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The Impact of Classroom Engagement in a College Civic Engagement Classroom: An Action Research Study

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THE IMPACT OF CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT IN A COLLEGE CIVIC
ENGAGEMENT CLASSROOM: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior, who I prayed to many days and nights to have the courage, endurance, and ambition to embark and successfully complete this program and dissertation. I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Norman and Debra, and sister Kristina. Additionally, this dissertation is dedicated to my late grandparents, Lonnie, Almeter, Dave, and Daisy, who had no formal education but worked hard to support their families. Lastly, I dedicate this dissertation to Berkly, who brings such joy to my heart.

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ABSTRACT

At Southern College (pseudonym), a liberal arts college in South Carolina, students were enrolled in an introductory civic engagement course. The purpose of this action research study was to examine how an introductory civic engagement course influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. Additionally, the research focused on how a civic engagement course prepared students to engage in service learning. The dissertation sought to explore how peer conversations, course readings, and direct instruction would impact students' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives toward civic engagement. The study was implemented over a 14-week period. The researcher collected and analyzed data using a mixed methods triangulation approach. The quantitative data consisted of a pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire. The questionnaires benchmarked students' learning, attitudes, and beliefs before and after the study. The results for the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire did not show significant difference. The qualitative data of the study included a Service Learning Project and interviews. The results from the Service Learning Project and interviews suggest direct instructional practices, peer conversations, and active student engagement influenced participants' learning outcomes. The implications for future practices discussed educators using pre- and post-questionnaires to gauge students learning. Additionally, the researcher suggested teachers include civic engagement and service learning into their curricula, instructional activities, and discussions. The researcher

concluded their recommendations by discussing the importance of schools providing funding for civic engagement courses.

Keywords: action research, civic engagement, service learning, critical thinking, diversity, peer conversations, direct instruction, and perspectives

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRT.....	Culturally Relevant Teaching Pedagogy
EIL.....	Emotionally Intelligent Leadership
M.....	Mean
SD.....	Significant Difference

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Technological advances have influenced how humans communicate, perceive, and experience the world. Innovations such as television, smartphones, social media, and 24-hour news outlets magnify our understanding of the realities of the world, making some, particularly college students, ask the question ‘what can I do to make my community a better place?’ A study conducted by Net Impact reported two-thirds of college students think they are going to change the world (Wade, 2013). According to Wade (2013), some college students strongly identify as progressives who seek political and social inequality reform. Some college students demonstrate their dedication to making a difference in their communities by engaging in philanthropic opportunities such as taking alternative spring break trips, participating in dance marathons, or sponsoring charitable bake sales (Shinbane, 2016).

Most college students incorporate addressing social and environmental challenges as part of their strategic life plans. Net Impact’s 2013 survey reported 72% of college students believed it was essential to find a job where they could have an impact (Wade, 2013). Additionally, 45% of students said they would take a 15% pay cut for a job that made a social or environmental impact (Wade, 2013). Data from the study demonstrated that students have a desire to make positive contributions in society while being personally enriched in their personal lives and careers. Serving ones’ community through civic involvement is a lifestyle change that proliferates while attending college and

continues beyond the scope of educational institutions. Higher education institutions serve as launching pads for students to develop holistic, diverse, and transferable civic engagement and service learning skills. However, many students enter higher education and engage in service-learning opportunities with little to no knowledge on the influence of the intersectionality of academics, service, culture, class, privilege, and power.

According to the 2015 Princeton Review, college students satisfy their aspirations to make a difference in their communities by taking on leadership positions in student organizations on campus or actively seeking volunteer opportunities in communities surrounding their institutions (Loudenback, 2016). Today, high school graduates aspire to attend colleges and universities that offer not only excellent academic programs but also provide diverse civic engagement and service learning opportunities (Loudenback, 2016). Subsequently, higher education faculty are creating new courses or reconstructing existing courses that utilize service learning or civic engagement (Heffernan, n.d.). In these courses, students are asked to reflect on their service learning experiences in relation to “community principles, civic ideals, universal virtues, and their relationship to course content” (Heffernan, n.d., p.2).

