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## Managing Students as Volunteers: Community Organizations' Perspectives of Service-Learning Placements

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**Managing Students as Volunteers:  
Community Organizations' Perspectives of Service-Learning Placements**

**By  
Bradley Wolfe**

**This Dissertation is Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for  
the Educational Doctorate Degree  
in Educational Leadership**

**Minnesota State University, Mankato  
Mankato, Minnesota**

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**This dissertation has been examined and approved.**

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### **Abstract**

This qualitative study examines how students are managed as volunteers in community organizations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eleven professionals in Southern Minnesota who oversee student-volunteers as a part of their position. The research covers the roles of student-volunteers in community organizations, the community benefits of student labor, and the management models used for supervising students. The results demonstrate different models used to manage students as volunteer, which vary by the depth of the volunteer commitment. Under all models, the sample of participants attested to an overall benefit of students as volunteers in their respective organizations.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Background of the Problem

Schools have a special status in American society where “the relations of education to the public are different from those of any other professional work” (Dewey, 1909, p. 2). Educators provide leadership through their expertise in the field of teaching, but the expertise is not viewed in a silo separate from the rest of public life. John Dewey, an educational philosopher of the early twentieth century, understood educational leadership reaches beyond the school day through its connections to the wider community. The relation between schools and the public allows for each group to influence each other along these connecting lines. The current research will examine one of these associations: the network created when nonprofit agencies host students as volunteers.

Nonprofit organizations often collaborate with educational institutions because students are perceived to have “knowledge, resources, and opportunity to engage with [the nonprofit’s work] effectively” (Mitchell, 2017, p. 36). This sentiment is accurate in some ways, but it ignores the difference in cultures between schools and nonprofits. Each partner “generates knowledges and solves problems” in different ways (Bringle & Hatrcher, 2002, p. 506). Further, educators, especially in higher education, are used to being experts in their fields. This reality has caused some scholars to critique the relationships between nonprofits and educational institutions as devaluing the existing knowledge in the local community (Mitchell, 2017). The building of new research about these relationships allows for opportunity to envision new models for nonprofits and educators to use in creating their service opportunities for students.

The focus on experiential education opportunities for students to put their skills and knowledge into practice is a change from traditional academics. Education traditionally has been a method of imparting information from the instructor and materials to the students who are passive participants in the learning process. The new model being researched allows students to be at the center of the learning process which takes place through real world experiences (Dewey, 1938:2015; Munter, 2002). The real-world experiences are integrated into the academic course outcomes. Researchers have often found additional civic and personal outcomes for students which can be attained through integrated experiences in the community (Felten & Clayton, 2011). The changing pedagogy has created new opportunities for educational leaders to analyze the purpose and meaning of education.

When looking at the academic perspective in how students serve with nonprofit agencies, the term service-learning is used to describe the teaching method which “link[s] community service with academic concepts by placing students with local... nonprofit agencies to do community work that can be used to inform and ground their classroom learning” (Mitchell, 2017, p. 36). As Eder (2013) explains in the reference guide *Sociology of Education*:

[Service-learning] differs from other courses in which students are required to volunteer by incorporating reflection on service in light of course readings. This often includes structured or unstructured journal assignments, reflective essays, or in-class reflection. Through these activities students interpret their service for greater understanding much like they would interpret a text (p. 696).

The interconnectedness between the service and learning is necessary to create outcomes which are greater than if a student were to undertake the volunteering or academic studies alone. The combination of activities allows students to apply their classroom knowledge for the benefit of the community while enhancing the quality of their experience and education.

Service-learning is often implemented in one of two ways, which impacts the amount of value provided to the community and cause being served. A charity model of service-learning emphasizes students first in the role of providing time on a community project for people in need. The model has a clear power dynamic between the students with the ivory tower behind them and the disadvantaged people at the bottom rung of society. The alternative social justice or transformative approach uses the educational component of service-learning to analyze the root causes of inequality in partnership with the community being served. Both models focus on the students and the work being done, but frame the relationship very differently (Bertaux, Symthe, & Crable, 2012; Verjee, 2010; Worrall, 2007). Even with the difference, both models often overlook the community organization which either by viewing it as a conduit for the work being conducted or by merging the agency into the concept of community, which eliminates the existing position of power held by the organization over the community.

Models of service-learning need to examine all the relationships being created between students, academic institutions, nonprofit partners, and the community being served. Each has some degree of influence over the other and the research should recognize those connections to maximize the impact of the work being done.

Unfortunately, current research on the nonprofit perspective is limited and remains at a

“relatively superficial level” (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009, p. 5). Stoecker and Tryon (2009) lament the minimal research is created and published to reinforce the assumption that nonprofit partners receive more mission-focused benefit than they put into the partnership. Other research has shown nonprofits receive little benefit to their programs from service-learnings. Instead, a common outcome for hosting students in that role was increased community and campus visibility (Gazley, Littlepage, & Bennett, 2012). In order to have stronger program outcomes for nonprofit partners, supportive relationships need to be established between nonprofits and schools. However, those relationships are hard to establish when less than half of nonprofits hosting student volunteers receive any communication from the supervising faculty (Gazley, Bennett, & Littlepage, 2013).

The lack of communication can lead nonprofit partners to “not distinguish between service learning and community service” (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009, p. 5). Students may volunteer as a part of a class, as a member of a student organization, or as an independent volunteer (Paull, Omari, MacCallum, Young, Walker, Holmes, Haski-Leventhal, & Scott, 2016). While the connection between service and academic coursework is fundamental to academic institutions requiring the service-learning, there is a clear disconnect with how nonprofits perceive the volunteers they work with. Nonprofits with stronger volunteer management capacity are more likely to differentiate between interns and service-learners, with interns receiving more investment of positive management practices (Littlepage, Gazley, & Bennett, 2012). If service-learning is going to be authentically researched from the perspective of nonprofit partners, the research may need to disregard the distinction between students who volunteer within their

organizations for different reasons. This will allow full representation of nonprofits of different sizes who engage with student-volunteers.

Even with progress to be made in terms of the communication between parties, research has shown the relationships created through community-based learning provide benefits to all groups involved. Most of the literature on the subject focuses on the students' academic outcomes and the benefits for the institution (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Some of the broader research on the topic shows service-learning has a positive effect on student learning outcomes (Warren, 2012; Novak, Markey, & Allen, 2007). Students improve their community engagement skills and apply them after graduation (Moely & Ilustre, 2016). The amount of time students spend in a service experience and the variety of service opportunities students undertake are also correlated to stronger institutional outcomes (Coker, Heiser, Taylor, & Book, 2016). Even with a strong benefit to student and institutional goals, academic institutions need to be more thoughtful about producing research with the nonprofit communities in mind.

The issues in service-learning underline the need for reciprocity and collaboration when designing, implementing, and reflecting upon service-learning partnerships. The relationship should focus on the strengths each party brings to the table (Kalles & Ryan, 2015). The current practices of student-volunteer management need to be further studied to see what opportunities exist for service-learning collaboration. An increased commitment from the university can create more valuable service opportunities and long-term success (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Part of that increased commitment needs to come from hearing the voice of the nonprofits in research. The authentic nonprofit perspective can support academic institutions in designing service-learning programs

with proper communication to fit the current needs and realities of the nonprofits being served.

### **Problem Statement**

Previous research has not yet established a model of service-learning which is designed from the nonprofit perspective. Current literature establishes that current service-learning models do not work as well as intended for nonprofit partners. This research will examine what student-volunteering currently looks like in nonprofit organizations with the intention of building a new model of service-learning for volunteer managers and faculty to use together.

### **Purpose of the Research**

The purpose of this study is interview nonprofit professionals on their experience with student-volunteers to create a grounded theory of service-learning from the nonprofit perspective. Ideally, the current research will help align the expectations and outcomes between students, academic institutions, and nonprofit partners. Eleven professionals who manage volunteer as part of their role have been interviewed. The interviews took place via a recorded phone call, then were transcribed, coded and analyzed against existing literature.

### **Research Questions**

The study intended to find out how nonprofit volunteer professionals and their organizations recruit, manage, and conclude relationships with student volunteers. Using organic and thematic questions during the interview process, a grounded theory model has been created and analyzed for how it impacts a new vision of service-learning. To support this process, the research questions are:

- What roles do students volunteer for in community organizations?
- What are the benefits of hosting students as volunteers?
- What management models are used for students in volunteer roles?

### **Significance of Research**

The study may benefit nonprofit organizations by analyzing current volunteer management models or by establishing a new a model of service-learning which works better for their needs. The research fills an existing gap in literature surrounding the nonprofit perspective in community-based learning arrangements. Additional research from the nonprofit perspective may also benefit instructors and students in how they engage with nonprofit partners. The new information may support all stakeholders involved in creating improved outcomes.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

Qualitative research is value-laden by nature. The current study may be limited by the values and biases stemming from the researcher involved (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In the current study, the researcher is a white, gay male. The grounded theory designed from this perspective may cause the analysis and model of service-learning to be more salient for people with a similar background. In order to minimize this effect, the research will be validated by engaging in reflexivity, as is being done now, and by following other validation strategies as described in the methodology section.

The study may also be limited by the professional positionality of the researcher. He comes from a background of both nonprofit and academic work. His academic experiences include teaching undergraduate communication courses with some degree of

service-learning involved. Mostly, he has engaged in charity-based service learning by integrating the volunteerism into his courses through public speaking projects.

The researcher's nonprofit experience includes a decade of work going back to when he was a student engaging in service-learning. He first engaged in service-learning by volunteering with immigrants as part of a Spanish course at a community college. While the use of language was a clear connection between the volunteering and the coursework, there were no clear objectives or guidelines to follow. The work was assessed by the number of hours served to earn credit in the course. He also engaged in a week-long service project sponsored by a state university. The service with a Native American tribe was not connected to a specific course, but was connected to goals of the university. A third service engagement involved earning a scholarship for graduate school for community service, which was connected to a number of hours served with a specific nonprofit organization.

He has used these service opportunities connected to his formal education to develop a career in the nonprofit sector. He has conducted paid nonprofit work in both program and administrative roles. The positions have involved data management, program management, community engagement, and executive leadership. None of the roles directly supervised students for more than an event-based service opportunity. Even so, his experience in the nonprofit sector may build a credible connection with the participants who will be involved in the current research (Berger, 2015). This comfort may encourage participants to share about their experiences more authentically than previous research which "tend to be too focused on existing community partners [and] convenience samples" (Gazley, Littlepage, and Bennett, 2012).

Previous studies have been limited by their focus on nonprofits with existing service learning centers on university campuses or who are otherwise connected with the research institution beforehand. The current research will instead focus on community organizations within a fifteen mile radius of a rural state university. The community organizations engage with college students as volunteers from multiple colleges and high schools. The intentional inclusive of a geographic sample, instead of connecting to a specific educational institution, will fill a gap in literature and limit the study in that the participants may not represent the typical partner for service-learning.

The study will also be limited by the eleven participants. Participants may have similarities from existing near geographically near each other and may have similar views informing their perspectives on working with students. However, delimiting the study to a regional focus will allow the study to have a common thread between the participants utilized. The study will also specifically speak with nonprofit professionals who engage in student-volunteer management as part of their role.

### **Definition of Key Terms**

**Educational institution.** A public or private college, university, or K-12 school operating by enrolling students through formal academic coursework.

**Community organization.** A charitable or government agency with tax exempt status.

**Service-learning.** When a student volunteers with a community group for the direct purpose of fulfilling a requirement of an academic course.

**Student-volunteer:** A person enrolled in formal academic coursework who also donates their time to a community organization. The donated time may or may not be directly related to academic coursework they are undertaking.

**Volunteer management.** The practice of nonprofit professionals overseeing unpaid individuals who contribute to the mission of the nonprofit organization.

## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

While there is limited information on the nonprofit perspective in service-learning (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009), academic literature covers a variety of views including its roots in experiential education. The field has a long history going back to John Dewey's emphasis on practice in learning. Other theorists have built on Dewey's foundation and many new experience-based programs have been popularized starting in the 1960's (Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001; Verjee, 2010).

The programs that have been established use a variety of models and practices in order to achieve success for stakeholders involved. Some academics view these models on a spectrum from charity-based to transformative in nature. This spectrum involves how much input and coordination is received from the nonprofits and community at large (Verjee, 2010). Many of the programs must adjust their work to fit the needs of the students instead of having the university design programs to fit the needs of the community (Bertaux, Smythe, & Crable, 2012). Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Worrall, 2007). One study found over fifty percent of nonprofits wanting to take a greater role in the preparation of service-learning to help this be the case (Gazley et al., 2013). It appears that more service-learning programs are starting to take this approach (Mitchell, 2017; Verjee, 2010).

The benefits of service-learning focus on how much support is given to three distinct stakeholders: the students, the campus, and the community (Gazley et al., 2013). A large portion of service-learning research focuses on the first group, the students. Academics want to ensure service-learning is a sound pedagogical strategy to support

student learning, but also the potential personal, social, and civic outcomes that can come from the practice (Fayter, 2005; Koliba, 2003; Warren, 2012; Verjee, 2010). Academic campuses use service-learning to build links in the community in ways that highlight the knowledge and opportunities they generate (Gazley et al., 2013; Mitchell, 2017).

The community portion of the three-legged stool which is service-learning has only recently gained the attention of scholars (Gazley et al., 2013; Stocker & Tryon, 2009). Literature regularly highlights the importance of students on volunteer pools for communities surrounding campuses of higher education. The nonprofits continue to appreciate the student volunteers, even when empirical research is weak on what if any positive impact the students have on the mission of community organizations (Edwards et al., 2001; Gazley et al., 2012; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). The main issue communities emphasize is the lack of direct communication between faculty and the community-based organizations. Some institutions are fortunate enough to have staff directly overseeing service-learning for the institutions, but even then, the line to faculty overseeing the students' work is often nonexistent (Gazley et al., 2012; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Worrall, 2007).

In order to maximize the use of student volunteers, successful nonprofits invest in some combination of volunteer management strategies. These strategies can vary based on the type of volunteering being done, such as a formal internships, academic service-learning, or general volunteering in the community (Gazley et al., 2012). The projects may be supervised by paid staff or a volunteer from the community. This leadership distinction is apparent in how many nonprofits classify students away from their general

pool of volunteers, even when students may make up a majority of the volunteers (Edwards et al., 2001).

### **History of Service-Learning**

Education has always had a public purpose beyond academic exercises. In the United States, the earliest schools and colleges were built “to prepare religious and civic leaders for colonial communities” (Felten & Clayton, 2011, p. 75). Service-learning as an educational strategy roots back to the early twentieth century with the work of John Dewey. Dewey (1938:2015) was one of the most influential education philosophers in American history. He advocated for education as a combination of theory and practice. His work was reinforced and further developed by other influential educational theorists such as David Kolb and Paulo Freire (Verjee, 2010). In the 1980’s and 1990’s, there was significant growth in service-learning itself with new organizations, journals, and programs to build out service-learning as a pedagogical and practical experience for students (Felton & Clayton; Mitchell, 2017; Verjee, 2010). A growing body of research continues to refine different models of service-learning to connect educational institutions, community organizations, and students into a synergetic triad.

**Contributing theorists.** John Dewey was a proponent of taking content knowledge learned in the classroom and applying it to real life situations. He believed students could and should participate in civil society as a part of their education (Lake, Winterbottom, Ethridge, & Kelly, 2015). Dewey (1938:2015) viewed traditional education of the twentieth century as “essentially static” (p. 19). Education was treated as finite, unchanging information which was decided on by the generations who came before the current students. He did not see the content being connected to either the

present or the future (Dewey). When the content is placed in the present, students can see how they can contribute to society with their knowledge. Civil society continues to change, and students will be the ones influencing the change as adults. Instead of waiting until their education is completed, students should engage in theory and practice concurrently to apply what they are learning (Lake et al., 2015).

Dewey (1938:2015) spent his time considering how the subject matter should be placed within experience. A lecture in a classroom can be considered an experience, but then the content knowledge being learned will be limited to that setting. Dewey believes instructors should develop higher quality experiences related to the content knowledge and based on the needs of the students with whom they are working. The practical application of knowledge will support students in acting intelligently when they encounter new experiences with which they are not yet familiar. In his work *Democracy and Education*, Dewey (1916) asserts the experiences should be age-appropriate as being similar to activities students would naturally engage in outside of the classroom. Young children should play games and, as students grow older, the games should become more similar to occupations available to them upon graduation. In any case, the experiences should have enough flexibility to be personalized for the students involved (Dewey, 1938:2015).

