 84) It's just made me grateful. It's been a great experience.

**Student Themes: Clustering, Thematizing, and Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents**

According to Moustakas (1994), steps three and four of the modified version of the van Kaam method of analysis include clustering and thematizing of the invariant constituents, and final identification of the invariant constituents and themes. These steps
help to validate the findings and themes. Imaginative variation was employed to help explore all possible meanings of the data through the use of imagination and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives. Also, a critical peer was employed to help validate the findings and relevant themes. The identified themes and final invariant constituents are depicted in tables 1 and 2. See Table 1 for pre-service themes and Table 2 for post-service themes.

Table 1
Themes and Descriptions of Students’ Lived Experiences Regarding Service Learning: Pre-Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Prospect of working with individuals with developmental disabilities make you feel** | Nervous  
   Excited  
   Good/great opportunity  
   Learning experience  
   Fulfilling |
| **Experience with DD** | No, none  
   Family friend, family member  
   Volunteer at school  
   Limited |
| **If you have past experience working with individuals with DD, how did it make you feel** | Grateful  
   Happy  
   Fortunate  
   Compassion  
   Sorry/feelings of guilt  
   Difficult |
| **Hope to gain from this experience** | Communication skills  
   Greater understanding  
   Become a better person  
   Become more comfortable around others  
   Change how I look at others  
   Become more mature  
   Become more appreciative |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of developmental disabilities</th>
<th>Learning abilities of person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive issue</td>
<td>Have trouble learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not a typical person</td>
<td>Someone who has challenges</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Identity Development                     | I am comfortable            |
|                                         | I am confident              |
|                                         | I fit in/I feel the same    |
|                                         | I am happy                  |
|                                         | I am satisfied              |
|                                         | I am equal                  |

| Self-authorship                          | I am comfortable            |
|                                         | I am confident              |
|                                         | My parents allowed me to be who I wanted |
|                                         | I have control over I how react |
|                                         | I am mature                 |
|                                         | I am responsible            |
|                                         | Yes, I am in charge         |

| Inter-cultural maturity                  | I am open                   |
|                                         | I am sensitive              |
|                                         | I am accepting              |
|                                         | I am emotional              |
|                                         | I am learning from others   |
|                                         | I need to grow              |
|                                         | I am compassionate          |
|                                         | I am empathic               |
|                                         | I am mature                 |
Table 2  
Themes and Descriptions of Students’ Lived Experiences Regarding Service Learning: Post-Service

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Definition of developmental disabilities   | Unique  
Mental  
Physical  
Social  
Not negative  
Extra push  
No one is normal  
Slower  
Variations  
Challenges  
Different – used in learning, course, track, ways, obstacles, coping |
| Characteristics of the students you worked with | Adorable, funny, entertaining, happy  
Sick, wheelchair, feeding tube  
Non-verbal, talker, communication device  
High energy, runner, hands on  
Different  
Frustrated, upset, irritable  
Autism, hard to pay attention |
| Feelings about the experience               | Great, good  
Love  
Happy, positive, excited  
Right place, supposed to be doing  
Connected, part of something  
Special, opened my eyes,  
Grateful  
Sad |
| Identity development                        | More open to different others  
Opened me to new people  
Makes me feel more part of my community  
Altered my view of community  
I still feel the same  
Broadened my sense of community  
Makes me want to give back to community  
More well rounded  
Want to now impact my community |
Table 2: continued

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-authorship</th>
<th>More confidence in my ability to self-author Made me value that I can Made me value that I am able to Have a different outlook on my sense of I Appreciate the fact that I can define my values Made me realize I should take more advantage Glad I can speak and say what I believe Opens your eyes that some people can’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter-cultural maturity</td>
<td>Yes, definitely more sensitive Helped me realize I need to be more sensitive\ I would be sensitive and help when needed I took a lot away from this experience I have much more patience now Made me stronger while being sensitive I am probably more sensitive now Completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goals obtained</td>
<td>I definitely feel I accomplished Made me a better person Absolutely Disability is different even if it is the same Gained more patience I have matured More comfortable and able to fit in I am very proud of myself I can say that I did this Not sign language I learned how to engage and understanding I am more well-rounded Want to work with people who have DD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student take away from experiences</td>
<td>I’d be interested in working in the future I would love to work with children with DD Interested in working in an environment I learned a lot about myself and others This is my career objective now I made a difference in someone’s life It made me want to work with kids I would absolutely recommend it Awesome experience Broadened my ideas Very changing for me in a good way Eye opening experience Made me a better person Nothing but positive My understanding has changed completely It made me grateful, great experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Textural-Structural Description Student Interviews

The next step in the analysis included developing a textural-structural description for each student based on his/her interview and original groupings. The textural-structural descriptions were developed using the invariant constituents and themes by invoking imaginative variation. This section represents steps five, six, and seven in the modified van Kaam method of phenomenological data analysis. Each section contains an individual textural-structural description from both his/her pre-service and post-service interview data.

Sara pre-service. Sara’s pre-service interview was conducted on Wednesday, February 1, 2017 at 9:30am. She initially described herself as friendly and outgoing, an assessment with which the researcher would agree. She was very at ease and forthcoming as the interview began and progressed. When asked why she selected this school program to perform her service-learning project, without hesitation she stated,

"When I was reading through the packet of possible places, this appealed most to me. I have a cousin who actually has autism. I wanted to work with children with disabilities. It's something I've not really done before, so I wanted to expand my experience and challenge myself, because I really haven't worked in an environment like this before."

Sara also indicated that this site selection would be able to give her professional experience that would be helpful in her later career path, stating that “once I graduate, this is the type of environment I'd like to be in.” Sara was also quick to talk about how the upcoming service experience was making her feel, saying that she didn’t exactly
know what to expect. Her nervousness stemmed from the fact that Sara was unclear what her role in the classroom would be stating “I don't know if one of the kids sitting in the class started running around, I wasn't sure if I was allowed to let him run around or something” and “I didn't want to cross over any boundaries or not help enough.” Sara used the term “nervous” multiple times throughout the interview.

Sara’s definition of developmental disabilities centered on someone who is required to learn in a different way, stating, “Kids with developmental disabilities, they can learn just as much. They just need different methods of it.” She did say multiple times, that even though they were required to learn in a different way, they were in her view “human.” Sara talked about her experience with individuals with disabilities was limited. She spoke of her cousin who has autism, but is “low on the spectrum” and that her cousin was one of the driving factors on why she selected this site to work. Sara described her feelings about her cousin as “I just feel happy when I’m around him” and “it makes me feel good that he can have the same opportunities as anyone else.” She also used the terms “cute” and the “greatest” to describe her cousin.

In terms of identity development, Sara described herself as confident and that she is comfortable with where she is in her life at this point. She freely described herself as “a leader.” Despite this assertion, she followed that up stating, “I am not sure that I always am” and that she changed her major several times trying to find where she fit it. In regards to self-authorship, she indicated that she was her own life’s author and that she has gotten much better at this as she entered college as a pharmacy major because that is what her parents wanted for her. She stated,
That was because my parents really kind of pushed that on me. They wanted me to be that. Then I think the reason I changed so much was because I wasn't in charge. Now I am, and now I'm happy with my major. Yeah, so I don't think I was before, but I am now.