As a result, students are able to connect theory to practice. Brail (2016) cited experiential learning opportunities, such as service learning and internships, serve to support undergraduate student learning by providing opportunities for the development of transferable, functional, and practical skills. Koldewyn, Brain, and Stephens (2017) explained civic engagement and service learning programs help students develop the skills needed to thrive and compete in their respective careers while enhancing their university experiences. Service learning encourages students to take part in the civic

engagement, give back to their communities in meaningful ways, and create stronger ties between their schools and surrounding communities (Sabat, Morgan, Perry, & Wang, 2015).

The challenge, however, is that college students come from diverse; yet, homogenous backgrounds. Cultural perception is cultivated within family and community environments where children procure the cultural capital of their environments, maintaining the generational reproduction of social inequality (Yee, 2016). According to Yee (2016), an individual's perspectives and actions are shaped by their culture and social class. Bourdieu stated, "individuals possess attitudes and dispositions (habitus), as well as knowledge, skills, and tastes (cultural capital), which determine one's status and strategies in a given context (field)" (as cited in Yee, 2016, p. 833). Individuals' perceptions of the world are not only shaped by their family but the media as well. Research conducted by Aronson (2017) and the Opportunity Agenda (2017) found rigorous evidence that media representations affect individuals' perspectives of various social groups, which can distort portrayals or lead to negative beliefs about social groups.

Culturally learned beliefs influence everyday social and educational interactions amongst students (Sharma, 2014). These learned behaviors may influence students' attitudes, skills, behaviors, knowledge, values, and forms of expression in the classroom (Sharma, 2014). The intersectional identities of youth help to foster their beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors, which can reinforce systemic social structures (Yee, 2016). It is essential for students to understand the intersectional relationship of power, privilege, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and class, when serving in the community (Endres & Gould, 2009). Students should avoid going into communities with the rationale of having

the unique power to uplift and strengthen those who are poor and oppressed (Straubhaar, 2016). Students should act as allies when working with marginalized and under-resourced community members (Endres & Gould, 2009).

In response to this dilemma, colleges have begun to incorporate high impact educational practices that integrate public awareness and civic interactions (Hughes, 2015). Colleges have started to incorporate civic engagement and service learning courses to prepare students to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Unlike in traditional teaching settings, where instructors primarily focus on learning and understanding, service learning courses provide an understanding of course concepts with hands-on practice through real-world experiences (Sabat et al., 2015). These courses help to build a theoretical foundation for students while expanding students' knowledge of effectively communicating and working with different populations. Service-learning courses involve students by connecting information learned in the classroom to community challenges such as poverty, literacy, education, access, health care, immigration, hunger, housing, environment, and more (Sabat et al., 2015).

Educators who teach service learning courses understand service learning classrooms offer students in-depth learning opportunities that cannot be achieved alone in traditional classroom settings (Brail, 2016). Service-learning courses are structured to be academically rigorous while offering students opportunities to tie theory and practice through structured engaged learning and research activities. Koldewyn et al.'s (2017) research stated students who participate in service learning courses make a difference in their community by having academics, service, and experience integrated into their curriculum, with the overarching goal of developing sustainable change. Service learning

courses give students' opportunities to gain hands-on problem-solving skills as students work to solve real-world problems (Koldewyn et al., 2017). The curricula of service learning courses employ students with the theoretical and conceptual knowledge and skills that are transferable to the real world and work-related arenas (Sabat et al., 2015).

Service learning courses use various instructional methodologies to educate students including class discussions, assigned readings, reflection activities, and teamwork projects. Sabat et al.'s (2015) research explored how service learning courses uniquely and directly address specific skills needed for students to compete in a 21st-century workforce competently. The skill-set framework provided in these courses includes: "increasing students' abilities with regards to applying and refining concepts learned in the classroom, cooperating with others within groups and teams, and increasing one's civic literacy and engagement within the local community" (Sabat et al., 2015, p. 24). Inside service learning classrooms, instructors help students apply and refine concepts by integrating applied knowledge, team-work, and civic engagement opportunities into the curriculum. Through classroom engagement, service learning classrooms incorporate reflective activities such as readings and class discussions that prompt deep thinking and analysis about one's self and one's relationship to society. By cultivating cultural awareness through classroom engagement, students' perspectives are widened, resulting in students providing better services as servant leaders (Luna & Folgueiras, 2014).