Experiential education has been refined since the time of John Dewey with additional practices and sub-areas, such as service-learning. David Kolb viewed concrete educational experiences as a foundation for observation and reflection. Students can use their experience to make theories of how the world works and apply those theories to new situations (Kalles & Ryan, 2015). As the students continue developing their knowledge

of the world, old constructs are integrated with new experiences through analysis. Kolb viewed this process as one which empowered students to be responsible for their own learning (Whitley, 2014). When learning takes place outside of the classroom, students become accustomed to learning from life experiences, which will follow them beyond their school years (Dewey, 1938:2015).

Paulo Freire went further in empowering students to take hold of their education. His philosophy of education is one in which students and teachers co-create knowledge together (Whitley, 2014). Freire's liberatory education treats students as change agents in their communities. Education is a dynamic process where students recognize the power structures in their community which established the current inequities. Students are to work on transforming the power structures and alleviate their own oppression (Kalles & Ryan, 2015). The social justice approach to this work is utilized in many service-learning models, as they recognize the need for collaboration between the students and the community. Collaboration is the best way to address both the symptoms and causes of inequities (Verjee, 2010).

**Growth of service-learning.** The experiential education theories were informally brought to life through student activism in the 1960's, which transitioned into government and university programs (Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001). Campus Compact, a coalition of colleges committed to the public purposes of higher education, was established in 1985 by the presidents of three east coast universities. Now the program reaches over twelve-thousand college courses with service-learning as a required component (Edwards et al., 2001; Mitchell, 2017). Another national initiative to promote student service in the community was created by the Corporation for National and

Community Service in 1990. The Learn & Serve America program allowed community engagement programs to spread rapidly across the United States (Lake et al., 2015; Mitchell, 2017).

The growth in service-learning led to new research being done on the topic. In 1994, the *Michigan Journal for Community Service Learning* was developed to share peer-reviewed research on the topic (Felton & Clayton, 2011). Zlotkowski (1995) published a critique of service-learning in that same journal about the perception that service-learning was an ideological pedagogy not rooted in academic concerns. Since then, many studies have been published on how service-learning supports academic and many other outcomes for students, educational institutions, and the community (Whitley, 2014).

### **Models of Service-Learning**

As service-learning has derived from experiential education over time, there have been various models used. Each model brings together academic content with community in some form. The various models of student-volunteerism led to the development of standards which service-learning should strive to meet. The recommended practices are not used consistently, even though they have been shown to improve student outcomes (Celio, Durlak, & Allison, 2011; Lake et al., 2015). There also is debate in the literature regarding how some models of service-learning are charity-based and others involve the community in a transformative way (Bertaux, Smythe, & Crable, 2012; Verjee, 2010). Models of service-learning can also vary in terms of how the students engage with the community organization they are serving (Macduff, Netting, & O'Conner, 2009).

**Standards of service-learning.** The National Youth Leadership Council ([NYLC], 2008) developed a set of eight, evidence-based standards that service-learning should follow: (a) meaningful service, (b) link to curriculum, (c) reflection, (d) diversity, (e) youth voice, (f) partnerships, (g) progress monitoring, and (h) duration and intensity.

- **Meaningful service:** As Dewey (1938:2015) explained in founding the field of experiential education, the experiences created need to be meaningful for the people involved. The experiences should be developmentally appropriate and tailored to the specific students in the group. Other theorists have added how students should understand their experiences in terms of the societal context involved (Kalles & Ryan, 2015). The service should also be engaging for students with clear outcomes for the community (NYLC, 2008).
- **Link to curriculum:** The service should be intentionally connected to the course content in order to meet specific learning goals (Lake et al., 2015). The connection allows the course content to be applied in a new setting for participants to transfer knowledge outside of the classroom (Dewey 1938:2015, NYLC, 2008). Service-learning should also be formally recognized by the educational institution in policies and student records (NYLC, 2008).
- **Reflection:** Reflection is one of the most commonly used tools instructors use when designing service-learning in the classroom (Celio et al., 2011). The reflection exercises may be verbal, written, or artistic in nature (NYLC, 2008). The exercises should be structured throughout the term of service with clear learning goals in mind (Conway, Amel, & Gerwien, 2009; Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004). Critical reflection can support students in understanding how

they are positioned in the issues they are serving to alleviate (D’Cruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007). The structure of the reflection should support students in the complexity of civic issues (NYLC, 2008).

- **Diversity:** The new environments and experiences allow students to challenge previously held assumptions about the communities around them (Hatcher et al., 2004). When students can work interdependently with new populations, the students’ prejudice can be reduced (Conner & Erickson, 2017). The interactions can improve students’ “interpersonal skills in conflict resolution and group decision-making” (NYLC, 2008, p. 2).
- **Youth voice:** Students should have some influence in “planning, implementing, and evaluating service-learning experiences” (Lake et al., 2015, p. 97).  
Instructors should create an environment of trust, so students feel free to express their thoughts on the experience. Open dialogue allows students to build their leadership and decision-making skills throughout the experience (NYLC, 2008).
- **Partnerships:** Community organizations should be treated as an equal partner instead of solely a beneficiary of student labor. Experiences can be jointly designed between instructors, students, and community involvement. A line of communication should be available throughout the process to adjust the work being done to maximize the benefit for all people involved (Gazley et al., 2013; NYLC, 2008; Stocker & Tryon, 2009). A public documentation of the partnership and intended outcomes can increase the accountability of the relationship (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002).

- Progress monitoring: After goals are jointly designed by instructors, students, and community partners, the progress towards those goals should be regularly monitored from multiple sources. This includes eliciting feedback from community organizations and students about their satisfaction with the arrangements (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). The evidence being gathered should be used to improve current and future service-learning partnerships (NYLC, 2008).
- Duration and intensity: Both the breadth and depth of service-learning placements improve general education goals of the students and the welfare of the communities being served (Coker et al., 2017). The amount of service being conducted should be enough to address the needs of the community and desired learning outcomes (NYLC, 2008).

**Charity-based vs. transformative.** Depending on how or which standards are being implemented in the service-learning program, the model can lean towards a charity-based or transformative approach. The main difference is a charity-based model does work for the community, whereas the transformative model does the work with them (Verjee, 2010). Charity-based models operate with the assumption the community is benefitting from the service being conducted (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). On the other side, the transformative model highlights the power dynamic involved in charity and instead advocates for service-learning in partnership with the community to create systemic change (Bertuax et al., 2012).

The charity-based model works to alleviate “symptoms of systemic inequities” to support student learning with little input from the community being served (Verjee, 2010, p. 7). Students gain real learning about societal issues while taking steps to solve

identified needs in the community (Verjee, 2010). For example, Stenhouse and Jarrett (2012) designed a service-learning program called the Problem Solution Project where students in the course choose and implement a project during the semester. The projects were centered around what the students felt the community could use. The students identified charitable needs in the community and implemented a plan of action to meet those needs. Lucy-Bouler and Lucy-Bouler (2012) describe another charity-based model where students run events on campus for the surrounding community, such as a pet adoption drive and a holiday donation program. The community receives the benefit of the service-learning projects, but they are minimally involved in doing the work.

While the community can benefit from the charity work being done, the transformative approach to service-learning criticizes how charity reinforces the status-quo. The critics argue service-learning is best used to work in active partnership with the community to make changes in the systems which produce inequities (Bertaux et al., 2012; Verjee, 2010). A charity-based model has the potential to reinforce stereotypes about the community being served, including a perception that those in education know better about what the community needs (Bertaux et al., 2012; Conner & Erickson, 2017). Community-based action research is an example of how educational institutions can act in partnership with the community. The two groups can work together to identify key reasons for the existing inequities and take action to change the systems in place (Verjee, 2010). The community should take on the expert role in a long-term relationship to improve the current conditions (Bertaux et al., 2012).

**Varying models of service.** The model of managing student-volunteers can be selected by the nonprofit partner for their organization or the choice may come from

collaboration with the educational institution. A formal partnership with commitment from both parties can design the service arrangement to meet the needs and goals of each partner. Other arrangements may have aligned goals between the community organization and educational institution, but the community program operates separately from the coursework being taught (Dorado & Giles, 2004). A mismatch in expectations on behalf of one or more parties involved can sour future opportunities for engagement (Paull et al., 2016). Community organizations can analyze the costs and benefits of working with student-volunteers to determine if they continue the partnership and what adjustments they may need to make (Worrall, 2007).

Each partner in the service-learning relationship needs some level of preparation. Organizations need to create a model of service-learning that works for their current resources and needs; educational institutions need to properly communicate and understand the community perspective; and the student-volunteers need skills to contribute. From the community organization perspective, the agency needs to determine how they will host student-volunteers. Some community organizations build programs specifically for student-volunteers, whereas others accept students in general volunteer opportunities. Other service-learning opportunities include placements with student-driven organizations and university driven volunteer activity (Paull et al., 2016). In any of those community organizations, Macduff et al. (2009) have identified four models of volunteer programs in which students may serve: (a) traditional, (b) social change, (c) serendipity, and (d) entrepreneurial.

***Traditional.*** The traditional approach to managing student-volunteers follows a business-based human resource management framework (Studer, 2016). The framework

will be discussed in more depth later in the literature review as the traditional approach is the most common design of volunteer management programs. The program designs are very hierarchical in nature with clear organizational structure and distribution of duties. Volunteer coordinators use the stability of established protocols to execute successful volunteer programs (Macduff et al., 2009). The traditional model is especially common for internships or practicum placements (Tryon, Stoecker, Martin, Seblonka, Hilgendorf, & Nellis, 2008). The traditional model can be viewed as charity-based, as it focuses on reinforcing proven outcomes instead of advocating for radical change (Verjee, 2010). Even when change occurs, the change comes from thoughtful review of existing protocols and carefully planned adjustments to the program (Dorado & Giles, 2004).

***Social change.*** Social change volunteer programs follow the human resource management framework, but with more flexibility to meet the fluidity of needs the organization serves. These organizations are coordinating efforts to change existing structures. This transformative approach balances existing protocols for volunteering in organizations while adapting to the changing needs of the community and students involved. Volunteer coordinators using the social change model would be comfortable replacing existing practices with an entirely new approach if the new approach will improve the final outcomes for the community (Macduff et al., 2009). The social change model works well when community organizations and educational institutions want to work together to experiment on new methods to address community needs (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). The model is also common in advocacy organizations where the goal of service-learning is to learn more about civic engagement (Ethridge, 2006; Macduff et al., 2009).

***Serendipity.*** The serendipitous volunteer model trends away from formal volunteering. These programs have tasks available that need minimal training so students can walk-in (expected or not) and complete their volunteer hours (Macduff et al., 2009). Some volunteer programs end up using this pattern because of their experience with students needing required volunteer hours. While they may have more structured volunteer programs as well, the community organization tries to make the most out of students demand for low-entry, low-commitment volunteer opportunities (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

***Entrepreneurial.*** The last model of volunteer management requires little, if any, managing on behalf of community organizations. Entrepreneurial volunteers recognize a problem in their community and work to solve it – and may not join a formal organization to complete their volunteering. The model is very flexible in allowing volunteers to start and stop on their own time (Macduff et al., 2009). An example of an entrepreneurial program within a community organization would be an organizational assessment. A student can come in to interview staff members and analyze the work being done, but the student operates independently until a final product or presentation is given to the organization. Then the community organization can choose what recommendations to accept and in what form (Carpenter, 2011).

### **Student Outcomes of Service-Learning**

Most of the research on the outcomes of service-learning have focused on student outcomes from the academic perspective (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). These outcomes can be broken down into the categories of personal outcomes, academic outcomes, social outcomes, civic outcomes, and diversity outcomes (Conway et al., 2009; Whitley, 2014).

Some of the outcomes are measured immediately after the service is conducted, whereas others focus on long-term changes in attitude and behaviors of the students (Whitley, 2014). Early service-learning work focused on promoting the personal and civic benefits students receive from conducting service-learning work. However, following a sharp criticism by Zlotkowski (1995), a large body of research was generated on academic outcomes to ensure service-learning was more than an ideological bias of the instructors. As the disparity between the students and those being served was recognized, research also analyzed diversity outcomes, which has received mixed results depending on the design of the course.

**Personal student outcomes.** The personal outcomes of service-learning focus on the student's *personal growth, identity, values, and moral development*. An overview of current research shows service-learning has the potential for significant personal development (Conway et al., 2009; Whitley, 2014). Conway et al.'s (2009) meta-analysis found statistical growth across fifty-eight studies on personal outcomes of service-learning. The study found growth in categories such as *volunteer motivation, moral development, well-being, and career development*. The authors noted "some individual studies reported finding no evidence of change" on personal outcomes, though overall there was positive association (p. 234).

When students are given the opportunity to discuss the personal impact of service-learning, they often disclose meaningful personal change. Deeley (2010) interviewed students following participation in a service-learning course. The students disclosed personal transformation either in small ways or as a sudden transformation. The author noted how some students self-select service-learning courses because the service is a part

of their identity entering the class and is enhanced throughout the coursework. Even when students are pushed outside their comfort zone, the personal, moral identity changes can be seen.

Wurdinger & Qureshi (2015) took a quantitative approach to study personal outcomes of project-based learning, which is often viewed as a form of service-learning. They found a significant difference from the beginning to end of the project in the areas of *responsibility, problem solving, self-direction, communication, and creativity*. They did not find a statistically significant difference in time management, collaboration, and work ethic. Another quantitative study researched how service-learning impacted students' *self-actualization* and *social/moral development*. The preservice teachers in the study rated a variety of items which determined the service-learning had a positive impact and was personally important to the students (Lake, et al., 2015).

**Academic student outcomes.** The academic outcomes of service-learning focus on the student's *general academic skills, knowledge and application of course content, and commitment to education* (Conway et al., 2009; Whitley, 2014). Felton and Clayton (2011) summarized on how "the strongest service-learning outcomes appeared in the category of academic performance" (p. 79). The authors found this was especially true for historically underrepresented groups. One meta-analysis calculated the academic improvement at 53% (Novak, Markey, & Allen, 2007). Achieving the strong outcomes for all students depends on properly designing and executing the service-learning experience (Conway et al., 2009; Felten & Clayton, 2011).

For an example of proper design and execution, the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance at Auburn University Montgomery has designed their nonprofit leadership

academic program around signature events done throughout the year. The three events (Easter Egg Hunt, Pet Adopt-a-thon, and Christmas Program) develop and reinforce the academic competencies. As the programs have developed over time, students now run the entire events with senior students getting promoted into leadership positions once they prove themselves in other support roles. The competencies include theoretical knowledge and tangible skills students can use in a variety of jobs upon graduation. Many of these skills relate to event management, such as *marketing, program planning, volunteer management, accounting, and risk assessment*. Students are able to develop these academic and career skills over multiple years at the university (Lucy-Bouler & Lucy-Bouler, 2012).

When service opportunities are not properly designed, the success of the academic outcomes are not guaranteed. Stenhouse and Jarrett (2012) created a service-learning opportunity for teachers in urban education. The program was designed to show the future teachers how to collaborate with students on service-learning projects. The instructors for the course allowed the preservice teachers to choose their own project – related to the futures as educators – to work on collectively as a class. Over multiple cohorts, the ambiguity worked alright when the class was able to agree effectively on a project, but in other cases the experience caused conflict throughout the course. The authors recommend creating more structure for the project and decision-making process so conflict does not take over the intention of the experience. While the authors noted a favorable outcome in *classroom leadership skills* in each of their cohorts, the academic outcomes were stronger in the cohorts where the projects were smooth from the beginning.

Even when the academic outcomes are not career-oriented, studies have found service-learning to have a strong effect on the outcomes. Novak et al. (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of nine quantitative studies to see what impact service-learning had on academic outcomes. The author focused on academic outcomes in literature related to *understanding of the subject matter* and *applying the knowledge and skills in new settings* – all of which found service-learning to have a positive effect. Warren (2012) found similarly strong results around *student learning* by sampling eleven previous research studies which each had a comparison group. A third meta-analysis of seventeen studies looked at the broader category of *academic achievement* and found a positive influence created by service-learning (Celio et al., 2011).

**Social student outcomes.** The social outcomes of service-learning focus on the student's *communication, leadership skills, and attitude* (Conway et al., 2009; Whitley, 2014). Moely and Ilustre's (2016) study on service-learning as a graduation requirement found a significant increase in *interpersonal skills* and a moderate increase in *leadership skills*. Fifteen percent of respondents also commented on the improvement of their communication skills in open-ended responses. Students said they have more *self- and other-awareness* along with having the opportunity to serve in *leadership roles*.

Koliba (2003) researched how service-learning promotes the social capital of children in five rural school districts in a New England state. Students had the opportunity to serve in the community in a variety of roles, but all opportunities were created to support the students in *building connections* outside of their peer group. The social connections could be created through mentoring younger students, interning with local organization, or communicating out information to the wider community. The

research found a positive impact on the students because they saw themselves in a larger context. As these were K-12 schools, parents also became more involved in the education of their children. The service projects grew beyond a classroom activity to one the whole community participated in. The model gave students opportunities to practice and *improve their social skills* in the new networks they established.