In terms of her inter-cultural maturity and level of sensitivity and openness to others, Sara offered very firmly, “Completely open. I could talk to anybody. I think everybody, we're all human. We all deserve chances at everything. Yeah, I'm definitely a very open person to anybody.”

Sara was able to clearly articulate her goal for her service experience stating she would receive more insight into the world by engaging in this service learning experience at the school program. She offered, “I think just as a person, with that insight and with all the skills that I'll gain on working with them, I think I'll just be a better person in general to work with anyone.” Sara also indicated that she was “intrigued” by the prospect of this experience and that she felt it would be a “great opportunity.”

**Sara post-service.** Sara’s post-service interview was held on Wednesday, March 29, at 11:30am. As in her pre-service interview, Sara was extremely pleasant and forthcoming. She was very engaging. She started the interview by expressing her appreciation for being at this site and talking about how much she has enjoyed her experience. When asked, after her experience, how she would define developmental disability she indicated that it was just “a different track of life” and that you “can live with it and succeed”. She also offered that it wasn’t a “negative thing” and that someone with a disability just needs an “extra push” sometimes.
Sara clearly demonstrated that she was familiar with the students when asked to describe their characteristics. She offered:

They're ages eight through 12. And, I never worked with students with disabilities before. Characteristics. They're all funny. I think they're all very entertaining, they keep me laughing. Sometimes, when I started, I didn't know if I was allowed to laugh at what they did or not, because I didn't know if they were supposed to be working on something. But, they're all just, you know that they want to learn. They ask questions all the time. I love when I walk in and they're like, what are you doing today? Where are you going later? Why do you do that? Why that?

She also indicated that several of them were non-verbal and that they often just need an extra push or extra reinforcement. She also offered that she was drawn to the boys in the classroom but that she wasn’t sure why that was. When asked how the students made her feel, she offered that they make her feel happy, good, excited, like she was in “the right place”, “doing what I am supposed to do” and that she “had found the right thing.”

When asked about how this experience has affected her identity development or her place in the community, she indicated that this experience has made her more aware of her place in society and that it made her more aware of her ability to help others. She also indicated that this experience made her feel “fortunate” to have grown up as she did. When asked about self-authorship, she indicated that this experience made her feel more confident in herself, and that this experience affirmed for her that she would like to do this kind of work in her career. This experience also helped her be more sensitive to
others in need as she indicated “Everyone is different. You just need to accept everyone’s different position”.

When asked about goals, she felt she accomplished her goals of being more sensitive and having more insight into individuals with developmental disabilities. She also felt she was a better person because she could “identify” now with others less fortunate than her. In regard to what she would be taking away from this experience, she indicated she gained more patience, confidence, and the affirmation that she wanted to work in this field as a career. One other take away Sara offered was that she learned every child with a disability is different. She realized that even children with the same diagnosis such as autism were different stating, “Every single kid in my classroom completely needs different things to calm themselves down, different things to stimulate themselves, just, it's a whole different world. Definitely, something that's opened my eyes.”

**Tara pre-service.** Tara’s pre-service interview was conducted at 12:30pm on Wednesday, February 1, 2017. Tara began by describing herself as a very kind girl and that she cared a lot about others. She described her upcoming service learning experience as a “very cool opportunity.” When asked why she selected the school as a program site she indicated,

This was actually my first choice and I was really, really thrilled that I got it. I'm going to be working with children with disabilities. This is something I've never done before so that's why I was really intrigued by it and I thought it was just going to be a great opportunity.
Describing how she felt about working with individuals with disabilities, she used the word “nervous” multiple times. She indicated she was “nervous about what the teachers would be asking of me” and “nervous to work with children with disabilities.”

Tara was only able to discuss one past experience she had with individuals with disabilities. She described her friend and neighbor having a brother who had autism. He was several years older than her and indicated he was treated “completely normal” and “was a really good kid.” She also said he attended sporting events and the high school prom. When asked about how this experience made her feel, Tara indicated it made her feel happy to be around him. She explained, “I don't want this to come off in the wrong way, but [I feel] almost like privileged a little bit.” When asked about this further she indicated that she felt sorry for him because of his struggle to communicate.

Tara felt very comfortable with her identity and her place in it. She stated her home community “is a lot like me” and that “we are all the same kind of person.” She offered that her identity and surroundings at this time “just make sense.” In terms of self-authorship, while Tara was able to say that she was confident with setting her own direction, she stated that “I am sure there are definitely things that I could do to strengthen my self-control, myself, my I” indicating there is always room to grow. Tara did state that she is “extremely sensitive” to others and that she “tries to hear people out and I sympathize for others.” She explained that even walking into the school for her service experience on her first day she felt sensitive towards the students she met.

As far as her goals for the service learning experience, Tara was able to express quite a few. She felt the experience would be a “big growing up” process for herself.
She also indicated she felt this experience would allow her to “accept others and understand people differently”, to be able to be more “sensitive to others”, to have better “listening and communication skills”, and to “make me a stronger person, more comfortable with myself.” Tara also stated that she hoped she could get an overall good feeling of worth or appreciation from the experience.

**Tara post-service.** Tara’s post-service interview was held on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 12pm. Tara was very engaging and extremely forthcoming. She did not indicate any hesitation in talking. When asked her definition of a developmental disability, she offered “someone who does not perform on the same level” and they “operate at a slower level.” Tara then described the characteristics of the students she worked with and their age range. Tara went through all of the students in her classroom and gave brief descriptions of each of them such as “intelligent”, “can read and write”, “just needs a little help”, “non-verbal”, and “hard time communicating.” She offered well thought-out descriptions indicating a true knowledge of the students.

When asked how the experiences made her feel, Tara discussed how good it was, stating, “They know my name and like you saw, we were hanging out, we do fun stuff. I don't know, it made me feel good working with them. Yeah, I don't know, it just made me feel good.” She also stated:

It makes me feel good in the sense that they are able to recognize who I am and remember me. I didn't think they were going to be able to remember me. I'm only here two times a week, I just kind of thought I was almost going to be just like we
said earlier, just someone standing in the back observing. But I just feel like they are my friends.

When prompted regarding identity development and her thoughts regarding her place in the community, Tara offered this experience altered her view on the community and she feels her role in the community has now changed. For self-authorship, Tara stated this experience with students who have developmental disabilities has caused her to “value that I have the ability to.” She said it was hard to watch people not have control over their lives and it “really made me appreciate and value the fact that I am able to define my own beliefs.” Tara also indicated this experience has significantly increased her level of sensitivity towards others and that she now has “more patience for people now.”

When asked about her pre-service goals, she stated she was much more comfortable and able to fit in around people with developmental disabilities. She also indicated, “I matured in the sense of I am able to communicate with these kids now, and I know what to do ... I don't know, I've matured.” She was very proud of herself and what she was able to do during the semester. In regard to what she would take with her from this experience, Tara stated it had changed her career objectives and now she would be exploring a career in this field. She stated:

I absolutely would recommend it. Like I said, this had nothing to do with what I wanted to do. I knew I kind of wanted to work with kids, but I just didn't ... I love kids obviously, but it really just put into perspective what I think I'd like to do. I would recommend this to people.
Tara also indicated that she learned a lot about herself during the semester. She was “thrilled” to have selected this site and offered multiple times that she would recommend it to anyone who asked.