Additionally, students in service learning classrooms are encouraged to have participatory interactions with peers and the local community. Teamwork exercises and group projects encourage students to interact with peers outside of their regular friend

groups. In service-learning classrooms, the role of group work is to enhance opportunities for interaction amongst peers and community members, which leads to higher achievement (Brail, 2016). Group work in service learning classrooms helps students understand how to embrace and navigate diverse points of views. Cooperative activities within service learning classrooms develop students' abilities to work collaboratively with others to accomplish project goals (Sabat et al., 2015). To optimize the success of their groups, students must become aware and competent in understanding their strengths, and the strengths of others (Sabat et al., 2015, p. 25). Furthermore, in service learning courses students learn how to actively listen and communicate goals, challenges, and solutions that impact the local community. Service learning courses require students to work together to examine and understand community problems and complex concepts; afterward offering their findings and recommendations to community members (Sabat et al., 2015).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of higher education is to help build a more just society through holistic experiences (Chan, 2016). Research completed by Haigh and Clifford (2011) reports colleges and universities are seen as institutions that equip students with knowledge of various disciplines and general skills which help students learn to thrive in an ever-changing world (Chan, 2016). Individuals from diverse backgrounds are given the opportunity to interact academically and socially with their peers, learning about freedom of expression, tolerance, and their responsibilities as citizens. The researcher of this research study, who worked at a higher education institution, observed that diverse interactions among students rarely occur due to students befriending others who share the

same physical, social, or economic similarities. According to research completed by Hackett and Hogg (2014) people who are similar tend to develop friendships with others who share the same physical appearances, values, attitudes, and beliefs. Kim, Park, and Koo (2015) found college students spend a significant amount of time developing friendships and interacting within colleges' subcultures. Students navigating through homogeneous communities are less likely to interact with students outside of their communities (Kim et al., 2015). Navigating through parallel communities can have broad implications as people can miss opportunities to develop relationships with physically dissimilar looking people (Kim et al., 2015).

Many students who engage in civic engagement or community service are not socially prepared to serve their constituents due to a lack of cross-cultural experiences. Walter (2018), who discussed the impact of educators using culturally responsive teaching practices in their classrooms, suggested that cross-cultural experiences are essential as groups work together to eradicate societal barriers and bridge gaps between marginalized and dominant groups. Due to a lack of diverse engagement, students are culturally inept to serve individuals from diverse backgrounds properly. As a result, students participate in internships, civic and service learning opportunities with misconceptions or superiority complexes, making them unprepared to effectively make connections with diverse groups.

Research completed by Aronson (2017) cited that distorted narratives can create assumptions and deficits regarding the lives and abilities of others. Aronson's (2017) research found savior mentalities are embedded within social institutions and create detrimental spaces that perpetuate inequality in schools. According to Aronson (2017)

some teachers take on the identity of a savoir complex. Teachers who develop a savoir complex, learn, internalize, and make this aspect a part of their normal routines (Aronson, 2017). These behaviors trickle down to students, as teachers can influence their students' attitudes (Aronson, 2017).

To combat this issue, many college activists, stakeholders, and community members have begun to ask institutions to mandate courses that examine cultural, racial, and social awareness (Brown, 2016). Although many institutions are implementing courses designed to explore specific cultures, many of these courses are not mandatory for students to take. This can be problematic as some students who volunteer in the community have little cultural awareness. Thus, sparking a need for service learning courses to fill in cultural awareness and sensitivity gaps.

Purpose of the Study

Fostering a civically engaged environment equips students with the tools needed to help propel America's diverse democracy by creating a space for students to discover, learn, and reflect on the barriers of privilege and oppression. Facilitating culturally mediated discussions in a civic engagement classroom can help forge pathways for students to develop stronger citizenship, understand social justice, and partake in volunteerism (Bernot, Kulesza, & Ridgway, 2017). However, despite the positive attributes of civic engagement courses, a plethora of adverse effects can arise. According to Banks and Banks (2016) the United States is comprised of a core culture, called macroculture, and subcultures, called microcultures. Due to the nature of culture and socialization in the United States, differences among microcultures can often lead to cultural misunderstandings, conflicts, and discrimination (Banks & Banks, 2016).

Cultural identity differences and complexities can create disjuncture as individuals develop civic skills and knowledge (Littenberg- Tobias & Cohen, 2016). According to Littenburg- Tobias, and Cohen (2016) educators can counter cultural challenges relating to civic engagement by incorporating content into their curriculum that discusses the experiences of people of color. Through an exploration of experiences, individuals will have the opportunity to examine and discuss their attitudes toward civic engagement (Littenberg- Tobias & Cohen, 2016). Additionally, Littenberg- Tobias and Cohen (2016) suggested the idea that teachers should promote action civics by encouraging students to develop an action plan to solve a problem in their community.