**Civic student outcomes.** The civic outcomes of service-learning focus on the student's *knowledge of civic issues, personal responsibility to the community, and justice-oriented citizenship* (Conway et al., 2009; Whitley, 2014). Celio et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis included twenty-eight studies on service-learning which found a statistically significant effect on *civic engagement*. Service-learning by definition involves some form of civic engagement, but the authors pointed out the level of impact the service had on the students' civic engagement outcomes increased when the service opportunities were more thoughtfully created with components such as meaningful reflection and linking the service to the curriculum.

In another study, Moely and Ilustre (2016) surveyed students at three times during their college careers about their required service-learning experiences. The surveys were conducted at the beginning, in year two, and at the end of the undergraduate education. The students were required to participate in public service experiences such as internships, service-learning courses, and community-based research projects. After two years at the college, the students self-reported higher levels of *valuing community engagement* and *knowledge of current events*. Near the end of their college experience, fifty-six percent of the students agreed that continuing to be civically engaged fit well with their career plans. Fayter (2005) also surveyed students who previously participated

in service-learning to understand their civic outcomes. The majority of respondents noted how service-learning supported their *civic responsibility*. Eighty-six percent said they were able to *positively impact community conditions*, and seventy-one percent said service-learning helped them *understand the needs of their community*.

**Diversity student outcomes.** The diversity outcomes of service-learning focus on the student's *awareness of personal privilege, stereotype reduction, interactions across difference, and global consciousness* (Holsapple, 2012; Whitley, 2014). Even though service-learning is not mentioned in much of the literature on multicultural issues in education, service-learning students often are placed in a multicultural environment that can enhance their knowledge and skills around issues of diversity (Holsapple). The multicultural environment forces students to confront both conscious and unconscious stereotypes they may have about different groups. The diversity could be around disabilities, sexual orientation, or race/ethnicity.

Conner and Erickson (2017) looked specifically at racial attitudes among students participating in service-learning projects in two midsized, private universities. Overall, the courses were effective at *reducing colorblindness and improving students' awareness of racial issues*. However, authors noted the mean change scores varied greatly across the thirteen courses they surveyed. The scores also varied based on demographic information. Males started off as more colorblind and unaware of blatant racial issues, but they also made more progress than females by the end of the service participation. White students also started more colorblind and unaware than their peers of color. They did not make up for the difference by the end of the service opportunity though (Conner & Erickson, 2017).

Moley and Ilustre (2016) took another large sample of 225 students who reported an overall *greater appreciation of cultural difference* in reflection of their service-learning experience. The study surveyed students after completing at least one service-learning opportunity as a graduation requirement at a university. While the students participated in a variety of different service opportunities, many students commented in the open-ended questions that they were meaningfully *exposed to societal inequities* relating to cultural differences. A separate case study found some students who participated in service-learning took the initiative to improve their foreign language skills when they recognized they would be working with people whose first language is not English (Lucy-Bouler & Lucy-Bouler, 2012).

### **Institutional Outcomes of Service-Learning**

The Association of American Colleges & Universities list service-learning as one of a handful of institutional practices which increases student retention, engagement, and long-term success (Kuh, 2008). Research on institutional outcomes often groups service-learning with similar strategies in experiential education, such as study abroad, internships, and research (Coker & Porter, 2015; Gazley et al., 2012). Furthermore, the outcomes increase as more experiential education opportunities are taken by students during their education. Coker and Porter (2015) found that “students with average GPAs who did only one experience were 33 percent less likely to have a job at graduation and 26 percent less likely to be accepted to a graduate or professional school than similar graduates with more experiences” (p. 67).

**High-impact educational practice.** Service-learning is listed as one of ten high-impact educational practices that support student engagement and retention for college

students. The practice supports all students but has stronger impact on traditionally underserved student populations (Felton & Clayton, 2011; Kuh, 2008). Students engaged in service-learning have self-reported gains in their personal, practical, and academic learning. Further, the practice of service-learning has shown to create a supportive campus with active and collaborative learning (Kuh, 2008). Other research has shown service-learning to improve student-retention and to improve relationships between students and instructors (Coker et al., 2017). Service-learning supports students in “cultivating higher-order reasoning and critical thinking” skills, which many educational institutions intend to support (Felton & Clayton, 2011). While these gains can be made through service-learning alone, additional high-impact practices can create further institutional benefits (Coker & Porter, 2015).

**Faculty outcomes.** Faculty benefit from service-learning by connecting personal and professional goals into their career work. They can make a positive difference in the community by connecting students to a passion project or means of civic engagement. The connection between the educational institution and community can provide a strong network for faculty, administrators, students, and members of the community. The connections can be informal or built into a formal administrative staff position for campus and community partnerships (Vernon & Foster, 2002). A formal office or position connecting the campus to the community takes some of the work off of faculty and provides a greater variety of service opportunities for students (Coker & Porter, 2015).

Gazley et al. (2013) emphasize how faculty can benefit from the community connections through applied research projects. The publication of scholarly research is

especially important to university faculty, who can build on the community connections made with students to further their civic engagement. Students may also benefit as assistants in the research projects. The authors indicate the research is best done in partnership with the community, such as nonprofit professionals or the participants themselves. The trust built during this process ensures the relationships between faculty, students, and community partners will continue to meet everyone's needs.

### **Community Motivations of Service-Learning**

In comparison to student and institutional outcomes, there has been little research on the community outcomes of service learning. There has been an assumption in the field of education that the community benefits from service-learning arrangements (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). In service-learning relationships, community organizations spend time training students as volunteers, coordinating their efforts, and analyzing the impact of the work completed. Some critics of current service-learning models have theorized that community organizations put more effort into the students than the community receives out of the service (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Yet, community organizations continue to welcome students as volunteers in their organizations. Worrall (2007) views the commitment from the community organizations as a calculated risk. There is potential for great success in well-designed partnerships, but the benefit to community organizations is not guaranteed.

Instead of focusing on the limited research of community outcomes, this section will broaden the discussion to include motivations of service-learning, which may include anecdotal or aspirational outcomes. This perspective includes both proven outcomes and qualitative evidence of why nonprofit professionals continue to engage with students as

volunteers. Some of the reasons are self-interested, whereas others recognize the toll of service-learning on community resources (Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006). Stoecker and Tryon (2009) identified four reasons community organizations welcome service-learning partnerships (a) to increase their organizational capacity, (b) to support students, (c) to build long-term relationships, and (d) to connect with the schools.

**Increase organizational capacity.** The direct, intended impact of student-volunteers is to build up the organization's capacity. Students may be placed in a variety of roles such as direct service, outreach, fundraising, or special projects (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). One survey of 245 nonprofit professionals found over half of respondents reported an increase in their organizational capacity as a result of service-learning (Littlepage et al., 2012). Often students are thought of differently than general volunteers in how they are placed in an organization. In one survey of nonprofit organizations, researchers found that students were more often placed in meaningful, yet less substantive roles than community volunteers. The role choice derived from students' short-term commitment based on the school schedule and higher turnover rate once the school commitment is completed (Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001).

Edwards et al. (2001) found students were more likely to be utilized in youth serving organizations. The youth viewed older students as mentors and roles models, which made student-volunteers the ideal demographic to work in youth-oriented programming. Vernon and Foster (2002) echo those sentiments in their research of fifteen youth-serving nonprofit organizations. The results were overwhelmingly positive on how student-volunteers "allowed programs to broaden and [...] reach more youth" (p.217). However, student schedules came up as an issue in creating positive

programmatic results. The youth in the program become somewhat dependent on the student volunteers, who may not be available during school break and may leave once their academic commitment is complete. Further, nonprofit professionals recognize not all student-volunteers create the intended impact. Instead, the anecdotal programmatic impacts come from a minority of student-volunteers who have resounding success with youth (Vernon & Foster, 2002).

Students have also been used to complete special projects that would not have otherwise been done. Carpenter (2011) reviewed results of capstone projects and technical assistance requests from community organizations. The projects varied greatly so not all organizations could neatly assess the impact the projects had on their organization capacity, but most of the organizations accepted the student recommendations in some manner. Stoecker and Tryon (2009) recognize how some community organizations have been burned through the special project capacity building. Students may half-finish a project to the fulfillment of their course, then leave it incomplete and unusable to the intended recipient. This downside in community outcomes can be resolved through a thoughtful design of the service-learning relationships.

**Support students.** In researching the motivations, expectations, and outcomes of nonprofit organizations, Basinger and Bartholomew (2006) found community organizations are strongly drawn to students as volunteers as an extension of the organizational mission. Their survey found to “help student learn” was a strong motivation of nonprofit organizations ranking an average of 4.54 on a five-point Likert scale (p. 20). A separate study found that over fifty percent of 287 nonprofit respondents

agreed or strongly agreed that teaching students is a part of their job (Gazley et al., 2013). As detailed earlier with student outcomes, the education benefits may be related to the discipline of students' coursework or personal life skills (Paull et al., 2016). Nonprofit organizations also want to build awareness in the public about the issues they are working on – and students are a part of that public (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

Worrall (2007) interviewed forty nonprofit representatives who actively worked with a university service-learning program. All respondents viewed the service-learning programs as an “important complement to traditional higher education courses” (p. 11). The nonprofit professionals specifically mentioned enhanced cross-cultural understanding as a way the service complements the formal education. Students were able to learn more about socioeconomic and racial disparities in the communities they served. Nonprofit professionals recognize students are future leaders who will affect public policy and community decisions down the road. In the hopes of nonprofit professionals, educating the students now will provide long-term benefits to the causes being served (Worrall).

**Building long-term relationships.** Some nonprofit professionals view student-volunteering as the start of a long-term relationship to continue sustaining the community organization into the future. Professionals are not naïve to believe every student will continue beyond their commitment, but some students could be future volunteers, donors, or even staff members (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Volunteering shows what it takes to build a career in the sector and why the many resources are necessary to support the cause of choice (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). In one survey, over fifty-five percent of respondents were at least somewhat motivated by the cultivation of future relationships

(Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006). Another study found about two-thirds of nonprofits have experienced students volunteering beyond their initial commitment (Gazley et al., 2012). Macduff et al. (2009) views volunteering as something that can be built into a person's identity. Once students "become socialized to volunteer roles, they continue to perform those types of roles throughout the lifespan" (p. 403).

Recruitment and retention of volunteers is a common outcomes measure for volunteer programs in the nonprofit sector. Both of these outcomes can be supported through service-learning arrangements to benefit the long-term sustainability of an organization. Recruitment measures focus on finding the appropriate number of volunteers with the necessary skills and interests to fill the available volunteer tasks (Studer, 2016). Organizations need to prepare the necessary roles for student-volunteers, along with establishing the appropriate training (Paull et al., 2017). Retention outcomes look at the satisfaction and duration of volunteers. By providing volunteers with unique support systems, community organizations can sustain the support they receive from volunteers and their connections (Studer, 2016).

**Connection with the schools.** Community organizations make use of institutional resources as they build up a connection with the schools involved. The pipeline of service-learning students is a primary resource they receive, but community organizations also can benefit from academic research and professional connections with staff at the schools. Spreading awareness about the cause and organization to instructors and administrators builds a stronger network of support for the community organization (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Increased agency visibility on campus and in the community is one the strongest outcomes found in research, even though that

is not the primary goal of most service-learning programs (Gazley et al., 2012; Littlepage et al., 2012).

The relationships with the school can grow into a long-term personal connection as well. When the relationships become personal, the reciprocity in the partnership becomes stronger, but it can also influence the partnership when individuals leave their roles (Worrall, 2007). Therefore, the educational institutions and community organizations should have regular, meaningful communication to support the relationships involved. The frequent communication will help design better partnerships to support strong outcomes for students, educational institutions, and community organizations (Gazley et al., 2013).

### **Volunteer Management Models**

Volunteer management, including management of service-learning students, is the process through which community organizations oversee groups of people giving their time towards the cause at hand. The literature on volunteer management derives from classical human resource management of paid staff (Studer, 2016). Human resource management as a body of knowledge is designed to help organizations improve their performance. The framework “reflects a philosophical commitment to human capital development as a central business function” (Cuskelly, Taylor, Hoye, & Darcy, 2006, p.145). Organizations continue to search for better ways to manage the people of which they are made, but each organization and volunteer program is unique. The human resource approach advocates the development of a human resource strategy for each organization and implementing appropriate strategies to maximize the time and energy given to the organizational cause (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Cuskelly et al., 2006).

Volunteer managers, whether paid or unpaid, can influence the student-volunteers' level of satisfaction and contribution. These factors can increase the short- and long-term impacts of the service-learning placement (Dwyer, Bono, Snyder, Nov, & Berson, 2013). Many community organizations are dependent on volunteers for the survival of the programs, and organization in college towns are especially dependent on student-volunteers as a source of their programming (Worrall, 2007). While the students are essential to the program, they are less likely than community volunteers to be subjected to volunteer management practices (Gazley et al., 2012). Research has shown the inclusion of volunteer management practices increases the outcomes from community organizations (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Studer, 2016). Cuskelly et al. (2006) and Studer (2016) modeled the volunteer management process into seven similar functional phases with slightly different titles of each phase. For the purposes here within, the categories shall be labeled (a) planning, (b) recruiting, (c) orienting, (d) training, (e) managing, (f) recognizing, and (g) concluding.

**Planning.** The first part of a service-learning relationship comes far before the student gets placed with the organization. Community organizations need to build into their human resource structure room for volunteers, especially volunteer programs that fit with the school calendar (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Littlepage et al., 2012). Both paid and unpaid staff may be involved in planning for service-learning placements (Edwards et al., 2001). The planning can be constructed specifically for student-volunteers or just as general short-term volunteering opportunities for the community. Macduff et al. (2009) noticed a trend in literature around the desire among people (not just students) to participate in volunteer activities for only a short duration.

If the planning is for student-volunteers, community organizations should engage with the educational institution on the front end to ensure the program opportunities created fit with the academic needs of the institution (Littlepage et al., 2012; Gazley et al., 2013). Stoecker and Tryon (2009) emphasize how communication is a strong indicator of the health of the partnership. If communication is lacking during the planning phase (or at any point), the student placement may not meet the expectations of one or more of the parties involved. Community organizations view relationships with more communication as having more benefit to them (Worrall, 2007). Students, instructors, and community staff should take time to clarify roles and responsibilities. Often students end up being an intermediary between their educational institution and the community organization (Stocker & Tryon, 2009).

Regardless of who is volunteering, the human resource model recommends key strategies to implement in the planning phase. Volunteer positions in community organizations should have a written job description for the available roles. The job description should keep in mind who the target demographic is to be filling the volunteer role (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Studer, 2016). A clear job description supports a common understanding between the community organization, student, and faculty supervisor about what the student will be doing during the placement. Organizations should also plan for the natural turnover in service-learning arrangements with preparations to recruit replacement volunteers or build projects with definitive endings (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Macduff et al., 2009). The transitioning planning will reduce the stress on the nonprofit in between academic terms when they may be without student-volunteers (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

**Recruiting.** Recruitment entails finding the appropriate people and skills to fit with the volunteer tasks available. Volunteer opportunities should be promoted through word of mouth networks and other formal advertising (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Studer, 2016). Many service-learning opportunities are built and sustained through formal and informal relationships. Faculty, administrators, and students can reach out to community organizations to see if opportunities are available, or the community organization can be the first to reach out to the educational institution. There may be volunteer fairs and job boards to recruit general student-volunteers. Organizations needing specific skills may approach academic departments or specific faculty to attempt to build a relationship (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Foster, 2002). Some educational institutions offer liaison offices to build bridges between the campus and community as a key contact point (Gazley et al., 2013; Worrall, 2007). Community organizations view liaison offices as an indicator the educational institution is “better equipped to collaborate with the community” (Vernon & Foster, 2002, p. 213).

Student-volunteers should be interviewed for the position to determine where their skills can best be put to use – or even if this is the right organization for them to serve (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Studer, 2016). Some community organization are hesitant to turn away student-volunteers out of fear that may hamper the relationship with the educational institution (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). However, accepting a candidate who is a bad fit may hamper the culture of the organization or may lead to an early separation between the parties involved. The organizational resources would be drained from the bad fit without receiving the intended benefit of the volunteer (Bolman & Deal, 2017). Community organizations should perform a background screening on student-volunteers

if the organization is working with children or other vulnerable populations (Cuskelly et al., 2006).