**Janet pre-service.** Janet’s pre-service interview was conducted on Wednesday, February 1 at 1:30pm. Janet was extremely engaged and eager to share her feelings. Her personality certainly came across as being “very friendly” and “liking to try new things” which is how she described herself. When asked why she selected this school site for her experience she was quick to say because she was “excited and makes me feel good knowing that I'm engaging with these individuals who I feel like have a lot to offer.” She continued that she was excited to learn from the students and used the word “fulfilling” several times saying, “that's really fulfilling knowing that I'm able to work with individuals with disabilities.” She added that she was nervous when she found out some of the students were non-verbal.

When asked to define what developmental disabilities meant to her, Janet stated she had taken a “special ed” class which enabled her to know the difference between “typical” and “atypical.” When asked about that, she replied, “No one is normal. It's not right to say someone has disabilities and then someone else is normal.” She also stated “Someone that has disabilities, I think they are unique to themselves, and they may not be typical. They may be atypical, and that's fine.” Janet indicated this would be her first structured experience working with individuals with developmental disabilities. She has a cousin, who she described as having an “IEP.” Janet used to be close with her, but not much anymore because she moved away years ago. When asked how the experiences
with her cousin made her feel, Janet replied several times that it made her feel good and that “It made me feel good knowing that she feels good as well.”

When describing how she felt about her identity, Janet was very clear that she was confident with it. She stated, “I accept me for who I am with my race, gender, and ethnic background” and because of that acceptance, she felt “I think because I'm comfortable with that, it makes me love who I am.” Janet repeatedly stated that she felt good and comfortable with her identity. When asked about being the author of her life, Janet replied that her parents never put any pressure on her to be someone else. She indicated the support from her parents allowed her and her sisters to “be who we are, and I think that's also why I'm so comfortable with myself and my belief, my identity, and my social relations because I chose them. They weren't forced upon me.” She also described herself as “very sensitive to others” and that if “I see someone hurt, I instantly feel bad and want to help.” Janet indicated that she was concerned because she was so sensitive that she could get “emotionally attached to them” referring to the students she would be working with during her time at the school.

In regard to her stated goals for her experience at the school, Janet said she was looking forward to the learning experience ahead of her. She was looking forward to “having her eyes opened” towards people with developmental disabilities and understanding these “individuals.” She also stated she felt she would gain an understanding of engaging with people with disabilities and this experience “gives me the opportunity to be able to engage with almost anyone then.” She stated that by watching people with disabilities go through hard times would “make her stronger.”
**Janet post-service.** Janet’s post-service interview was conducted on Wednesday, March 29, 2017 at 10 am. Janet was eager to share her experiences during the semester and was pleased with her time at the school. She offered:

Well, being placed here, I've been able to see firsthand how children with disabilities learn, and kind of like what their daily routine is at school. I had gone through a public school with children with disabilities, but I didn't get to see firsthand as much as I have here, so that was an awesome experience to see.

When asked her definition of developmental disabilities she offered, “Everyone is different and no one’s normal.” She felt a disability could be mental, physical, or social and that she was lucky to have gotten to work with all types during the semester. When asked to describe the characteristics of the children she worked with she stated she had been in the pre-school room so they were from “3 to 5 years old” in a very fast-paced room and things were always changing quickly. She said several children “had” autism, one really liked music, and that several really “like hugs.” She also described one young man as a “runner” and that the class had to keep a very close eye on him.

When asked about how this experience made her feel, Janet offered:

It feels great. I haven't had this much experience before, and so seeing how much time I have to engage with them is awesome, and it makes me feel good that they, even though they can't fully tell me that they want to play with me or engage with me, they still show me that. I think that's awesome to have that one-on-one time with them.
Janet also stated that she wanted to have as much exposure as possible with the students, and that it made her feel good “knowing that they wanted to engage with me as well.”

When asked about identity development and her place within the community, Janet was clear this experience “semi-broadened my sense of community” because she didn’t have experience with people with developmental disabilities before adding that “it made me a more well-rounded by now knowing individuals in the community.” According to Janet, the experience also “gave me a better sense of the community” because “they are in my community and I think it is important to know that.” In regard to self-authorship, Janet stated she had a good sense of her “I” coming into the experience, but that by having this experience, her “I” was strengthened and she had a better sense of it because she “could relate to others better than I thought I could.” When asked about her level of sensitivity, Janet offered that while she was a sensitive person coming into this experience, it made her much more sensitive and even stronger and more vulnerable at the same time.

When asked about her goals for the semester, Janet indicated she met them all, with the exception of sign language. Although the use of sign language was at a minimum, she did get to experience several communication devices. She learned how to engage well with people who have disabilities and that it was “huge for me to be able to understand the individuals here.” She also felt this experience broadened her thoughts and ideas about people with disabilities. As far as for what she would take away from this experience, Janet stated:
Now, I think I have a good sense of saying I would like to work with children with disabilities in the future, and hopefully pursue a job with that. I think that being here has been a huge factor in that, because I've enjoyed it so much. Janet was also very gracious for her experience thanking the school many times for letting her be there, adding that her experience had been “very changing for me in a good way and that it is kind of leading me towards to a future.”

**Amy pre-service.** Amy’s pre-service interview was held on Monday, February 6, 2017 at 10am. Amy described herself as easy going, open-minded, and friendly. This was certainly the case, as she was the most at ease of all participants in this study. She described herself as nervous because she had no interactions with people with disabilities. She went to a small, private high school and “they didn’t have any programs for people like that.” She was concerned with how she would be interacting with the students, suggesting, “I didn’t want to feel like I was belittling anybody with the way I would be talking to them.” She was also concerned about being asked to do something that she had never done. Amy defined a developmental disability as a “cognitive issue” and that “they have trouble learning, understanding how to act in situations.”

When was asked if she had any prior experience with individuals with disabilities, Amy responded very quickly that she had not. She continued by saying how this would be such an eye-opening experience for her and humbling because it would allow her to realize “how lucky I am for my family and me.” She also felt this experience would allow her to see “how maybe things I don't even think twice about that are super easy for
me, might not be for them.” She expressed how this experience may allow her to see things that she takes for granted now.

When asked about her identity, Amy responded she felt she fit in well. She felt everyone should be equal in the world and that “I don't really compare myself to others in that aspect because I just view everyone as equals so I guess I'm happy with my place in society because I don't favor one side or the other.” She also felt fortunate with how she was raised by her parents, and that they did a very good job adding, “My values … they align right.” In regards to self-authorship, she relayed that while you can’t control everything that happens to you, you can control how you react, stating “I do believe that I am in control.” Amy explained that while she sometimes struggles understanding others, she is a “very sensitive person.” And indicated, “I feel strongly for other people, their emotions. If they're going through something, I feel like I take it upon myself. I almost put their emotions on me too.”