Students who are engaged in the community can build sustainable and trusting relationships with community partners while identifying and synthesizing solutions to address community needs (Stringfellow & Edmonds-Behrend, 2013). In many civic engagement courses, the curriculum is focused on offering services to solve the community's problem (Sabat et al., 2015). Usually, the curriculum encompasses little to no discussion on the social injustices plaguing the community such as unbalanced power structures and unequal distributions of wealth and poverty. It is essential for civic engagement course instructors to create classroom curricula and environment for students to share, hear, explore, and understand diverse perspectives before going into the community. Also, instructors should intentionally have students explore and discuss historical frameworks such as slavery, reconstruction, Jim Crow, and various civil rights movements that have led to the allotment of power and privilege in their communities. According to Aronson and Laughter (2015) educators should infuse social justice education into their classroom to foster socially, academically, and politically

empowering classroom environments. Aronson and Laughter's (2015) research suggest the infusion of cultural knowledge in classrooms allow students to examine historical experiences and references. Incorporating tenants of social justice into the curriculum can increase the relevance and effectiveness of course instruction for learners (Aronson & Laughter, 2015).

As many college students' perspectives are influenced by homogenous experiences from their environment, it is essential to expose students who are working or volunteering in the community to different ideas that will challenge their belief systems. Increasing classroom engagement in civic engagement courses can contribute to breaking down socially constructed barriers, increase interpersonal relationships and interactions among students and community members of different races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, and classes. Students who are in classes that use intercultural instruction become attuned to issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity; preparing students to be open, sensitive, and respectful when having intercultural conversations (Brown, 2016). The curriculum structures of these courses help broaden students' cultural perspectives and equip students with pluralistic skills that will enhance their abilities to interact with diverse cultures (Brown, 2016). Students benefit from the use of peer-to-peer cultural mediated instruction as they are introduced to academic and social material in spaces where their thoughts can be explored, examined, challenged or confirmed.

Service learning curricula are designed to build collaborative relationships between students, their academics, the institution, and communities (Stringfellow & Edmonds-Behrend, 2013). The primary objective of service learning is to use high impact activities to help students connect course concepts and real-world experiences (Bernot et

al., 2017). As a result, using these practices in civic engagement courses could help students understand the importance of embracing diverse talents and contributions in society, which help to expand inclusivity, fairness, and equity. Instructional methodologies used in service-learning classrooms equip students with the knowledge and skills to be socially and civically responsible, and promotes students' progress concerning intellectual development, by aligning course activities with course content (Bernot et al., 2017). Also, instructional methods used in service learning courses can motivate students to step outside of their comfort zones, and comfortably and knowledgeably interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

The purpose of this action research study was to examine instructional strategies that influence students' perspectives on civic engagement. Additionally, the research focused on how civic engagement classes prepare students to engage in service learning. The study investigated three distinct instructional strategies; 1) incorporating peer conversations; 2) infusing literature focused on improving civic engagement, and 3) implementing direct classroom instruction. These three strategies were evaluated based on how they influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. In detail, this research study monitored how peer conversations, literature, and direct classroom instruction influenced student civic attitudes and skills regarding fostering a community, which embraces different perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds.

Research Questions

The goal of this action research study was to examine the attitudes and beliefs of students as they matriculate through an introductory civic engagement course. This research study analyzed how these themes empower students to take control of their

learning process and develop cultural civic awareness to communicate and interact effectively with peers and community constituents. The researcher asked the following research questions:

1. How do the instructional strategies utilized in an introductory civic engagement course influence the attitudes and beliefs of college students around civic engagement?
2. How does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?

Overview of Methodology

Action research methodology was the research method utilized to investigate and answer the research questions effectively. Action research “is the production of knowledge to guide practice, with the modification of a given reality occurring as part of the research process itself” (Oquist, 1978, p. 145). This type of “research is carried out by people directly concerned with the social situation that is being researched” (Somekh, 1995, p. 340). These concerns arise as practitioners, individuals directly involved in the situation being researched, recognizes challenges facing their organizations and develops a desire to initiate change (Mertler, 2014). For this research study, the researcher had the opportunity to participate and concurrently control the research process. Unlike in traditional research studies where validity “depends upon measuring the extent and frequency of phenomena over a period of time in order to justify precise statements of cause and effect, action research is concerned with exploring the multiple determinants of actions, interactions, and interpersonal relationships in unique contexts” (Somekh, 1995, p. 341).