**Orienting.** Almost eighty percent of nonprofit professionals view the orientation phase as “very important” or “essential” in service-learning placements (Gazley et al., 2013). During orientation, student-volunteers should be introduced to the organization as a whole and the role they will be performing as a volunteer (Cuskelly et al., 2006). Some organizations prefer to merge the recruitment and orientation phases by introducing the students to the organization during the interview. Interviews can help both the organization and prospective students determine if the match is correct, so providing more detail about the organization upfront encourages students to self-select the best organization for their skills and interests (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). The orientation phase is also an opportunity to align expectations for the organization and student. While having a job description allows the community organization to share their expectations, student-volunteers also have expectations that can be disclosed either during the recruitment or orientation phase (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

The orientation phase is more resource-effective for community organizations when students volunteer in groups. They can train the group of students together on the tasks they will be completing, which provides a better ratio for how much the community organization benefits from the student-volunteers (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Each organization will have their own expectations and codes of conduct for the student-volunteers to follow (Cuskelly et al., 2006). Additionally, community organizations can use the orientation phase to create a clear connection between the work student-volunteers will be performing and the mission of the organization. The learning

opportunities are more likely to reach their potential if a direct connection is established (Gazley et al., 2013).

**Training.** While the form and duration of training vary greatly, most community organizations provide some form of training (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). Community organizations can create internal professional development opportunities or reimburse student-volunteers for training costs and out-of-pocket expenses (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Cuskelly et al., 2006). One study found about one-quarter of community organizations provide access to additional professional development opportunities (Gazley et al., 2012). However, most organizations provide ongoing training internally or work with the educational institution to provide support. Student-volunteers working with a diverse population may need training on how to interact across racial or socioeconomic differences. Other student-volunteers need general support on how to work in an office. Community organizations can determine what support each individual student-volunteer needs after interviewing and orienting them to the organization (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009)

**Managing.** Overseeing student-volunteers in a service-learning opportunity is a joint responsibility of the community organization's staff and the instructor from the educational institution (Gazley et al., 2013). The managing of student-volunteers can be done by either paid staff or unpaid staff under the general direction of a staff member. Unpaid staff supervising student-volunteers are usually long-term volunteers in the organization who have received additional training on how the program operates (Edwards et al., 2001). Depending on the model of service-learning involved, the managing of student-volunteer can be on a spectrum from direct management to loose

coordination. In some cases, the student-volunteer may work independently and report back to the organization with the results of their work (Macduff et al., 2009).

Management of volunteers is the longest phase of the human resource management model with the greatest opportunity to impact the quality of the service-learning placement. Community organizations should check-in with the student-volunteers to ensure the volunteers are satisfied with and knowledgeable on the work being conducted (Studer, 2016). The student-volunteer's performance should also be monitored with regular feedback given to maximize the student's learning and community organization's outcomes. If any problems occur during the placement, the partners should be proactive in addressing the issues to continue a positive experience (Cuskelly et al., 2006). When there are not protocols in place for the partners to work together to resolve issues, the community organization can be left with an unexpected void in their programming. Instructors need to support the management process by holding their students accountable for the work (Vernon & Foster, 2002).

**Recognizing.** As student-volunteers usually do not get compensated for their time, recognition is an important part of volunteer management to show appreciation for the time and effort donated to the community organization. Recognition may come as an activity or program for all volunteers to attend, or an individualized acknowledgement for the effort given (Cuskelly et al. 2006; Studer, 2016). Student-volunteers usually require an evaluation by the community organization as a requirement of the academic coursework. Some evaluation may be a shared responsibility between the community organization and educational institution (Gazley et al., 2013).

**Concluding.** The concluding phase is an opportunity for community organizations, educational institutions, and student-volunteers to determine the success of the partnership and what can be adjusted moving forward. A pleasant separation can leave room for future partnerships and positive word-of-mouth awareness for the community organization (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). The networks can provide good recruitment for the next volunteers coming into the community organization (Studer, 2016). Community organizations may implement recommendations from the student-volunteer to improve their organizational capacity (Carpenter, 2011; Littlepage et al., 2012).

### **Gap in Literature**

The current research adds to this body of literature with new information on the community perspective of student-volunteers in the community. Of the three partners involved in service-learning relationships, the community perspective has been the least studied. Further, the research on outcomes shows an emphasis on student learning with little attention to program level outcomes of community organizations (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). The outcomes for students and communities may or may not align. Research has also not addressed the unique characteristics of managing students as volunteers. Instead, models of volunteer management are borrowed from business-based literature on human resource management of paid employees (Studer, 2016). There is a gap in the literature around an appropriate model of student-volunteer management from the nonprofit perspective.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methods

This research study used a grounded theory approach through semi-structured interviews to examine how nonprofit organizations use the human resource management approach with their student-volunteers to impact organizational outcomes. The researcher interviewed eleven community professionals for their experience and perceptions of how the organization works with student-volunteers. The interviews were analyzed using the open and axial coding processes introduced by Corbin and Strauss (1990) along with thematic coding. The resulting grounded theory analysis described the expectations, realities, and outcomes for students, educational institutions, and nonprofit organizations connected through a service-learning partnership.

### Rationale

Creswell and Poth (2018) indicate grounded theory is a suitable method if there is a lack of research to describe the process under review. The process of managing student volunteers has not been explained in current literature. Cuskelly et al. (2006) used the human resource management approach to describe various volunteer management practices related to volunteer retention outcomes. They described seven categories of the approach which were later adapted by Studer (2016) with a slight variation. The model provides a potential foundation for nonprofits working with student-volunteers, but the added partnership with educational institutions complicates the process and gives reason for further review. The seven constructs within the human resource management approach will guide the semi-structured interview questions, but the research will not be limited by that theoretical framework.

As the research focuses on the entire volunteer management experience, participants were interviewed on how the organization uses students to fulfill mission-related outcomes along with the organization's use of the seven constructs of human resource management: planning, recruiting, orienting, training, managing, recognizing, and concluding (Studer, 2016). The human resource management approach comes from the for-profit sector focused on improving organizational outcomes. This makes the framework ideal for assessing how volunteer management affects community organizations' outcomes as well (Cuskelly et al., 2006). The framework, however, has had mixed results on how the volunteer management practices affect volunteer outcomes, such as recruitment, retention, and satisfaction of volunteers (Studer & von Schnurbein, 2013). The resulting grounded theory models of student-volunteer management describes the community organization's perspective in service-learning relationships. The framework then can be used to refine partnerships between educational institutions and the community to focus on fulfilling the mission of the community partners.

The data for the grounded theory model was gathered through semi-structured interviews. The method is a common interview technique in qualitative research when previous knowledge exists on the topic (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016). A primary set of interview questions have been established using the seven concepts within the human resource management approach of Studer (2016). These questions addressed the main themes in the research. The semi-structured method also included secondary questions which was not asked of every participant, but are listed as potential points to follow up on (Kallio et al., 2016). The secondary questions were created through an iterative process described by Cuskelly et al. (2006) where themes brought up

in each interview are addressed with subsequent interviewees. Corbin and Strauss (1990) emphasized how the process of analyzing the results and bringing those themes to future interviews limits the number of gaps in the grounded theory. Therefore, the secondary, follow-up questions were created and adjusted as the interviews progress.

### **Participants**

The sampling in grounded theory research strives to recruit participants with high variance in their perspectives (Dorado & Giles, 2004). For that purpose, known volunteer managers, or those who oversee volunteers as a part of their role, at community organizations in Southern Minnesota were emailed an invitation to participate in an interview. A snowball method of recruitment was used as a secondary method to ensure enough participants for the results to be saturated.

Eligible participants all held a position in the community overseeing student-volunteers. The positions were all paid positions. If multiple people in the organization oversee the different aspects of the volunteer management process, each individual was invited to provide their perspective in an interview. Participants were included even if the results will only speak to the portion of volunteer management with the community organization they are familiar with.

Stoecker and Tryon (2009) found many nonprofit professionals are unaware of what academic connection their student-volunteers have to the service being conducted. Tryon et al. (2008) overcame this problem by using a “broad definition of service-learning that included any student performing any service for a community organization for academic credit” (p. 17). The broad definition is appropriate to a grounded theory approach to model how the various forms of student-volunteering affect the nonprofit’s

mission-related outcomes. Some community organizations use different volunteer management strategies depending on what service relationship students are undertaking (Gazley, Littlepage, & Bennett, 2012). Questions were asked to determine if that is the case for the students served by the participants involved in this research so these unique characteristics can be taken into account. Even if the participant does not know if the students are completing the work for academic credit, the current research was still include their perspective as part of an authentic perspective of the community organization.

### **Data Collection**

**Interviews.** Research with participants used semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured format allowed participants to express a diverse set of opinions on the complex issue of how nonprofits use the human resource management approach with student-volunteers. Kallio et al. (2016) recommended piloting the questions prior to conducting the study. The primary questions have been assessed by five nonprofit professionals by discussing the questions and intentions of the study prior to engaging in field work.

In grounded theory, there is an unknown trying to be solved, which necessitates the researcher being reactive to each interview (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). New themes emerged which have not previously been captured in research. The themes were detailed through the process of memoing, which allowed the ideas to be addressed in subsequent interviews. Creswell and Poth (2018) describe memos as “short phrases, ideas, or key concepts that occur” (p. 188).

Interviews took place over the phone which allowed participants to converse in a location they feel comfortable. The conversations were audio recorded and later professionally transcribed for coding. Each interview took fifteen to forty-five minutes depending on the level of depth provided by the participants in the study.

**Interview questions.** The following primary questions were designed in response to Cuskelly et al.'s (2006) and Studer's (2016) stages of the human resource management approach. The questions start with the mission-related outcomes to which student-volunteers contribute. Then the questions focus on the processes of planning, recruiting, orienting, training, managing, recognizing, and concluding in volunteer management programs overseeing student-volunteers. Finally, the interview ends by gathering general thoughts on the use of student-volunteers to gather additional data that may not have neatly fit into the human resource management framework.

1. What is the mission of your organization? What are the main programs you offer?
2. How often do you host students as volunteers?
3. What arrangements do your students have when volunteering? Such as internships, class requirements, etc. What volunteer roles are they usually assigned?
4. What has been your motivations for using students as volunteers?
5. How do you assess the roles and contributions of the students volunteering for your organization?
6. In your experience, what practices are used in preparing for students as volunteers?

7. In your experience, what practices are used in recruiting students as volunteers?
8. In your experience, what practices are used in volunteer orientation for students?
9. In your experience, what practices are used in training students as volunteers?
10. In your experience, what practices are used in managing students?
11. In your experience, what practices are used in recognizing the contributions of students?
12. In your experience, what practices are used in concluding student placements?
13. How, if at all, does the management of students as volunteers differ if the students come as a course requirement versus on their own initiative?
14. What are some of the benefits of having students volunteering in your organization?
15. What are some of the difficulties in using students as volunteers?
16. What else should I know about the process of working with students as volunteers?
17. Who else do you recommend I speak with about recruiting, managing, and concluding relationships with students as volunteers?

**Role of the researcher.** The researcher has worked in the nonprofit sector in the past, including various roles from a student-volunteer to an Executive Director of a small nonprofit. The broad experience should be noted as how that may have influenced the researcher's guidance of the semi-structured interview. The researcher was responsible for guiding the interview using the initial questions and for following up on statements made by participants. The nonprofit experience would have reduced the power dynamic between researcher and the participants when studying student-volunteers in the nonprofit

sector (Stroecker & Tryon, 2009). However, the power dynamic may still be present and should be acknowledged.

The researcher has a bias as someone who has worked for several years in the nonprofit sector. The nonprofit experience was both current and local to the geographic region being recruited from. By recruiting via an email, any personal pressure on connections in the sector may be eliminated, but those personal acquaintanceships still may have influenced the interviews. The hope was the personal connection and common nonprofit experience created a safe environment for the participants to share their experiences.

**Trustworthiness.** A brief final analysis was given to participants to check for credibility of the statements when placed within the research context. Participants were asked for edits or further insight once they reviewed the resulting themes. This provided an opportunity to reaffirm or contradict what other participants stated to see how transferable the research may be. The opportunity also provided additional value to the participants for participating in the research.

### **Data Analysis**

The interviews were coded using Corbin and Strauss' (1990) open and axial coding to develop a grounded theory of the volunteer management process for student-volunteers. Thematic coding was also used to ensure all seven constructs of the human resource management model were analyzed. The resulting theory will be discussed for any implication that may be found for future work with student-volunteers.

**Open coding.** The interviews were first analyzed using open coding. Open coding is a process where direct words or phrases from participants are used to represent

key ideas brought up during the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Each interview was coded separately at this stage to allow each participant's unique voice and ideas to come forward during the coding process. The transcription and open coding took place soon after the interview. Corbin and Strauss (1990) advised analyzing the interviews as soon as they are collected. New themes may emerge that should be brought up in subsequent interviews. Deeley (2010) recommends continuing the "process of sequential analysis... until all the interviews are complete" (p. 46). The timely coding of interviews also helped determine when the interviews become saturated.

**Axial Coding.** The axial coding stage brought together the open coding from all the interviews into common themes. Codes were combined and adjusted to represent themes present across multiple interviews. Corbin and Strauss (1990) view the codes as the basic unit of analysis in grounded theory. Not all open codes fall into axial codes, but the common, repeated themes were brought forward at this stage. The codes provisionally came together to form theoretical relationships at this stage. The differences in patterns help sharpen the grounded theory models for the conditions under which the theoretical relationship exists.

**Thematic Coding.** The constructs from the human resource management model which did not come forward during axial coding were investigated during a final stage of thematic coding. Cuskelly et al. (2006) and Studer (2016) both used the seven-construct model with slight variation. The research reviewed the open codes for alignment with the human resource management model. The themes and subcategories across the interviews are listed in chapter four. Chapter five then analyzes how well the axial and thematic codes fit into different models of student-volunteer management.

## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

The qualitative research investigated how community organization use students as volunteers. The interview questions asked to eleven participants covered the roles, processes, and benefits of student-volunteer work. This chapter contains ten themes derived from semi-structured interviews with professionals who manage students as volunteers. The first theme entitled “Tiers of Volunteers” discusses the variety of placements the students held. In each student placements, different benefits and challenges were present, which arose as the second and third themes. The final seven themes follow the human resource management model: planning, recruiting, orienting, managing, training, recognizing, and concluding.

Eleven participants were interviewed from nine organizations located near a regional hub in a rural Midwestern state. The participants shared their experience from the program and/or organization they currently work with, along with some insight from their broader experience as a professional in the community. The student-volunteers in the community programs were recruited from local high schools, colleges, and universities. The interviews with the participants lasted from fifteen to forty-five minutes.

After each interview was conducted, a third-party transcription service typed the interview, which was then proof-read by the researcher. The researcher printed off and manually coded the interview for an initial phase of open coding. The interviews were then analyzed using a dual axial analysis of grounded theory along with a thematic analysis based on the seven constructs in human resource management. The thematic

analysis was added, as most of the seven constructs were a part of the grounded theory analysis. The overlap between the grounded theory analysis and the thematic analysis will be discussed in chapter five.

### **Tiers of Volunteers**

Participants distinguished between the type of service-learning placement the students had based on the frequency of contact between the organization and the student. Three tiers of student-volunteers have been identified: event volunteers, project-based volunteers, and interns/leadership volunteers.

**Event volunteers.** Seven of the eleven participants discussed regular use of event volunteers in their current organization. Event volunteers sign up for regularly posted shifts or one-time events without any further commitment. The student may come in for multiple shifts, but at this level the students are not treated differently than students with no experience at the organization.

- *“With the regular weekly volunteers that change every week, we post something... so that people can sign up to volunteer.”*
- *“We do have a number of college students that come and engage with us on some of our larger events.”*
- *“They’re basically [here] one day and sometimes the one-days are split into different shifts.”*

Participants described these students as filling roles where the organization “literally just need[s] warm bodies.” The tasks they are assigned are quick to train and repetitive.

- *“It gets to be just kind of a repetitive things that it’s not like that awfully complicated... Manageable for some who’s just coming in to a volunteer role for the first time.”*
- *“They’re only able to apparently do really minimal, very easy tasks that are very straightforward.”*
- *“As long as you give them the direction they need, they will do what you ask.”*

**Project-based volunteers.** The second tier of student-volunteers are project-based volunteers. Nine of the eleven participants discussed the regular use of project-based volunteers. These volunteers are connected to a specific program or activity that is either ongoing or for a set period of time.

- *“We have certain volunteer positions, but then we just have some folks who have a special skill or talent that they want to share with the people we service.”*
- *“We also have programming that is specific to the program that the college students are engaged with.”*
- *“Our teen volunteers are actively working on a facilitated program over winter break.”*

The project-based volunteers often (but not always) come because of a requirement to meet a specific number of hours for a course or organizational requirement. Event volunteers also may be earning hours towards a requirement, but the project-based volunteers earn their hours through an ongoing project instead of one-time shifts.