Amy outlined her goal for the service learning experience is to gain a better understanding of someone who has disabilities and “probably increase my sensitivity to others and listening and learning from others too. I think I could definitely learn from them.” She stated she felt this experience would “make me a better person” and give her the skills to interact with someone who has disabilities in the community, as opposed to being “standoffish” because she didn’t have the skills previously. She stated, “This experience is going to teach me how to interact with people with disabilities so maybe if I saw someone in public, I would feel comfortable being open to going and talking to them.” She finished by saying she felt this experience would also give her some insight
into the lives and experiences of people with disabilities and that she was grateful for that.

**Amy post-service.** Amy’s post-service interview was held on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 9 am. As with her pre-service interview, Amy was very relaxed and engaging. She was very thankful for the opportunity to have worked with students with developmental disabilities. When asked how she would define developmental disabilities after her service experience, she stated, “I would say, someone with either a mental or physical or both, delay.” She was clearly able to describe the characteristics of the students she worked with detailing one student who used a wheelchair, one student who used a feeding tube, one girl who does not speak, and one little boy who she described as “high energy.” She said the ages of the students she worked with ranged from four to seven years old. She also described the class as having a hard time paying attention and sometimes a bit “irritable.”

When asked how her experiences made her feel, Amy said she was intrigued by her experience, “It intrigues me, because it's just like, every student is different, like with what calms them down.” She described being happy to have worked with the students and at no point did she find herself intimidated or nervous. When asked about her identity development and if it was impacted, she was clear “yeah, I feel like I am more rounded now” to have had these experiences. She offered she was more confident regarding her place in her community to have this experience. When discussing self-authorship, Amy indicated she was a strong self-author but that this experience opened her eyes and made her “realize that I need to take advantage of it more” after seeing
students who could not author their own lives. Amy indicated this experience increased her sensitivity towards others by seeing first-hand what others go through and offered, “Not everybody has the luxuries in life that I've been presented with. So, I think it makes me sensitive.”

Amy felt she had accomplished the goals she had set out to accomplish at the beginning of the semester. She stated, “It's taught me that the students are just like everybody else.” She was clear about what she was taking away from the experience.

I feel like I want to just give back to the community more. Not even as a job, but just like by being a good person, like offering what I can to people, either with disabilities, or just people in Appalachia in general.”

She also offered she could see herself working with individuals who have disabilities in the future as a career choice. She stated, “It was just overall really good, like eye-opening experience and I'm definitely glad I did it.”

**Cindy pre-service.** Cindy’s pre-service interview was conducted on Monday, February 6, 2017 at 11am. When asked why she selected this location she indicated it was because she loves being a part of children’s lives. “Just being a part of their life, and giving me that opportunity to grow, and giving me that experience that I can take out into the community.” She described the opportunity to work at the school program as making her feel “good, great.” When defining developmental disabilities, she offered that it was challenges or obstacles that are in place for certain individuals. Cindy said that individuals with disabilities “have to overcome those” and that they have to “adapt and
finding different ways that help them learn or interact.” She also indicated that developmental disabilities could be physical as well.

Cindy offered that her brother has “ADD” and that he has an “IEP” at school. She described him as being able to “do a lot of things” but that she has watched him struggle, indicating, “It's difficult, but you have to be down on his level and understand that he doesn't get it the way that I do. Just like there are things that I don't get the way he gets it. So, it's just breaking it down.” She said that she could teach her brother something, and that he could completely forget it five minutes later. When asked how this experience makes her feel, she indicated “grateful that I don’t have some of those difficulties” and offered that when she was young, she had a lot of ear infections which made reading difficult for her. This experience allowed her to ‘understand where he was coming from.’

When asked about her identity, she was very quick to respond stating, “I feel comfortable with, you know, being a woman.” She also offered “I mean, I know who I am. I am fine with everything.” She indicated that she is able to confront any situation being a female and not be judged by that. Cindy indicated that she is able to communicate with just about everyone, and very comfortable having conversations with everyone while standing up for what she believes. She responded just as strongly when asked about being the author of her life by affirming, “yes, I am in control of it”. She then described herself as consistent, confident, and never changing her beliefs to fit someone else, but that she could change how she views something. Cindy explained, “I am a very sensitive person” and “I am always going to be a sensitive person, I am always
going to be compassionate and caring and try to understand.” She also offered, “I also try to fix the problem or look at it from a different perspective…not judging, honestly.”

Some of her goals for the semester would be to make her more open-minded, more appreciative, not as judgmental, and that it would help her fit in. “It will give me the opportunity to get on their level, and to understand the things that they go through, especially if I'm going through them with them.” She explained she does not have a lot of experience with people who are in “poverty” and thought this experience would help her “understanding of just what they go through on a daily basis.” She hoped this experience would change what was inside her, because she is capable of doing things that the students aren’t and hoped this would make her grateful.

**Cindy post-service.** Cindy’s post-service interview was held on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 10 am. Cindy began by offering her definition of developmental disabilities.

I think it's just challenges and obstacles that they face on a daily basis. They could have the minor issues versus major issues of not being able to do things by themselves. But it makes them special. It's a whole different view of life. That's kind of how I would define it.

Cindy reported working with the older students, seventeen and eighteen year-olds who had mental, physical, and social challenges. She was particularly interested in one young man who could not speak, but used a “talker.” While this student could not talk, Cindy said he used “hand signs” and made noises along with his “talker” to communicate.

When asked how these experiences made her feel, she offered “sad, but it also makes me feel grateful, that I'm able to be a part of all of it, and see what they go through
every single day.” Cindy talked about her brother who has ADD and how this helped her be grateful that his disabilities were not as severe as the students with whom she worked. When prompted about identity development and her place in the community, Cindy believes this experience helped her feel accepted more into the community and “makes me feel a part of it.” When asked if this experience increased her self-authorship ability she stated, “Yeah, because I have a voice and I can actually speak and say what I believe” referring to the students who can’t speak for themselves. Cindy also felt strongly this experience increased her sensitivity levels. “Yeah, I think it has. Just being able to see what they go through, and being a part of all of that.”

Cindy stated she reached her goals for the semester “and it's made me want to work with people with disabilities versus when I first came in, not knowing a lot.” She said the experiences were invaluable, “being able to see what they go through” and she now has a strong desire to work in this area professionally. She used the term “eye opening” and a “good learning experience” multiple times throughout the interview.

**Beth pre-service.** Beth’s pre-service interview was held Monday, February 6, 2017 at noon. Beth was the most reserved and least forthcoming with her answers of all interview participants. When asked why she selected this school program to do her service learning experience, she stated she had done “something” in high school with developmentally disabled children and this experience made her want to come. She also stated that she liked working with preschoolers. When asked how the prospect of working with students who have developmental disabilities made her feel, she indicated that “it doesn’t make me uncomfortable” and “I know some people – it takes a certain
person to work with them, so it doesn’t make me uncomfortable.” Although she wasn’t nervous about working with the students, she was a little nervous because she wanted everyone to like her, but that overall she wasn’t uncomfortable or scared, just excited.

When asked if she had any direct experience, Beth again mentioned “the one thing when I was in high school.” When pressed further, she offered that she worked with two different students making art and craft items and she was “fine” with the experience. Additionally, her mom’s friend had a sister who was approximately forty years old who has autism. The friend was around a lot when she was young and was “the funniest person I ever met” and “we love it when she comes around.” When asked how these experiences made her feel, Beth said “I don’t want to say lucky, but…” and “you feel fortunate and kind of sad for them.” Beth said, “it makes me sad in general that people aren’t…everyone’s not so lucky” indicating the experiences made her feel compassion and able to help however she could.