The researcher used qualitative and quantitative instruments to collect data using a triangular mixed methods action research design. Quantitative instruments used were a pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire given to participants at the beginning and end of the study. The researcher examined quantitative data using descriptive statistics, considering the central tendency mean of the data's measurements. Qualitative instruments used were a structured closed-ended interview and summaries of individual Community Service Projects. The researcher analyzed qualitative data using the research qualitative software NVivo. The qualitative data measured the outcomes of the service learning experiences of participants. The researcher presented the results from the data collected by providing tables and figures. Chapter 3 of this dissertation provides a comprehensive description of the methodology used to complete this research study. To increase the validity of the research study's data, the researcher concurrently used both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to analyze data using a mixed methods approach.

The research focused on how a civic engagement course influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. Additionally, the research focused on how an introductory civic engagement course prepared students to engage in service learning. The researcher adjusted direct classroom instruction using the pedagogies of Culturally Relevant Teaching in higher education, the Experiential Learning Model, and the Social Change Model of Leadership. In this process, the researcher designed and implemented a research study that collected and analyzed data on the effectiveness of the identified instructional practices. After the completion of the study, the researcher provided recommendations for improvements in the future. The action research design was the

most appropriate process to conduct the research study. This design encompassed a four-stage procedure: the planning stage, the acting stage, the developing stage, and the reflecting stage.

Stage one: The planning stage. During the planning stage, the researcher identified a topic that addressed the need of their current educational environment. As the Director of Community and Inclusion, the action researcher recognized the challenges students encountered as they participated in civic engagement roles. These challenges ascended from a lack of cultural competence and understanding. During the planning stage, the action researcher reviewed literature related to the proposed research questions, civic engagement in higher education, culturally responsive teaching practices, experiential learning, social change and leadership, and cultural competence. After reviewing the literature outlined in Chapter Two of this dissertation, the action researcher developed an action research plan.

Stage two: The acting stage. In the acting stage, the researcher completed the data collection process and analyzed data. The action researcher's student sample consisted of 22 participants whose classification ranged from first-year students to seniors. Participants were issued a pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire to assess their civic engagement skills and attitudes. Additionally, participants engaged in an experiential learning project. This project required students to complete 10 hours of community service and journal their experiences.

Stage three: The developing stage. In the developing stage, the researcher interpreted and concluded the results from the data analyzed and developed a plan of action for the future.

Stage four: The reflection stage. During the reflecting stage, the researcher summarized and shared the results and reflections on the action research study with the administration, participants, and course instructors who use principles of civic engagement in their course curricula. Recommendations and limitations of the study were also mentioned during the discussion to acknowledge how the study could be improved in the future.

Employing the action research model to conduct the research study created an opportunity for the researcher to identify and address the identified problem of practice by trying new teaching methods and examining the innovative approach effectiveness. Throughout the action research process, it was vital for the researcher to explore “practitioner knowledge” as part of a “holistic inquiry into the nature of practice in social settings and the nature of educational action research as a means of bringing about improvements in that practice” (Somekh, 1995, p. 351). By using a comprehensive approach, the validity of the research is increased as “the research is tested by evaluating the impact of these action steps in a continuous process of data collection, reflection, and analysis, interpretation, action, and evaluation” (Somekh, 1995, p. 341).

Significance of the Study

As the Director of Community and Inclusion for the college, the researcher was knowledgeable of the challenges students encountered as they participated in civic engagement and service learning opportunities. The researcher of the study observed students struggling to reflect and understand their civic responsibility and reflect on their community service experiences. The practitioner observed this trend for three consecutive years, noticing there was a gap in students being able to apply theory into

their civic and service learning practices. As a result, the investigator began to question if the gaps in learning were in part due to students following trends and approaching civic and service opportunities with a savior complex, never reflecting to understand their actions, experiences, or interactions.