- *“They come to the [organization] because they have a mandated volunteer expectation for the class.”*

- *“This last semester we had three students that were volunteers as service-learning students, which means they did hours for a community service class that they were taking, and that is just ten hours each.”*
- *“[A professor] sends us about three or four groups of students a year. We put them actually in charge of an event or a project.”*

**Interns/leadership volunteers.** Nine of the eleven participants discussed regularly using interns or leadership volunteers. This tier involves leadership, including the creation and/or management of programs. Student interns are tied with academic requirements or goals mutually agreed upon between the community staff and the educational institution.

- *“Interns [are] here for a substantially longer amount of time where we can put them in charge of programs that are over a period of time.”*
- *“We specifically have one or two interns a year at least. And then we also have a lot of volunteers.”*
- *“I guess we do call them an intern, and I do have a job description [for the position].”*

The leadership volunteers may or may not be interns with academic requirements, but they led programming. The student leaders may manage other students and/or create programming for the organization the community would otherwise be without.

- *“Typically, the student leaders are either interns or they just do it because they enjoy it.”*
- *“I’m an advisor to [the program], but they really are student-led.”*

- *“Student leaders... are there for a semester or the four years kind of thing.”*

### **Benefits of Hosting Students**

*“If you truly run [the program] correctly and you truly offer them a job that they are able to do, then it is just a benefit to everybody, especially in our line of work as a nonprofit.”*

Virtually all participants shared some benefits the students brought to their organization. The organizations have built their volunteer programs around the use of students to enhance their respective missions. Volunteers are a source of free labor that helps the organization increase their reach. Students support networks with the educational institutions for mutual benefit between the organizations. The students may bring in new volunteers from those networks, and they may stay beyond their initial commitment to continue helping the community organization. Participants valued the opportunity to train students to support the organizational mission, while receiving from the students' fresh ideas and enthusiasm for the work. For all participants, students have been a regular source of volunteers for the organization.

**Organizational values.** Participants shared how the use of students as volunteers has become a program in itself. The mission and vision of some organizations align with supporting students in building their leadership and other skills. The students can become the primary goal of the program, with the output they create secondary.

- *“Service is one of our core values here...So I would feel, how can we lift that up as a core value if we didn't have students volunteering?”*

- “[The program] is intended to be a student leadership program. So the student learn how to manage volunteers and manage resources.”
- “If direct benefits to the [organization] isn’t the only reason that [the students are] there, there’s got to be something else. And to me that’s fulfilling what they need... because volunteers is one of our programs.”

**Programs exist because of students.** All participants shared the level of service their respective organizations provide would not be near the same level without the support of students. A few participants said the organization and/or program would shut down completely if they did not have access to partnership with educational institutions.

- “[The organization] wouldn’t be able to run the program with [the students]. They’re the main focus for being able to attain our mission and vision.”
- “We wouldn’t be able to run [our programs] with just our staff.”
- “But I do know that we could not provide the level of service we do without volunteer and interns.”

**Financial benefits.** If the programs continued without students, participants shared they would need to hire additional staff to complete the work. There is a clear cost-saving incentive for community organizations to make use of student-volunteers. Further, one participant said their organization receives grant money because of the matching donation of volunteer time.

- “We don’t have to pay staff. That feels wrong to say, but the more help that we get from the outside to help us [the less we have to] force people to come in on non-scheduled work days.”

- *“Our major funder does require us to set up with some kind of grant matching. And the majority of that grant match comes from volunteer and intern hours.”*
- *“[The students relieve] the staff from a lot of the menial tasks that need to be done daily, which is positive. And the students love to give back, so it’s a great thing for both of us.”*

**Relationship with school.** Participants appreciate the networks established with the educational institutions because of the student-volunteers. The connections promote awareness to faculty, staff, and other students. Also, when the service is required by a course, the faculty members may be available to support the student success.

- *“The [students] bring in some good ideas and perspectives and have some connections with the university that we otherwise might not have for being able to spread more awareness on campus.”*
- *“The college students... already have had some training. They do get some direction from their professor. I feel like they can handle a little bit higher level projects.”*
- *“I could see how, if we didn’t have the connection with the school, it would be a lot more challenging for us to find those volunteers.”*

**Word-of-mouth recruitment.** When students share their volunteer experience with their peers, the community organizations may receive additional volunteers to support their mission. The students may bring friends along to events or just spread the word about the opportunity on campus.

- *“It also gets the word out that [the organization] is there to help and we’re a good place to come and volunteer.”*
- *“Getting the word out there. Might be some people that come volunteer that didn’t know about our events before.”*
- *“[Students will] do everything from helping market, to purchasing the supplies... to getting more volunteers to help on the event night.”*

**Retention beyond initial commitment.** Participants additionally shared many students stay beyond their initial commitment. The recruitment and retention of student-volunteers eases the burden on the community organization to find new volunteers on their own.

- *“We have kind of one of the service-learning students is going to come in and [volunteer with us] next semester. So that was a good way for us to get to know her and that she was dependable.”*
- *“I think there’s that generated interest too, because we have a lot of people who kind of continue to do additional hours even if they’ve met their hours for their primary reason for volunteering in the first place.”*
- *“It’s the ones that stick around and come back, especially beyond the mandated requirements of whatever program they’re in. And with students of any grade level there’s going to be people that do the required time and then never repeat them again. But there is a pretty substantial amount of folks that continue to come back beyond their required time.”*

**Workforce development.** Participants recognize the students may be future employees for their organization or one of their community partners. The volunteer opportunity is a chance for community organizations to train and recruit future workers.

- *“If students are going into some kind of human service field... We have an opportunity to train them [and] help shape their opinions.”*
- *“We might be helping to screen people that are going to work here eventually. It’s in our own best interest to get some of those folks some experiences and some opportunities.”*
- *“It’s nice to have [students] get involved with [our mission] because they’re going to be [involved with the mission in the future].”*

**Fresh ideas.** Participants appreciate how students bring new ideas to the community organization. The ideas may be up-to-date information the student is learning in class, or just providing a new perspective on the programming.

- *“I think students, especially the interns, they come with fresh ideas. They’re learning the most up-to-date things about human service fields. And so they’d come with sometimes some very different ideas, and they get to shake things up a little bit and change how we do things.”*
- *“I feel like [the students] come with a lot of ideas and a lot of innovation... Some of them come with program ideas. I’ve seen them really kind of rally together and really make something work really well.”*

- *“If we were doing [the annual event] ourselves still, we’d probably still be doing nine of the ten same [activities]. Since we have this student group do it every year, it’s completely different every year.”*

**Fresh enthusiasm.** Participants shared how students are excited to be working on the cause. The student-volunteer bring new motivation to the community organization, which helps the staff re-energize and re-commit to their work.

- *“It’s high burnout work and [the students] come with a fresh attitude, a fresh enthusiasm, and that is very much appreciated.”*
- *“I think honestly it’s the energy that they bring.”*
- *“I really do look for students who I think can be self-starters and motivated to find areas that interest them and kind of take things and run with it for their own learning.”*

**Dependable and availability.** Participants had conflicting perspectives on the dependability of student-volunteers (challenges listed in the next section). The organizations regularly receive students as volunteers, and therefore the participants can depend on student-volunteers being a part of the organization. The participants also appreciate how students are available during regular working hours.

- *“Students are usually my most reliable source of volunteers.”*
- *“But this year we have been lucky and our students have been pretty regular coming in and dependable.”*
- *“They are a little more flexible with their schedule, so a lot of my friends would be working nine to five.”*

## Challenges of Hosting Students

*“But to be totally honest with you, if [the mission is] the only reason that I’m having volunteers...then I am much better off just hiring staff because managing volunteers is hard.”*

The challenges of using students as volunteers were also present in every interview. Participants emphasized the lack of reliability students showed when they agree to volunteer with an organization. Some of the unreliability was caused by students who became busy with school, or during the breaks in the school calendar. Other students may volunteer for a grade and may be off task while earning hours. Participants shared they can only assign basic tasks to some students, even then with needed supervision. At the end of the day, if something goes wrong, the organization will suffer from the students’ unreliable work.

**Reliability.** All organizations represented disclosed frustrations around the unreliability of students. Students may have signed up to complete a shift, then shown up late or not at all. Students also have left before their shift ends because of overlapping commitments. The participants have had to continue their work without the expected help.

- *“Sometimes student volunteer, and in particular college students, sometimes they wake up in the morning and decide that they don’t want to volunteer, and then that’s all there was to it. We have had to fire volunteers... mostly due to attendance and communication.”*

- *“One of the students had emailed me, emailed me five minutes before [the group was] supposed to be here saying it was snowy outside and they would have to cancel.”*
- *“Well, some students haven’t quite learned that you need to follow through. When you say you’re going to do something, you do show up. This year, this semester in particular we’ve had a lot of students that have signed up that didn’t show up.”*

**Gradual decline in performance.** Some participants shared the students may be wishfully committing to the organization before realizing they are too busy to fulfill the initial commitment. The students may not be showing up or may not be giving their full effort to the organization as they finish their hours.

- *“Probably the other challenge is people that start off really strong. About halfway through the semester they start petering out and their production comes to a halt.”*
- *“A lot of students I’ve worked with have maybe started off their volunteer experience biting off more than they can chew...And two weeks into the semester they realize...they’ll have to dial it back.”*
- *“I placed [a student] in the program and that particular person did pretty good... Then all the sudden this person didn’t start showing up for [the program]. Just up and quit.”*

**School schedule/calendar.** Most participants rearrange their workloads when students are on winter or summer breaks. The flux in volunteers impacts how much

service community organizations can complete. One participant said they shut down their programming when students are not in session. The student's daily schedule can also impact the participants' ability to schedule work getting completed.

- *“During the break and during the summer, we collapse the shifts into one day.”*
- *“We have been pretty intensely trying to recruit non-students as volunteers. But the breaks where students are gone, other people also want to be gone...Sometimes it means telling a client, we just can't [provide a service to you] today because we don't have enough staff or people in the building.”*
- *“The difficulty is that...you can't say, 'Be here on this certain day.' You have to work with their school schedule.”*

**Doing it for a grade.** When students are volunteering primarily to earn a grade or to fulfill a commitment, participants can tell a difference in their performance.

- *“So even if they're doing it for a grade, I really try to have conversations with them about, 'Yeah, you're doing it for a grade and that's part of it. But it's either just a waste of time to get a grade or you're waiting to see what do you want out of this.'”*
- *“While [the student's] time is here, I know a lot of them are doing it for a class and [our staff] will help watch because we do have things in the [organization] we need to protect.”*
- *“The people who come with the class, many of them do a good job and then some of them you can tell are less invested in it.”*

**Socializing/off task.** When earning hours is the primary concern, students may be off task or socializing with their peers as a distraction from the tasks they have been assigned.

- *“The things I would correct are avoiding our guests, not paying attention to them, or the standard thing: messing around on your phone or congregating.”*
- *“We’ve set rules before as well because [the students] may come in and not do what’s expected of them.”*
- *“I feel like students can’t, don’t want to be by themselves when they’re doing something...So trying to make them happy to want to volunteer, but yet at the same time trying to get them to go where we need them the most, whether it be with a friend or not.”*

**Only basic tasks.** The participants who work with event volunteers emphasized how work assignments need to be easy and repetitive for the students. Even when the tasks are quick to learn, staff time is still spent supervising and correcting the students as they complete the tasks.

- *“With the high school students, I found that no matter how much instruction I give them beforehand, they generally do a minimal amount of stuff and are not good at making decisions on their own.”*
- *“[We] talk to [the students] to figure out what they can do and what they can’t do. We try to base [the work assignments] off of that because we might have people who have never [done a task] before...They could get more accomplished in that time.”*

- *“Sometimes we do have students coming in to help with [a task] and so we’ll have to make sure...that person is going to check their work so that they don’t get all the way through it and then find out that they were doing it wrong the while time...We do some quality control.”*

**Harms the organization’s reputation.** If students complete sub-par work, participants accepted the responsibility to make up for the short coming – or otherwise their organizational image would be tarnished.

- *“Ultimately, it’s our facility and our program and our name on it. If it’s not going well or something is going wrong, we’re not going to just let it fail and say, ‘Oh sorry, well that was not us, [a student group] did that.’ We still have to jump in during the event.”*
- *“I think sometimes having conversation about kind of professionalism within a workspace because...you also want to make sure they’re being respectful of...different beliefs and values.”*
- *“I’m really concerned about the relationships that we build with our community partners because that’s going to last a lot longer than any students that I’m going to have. And so I guess just not be afraid to say [something to the student] or we need to pull [the student] out for the semester.”*

## **Planning**

*“Not too long ago, I advocated that interacting with, engaging with, and supervising volunteers and interns be put into every person’s job description.”*

Participants shared four reoccurring tasks which would occur during the planning phase. Community organizations need to assign supervisors for the student-volunteers and assign what tasks the students will be able to complete. Many of the participants relied on existing handbooks to distribute to the students, which also they have updated regularly. The participants also relied on partnerships that have been built over time to sustain volunteer opportunities for students.

**Determining student supervisors.** Volunteer management takes organizational capacity to oversee, so participants and their organizations determined in advance who would be responsible for the management of student-volunteers.

- *“We let [the students] know that any of the managers can give them tasks but that they really report to one person, so it doesn’t get confusing.”*
- *“We are getting ready actually right now to train any staff who will be directly supervising interns in supervision techniques.”*
- *“[The student are] always assigned to one specific task, one specific staff person, so that staff will oversee that student.”*

**Determining student tasks.** Before students get placed with a community organization, participants worked with their colleagues to decide on which task or tasks could be available for student-volunteers to complete. There is planning and preparation involved to support the students in the organization.

- *When [students are] coming on their own initiative, it gives us a much broader chance and a blank page to start with to ask them what do you really want to get*

*out of this internship. With a class project, we know what they have to do. It's pretty narrowly defined."*

- *"For those special events, [the tasks are] usually pre-setup that I need this number of students to help me, and exactly what they would be helping for, so they know exactly what they're signing up for before they come."*
- *"We do take drop-in students quite often because there's always something to do...But if we have a large group come in, we always ask them to contact us first because...we would have to plan and, of course, we can accordingly."*

**Preparing handbooks.** Most organizations had some handbook, contract, or written set of policies for the management of volunteers. These documents are usually created before the students are placed but may be adjusted to fit the specific goals of students who are volunteers for the community organization.

- *[One of our student-volunteers is] interested in writing and being an English major...[so she is] reviewing our shift management manuals to see if there's anything that [she can improve].*
- *"But every volunteer and intern gets our internship handbook. They get a welcome letter [and] they get some policies they have to sign and return."*
- *"Well, when they first get signed up, I have a contract that [the students] sign."*

**Building partnerships.** Planning is done through building partnership to provide students with well-rounded experiences. The partnerships are used to place volunteers with partner organizations and/or educate the students on how the skills they are learning can be applied in other settings.

- *“It all depends on the students and the partnership that I have built up through the years, which has taken time.”*
- *“And then for the past few years we’ve been going to visit some of our community partners...and we had them talk about how they go through the same things that we do.”*
- *“[Learning contracts] can also make it difficult as well when it gets really tied to some specific areas that [students] may or may not be able to get out of their internship here...We’ll collaborate with other organizations to help them fulfill their learning goals.”*

## **Recruiting**

*“It’s a lot easier when [the students] come on their own initiative because they enjoy it, They want to give back.”*

Some students are required to earn volunteer hours because of their international status, their involvement with school organizations, or their course requirements. Participants create opportunities for these students while actively seeking out volunteers. Participants leverage existing relationships at the educational institutions, while also attempting to build new bonds with faculty and programs. Participants attend volunteer and job fairs held at the educational institutions, and some post flyers on college bulletin boards. Social media is also leveraged to extend the reach of the organizations. Finally, participants utilized their current volunteers to spread word-of-mouth recruitment for new students to get involved.

**Cultural contribution hours.** International students at the local college are required to volunteer a specific number of hours in the community. Many participants benefit from these students to fulfill some of their volunteer roles.

- *“I do have a number of students who look for cultural contribution hours from [the college].”*
- *“Typically, it’s been international students who are doing it for their international student scholarship or status.”*
- *“Well each year at [the college], we have an international student who will come to us from the international site at [the college] because international students need to do a certain amount of volunteer work while they’re in classes.”*

**Greek life, college organizations.** Students may reach out to community organizations to volunteer as a group. Participants said they work with college groups when given advance notice, as the large influx of volunteers takes advanced planning.

- *“[We use] students who are part of service groups or fraternities or sororities.”*
- *“We get a lot of requests for large groups...For instance, we had a fraternity...just about four weeks ago come in and they had seven volunteers.”*
- *“We actively recruit from student organizations, but...[we] usually need about three to four weeks in advance so that we can prepare for that.”*

**National Honor Society.** A few participants shared their connection to local high schools were through the National Honor Society. Each high school group has an advisor who helps connect participants with students who are eager to volunteer in the community.