In terms of identity development, Beth is comfortable and believes every experience she has helps build her as a person. She described herself as “fitting in” looking forward to this experience because she felt it would help her identity because it would “give me a different view of the world and how I look at it.” For self-authorship, Beth was very clear she believed she was in control of her life and gave examples such as “everyone has decisions to make”, “I'm definitely in control of my body, so I feel like, for consequences and stuff like that, I never get too beat up about it because I did it to myself”, and “If I get a bad grade on a test, it's probably because I didn't study enough. I don't really blame outside sources for that.” She also said that if you are mature, “you
can own up to your own mistakes.” As far as inter-cultural maturity and being sensitive, Beth felt she was sensitive indicating, “I will say that I am a pretty sensitive person” and would always be open to “trying to understand or look at things differently.” She also stated that she was very empathic and “that was just how she was raised.”

When asked about goals for the semester service learning experience, Beth felt this experience would make her more comfortable with children and young adults. She believed the experience would make her more understanding, sensitive, and raise her level of empathy. She summed it up by stating “be comfortable in all situations because I feel like this is something that not everyone is used to and a lot of people are uncomfortable in this type of situation, so I just want to be able to be a whole person.”

**Beth post-service.** Beth’s post-service interview was held on Tuesday, March 28, 2017 at 12 pm. While Beth was very reserved and not forthcoming during her pre-service interview, she was much more relaxed, outgoing, and engaging during the post-service interview. She began by offering that her perspective on people with disabilities had changed saying, “I think my understanding has changed, like completely.” She offered that she learned a tremendous amount of patience and understanding.

When asked her definition of developmental disabilities she offered that it could be mental, physical, or even social, adding that she worked with one boy who had social issues such as being shy and having problems with the other kids. When asked about the students’ characteristics, she described one boy with social issues, one boy who was a “runner”, one girl who needed help with eating, one girl who had separation anxiety, and one girl who couldn’t talk at all. When asked how working with these students made her
feel, Beth responded “It made me feel great. I've volunteered before, but not with this type of community, so like going home I would tell my roommates about it. Like right away, like my special moment of the day. Kind of brag about it almost because it's fun.” She also stated that it made her feel “worthy” and that she felt she now had a “new door opened. It makes me feel good.”

When asked about identity development and her place in the community, Beth offered, “as a member of society, my experience here has opened up a new way of seeing things by being more open to different ways of living and people.” In regard to self-authorship, Beth stated that even before she came to this experience she felt in control of her life, but this experience really did “open her eyes” to individuals who have no control. She added “knowing that some people aren’t makes you feel more confident.” When asked about sensitivity, Beth responded that she was a sensitive person, but this experience increased her understanding which in turn increased her level of sensitivity to people with disabilities.

Beth was confident she reached her goals, felt extremely comfortable now being around people who are different, and had a new level of empathy for individuals with disabilities. When asked what she would take away from this experience, Beth offered:

My understanding to different groups has definitely broadened and my empathy has increased. Sensitivity increased. I think it'll, it's definitely made me a better person and more understanding to the different circumstances people might be going through. I think, I mean that's had nothing but positive, for sure.
Beth added she had a great time and could see herself working with children and could “definitely work with the developmentally disabled.”

Composite Thematic Textural-Structural Descriptions: Students Combined Pre-service and Post-service

The final level of analysis of the participants’ interview data, according to the van Kaam method of analysis, was to do a composite description of the students’ experiences as a group. This composite thematic textural-structural description of the combined pre- and post-service interviews as a group, focuses on their perceived meanings and experiences during the service learning experience. The composite thematic textural-structural descriptions are described in the following sections.

Overall experience. The overall perceived experience for all six participants was very similar. The six participants expressed varying degrees of hope, nervousness, excitement, and enthusiasm in the pre-service interview. There were no students expressing any major reservations or fear about the experience. In the post-service interview, when asked how the experience made the participant feel about themselves, all students were consistent in describing feeling good, love, happiness, and gratefulness. Several students described feelings of “being in the right place” and that the experience made them feel “connected” or “part of something special” regarding their service at the school. Although the overall theme was positive, there was one participant, Cindy, who expressed sadness. She indicated she had feelings of guilt and sadness for the challenges faced by the students she worked with at the school.
Defining disability. When asked about how they would define developmental disabilities, the overall theme did not change much from the pre-service to the post-service interview, but participants were able to articulate their thoughts much more clearly in the post-service interview. In the pre-service interview responses were consistent centering around “someone who has challenges,” “someone who may have trouble learning,” or “not a typical person.” When asked to define developmental disability during the post-service interview, the participants articulated their understandings much more clearly and offered descriptions to support their definitions. They used terms such as “unique,” “social,” “mental,” “physical,” “challenges,” “variations,” and needing an “extra push.” During the post-service interviews, participants were much freer and open with their thoughts and use their experiences from the semester to help them define developmental disability.

Identity development. In terms of identity development, at the start of the semester, all participants indicated they felt good about their place in the community. They described feeling “comfortable” and “confident” when describing how they “fit in” and as being a part of their community. At the end of the semester, many expressed a heightened sense of community. They described a new feeling of “belonging” to the community or an understanding of their “place” in the community. They described having their sense of community “broadened” and “altered” to such a degree that they wanted to give back more. They indicated a desire to positively impact their community more than in the past. The interviewees described being more “open” to people who were different from them and feelings of being more “well rounded.”
**Author of one’s own life.** At the start of the semester, when asked about their ability to author their own lives, all interviewees indicated they were free thinkers and could make their own decisions. All suggested they were indeed in charge of their “I”s stating they were “in charge,” “I have control over how I act,” “my parents allowed me to be who I wanted to be,” and “I am responsible.” At the end of the semester, it was intriguing that the interviewees noted they had a different outlook on their sense of “I” because they spent time with individuals with disabilities who were not always in charge of their “I’s.” Post-service comments include: “made me value that I am in charge of me,” “appreciate the fact that I can define my path,” “made me realize I should take more advantage of defining my own path,” and “opened my eyes that some people can’t or aren’t in charge of themselves.”

**Inter-cultural maturity.** During the pre-service interview, all participants were asked about their level of inter-cultural maturity (specifically their sensitivity to others). All participants described themselves as being “sensitive,” “open to others,” “accepting,” “compassionate,” or “empathic” to others in need. Despite all indicated they were sensitive in the pre-service interviews, all stated that their level of sensitivity to others (especially others in need) had increased dramatically during the service experience. Several even noted that while the experience made them more sensitive, it made them stronger as well. Participants reported gaining empathy, sensitivity, strength, and even more patience towards others during their time with individuals with disabilities.

**Goal achievement.** In the pre-service interview, participants were asked about their goals for the semester. The answers were consistent and centered on being “more
mature,” “gaining experience with others not like me,” “understanding people with disabilities,” and “increasing communication skills.” During the post-service interview, the responses were overwhelmingly positive with regard to meeting their goals. Participants focused on feelings of accomplishment, being a better person, gaining patience, maturing, being more well-rounded and understanding people with developmental disabilities. Only one student (Janet) indicated that while she accomplished most of her goals, she was disappointed that she did not get to experience any sign language during her time.