This research study was significant because it has the potential to help gauge if instructional practices in civic engagement classrooms shape students' perspectives on civic engagement and service learning. Consequently, this study was significant as it could suggest if students understand and reflect on their civic and service responsibility in society. Instructional practices in civic engagement classrooms seek to aid in the continuous process of assisting students in developing cognitive, affective, and moral skills (Heffernan, n.d.). These developments will help students make connections with peers and other campus and community resources as students practice civic engagement skills and gain insight into service learning opportunities. This is illustrated by research conducted by Sabat et al. (2015) whose goal was to demonstrate the importance of employing students' with 21st-century skills, in addition to using service learning to exhibit the bridge between content and practice in student learning. According to Sabet et al. (2015) introducing students to basic civic engagement principles and skills will enhance students' competence and help them to exhibit cognitive, writing, and speaking skills. Instructors, who have incorporated service learning projects in their classrooms, reported positive student learning outcomes which include providing settings for students to apply theory and newly learned skills (Sabet et al., 2015). Instructional practices used in civic engagement classrooms allow teachers to supplement their traditional teaching practices by incorporating hands-on and real-world experiences into their curriculum.

Furthermore, integrating service learning opportunities into civic engagement classes prepare students to engage in community service opportunities. Research completed by Kezar supported service learning pedagogy, as the practice demonstrated measurable student learning outcomes in traditional and holistic assessment forms (as cited in Brail, 2016). According to Koldewyn et al. (2017), service learning provides opportunities for the realms of civics and academics to collaborate for the betterment of student and community engagement. Additionally, service learning benefits students by presenting opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills, communication skills, apply content learned in class in real-world settings, among other new skills (Koldewyn et al., 2017). Students who engage in service learning opportunities develop the ability to differentiate and navigate different civic and service challenges. In addition, these classes equip students with valuable skills as students' experience and discuss such topics as leadership, time and stress management, motivation, stereotyping, prejudice, social justice, communication skills, and conflict resolution.

Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this study were influenced in part by three main factors: time sample size, and sample gender. This research study was completed within 14 weeks during one semester. The study focused on one course. Due to the research site being a single-gender institution, generalizations cannot be made based on gender. The generalizations for this research study are limited, and cannot be made to other instructors, students, classrooms, or higher education institutions. Also, the researcher served as the researcher and a facilitator of the course. Outside of the classroom, the investigator of the study served in multiple roles such as the Director of Community and

Inclusion and Assistant Director of Residential Life. In these roles, the researcher may have interacted with students in the course who may have student conduct or implicit bias cases. The previous experiences with students in the course, served as a limitation as the researcher could have implicit bias towards some students based on previous interactions.

Summary

As technological advances change the way society communicates and how we view others from diverse backgrounds, it is essential to facilitate verbal discussions in the classroom to break down barriers of mistrust, misinformation, and intolerance. In civic engagement courses, it is fundamentally important to have these discussions, as these students will work firsthand with individuals or communities who are different from the students. The purpose of this action research study was to explore how a civic engagement course influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement and prepared students to engage in service learning. For this study, the researcher examined peer-to-peer conversations, literature, and direct classroom instruction impact on students' engagement in a civic engagement college course. Various research relating to the action research study, cite student peer-to-peer engagement as being essential as knowledge is transferred. The action research design of the study used a triangular mixed method design that collected data by administering a pretest and posttest to participants to document the progress of the participants' civic attitudes and skills before and after the study. In addition, participants completed a structured open-ended interview and a community service group project.

Chapter One of the dissertation included a contextual framework that outlined a description of the action research study and research questions. Chapter Two will review

the scholarly literature and theoretical contexts based on service learning. In addition, Chapter Three will describe the methodological approach used by the researcher to conduct the study. Chapter Four detailed and analyzed the data collected in the study. Chapter Five, the concluding chapter of the dissertation, will outline how the results and action plan related to the research study was disseminated to student participants and college constituents. It will also examine the implications of this study and provide recommendations for future studies.

Glossary of key terms

Action Research: A research methodology conducted by teachers or other education stakeholders who have “a vested interest in teaching and learning process or environment for the purpose of gathering information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how their students learn” (Mertler, 2014, p. 4).

Civic Engagement: Cooper, Bryer, and Meek (2006) defined civic engagement as “any activity, individual or collective, devoted to influencing the collective life of the polity” (p. 76). In education, “civic engagement is a reliable pedagogical and epistemological strategy for developing student knowledge and skills while fostering individual and organizational collaborations to address pressing social, environmental, educational, and economic issues” (Cress, 2012, p. 2).