- *“Sometimes they’re interested in being in a National Honor Society, so they’re looking for volunteer opportunities but not necessarily needing to maybe hit a specific quota to be considered for something else.”*
- *“We work with the school a lot, which would be the NHS, the National Honor Society. That’s the first place that I contact for events because they have to put in so many hours.”*
- *“Most of the ones that we have are through the National Honorary Association for high school kids, so they’re the kids that are in this club. I believe they are in the club because of their grades, but in order to fulfill their requirements of being in the club they have to do so many volunteer hours.”*

**Connections to specific course or faculty.** Participants value existing partnerships with courses and faculty. Some courses require a service-learning requirement, which may be tied to the specific community organization. The personal bonds have allowed participants to build ongoing partnerships to benefit educational institutions and community organizations.

- *“I know at [the college] there are specific classes that require ten hours worth of community service. We get a lot of them in. It’s always fun towards the end of the semester. The last two weeks we’ve had a ton of students in trying to get their ten hours a day because they don’t do it all semester.”*
- *“I think a lot if it is people having personal connections to maybe faculty, or faculty that have an interest in the [community organization] based on the type of major.”*

- *“I know that the relationship with [a specific course] had to do with [the professor] up there who runs the program and has been heavily involved with the [community organization] since its inception.”*

**Contacting campus.** Even when a specific partnership does not yet exist with faculty, participants shared they have other contacts on campus who can spread the word to students in specific majors or courses.

- *“We have a list of contacts on campus so that we can do some more of that large group recruiting.”*
- *“I contact the departments. I contact the professors. I’ve got kind of a partnership with the colleges around here.”*
- *“In recruiting students, [I am] connected with different departments. [I contact] the admin person [for] recruitment to have them pass along the word.”*

**Campus community fair.** Many participants made use of campus and community fairs. The tabling offers an opportunity for students to learn more about and express their interest in volunteering opportunities.

- *“Then we’ll go off and we’ll table at the campus community fair at the beginning of the school year.”*
- *“We try to go to as many tabling events, or career fairs, internship fairs.”*
- *“I’ve done some onsite recruitment at [the college] during their community involvement fair.”*

**Flyers and table tents.** Some participants printed off flyers and table tents to distribute at local educational institutions. The flyers may be distributed widely across

campus or on the bulletin boards of specific departments the organization has partnerships with.

- *“Then we have the bulletin board and we try to post stuff whenever we’re on campus.”*
- *“We put flyers up.”*
- *“We’ve also done everything from Facebook pages to posters hanging all over campus to table tents in [the college] cafeteria.”*

**Online postings.** Participants made use of campus and community virtual listings to share about their volunteer opportunities.

- *“[The local United Way’s] Get Connected [has] volunteer opportunities for organizations all over the community.”*
- *“We also advertise in... the digital newsletter for the school district. And I know we are listed with the community engagement website.”*
- *“Sometimes if we’re in desperate need for help, we’ll just contact the school secretary and ask them to put it on their digital bulletin board that we’re looking for volunteers.”*

**Social media.** Participants post on social media about volunteer opportunities available. Some also reach out to other programs or organizations to leverage their social media to reach more students with the opportunity.

- *“We’ll also share on social media...so that people can hopefully hear about us through that.”*

- *“We use social media, so Facebook. And I’ve contacted the page manager for different departments so that their students are also seeing our stuff on their Facebook page.”*
- *“Otherwise, we do use our Facebook page as well if we’re lacking volunteers to just say, ‘If anyone in the community is willing, we are looking for volunteers for the event.’”*

**Word of mouth.** Participants actively encouraged student-volunteers to share about their experience with friends and classmates. The peer interaction promotes the organizations as positive environments for students to earn volunteer hours.

- *“We do rely on word of mouth. So if we do have volunteers or interns, we encourage them to tell their friends, tell their professors.”*
- *“Yeah, a lot of I would say shoulder tapping. So we get a lot of, ‘Oh, my roommate was a [volunteer at the community organization] last year and said that I should do it.’”*
- *“I think a lot of it is just mostly word of mouth too, like if one of our students has a really great experience, they tend to tell their friends and their friends will join us.”*

### **Orienting Students**

*“If it takes me more time to show you how to do something than it would have been if I would have just done it myself, then it’s not worth it.”*

The orientation process varies depending on the organization and the type of commitment for the student role. Internships and leadership roles will have longer

orientations than one time event opportunities. Some participants interview volunteers as a screening mechanism to ensure a good fit between the student and the organization.

When there is a good fit, the students and participants create mutually beneficial goals to achieve for the length of commitment. Students are then onboarded into the organization, which can be similar to that of an employee onboarding process. Participants shared about handbooks of written procedures and policies they use for volunteers during the orientation phase. Students may complete job shadowing to better understand their role when entering the organization. For short-term event volunteers, the orientation phase is condensed into quicker assignment of tasks with a basic overview of responsibilities.

**Interviewing.** Participants described interviewing as the first phase of training for student-volunteers. Students learn more about the role they are seeking out before making a final commitment to the organization. While interviews for jobs are used to find the best candidate, the interview for volunteers can be an introduction to the organization and volunteer duties.

- *“I meet [the students] briefly during their first interview phase, where I talk kind of about the role [of the student-volunteers].”*
- *“For some of our internships, we do have job descriptions that we try to provide to the students and actually do like an interview process with them to make sure that it’s going to be a good fit.”*
- *“There’s an application process for [the leadership roles]. [Students have to] go through...recruitment and application and selection committee and all that stuff.”*

**Goal setting.** Some students seek out volunteer opportunities to meet goals from a course, internship, or organization they belong to. The goals may be meeting a certain

number of hours or more specific learning goals they need to achieve. Participants work with students to ensure the goals are realistic and fit with the needs of the organization. Even if students do not come with a goal, participants shared how they want the service to be purposeful with specific goals that can be mutually agreed upon.

- *“We have a lot of conversations around balance... A lot of students I’ve worked with have maybe started off their volunteer experience biting off more than they could chew...And two weeks into the semester [the students] realize, ‘Oh no. That does work with [my schedule].’ And so they’ll have to dial it back.”*
- *“[For interns] we are doing obviously more assessment based on the learning goal that they have for the class, that they have for the internship...they’re earning credit for.”*
- *“When you come in, I ask you what your goal for the day is. And that always will generate a conversation of where I might give them some feedback about how to make it more specific.”*

**Onboarding training.** Especially for long term volunteers, onboarding can be similar to that of a new employee. Participants provide students with a tour of the site, introductions to key personnel, and an overview of the organization. Students will be given the policy, procedures, and expectations they are meant to follow. Depending on the length of the commitment, the volunteer handbook may be used or the participant may have highlighted the relevant practices for the tasks being completed.

- *“[During] the training, which usually last two to three hours...I’ll give them the option of how they decide they want to learn. If they want to learn by essentially*

*sitting through a lecture and having me go through [everything] all at once... We can do that... Or if they would rather have me give them tasks that I think will ultimately highlight some of these things, then we can do that."*

- *"And the intern orientation really just covers the bare bones of what's happening at [the community organization]. Here's our organization, here's our mission, here's different policies you have to sign. And kind of the basic overview [of what the student will do]. Position specific training gets done by the site supervisor."*
- *"We give a tour of our whole building... We introduce [the student] to all the staff here and then really just like we would a new employee, we give them the rundown of where they can find what they need and the expectations of the office setting... So we provide a general overview."*

**Volunteer handbooks.** Most of the participants described some handbook or written overview of the organization. The handbooks include required policies and practices for the organization, which get updated regularly. Some participants go over the handbook and provide a copy for the student-volunteers during orientation, whereas others made it available as a reference guide.

- *"Every volunteer and intern gets our internship handbook. They get a welcome let, they get some policies they have to sign and return to me, and a little get to know you page so we can learn more about them and work."*
- *"We have a little onboarding handbook of information about our organization."*
- *"And that's going to be your standard things like background checks and understanding the volunteer handbook of the [community organization]."*

**Job shadowing.** For internships or longer service arrangements, participants give students the opportunity to shadow their supervisor for one shift or a couple of days to get a better understanding of what role the student will be playing in the organization. The student may be assigned tasks as a part of this process to work alongside the supervisor.

- *“If they are a shift leader, I would actually walk them through the shift first...where I’m actually working side by side, or I’m leading the shift and they’re watching.”*
- *“Those first couple days typically tend to be more like shadowing with the staff that they’re working with to attend meetings or learn about what it is the staff person does.”*
- *“I usually just train the student...Hands on training, on the job training.”*

**Assign tasks.** For event volunteer, participants said tasks will be assigned either beforehand or the day of, and students will receive a brief overview of what their tasks entail. The orientation is rather short as the tasks they are assigned are simple. Often, students will receive a written description of their role as a part of the task assignment.

- *“Our protocol with event volunteers is to send them an email ahead of time confirming that they’re signed up, ensuring that we have the correct information about what they’re showing up, where they’re showing up, what their specific duty is that they signed up for.”*
- *“We specifically have someone assigned to meet with them, and we’ll have signs up saying this is where you meet. [The student’s task directions] will usually be*

*written out on paper for them to see, and then they're basically told their direction. And then there's time for questions."*

- *"A lot of students who come [don't have experience], which is fine, which is why we give them the orientation to train them and teach them how to do stuff."*

## **Training**

*"We also support service-learning and help students start to understand that community engagement isn't just going out and doing volunteer stuff. It's also looking at the bigger picture."*

Participants shared some opportunities they provide students for ongoing training, especially for student-volunteers who commit beyond a single event. Some reflection has been used by participants to get student-volunteers to see their service in a larger perspective. A few community organizations have legally required trainings specific to their mission which students participate in. Other internal trainings may be optional for students to attend and further their education. Emails have also been used to promote ongoing training for students.

**Reflection.** A few participants use reflection as a training method to support student-volunteers in seeing their work in a broader context. Some of the reflection prompts may be simple, but the participants are intentional about getting students to reflect.

- *"That reflection may be based on either prompts that the faculty member has set up for them. Or it might be just what did I do today kind of prompt."*
- *"On a weekly basis we put up reflection prompts."*

- *“We give [the students] a little summary of the [program] and the purpose of the [event] and so they feel like even if all they’re doing there is sitting at a check-in table, they still know how the volunteering is connected to the impact of the work that [the community organization] does.”*

**Legally required training.** Some of the community organizations have mission-specific legal oversight the research participants and student-volunteers need to abide by. Therefore, some legally required training is held for students to ensure those standards are met.

- *“Any of our student groups that are working with minors had to go through the [county’s] mandated reporter training.”*
- *“Our interns are required to attend [a mission specific] advocacy training, and volunteers are welcome to attend that training.”*
- *“We need to make sure that we’re maintaining...any laws that are governing our work.”*

**Internal staff trainings.** A few participants said internal staff trainings and speakers are optional for students to attend. None of the internal staff trainings were mandatory, but the participants wanted to support the education of students by opening up the opportunity.

- *“We’ve brought in maybe like a local psychologist to talk about [how to work with the mental health of the target population]. This is probably one of the things we can get better at.”*

- *“If someone from the county is coming during our staff meetings to just give us a training on [the mission], all of our volunteers and interns will be welcome to attend that. So basically any in-house thing.”*
- *“I’m trying to think if we’ve taken interns with us or not. Yeah, sometimes our interns have gone to our internal staff training.”*

**Email updates.** Some participants used email updates for student-volunteers to learn updates to the organization or to learn tips on how to best do their service.

- *“At this time, we don’t have any specific program that’s laid out for ongoing education, other than maybe me sending out email reminders about new updates or things that have changed.”*
- *“I send [the students] out information [on program tips] every month. They get a lot of emails through me.”*
- *“We’ll keep [the student’s contact information] in the database between six months and a year depending on how long they said that they’re going to be [in the area]. Then we’ll send an email saying...we need help at events because we also have people and students of course who want to do our major events.”*

## **Managing**

*“As much as we love students, it’s just like managing an employee.”*

Managing students and other volunteers takes organizational resources.

Participants shared some of their regular practices for managing students as volunteers.

For certain program activities, participants have created shifts for which students can sign up or have assigned semester-long tasks so students know what they will be doing.

Otherwise, participants have needed to anticipate when students will finish one task and be ready to receive more assignments. Most participants had some method of recording volunteer hours for internal tracking and students' records. To retain students as volunteers, participants have been open to student feedback and have adjusted student's work to align with the student's interests. Participants have used constructive feedback when necessary, especially when helping students learn about professionalism in the workplace. For one-time volunteers, participants regularly check-in on their work to ensure students are on-task and following directions.

**Register for shifts.** Some participants use online schedules to allow students and other volunteers to sign up to support the community organization. The schedule may be for a one-time event or ongoing shifts to support the everyday work of the organization.

- *“We run shifts from Sunday...until Thursday...We have nine full-time shifts that go every week.”*
- *“Then the college students sign up and then there's no training involved. They just come and they get placed for that particular weekend and then they have to quit in so many hours.”*
- *“They would be assigned [an event task] ...They may only put in like two to three hours and then a new group will come in, if it is a longer event.”*

**Assign semester-long task.** When ongoing projects are available, participants have assigned students semester-long tasks which require ongoing work.

- “[Students are] always assigned to one specific task, one specific staff person, so that staff oversees that students and [will] be the one that’s mentoring them and providing them direct feedback.”
- “You would get one [task] and that’s your [task] for the entire semester.”
- “Each year we have one [student] that comes and [completes an ongoing task] for us...They know what they’re doing...We just let them in and they do their work.”

**Anticipating student needs.** In order to minimize the downtime students have, participants shared the supervisors have needed to have new tasks or projects ready for student-volunteers when their current task is complete. Students have not always felt self-motivated or empowered to initiate another project or task.

- “It really should be about the student-volunteers doing the volunteer work, and the [supervisor] should be managing those volunteers to the point where you’re anticipating what their needs are and so you’re working two or three steps ahead of them.”
- “Depending on the time, we have to plan in advance what they’ll be doing...If they finish [one task], then we give them another task. That way they know that they’re doing something that’s valuable.”
- “Today, we’ve got an intern that’s getting towards the end of her internship. It didn’t appear that she was working on anything work related today, so I brought a giant stack of envelopes out and said, ‘Here.’ I guess we sometimes give them tasks to the level at which they’re performing.”

**Recording volunteer hours.** For both the student and community organization, volunteer hours have been tracked as a regular management practice.

- *“Yeah, I have [the students] sign in...I just want their leader to know as well that these are the kids that showed up and that will be emailed to [the leader] at the end of the event.”*
- *“I did need to keep track of the hours when it was service-learning because they needed to do a total of ten hours or more. The intern I have not kept, they’re kind of on their own to keep track of their hours.”*
- *“We teach students to go in, and they can log in their hours, and then they can write a little reflection.”*

**Being open to feedback.** Sometimes the student’s outside perspective has been valuable for the community organization. Participants have created space to welcome feedback from students to adjust the work the organization does, even if the student just wanted to try out something new.

- *Students may come up with ideas about how they would rather change the [work they are doing]., so if it’s something that isn’t a violation of a rule...I might say, ‘Hey that’s great, go for it.’”*
- *“With the interns, we have formal sit downs, discussions like, ‘Okay, we’re halfway through. This is where we thought you’d be, or this is what we thought you’d be able to produce.’ Even ask them if they feel like they’re getting out of the experience what they wanted.”*

- *“The [volunteer] job itself is fairly subjective...The approach to creating really, really engaging experiences has to be different as well.”*

**Fitting role with student interests.** Student-volunteers may come in for various reasons, but participants have retained some of those volunteers by tailoring the service to student interests.

- *“When I am trying to recruit students, I really do look for students who I think can be self-starters and motivated to find areas that interest them and kind of take things and run with it for their own learning.”*
- *“Typically feedback comes in the form of: ‘I’ve notice that this is what you like to do. Have you considered instead...doing this [other task] because it sounds like it fits within your interests?’”*
- *“Try to find projects or things that do motivate [the students]. Try to engage them in doing things.”*

**Constructive feedback.** Participants acknowledged the need for ongoing coaching for student-volunteers, who may not have previous experience in a professional setting. When the volunteers are around long enough, participants have an opportunity to provide more constructive feedback to students.

- *“For a lot of the students, it might be the first time they’re working in a professional office type setting. So I think that some of that coaching and feedback just happens naturally as part of it.”*
- *“Both the interns and the [regular volunteers] are the ones where they’re here long enough that we can give feedback along the way.”*

- *“Constructive feedback is an important thing for sure, but when that’s the only thing you focus on, everything else kind of leaves.”*

**Professional standards.** Participants have provided feedback to students on how to be professional in the workplace. Some students in the past have considered the volunteering to be more casual than the community organization needs their role to be.