**Overall impact.** In the post-service interview, participants were asked what they gained from this experience or how the experience affected them. Many stated they now have a strong desire to work with individuals with disabilities in the future (while they may not have wanted to before the experience). Several indicated they would like to make a career change to include people who are in need. Many noted how this experience affected their lives and how good it felt to “make a difference to somebody,” “broadened their ideas,” “very changing for me in a good way,” “eye opening,” and “made me a better person.” Responses also included what a “great experience” this was and how it made them more “grateful.” All respondents stated they were happy with their selection of this school to do their service and they would strongly recommend it to others in the future.

**Summary**

This chapter focused on the organization, analysis, and synthesis of the data gathered as described in Chapter Three. Analysis was accomplished using a modified
version of the van Kaam method for analyzing phenomenological data offered by Moustakas (1994). The research data outlined in this chapter will be used as the foundation for the findings and recommendations that will follow in Chapter Five.
Chapter Five: Outcomes and Implications

This chapter represents the outcomes of this research study and examines the implications of the research findings in regards to practice, policy, preparation, and future research. The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the lived experiences of college students who chose to participate in service learning experiences with individuals who have developmental disabilities. This was done by conducting pre-service interviews and post-service interviews with six individuals who engaged in a service learning experience at a school which serves individuals with developmental disabilities. This research explored the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled?

2. How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perception of their identity development, self-authorship, and inter-cultural maturity?

Outcomes

The outcomes presented below were developed using the methods outlined in Chapters Three and Four including the analysis of the phenomenological data using the modification of the van Kaam method of data analysis offered by Moustakas (1994). The outcomes are presented in response to the original research questions and are listed below using the themes that emerged during the analysis of the collected data.

Question 1: What is the nature of the impact of service learning on college students with individuals who are developmentally disabled?
The definition of service learning used for this study is experiential learning (in an academic setting) in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning (Jacoby, 1996). The nature of the impact this service learning experience had on the students who participated was consistent across the six participants. Participants reported a very positive experience that could be described as transformational. Without being prompted regarding transformation, the students offered that this experience was “life changing,” “my understanding has changed completely,” and “very changing for me in a good way.” These transformational descriptions would support the findings by Jones et al. (2005) that service learning can have transformational qualities on the students who participate.

The student experiences also included consistent responses regarding increased learning during the service experience. These responses included statements such as, “I learned disability is different even if it is the same diagnosis,” “I learned how to engage and how to understand,” “I learned a lot about myself,” and “this broadened my understanding of disabilities.” These findings support research indicating that service learning has long been an accepted way of increasing student learning (Ilustre, et al, 2002).

The results of the interviews regarding the student experiences also found that students reported an increase in their knowledge and skills to handle advanced social problems. Their responses indicated “more confidence in my ability,” “gained more patience to handle issues,” and “made me more open to others.” These consistent
findings strongly support the research that service learning can help students develop knowledge, skills, and cognitive capacities to deal effectively with complex social issues and problems (Hurd, 2006).

The findings from this study indicated strongly that students participating in this service learning experience were also impacted regarding how they felt about themselves and their place in the community. The students reported the experience “opened me to new people,” “altered my view of the community,” “broadened my sense of the community,” “makes me want to give back to my community,” and “I want to impact my community.” These findings support the research that service-learning courses often change the way traditional college-age students feel about themselves, their communities, and their place in their community (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996).

During the pre-service interview, students reported they did not have experience working with people with developmental disabilities. This supported the research of Eyler and Giles (1999) who found that service learning often gives students a first chance to work alongside of someone quite different than themselves. The findings of this study also supported the findings of Henry (2005) that most service learning is designed for students of privilege serving people of need. The students reported they were serving people who were “non-verbal,” “different,” “slower,” and “hands on.” This clearly supports that the students felt they were serving people who were in need or underprivileged. This service learning experience also allowed for students to discover that the people they were serving weren’t that different from themselves and allowed them to have a growing appreciation of others as indicated by Eyler and Giles (2005).
This was affirmed by responses like “happy,” “great,” “opened my eyes,” “love,” and “positive.” The students also indicated an increased comfort and satisfaction in working with people with disabilities over the course of the semester which strongly supports the findings of Alexander (2015).

The students also indicated they were impacted in two areas, oppression and disablism, that could be understood as negative towards the individuals with disabilities with whom they were working. Oppression is defined as attitudes, behaviors, and pervasive and systematic arrangements by which members of one social group are exploited while members of another group are granted privileges (Evans et al., 2010). This exploitation can come from one group of students using service learning to gain insight into another (often lessor) group of people. There were responses indicating the students were impacted both positively and negatively by the insights they received into the lives of people with developmental disabilities. Disablism is a set of assumptions that promote the unfair or unequal treatment of people with disabilities. Gent and Gurecka (2001) offer that service learning can lead students to see people with disabilities as child-like, broken, or having a poor quality of life. There were statements made by the students in this study which would indicate they were impacted in this way. Statements included that the students with disabilities were “sick,” “entertaining,” “irritable,” “feel sorry for them,” “guilty,” and “sad.” While unintended, I do see a small level of disablism coming from this service learning experience that was present in how the students described the ways they were impacted.
Question 2: How does a service-learning experience with individuals who are developmentally disabled potentially affect students’ perception of their identity development, self-authorship, and inter-cultural maturity?

Identity development. Identity development is defined as the process of becoming comfortable with one’s race, gender, ethnic background, place in community, and sexual orientation (Chickering & Riesser, 1993). For the purpose of this study, the effects on the student’s understanding of their “place in the community” was examined. The results clearly demonstrated that students who engaged in this service learning experience had their understanding of their “place in the community” impacted in a substantial way. All interview participants reported changes in how they viewed themselves as a result of this experience. Comments included “makes me feel more apart of the community,” “altered my view of the community,” “makes me want to give back to the community,” and “makes me want to impact my community more.”

These results support the findings of Alexander (2015) who indicated that students participating in service learning with individuals with disabilities learned more about themselves, developed confidence, clarified their values, and realized their own capacity to give, and developed patience and compassion. The results of this study also support the findings of Jacoby (1996) who reported the importance of students being aware that they are middle class and how their privileges affect their identity in regard to comprehending social issues when interacting with community members of a different class. Finally, Chickering and Reisser (1993) noted that identity development is one of the core issues that students grapple with during their college years. The results of this
study clearly indicate that students enrolling in a service learning class can further their identity development by engaging with individuals with developmental disabilities.

**Self-authorship.** Self-authorship is defined as the recognition that what happens in the world and in one’s life is often beyond one’s control, however reactions are within one’s control and having the internal capacity to be able to define one’s beliefs, identity, social relations (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Renn & Reason, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the ability to have control over one’s life and to author one’s own path was examined in the theme of self-authorship. The results of this study were consistent with previous studies that demonstrated a link between service learning and the ability to develop self-authorship. As demonstrated by Jones et al., (2005) service learning can provide an excellent opportunity to promote student development towards self-authorship. Pizzolato (2005) offered that intentionally created crossroads (intersections that can challenge a student’s worldview) are helpful in developing self-authorship. Using transformative learning, such as service learning, can often lead to developing self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2009b; Chickering & Reiser, 1993). The results of this study largely supported these findings and the themes from students centered on “more confidence in my ability to self-author.”

One interesting finding noted in this study was the recognition by the college students participating in this service learning experience that many of the students with disabilities they worked with often do not have the full capacity to be their own self-authors. While this could be interpreted as a slight case of oppression (Evans et al., 2010) or disablism (Gent & Gurecka, 2001), this researcher did not view or interpret the
responses in that fashion. Rather, it was viewed as an awareness on the part of the college students, about how fortunate they are to be able to fully author their lives after experiencing the reality that some students may not fully be able to do so. Participant comments ranged from “made me value that I am able to,” “appreciate the fact that I can define my I,” “opened my eyes that some people can’t,” “made me realize that I should take more advantage of my I,” and “I now have a different outlook on my sense of I.”

**Inter-cultural maturity**: Inter-cultural maturity is defined as a process of maturing that evolves in students, given appropriate experiences, and involves a range of attributes including cognitive (understanding), interpersonal (sensitivity to others), and intrapersonal (listen and learning from others) (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the intrapersonal aspect (being more sensitive to others) was examined in regard to inter-cultural maturity. The results of this study strongly supported the findings in previous studies. According to Evans et al. (2010), educators can influence and promote intercultural maturity with service learning because it exposes students to others unlike themselves so they can begin to develop and enhance their intercultural maturity. The interview participants relayed ideas such as “yes, definitely made me more sensitive,” “I have much more patience now,” “I will be stronger and more sensitive now,” “broadened my ideas,” and “my understanding has changed completely.” All of these responses contributed to the finding that this service experience did increase the level of inter-cultural maturity for the participants.
Implications

Policy. The wide-ranging and big picture policy ramifications from this short-term phenomenological study are limited. I would suggest that if universities are going to offer or require service-learning courses in their curriculum, that they enact policies surrounding the practice of service learning. The policies should address the ethical concerns that may arise from oppression and having students serve populations that are in need. The policies would need to address the preparation of students, support for the students during the experience, followed by the proper reflection activities at the end of the experience to allow the students to have a quality educational experience without unnecessarily taking advantage of or profiting from a lower class for educational gain (Henry, 2005). The policies should also address what issues of preparation and responsibility the hosting agency should undertake.

Practice and preparation. Service learning, as a practice, is heralded as a pedagogical strategy with transformative potential (Jones, et al, 2005). Engagement with the local community has been demonstrated to benefit one’s personal conceptualizations of self, others, and societal issues. Involving college students in service learning has long been viewed as a way to help increase learning, student satisfaction, and student retention (Ilustre, et al, 2002). Service learning with individuals with disabilities led participating students to learn more about themselves, develop confidence, clarify their values, and realize their own capacity to give, and develop patience and compassion. Students also can increase their understanding of the importance of future community connections, increase their competence and efficacy, develop leadership roles, believe they could bring
about change and become civically responsible (Alexander, 2015). The results of this study support these findings.

For practitioners, this study highlights the positive experiences that can come from a service experience with individuals with disabilities. Educational administrators should continue to foster and develop service-learning classes that allow students to engage with individuals who have disabilities. This engagement can lead to increased learning opportunities and experiences that will benefit students in regard to their own personal development.

Practitioners must also be aware of the potential negative issues that can arise from designing service learning classes. Educational administrators must be aware that oppression and disablism can be encountered even with a well-intended and designed service learning course. Because of these two issues, both of which were present in this study, it is critical that practitioners provide an adequate level of training to the students before the service experience, support to participating students as the experience occurs, and an appropriate level of reflection for the students after completion so practitioners can confront the issues of oppression and disablism as they occur.

Practitioners and hosting agencies should work together to develop policies and procedures that help address the positive and negative outcomes from a service-learning class that engages with individuals with disabilities. This should include both preparation and debriefing. This could include a reading list of materials that address issues of oppression, disablism, abilities versus deficits thinking, self-determination, and person-centered planning for individuals with disabilities. An inclusive student orientation
should also be undertaken by hosting agencies done in consult with the faculty responsible for the service-learning class. These practice and preparatory steps could help reduce the instances of oppression and disablism in service-learning classes with individuals with disabilities.

**Future research.** In terms of suggested future research regarding service learning with individuals who are developmentally disabled and the impact it has on students, I would strongly recommend that the appropriate resources be committed. Additional research should be conducted on a broader scale regarding all aspects of the effects service learning with individuals who are developmentally disabled have on the participants. From this small, phenomenological study, it is clear that additional research could be undertaken regarding four areas: oppression, disablism, community awareness, and the impact on self-authorship that service learning has on students. For both oppression and disablism, there were small indications found during this study that students may have experienced these issues. Both of these areas could use further exploration to allow students to understand and prepare for the experience of providing service to individuals who have disabilities. Primarily with disablism, future research could be undertaken to allow faculty to prepare students through a thoughtful dialogue to allow service learning with individuals with disabilities to be a vehicle that strengthens all parties involved as suggested by Gent and Gurecka (2001). Regarding oppression, as detailed by Evans et al. (2010), additional research could be conducted to understand the level of oppression experienced by students engaging with individuals with
developmental disabilities to help determine possible ways to help students cope with, understand, and grow from their experience.

Regarding the impact service learning with individuals with disabilities has on a student’s increased community awareness, I feel this is an area that can be studied more thoroughly. The results clearly demonstrated that students who engaged in this service learning experience had their understanding of their “place in the community” impacted in a substantial way, making the students feel more a part of the community, altered their view of the community, made them want to give back to the community, and made them want to impact their community more. A comparative analysis that would examine the impact of increased desire to contribute to the community between students engaging with individuals with disabilities and students engaging with another population of people in need at the same time and for the same duration could be helpful. Also a longer term longitudinal study may also be helpful to measure if the impact on the students and their increased desire to contribute to their community is just a short term spike or if it has long term implications.

Regarding the area of the impact service learning with individuals with disabilities has on self-authorship, I strongly feel there should be additional research in this area. The results of this study were similar and supported others in regards to allowing the participants to increase their ability to author their “I”s (Baxter Magolda, 2009a; Chickering & Reiser, 1993; Jones et al., 2005; Pizzolato, 2005; Renn & Reason, 2013). In addition, this study also demonstrated that participants were strongly impacted by working with individuals with disabilities who may not have full control over their
“I”s. By witnessing people who could not control or fully author their own lives, the participants demonstrated this caused them to more fully appreciate the fact that they can. I find this conclusion to be worthy of further study on a larger scale. A longer term longitudinal study may also be helpful to measure if the impact on the students and their increased appreciation of their “I”s is short-term or a long-term, more meaningful impact. A comparative analysis that would examine the effect on self-authorship between students engaging with individuals with disabilities and students engaging with another population of people in need could clarify the impact of increasing appreciation by students for self-authorship.