- *“I think sometimes having conversations about kind of professionalism within a workspace...you also want to make sure that they’re being respectful of [clients who have] different beliefs and values.”*
- *“[When visiting our community partners], it’s good to see that professionals are doing this too...Going in [to] see how other people do it gets us an idea of how that’s being done and how we might be able to consider doing it differently.”*
- *“The two biggest challenges that I see over and over are the student’s ability to write and the student’s ability to talk to people in person or on the phone...They’re just, I don’t know, they’re just afraid to pick up our regular old-school telephone and talk to somebody that they don’t know. I think it’s generational.”*

**Double-checking student work.** For event volunteers, participants shared that management involves regularly checking in on the student-volunteers to ensure they are staying on task and accurately following the directions.

- *“We have had them consistently monitored. Usually we’ll have [the students] checked out every fifteen minutes, just do a walk by to make sure that they’re still on task.”*

- *“Yeah, it’s basically just kind of going around and checking in on them after [the supervisor] got them started.”*
- *“Sometimes we do have students coming in to help with [a specific task] so we’ll have to make sure that [a staff member] is going to check their work so that they don’t get all the way through it and then found out that they were doing it wrong the whole time.”*

**Adjusting for student absences.** A regular challenge for participants was how to adapt to the lack of reliability of students as volunteers. Some participants shared how they managed those situations.

- *“This semester in particular we’ve had a lot of students that have signed up that didn’t show up. So it may be that we have four people for a shift signed up and then the two shift leaders and only one person shows up. So it means three people instead of six people are doing all the work.”*
- *“We have had other people call and ask for other to help out as they knew of someone...Otherwise, we just have our managers and other staff members that are there kind of step in and they’ll fill in those spots.”*
- *“I know one student have like an illness that she couldn’t finish her internship. So that was a team meeting with her professor and the intern.”*

### **Recognizing**

*“You have to give [volunteers] incentives and you have to give them rewards on some level in order for them to participate and to stay active...I truly believe that a good volunteer program has to have good incentives, otherwise it’s just doomed for failure.”*

A variety of methods were used to recognize students who volunteer for the community organization beyond verbal, everyday praise. Participants gave students written thank you notes and publicly posted praise for the volunteers in the community organization's program. Student-volunteers receive t-shirts and other small gifts to show appreciation of their time. Most participants provided meals to students at either volunteer appreciation parties or for individual thank you lunches. Some participants offered small financial benefits or referred students to scholarships specifically targeted for volunteers. All students were recognized by being able to build skills and to grow their resumes for future career opportunities.

**Written thank you notes.** Thank you cards were a common type of recognition participants used. The cards may be distributed annually or at the end of a student-volunteer's time at the organization.

- *“When one of the guests asks for a volunteer by name, to me that's an indication that the volunteer is having really positive interactions with our guests. I also make sure to bring that up to the volunteer in an email immediately.”*
- *“At the end of everybody's volunteer and intern experience, I give them a little handwritten card and a little gift.”*
- *“I know I've done kind of thank you cards or I've brought in treats and had them in the back room.”*

**Public publicity.** Participants have shared volunteering success stories publicly with news organizations, on social media, and in public areas of their organization. This recognition has rewarded the volunteers for their efforts, while also advertising the success of the volunteering program.

- *“We typically, like with the groups that are volunteering at events, we’ll take pictures of them and post them on social media.”*
- *“[The local newspaper] is going to do an article about us next week. They came and took photos this week. And I gave them my piece, but I also sent an email out to all of our students leaders [asking them to] share [their] insights with this reporter.”*
- *“We also have a way online for guests to give us feedback to the [community organization]. And when those are about specific individual staff [and volunteers] we’ll make sure to print those out and post them publicly because public recognition is important.”*

**T-shirts.** Many participants used t-shirts as a reward for volunteering and a method of making volunteers feel included as a staff member.

- *“For the day-of [volunteers], we actually give them all t-shirts. For our interns, we give them staff clothing so they feel like they’re one of our staff.”*
- *“We would get bling, should we say, we’d get t-shirts and cups and things like that that we would give to student leaders.”*
- *“A lot of times we’re providing [the students] t-shirts so we have them let us know what size t-shirt they want.”*

**Volunteer appreciation meals.** Almost all participants used food as a way of recognizing the student-volunteers in their organizations. Some participants have hosted volunteer appreciation parties and others have taken students out for individual meals.

- *“Often that looks like an end-of-program celebration... We’ll bring in a bunch of pizza and the teen volunteers and do kind of an award ceremony and it’ll be a fun time.”*
- *“We usually do things like we’ll take them out for their birthday and definitely when they’re done at the end. We’ll take them out to eat or do some kind of special meal or something like that for them and recognize their time.”*
- *“Once a year we do a volunteer appreciation dinner. It’s looked a little different throughout the years...I think individual staff do a little extra sometimes. So I know one of our staff had a really great experience with her intern specifically and she took her out to lunch at the end.”*

**Financial benefits.** A few participants have given financial rewards to volunteers and interns. The recognition varies from scholarship opportunities to mileage for travel to the community organization.

- *“I wish I had scholarships for everybody...I don’t have that kind of money, but I can reference them [to scholarship opportunities].”*
- *“If a student has done a really good job, sometimes we do a little monetary gift for them as well at the end. We don’t tell them about it upfront and it’s not expected. We just might add it on.”*
- *“We don’t give [students] a lot. It’s enough to cover their mileage and whatever...College students need money. They’re kids that, some are working two and three jobs and go to school and try to make ends meet so anything is better than nothing.”*

**Career skills and opportunities.** All students who volunteer with community organizations can build their skills and grow their resumes. Participants shared how they support the career prospects of students who volunteer for them.

- *“Anytime I know that there’s a job coming open I will either advertise it directly with the shift leaders or I’ll ask to put it in our student news letter that goes out to all volunteers.”*
- *“First of all, [volunteering is] a foot in the door towards their career. So it’s a win-win no matter what...It looks really good on their resume, really good.”*
- *“In fact, sometimes that’s how we actually get student leaders into those leadership positions is that they started out volunteering as part of an organization and they say, ‘I really like this, I want to do more.’ And then they become a more permanent volunteer.”*

### **Concluding**

*“I try and really stress this with students that, first of all, like I said, for some of my programs, we’ve been doing this for fifty years. So you are kind of walking on the shoulders of giants and the legacy that you leave is long-lasting – so make sure it’s a good one.”*

There was overlap in the coding between recognizing and concluding partnerships with student volunteers. A few additional themes emerged for concluding. Some participants shared they like to formally say goodbye when they are able, but the closure is not always realistic with student volunteers. Some students have just needed to get

their hours signed off by the supervisor. For longer placements, participants have had exit interviews or exit surveys for students to provide feedback to the organization.

**Closure (or not).** Participants have not always had an opportunity to formally close student-volunteer placements. The students may just leave the event when they are scheduled to finish, or the students may not sign up for another shift without notice. When participants have had an opportunity to say goodbye, they attempt to make it meaningful.

- *“Well, unfortunately the nature of some student volunteers is sometimes it just fizzles out and the volunteers just don’t come in. When we do have an end date, we try to recognize that as best we can.”*
- *“There’s been times where they’re supposed to stay to help clean up, but then they’ll just end, or they’ll just leave because they say they have to leave at the time that we said they could be done.”*
- *“We do a little formal office ‘thank you’ and goodbye for some closure.”*

**Certify student hours.** Students who have needed volunteer hours for a course or group commitment have concluded their volunteer placement by having the participants sign off on their hours.

- *“I guess on the formality side there’s paperwork that we always have to fill out for the university... We have feedback forms that we have to fill out and send to the professor about how we felt that they did.”*

- *“When they’re done volunteering, of course we’re always sad...When a student comes in, what we’ll do is we’ll print off their volunteer hours, but we will keep them in the system [in case the student comes back to volunteer again].”*
- *“Most typically, the bulk of the volunteers that are coming are really just having us sign paperwork providing for an attendance. And we don’t really evaluate beyond whether or not we overall had a good experience with a student or a group.”*

**Exit interviews, exit surveys.** Some participants have used exit interviews or end-of-the-year surveys to assess their volunteer programs. The assessment has provided opportunity for the programs to adapt and grow.

- *“Yes, we do an exit interview, so that’s basically just them meeting with me and I ask them about their overall internship experience...Then they also have the opportunity to do an anonymous evaluation of data so that we see some people might not be comfortable telling me what went well and what didn’t.”*
- *“We’ll send [a survey] out to the [student-volunteers], how was this experience for you? And then...we do some, some I would call more reflections, and some are definitely either surveys or evaluations or assessments.”*
- *“When we do evaluations and we have them come in and give their yearly...reports to our board.”*

### **Summary of Findings**

The coding brought forward themes on tiers of volunteers, benefits and challenges of student-volunteers, and details of the seven constructs of human resource management

model. Each of the themes had sub-categories which expressed the experience of participants in richer detail. The quotes represent how each sub-category was brought up in at least three of the interviews representing a range of experiences. The next chapter will contextualize some of the codes discovered in the student-volunteer management experience. The themes and subcategories will be compared against existing literature for similarities and new opportunities for further investigation.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to better understand the nonprofit perspective of student-volunteering. This chapter includes a discussion of the types of volunteer roles students may have, the benefits of working with students, and models of student volunteering, such as the human resource management model. The chapter concludes with limitations of the current research and suggestions for future studies.

The following three research questions were used in the creation of analysis of the study, including the current discussion and suggestions for future research:

- What roles do students volunteer for in community organizations?
- What are the benefits of hosting students as volunteers?
- What management models are used for students in volunteer roles?

The interview questions established in chapter three allowed the researcher to gather additional information about the management of student-volunteers that may have been overlooked in previous research studies. Each interview intermingled the coding of major themes related to the research questions across the interview. In other words, participants shared information related to “What volunteer roles are [students] usually assigned?” during interview questions three, but they shared additional information about the same topic when asked about seemingly unrelated topics.

The open, axial, and thematic coding process allowed the themes described in chapter four to be properly sorted without preconceived alignment based on the interview questions. The coding resulted in three tiers of volunteer roles that students have within

nonprofit organizations, which will be compared against Macduff et al.'s (2009) four models of volunteer programs. There were ten benefits and seven challenges for nonprofit professionals in utilizing students as volunteers, which will be compared to the community motivations of service-learning and challenges of student-volunteers found in the literature. Last, there were seven coded constructs of the human resources management model, but not all constructs were as relevant or necessary to describe how the participants manage their volunteers.

### **Student-Volunteer Roles in Community Organizations**

The first tier of student-volunteers found in the current research were “event volunteers.” These volunteers come in with little training to complete easy tasks for a determined amount of time. This tier relates well to the serendipitous volunteer model described by Macduff et al. (2009). For serendipitous volunteers, community organizations create tasks that are easy for volunteers to complete without much training. Stoecker and Tryon (2009) indicate this model of student volunteering is in response to students wanting low-entry opportunities to earn volunteer hours. The model may not serve the community organizations to the full potential of the volunteer hours contributed, but volunteer managers gladly adapt to welcome the free labor.

The participants in the study spoke positively about the event or serendipitous volunteers. The community organizations have created programs which revolve around using low-commitment volunteers as an entry point to their organization. A few participants post shifts online for students to sign up for regularly. Other participants use a shift model for their events, which may include students and other serendipitous volunteers. If the right tasks are available, the model of student-volunteering is

accessible to students looking for hours and serves the community organizations looking for menial tasks to get completed.

The second tier of project-based volunteers and third tier of interns/leadership volunteers both fit within Macduff et al.'s (2009) traditional model of managing students as volunteers. There are clear hierarchies and established protocols in place for students. Project-based volunteers usually have more independence, which could lean towards Macduff et al.'s entrepreneurial model of volunteering. Some participants said the programs would not be in existence if students did not arrive with a special skill set and idea in mind to create the program. However, students still have roles and supervisors, along with a specific commitment in place. The roles are not as open-ended as entrepreneurial volunteers.

Traditional volunteer management is the most common form of volunteer management, but participants have shared how there are multiple forms of the traditional volunteer management. The open and axial coding found clear distinctions between project-based volunteers and interns/leadership volunteers in the level of commitment and responsibility given to each group. Interns/leadership volunteers committed more time to the organization and, therefore, received more responsibility in their roles. The management of the two types of volunteers differed as well, which will be discussed in more depth when the models of student-volunteering were analyzed.

None of the interviews reflected the fourth model of volunteer programs described in the literature. The social change model exists in volunteer programs aimed at changing the existing structures to better meet the mission of an organization. This model is common for advocacy organizations and service opportunity focused on civic

engagement (Ethridge, 2006; Macduff et al., 2009). The sampling of nonprofit professionals did not intentionally exclude advocacy and civic engagement organizations. A few of the community organizations interviewed have advocacy programs as a part of their work. Further research would be needed to determine whether the rural setting may impact the lack of social change organization in the community, or whether there is another explanation for this model not being present in the sample.

### **Benefits of Using Students as Volunteers**

The current research broadens the limited information on community motivations and benefits of using students as volunteers. Virtually all participants were able to identify benefits of using students as volunteers within their organization. The participants gave a more optimistic view of the positive contributions students make to their organizations and to the community than the view given by challenges of service-learning described in the literature. Part of the broader range of benefits found is because of a bias in the sample selection. Participants were chosen because of current and ongoing programs in which they use students as volunteers, which means the community organizations they work for continue to find value in students. A few participants alluded to other community organizations which no longer welcome students because of previous issues, but the participants in the study have found models of student-volunteering which work well for their respective organizations.

Stoecker and Tryon (2009) identified four motivations community organizations have for using students as volunteers: (a) to increase their organizational capacity, (b) to support students, (c) to build long-term relationships, and (d) to connect with the schools. Each of these motivations was repeated in the current research. Participants shared how

they increased their organizational capacity through student-volunteers by stretching their resources through the use of free labor. Some of the programs would not be viable without student-volunteers providing their labor for the organization. These increases to organizational capacity were coded in the current study as “programs exist because of students” and “financial benefits.” Littlepage et al. (2012) found over half of nonprofit professionals have increased their organizational capacity as a result of student-volunteers. The bias in recruiting for the current sample focused on community organizations in that half who increase their capacity, so the experiences drawn from the qualitative research are not representative of community organizations in general. Edwards et al. (2001) found students served in different roles than general community volunteers. The benefits drawn from students to increase organizational capacity may depend on having a fit between students and the structure and/or organizational mission.

The second motivation, “to support students,” was identical in nature to the code “organizational values.” Both described supporting students as within the mission of the community organization. While this benefit does not directly relate to the outcomes students are working to produce, the participation of students in itself can be a benefit. Literature describes being able to relate the organization mission to supporting students as an important factor to viewing the student-volunteers as an asset to the community organization (Basinger & Bartholomew, 2006; Gazley et al., 2013)

The third community motivation “to build long-term relationships” focuses on how the students may become future employees, donors, and supporters (Stocker & Tryon, 2009). This theme was found in a few of the codes from the interviews. “Retention beyond initial commitment” was an immediate transition from the initial

commitment to a longer-term relationship between the student and community organization. While not all students make the transition, Stoecker and Tryon (2009) also found even a portion of students extending their commitment as a significant benefit to the community organizations. Participants also described “workforce development” in how the students may become future employees for either their organization or a partner in the community. The service can help form a work ethic and habits for successful employment once the student graduates and enters the field. Again, the literature agrees that student-volunteering can serve as a stepping stone to a future career, or at least an opportunity for a future donor to know the work that’s done at the organization (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

The code “word-of-mouth recruitment” could also be related to building long-term relationships, as student-volunteers are clearly contributing to the organization beyond their commitments. However, this code could also be related to the fourth community motivation, “to connect with schools.” A separate code of “relationship with school” is a clearer indication of a desire to connect with schools, which was found in the current research. The literature had more depth on this theme than found in the current research. Previous research found specific connections to increase the visibility of the community organization to faculty and staff at colleges (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). The only similar references to faculty were in how some of the service relationships began and are sustained. No participants mentioned the benefit of growing their networks further by connecting to additional faculty and staff through the students. However, one participant mentioned the difficulty of reforming new partnerships when

someone at the educational institution leaves. Worrall (2007) also found a breakdown of communication during staff transitions at the schools.

The three additional codes found were not addressed directly as a community motivation by Stoecker and Tryon (2009). “Fresh ideas,” “fresh motivation,” and “dependability and availability” were additional benefits participants saw in students. “Fresh ideas” was about having the most up-to-date information from colleges and research to apply in the community. Instead of having to seek out professional development, participants can make use of the local college population to bring these ideas to them. “Fresh motivation” emphasized strongly by participants working in higher burnout human services organizations. But other participants said they appreciated getting reinvigorated and excited by the students’ enthusiasm for their work. Lastly, some participants felt students were more dependable and available to work the volunteer opportunities than other potential pools of volunteers. All volunteers may have some schedule conflicts or reliability issues, but the participants felt students were, at least in some cases, a strong pool to work with.