**Summary**

Outcomes from this phenomenological research study indicate an overall positive experience for the study participants. The participants reported a transformational experience, an increase in learning, an increase in ability to address social problems, a better understanding of people with developmental disabilities, an increase in identity development, an increase in inter-cultural maturity, and an increase in self-authorship abilities. The negative issues of oppression and disablism were also indicated by the study participants in limited amounts. The outcomes from this study were the result of the meaningful perceptions and self-understanding of the students.
References


retrieved March 30, 2014.


Frolow, M. (2010). *Determinants of a professor’s decision to include service-learning in an academic class*. Seton Hall University.


Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 5126.01. County Boards of Developmental Disabilities Definitions.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 5126.02. County Boards of Developmental Disabilities Required.

Ohio Revised Code (ORC) Section 5126.05. County Boards of Developmental Disabilities Powers and Duties.


*New directions in civic engagement: University Avenue meets Main Street.*

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

<table>
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<th>Project Number</th>
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<tr>
<td>Committee:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Compliance Contact:</td>
<td>Shelly Rex (<a href="mailto:rexs@ohio.edu">rexs@ohio.edu</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Investigator:</td>
<td>Kevin Davis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Title:</td>
<td>An Exploration of the Impact Service Learning has on Students who Engage with Individuals with Disabilities: A Phenomenological Study</td>
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<td>Level of Review:</td>
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The Ohio University Office of Research Compliance reviewed and approved by exempt review the above referenced research. The Office of Research Compliance was able to provide exempt approval under 45 CFR 46.101(b) because the research meets the applicability criteria and one or more categories of research eligible for exempt review, as indicated below.

IRB Approval: 01/31/2017 10:51:16 AM

Review Category: 1

If applicable, informed consent (and HIPAA research authorization) must be obtained from subjects or their legally authorized representatives and documented prior to research involvement. In addition, FERPA, PPRA, and other authorizations must be obtained, if needed. The IRB-approved consent form and process must be used. Any changes in the research (e.g., recruitment procedures, advertisements, enrollment numbers, etc.) or informed consent process must be approved by the IRB before they are implemented (except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects).

It is the responsibility of all investigators and research staff to promptly report to the Office of Research Compliance / IRB any serious, unexpected and related adverse and potential unanticipated problems involving risks to subjects or others.

This approval is issued under the Ohio University OHRP Federalwide Assurance #00000095. Please feel free to contact the Office of Research Compliance staff contact listed above with any questions or concerns.
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Guide – Pre-Service Questions

1. Please describe yourself in your own words.

2. (Demographic information on data sheet - age, gender, major, college status).

3. What class are you here fulfilling the requirements for? Why did you enroll in a service-learning class?

4. Please describe what service project you will be participating in and what location you will be engaging.

5. How does the potential of working with people with disabilities make you feel?

6. How do you define disabilities?

7. Have you had any direct service experiences with students or individuals with disabilities or any family/personal experience?
   a. If so, describe your experiences.
      i. How did these experiences make you feel about yourself
      ii. How did these make you feel about the person with whom you were working?
   b. If not, how do you think these experiences will make you feel about yourself and the person with whom you are working?

8. Identity development –
   a. Please describe the way you view yourself as a student, and as a member of society at large?
   b. How do you perceive that you fit in?

a. How confident do you feel in defining your beliefs and identity in regards to society as whole? “are you in charge of your “I”? Please describe.

10. Inter-cultural maturity –

a. How would you describe your level of sensitivity to others? Please provide an example.

11. What impact do you feel that your upcoming service-learning opportunity with individuals with developmental disabilities will have on the following:

a. How you view yourself as a student, and as a member of society at large?

b. How you perceive that you fit in?

c. How you describe your level of sensitivity to others?

d. How confident you feel in defining your beliefs and identity in regards to society as whole? How “in charge you are of your “I””?

12. What is your main goal for this service experience?
Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide – End of Service Questions

1. What did you take away from your service-learning class?

2. How do you define disabilities?
   a. Has it changed based on your service learning experience?
   b. Please describe.

3. What was your experience like with interacting with others (peers, faculty, students)?

4. What population or group of people were you “serving”? Describe their characteristics.

5. How did the people you were serving respond to you?

6. What did it mean to you to be the student server helping individuals with disabilities?

7. To what extent did you identify with the group you were serving?
   a. How did it make you feel to “share” characteristics with the served?

Based on your service describe how the service experience affected:

8. Identity development –
   a. How you describe the way you view yourself as a student, and as a member of society at large?

   a. How confident you feel in defining your beliefs and identity in regards to society as whole? “are you in charge of your “I”?”

10. Inter-cultural maturity –
a. How you describe your level of sensitivity to others?

11. At the beginning of your service, your main stated goal for the service-learning experience was…
   a. In what ways do you feel you accomplished this goal?
   b. In what ways do you feel you were unable to accomplish this goal?

12. How did your service experience affect who you knew yourself to be and who you want to be in the future?
Appendix D: Ohio University Adult Consent Form with Signature

Title of Research: An Exploration of the Impact Service Learning has on Students who Engage with Individuals with Developmental Disabilities: A Phenomenological Study

Researchers: Kevin Davis and Charles Lowery (advisor)

You are being asked to participate in research. For you to be able to decide whether you want to participate in this project, you should understand what the project is about, as well as the possible risks and benefits in order to make an informed decision. This process is known as informed consent. This form describes the purpose, procedures, possible benefits, and risks. It also explains how your personal information will be used and protected. Once you have read this form and your questions about the study are answered, you will be asked to sign it. This will allow your participation in this study. You should receive a copy of this document to take with you.

Explanation of Study

This study is being done to examine the experiences of students who participate in service learning with individuals who are developmentally disabled.

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in two face to face interviews lasting approximately one hour. There may be the possibility of a follow-up interview (could be by phone, or in person) if needed. You do not have to participate and you can withdraw at any time. The interview will be audio recorded. This and all data will be destroyed by August of 2017.

Risks and Discomforts

No risks or discomforts are anticipated

Benefits

This study has the potential to help educational administrators, college faculty, community leaders, and the community agencies who engage college students in service with developmentally disabled individuals to better understand the experience and develop supports to help the college student through the process of engaging in service and reflecting after.

You may not benefit, personally by participating in this study.
Confidentiality and Records

Your study information will be kept confidential by securing the data in a locked office, cabinet, the computers used will be password protected, and the data will be destroyed approximately by August 2017.

Additionally, while every effort will be made to keep your study-related information confidential, there may be circumstances where this information must be shared with:
* Federal agencies, for example the Office of Human Research Protections, whose responsibility is to protect human subjects in research;
* Representatives of Ohio University (OU), including the Institutional Review Board, a committee that oversees the research at OU;

Compensation

No compensation will be provided.

Contact Information

If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact the investigator Kevin Davis, 740-603-3521, kd417005@ohio.edu or the advisor Charles Lowery, lowery@ohio.edu.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Chris Hayhow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University, (740)593-0664 or hayhow@ohio.edu.

By signing below, you are agreeing that:
* you have read this consent form (or it has been read to you) and have been given the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered;
* you have been informed of potential risks and they have been explained to your satisfaction;
* you understand Ohio University has no funds set aside for any injuries you might receive as a result of participating in this study;
* you are 18 years of age or older;
* your participation in this research is completely voluntary;
* you may leave the study at any time; if you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.