### **Models of Student-Volunteer Management**

The third research question focused on the models being used to oversee students volunteering in community organizations. Seven of the interview questions in the study were written using the seven constructs of the human resource management model: (a) planning, (b) recruiting, (c) orienting, (d) training, (e) managing, (f) recognizing, and (g) concluding. The open and axial coding phases allowed additional information on models of volunteer management to come forward outside of these questions as well. Depending on the type of service placement, varying degrees of management strategies were used to

oversee the students as volunteers. Gazley et al. (2012) described how students were less likely to be subjected to volunteer management practices than community volunteers.

This was reflected in the research for event and project-based volunteers.

Interns/leadership volunteers were found to experience more management practices.

**Event volunteer management.** Volunteers who signed up/showed up for a one-time shift experienced the least amount of volunteer management practices. Far short of the seven-phase model described by Studer (2016), event volunteers would be better described as having a two-phase model: recruiting and supervising. The minor orientation, management, and recognition done for event volunteers could easily be combined into one phase labeled supervising. Participants also had to plan for event volunteers, but participants viewed the planning as outside of the volunteer management process; the participants would have to plan the event and tasks even if they did not have access to a pool of student-volunteers. Further, literature described the planning phase as creating job descriptions and duties in partnership with the educational institution from which students were recruited (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Littlepage et al., 2012; Gazley et al., 2013; Studer, 2016). The participants shared their planning for event volunteers was completed independently.

The recruitment phase in event volunteer management included posting or advertising a need for a specific number of individuals for a specific time frame.

Participants appreciated when they were able to contact individuals at the educational institution to recruit students, but others focused on placing the shift online for students to register through. The literature also showed the benefit of having a contact at the school to facilitate the service relationship, although that level of partnership is not always

present (Gazley et al., 2013; Vernon & Foster, 2002; Worrall, 2007). However, the literature went further than recruitment efforts in event volunteer management to emphasize community organizations seeking students who are a good fit with the organization's culture and needs (Bolman & Deal, 2017; Studer, 2016). Participants who oversaw event volunteers welcomed any level skill and, in some cases, wanted any "warm bodies" to fill the available roles.

The supervision phase for event volunteers was abbreviated. Participants described a brief orientation which involved the minimal directions necessary to perform a repetitive task for the duration of the shift, which was coded as "assign tasks" in the interviews. Some participants said they printed off these directions for students or sent them in an email beforehand. Then students are given supplies, which may include a t-shirt to recognize their involvement, and sent to the location where they were to perform the assigned duties. In the code "double-checking student work," participants said either they or an assigned supervisor would check in with the students every fifteen minutes to ensure the students stayed on task and did not need any clarifications. The brief interactions with the students fell short of what was currently described in literature but may be typical for event volunteers. More research about event or serendipitous volunteering would be needed to determine if that is the case.

The supervision stage involves some aspects of orienting, managing, and recognizing constructs described in the literature. The orientation phase is an opportunity for students to learn about the tasks they will be assigned and how the tasks connect to the mission of the community organization (Cuskelly et al., 2006). Not all participants made a connection to the mission during the brief orientation, but they did assign tasks

and set expectations for the shift. Participants recognized the students upfront, as the group may not come back together at the end of the shift. The individual or group recognition has been found in previous research as well (Cuskelly et al. 2006; Studer, 2016). Students, when serving as event volunteers, conduct most of the service without direct supervision. Macduff et al. (2009) concurs that service conducted by students has varying degrees of oversight. Other research supports the participants' practice of checking in with students after tasks are assigned to ensure the students are confident with the work they are undertaking (Studer, 2016).

Event volunteers come with a variety of challenges as well. One challenge coded through the interviews, "only basic task," was primarily focused on event volunteers. The limited interaction with the students in this model created a difficulty in establishing standards of the work. Further, without supervision, students may focus more on socializing with their peers volunteering alongside them instead of the task at hand. "Socializing/off task" was a challenge coded for all tiers of student-volunteers. These two challenges can lead to a third challenge: "harms the organization's reputation." If the work is not being completed adequately, the community organization – not the students – look bad in the eyes of the community being served.

**Project-based volunteer management.** With project-based volunteers committing more time to the community organization than event volunteers, the participants used additional management practices with this second tier. However, participants did not discuss using the human resource management model with students in these roles. As with event volunteers, recruiting was the first phase described in project-based partnerships. Second, the student-volunteers and the community

organization would plan together what project would be taking place, which would include some background and orientation for the students. There was no ongoing training for students and the management was indirect; students may be working more closely with their instructors than the community staff. Finally, the student may be recognized as the partnership concludes, but there were no consistent practices across interviews for this stage. Overall, a four-construct model would better fit project-based volunteer management: recruiting, planning, managing, and concluding.

Recruitment for project-based volunteers is usually conducted through existing relationships and partnerships. Participants named specific instructors or academic departments they work with regularly for student service projects. The code “connections to specific course or faculty” described some of these relationships, which were often started as result of the faculty reaching out. Some participants attempt to establish new, ongoing partnerships by “contacting campus,” which was another code found in recruitment. Existing literature also found the relationships can be initiated by either party. The project-based partnership often revolves around a specific course or program that fits with the needs of the community organization (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Foster, 2002). In order to continue partnerships, community organizations may be hesitant to reject new students who come from these partnerships out of fear future recruitment from the same partner may end (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). One participant shared a story of a failed partnership, but both he and the instructor wanted to continue the connection even though one group of students did not follow through with their commitment.

The planning for project-based volunteer opportunities is often done after the students have been selected. Participants may introduce some parameters of the project, but the students either as an individual or as a group have a wide range of discretion on how the project is approached. Therefore, some of the planning for the project may be done by the students following academic requirements of the instructor. Communication between all parties involved increases the benefit to the relationship, but takes more time and effort (Worrall, 2007). Macduff et al. (2009) found that volunteers are often interested in short-term opportunities. Project-based volunteering with definite beginning and ending dates works well to fit this need, especially with students who may be on an academic calendar. “School schedule/calendar” was one code found in the interviews, as planning programs around the school calendar may not be ideal for the community organization. Nonetheless, participants found the partnerships valuable.

The management of project-based volunteers tended to be indirect. The code “assign semester long task” brought to light how sometimes students are given an ongoing project they can develop throughout their volunteer commitments. The project may be repetitive to conduct the same task each time they volunteer, or the project may be more complicated where students take over all tasks involved. Participants were available to answer questions and they check in with the students as they completed the tasks, but overall the students worked more independently than the other two tiers of volunteers. Some participants mentioned this was because the instructor provided additional management to ensure the students’ success. Gazley et al. (2013) also found management consisted of a team effort between instructors and community staff. The community organizations may be more concerned with the final results than the process

through which the results are achieved (Macduff et al., 2009). Cuskelly et al. (2006) found that management should be proactive to alleviate any problems in the student-volunteer experience prior to the issues affecting the community organization. Most participants seemed satisfied with the existing relationships, especially when they have a contact person at the educational institution to assist in holding students responsible.

Finally, project-based volunteerism was concluded with presentations of the work completed. Presentations were a reflection of the tasks completed throughout the service term, or they could be implementing the project the student(s) were designing.

Depending on the service, some students leave once the hours were completed without notice to the community organization. Participants shared they would like to recognize students once they were done, but some students leave without any formal conclusion. This pattern was coded “closure (or not)” to show students may fizzle out with their service. Stoecker and Tryon (2009) described the conclusion of service partnerships as an opportunity for reflection to ensure future success. However, participants did not share intentional reflection as a part of project-based volunteering. The partnership may or may not have been successful, but participants were aware that a new group of students would be coming in for a fresh start.

**Intern/leadership volunteer management.** The management of interns/leadership volunteers most closely reflected the human resource management model. These volunteering opportunities require the most commitment for students and community organizations alike. Not all seven constructs were equally present in the interviews. Planning, as with the event volunteer model, was again viewed as something outside of volunteer management. Only one participant clearly articulated how her

organization prepared for volunteer placements. Most participants, when asked about planning, avoided the practices of planning described in the literature and instead spoke about how they recruited students as volunteers. Recruiting and orienting were both apparent during the axial coding stage as significant to the participants' experiences managing students as volunteers. The coding began to overlap for the constructs of training, managing, and recognizing volunteers. Formal training opportunities were viewed more of as a reward for students who gave their time, instead of a practice to support the student's work. Finally, the concluding construct was again limited, similar to the project-based volunteers.

***Planning.*** For interns/leadership volunteers, the participants shared how the roles often have job descriptions and applications. The process is more informal than a paid position, but there is an intentional effort to ensure the volunteer role is a good fit for the student. Participants discussed with students their goals for the position and thought through methods to align those goals with the work of the community organization. Previous research on the planning phase recommends a clear job description targeted towards the needs of prospective student-volunteers (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Studer, 2016). The upfront preparation of clarifying the roles and goals can help everyone in the partnership have a mutual understanding of what the position entails (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

***Recruiting.*** Recruiting for interns/leadership volunteers used a few key strategies. Participants with leadership roles available used those as promotional opportunities for event and project-based volunteers. Once a student's initial commitment was completed, the leadership roles were available for application. Often

these roles and the internship became available at the beginning of the academic year, or at least the academic term. As the roles have formal job descriptions, participants posted the opportunities on volunteer/job boards to recruit students, which was coded as “online postings.” Participants also frequently attend “campus community fairs,” which was another code. The recruitment strategy of formal postings or job fairs was commonly found in previous literature (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Foster, 2002). The review of literature did not find other examples of students earning a promotion to a leadership position as a volunteer. Future research may be able to identify the frequency and impact of this strategy.

***Orienting.*** Participants described orientating students as “interviewing,” “goal setting,” and “onboarding training.” The interview practices were more of a formality to introduce the students to the organization. No participants shared the interviews as a competitive process where they would turn away students; the participants describe the interviews as a method to inform the students of the expectations prior to them making a commitment. Goal setting was also important for participants. Students can be overambitious at the beginning of a volunteer opportunity, so participants worked with students to develop concrete and realistic goals. Goal setting was also used to avoid the challenge of a “gradual decline in performance.” By having realistic goals from the start, students begin their service with a successful foundation. Orienting also includes typical onboard training, such as reviewing the volunteer manual and receiving introductions to the staff within the organization. Previous research found the orientation to the community organization and the role of the student as an essential construct for student-volunteering (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Gazley et al., 2013). Interviews and goal setting have

also been commonly found in other studies to ensure the expectations of the student and community organization are aligned (Gazley et al., 2013; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

**Training.** Once students started in their intern/leadership volunteer role, there was minimal additional training given. Some participants gave students opportunity for reflection. The “reflection” coding described optional opportunity for students to think deeper about their work. Students were also given “email updates” with updates or reminders about the organization, but again not required information. Some organizations required training that was mission-specific “legal required training” given to students more as a part of the orientation and onboarding than as ongoing training. Finally, some students were invited to “internal staff trainings” as a part of their internship. Various students may be required to attend meetings for academic purposes, but participants described the invitation as a way of recognizing students for their time and commitment. Previous research found twenty-five percent of community organizations provided access to professional development opportunities (Gazley et al., 2012). Most training is done internally or in conjunction with the educational institution (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009). The practices described by participants were aligned with the varying practices found in literature. However, the optional nature of the internal opportunities may lead to future research on whether the training construct should be absorbed into a part of managing or recognizing volunteers.

**Managing.** For the managing construct, interns/leadership volunteers were subject to a higher level of practices than event or project-based volunteers. Participants assigned students to a specific supervisor for the term of their volunteering, who worked collaboratively with the student to fulfill the mutually determined goals of the position.

Students learned how to meet “professional standards,” as the volunteering may be the first time in a professional environment. This may come in the form of “constructive feedback,” which participants described more as coaching than a punitive reminder. Interns/leadership volunteers had more opportunity than the first two tiers to influence the community organizations. Participants were intentional at “being open to feedback” from the students as a part of the management process. Students may have new ideas or knowledge from their schooling that could help the community organization do their work better. The literature review found the managing of volunteers as the most impactful construct in the human resource management model. Regularly checking in with the student-volunteers can lead to stronger outcomes for the service being conducted (Cuskelly et al., 2006; Studer, 2016). The interview gave richer details on what the management of student-volunteers entails, as previous research focused on the academic perspective of instructors working with community staff to manage the volunteers (Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Vernon & Foster, 2002).

***Recognizing.*** Recognizing the volunteers for their work was a point of interest in the interviews. Participants were very thoughtful about going beyond verbal or written praise to thank the students who fulfilled extended commitments to the community organizations. Food was a common reward for the participants and students to come together to celebrate the achievements. This theme was coded as “volunteer appreciation meals” as several participants described gathering where everyone came together to celebrate around food. Students may receive small “financial benefits” as a part of their volunteering, which range from mileage to opportunities for scholarships. Some participants shared how financial benefits may bring questions to whether the students are

actually volunteers, but the financial benefits amounted to reimbursing them for actual expenses if anything was given at all. The literature reviewed did not mention any reimbursement opportunity, but instead focused the recognizing on meals (Cuskelly et al. 2006; Studer, 2016). There is opportunity to study more about how students are recognized and what boundaries exist for a student to still be considered a volunteer.

***Concluding.*** The coding of the interviews often overlapped between recognizing and concluding student placements. Meals were commonly used at the end of the placement or an academic term as a final goodbye for the interns/leadership volunteers. The other common practice for this tier of volunteers was “exit interviews, exit surveys” where participants would formally ask students about their experience. This could be an in-person conversation or an anonymous survey for the student to fill out afterwards. Participants did not disclose how often the exit interviews or surveys result in changes being made, but previous research shows the recommendations can improve organizational capacity (Carpenter, 2011; Littlepage et al., 2012).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Participants found many benefits of using student-volunteers in different models of volunteer management. Further research could be done on the various models community organizations use when managing students. The current research found that the human resource management model aligned well with the intern/leadership volunteers, but many other student-volunteer roles would be better envisioned in simpler models. Event volunteers are recruited then supervised for the duration of the shift. The two-stage model may be a more authentic analysis for the perspective of community organizations. Program-based volunteers also did not organically fit with the seven-

construct model. Instead, a four-stage model which reorganized the constructs may work better: recruiting, planning, managing, and concluding. Further research would be needed to verify this process. Even interns/leadership volunteers did not have salient planning, training, and concluding practices. The open and axial coding did not bring up these three constructs; the three were only brought forward through thematic coding. While participants had information to share on the constructs, the interviews and coding had to be intentional to bring those practices forward.

Research on student-volunteer management can allow practitioners in community organizations to create effective programs for managing students as volunteers. A few participants shared how other organizations who were not represented in the sample no longer work with students because of negative experiences. The current research shows students can be highly beneficial to community organizations when the model of volunteering is designed correctly. All participants felt students have brought benefits to their organization. There is opportunity for action-research to be done to see if formerly failed student-volunteering relationships can be redesigned to create a worthwhile endeavor. This would provide insight as to whether a correct model is needed, or if the mission of the organization is more influential in determining whether the community organization will have success with students as volunteers.

The current research adds a rural perspective to the existing body of research, which focuses on urban areas with large research universities. More research could be done on student-volunteering in rural communities, especially those without a nearby college. Participants shared they partner with high school students as well, which would make up a greater percentage of student-volunteers in rural areas. Further, the current

research sampled organizations in the community for their known work with student-volunteers. Much of the previous research focused on community organizations who had a preexisting relationship with a specific university. Additional research could be done with more open samples in the community. Nonprofit membership organizations may be a good point of contact to reach an audience who may not currently be associated with colleges or universities near where the research is taking place.

The current research contributes some valuable insight into the field of service-learning. The interviews reaffirmed some existing themes on the benefits of service-learning for community organizations, such as building relationships with educational institutions. The word-of-mouth recruitment creates sustainable relationships with the schools and future student-volunteers. Community organizations benefit from the fresh ideas and enthusiasm that students bring to the work. Overall, participants in the study believed student-volunteer programs are very beneficial to community organizations when the programs are designed correctly. The research on different models of volunteer management can support community staff in receiving the most benefits from students as volunteers. Instructors can also use this information to ensure the requirements for service-learning projects work within successful models of volunteer management, as to not overburden community staff with new requirements or criteria. Further, the combination of benefits in the partnership along with an acknowledgement of the effort it takes to manage these programs can encourage partnerships to focus on both the volunteering process and ensuring the community organizations are properly funded to staff the partnerships in place.

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