Critical thinking: Shepelak, Curry-Jackson, and Moore (1992), define critical thinking as a “process of active critical and creative inquiry,” “viewed as a cognitive approach to an active, rational assessment of and is based on an awareness and understanding of a set of logical analyses that permit a rational evaluation of argument” (p. 21).

Culturally mediated conversations: Integrating inter and cross-cultural discussions into civic engagement courses help to increase students' social awareness by "focusing classroom curricula and practice" on the exploration, value, and challenges of cultural frames (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011, p. 191). Culturally mediated conversations "recognizes students' differences, validates students' cultures, and asserts that upon cultural congruence of classroom practices, students will discover increasing success in school" (Parhar & Sensoy, 2011, p. 191).

Diversity: The term diversity has a wide array of definitions. However, for the research study diversity was defined as "differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical" (Silverman, 2010, p. 245).

Peer-to-peer conversations: The theoretical framework of peer-to-peer learning draws support from Collaborative Learning Theory. Peer learning provides "opportunities for peer interactions and participation from a student stance, offering critical feedback during class discussions" (Zhu & Mitchell, 2012, p. 363).

Social justice: Although there is not a comprehensive definition of social justice, "it is understood as an idea that can mobilize people, making injustice visible, contestable, and changeable" in efforts to create a more inclusive and just society (Bonnycastle, 2011, p. 269).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To further investigate the problem of practice, this literature review was divided into the following components: Understanding the Importance of Civic Engagement, the Evolution of Civic Engagement, Civic Engagement in Higher Education Institutions, the Benefits and Challenges Associated with Civic Engagement, and the Theoretical Framework for the Current Research Study. The literature began with a discussion on Understanding the Importance of Civic Engagement, then transitioning to discussing the Evolution of Civic Engagement. These sections reviewed historical perspectives, implications, and the development of civic engagement. The Civic Engagement in Higher Education section acknowledged the experiential and related perspectives by focusing on the following themes: civic engagement in higher education, college students' perspectives of student engagement, experiential learning in higher education, and the challenges of incorporating civic engagement in higher education. A discussion of the benefits, challenges, and limitations surrounding the problem of practice based on previous research followed the analysis of related concepts and research.

After acknowledging the conceptualized literature related to the problem of practice, the theoretical perspectives section discussed the theories and principles of peer conversations and civic engagement. Studying the theoretical perspectives provided a

comprehensive framework for understanding the ideologies of students' engagement in a civic engagement classroom. The theoretical perspective framework analyzed Cultural Relevant Teaching in higher education by focusing on the Experiential Learning Model and the Social Change Model of Leadership. The discussion demonstrated a concise relationship with the current action research study.

The Evolution of Civic Engagement

In the United States, civic engagement has a long history of addressing public concerns and promoting positive democratic changes in society. Since the inception of the United States, citizens have been charged with the responsibility to civically participate in a democratic society to bring about social and political changes. Although the United States is fundamentally a classless society, the country is socially divided by race and class (Rhodes, Schaffner, McElwee, 2017). Social barriers such as race, gender, and socioeconomic statuses influence individuals' abilities to become civically or politically involved in their communities.

The concept of civic engagement is connected to John Dewey's theory of experience as individuals learn and increase their self-awareness through interactions and reflections from situational experiences. Hildreth (2012) defined Dewey's philosophy of experience as "the transaction between an entire living being (body, mind, emotions) and its physical and social environments" (p. 922). Comprehending the transactional nature of experience requires individuals to participate in experiences physically, mentally, and emotionally. Active civic participation compels individuals to explore how social and environmental interactions interchangeably influence communities' rights, power, and privileges. Dewey believed every experience undergoes modification as individuals

continually develop an understanding of themselves through civic engagement (Hildreth, 2012). Active civic engagement interactions allow individuals to develop their definition of common good and civic responsibility, allowing them to engage in an active process that goes beyond passive citizenship. Through the experience defined by Dewey, individuals participate in society by addressing societal problems from an informed manner embracing the concept of participatory democracy and recognizing the value of diverse individuals and communities (Hildreth, 2012). Hildreth (2012) stated individuals develop their civic identity through civic engagement. Civic engagement requires individuals to consider how to respond to problematic situations by choosing the best practical solutions to resolve circumstances (Hildreth, 2012).

Understanding the Importance of Civic Engagement

Over the years, civic engagement has taken on many forms to address social issues, and community needs directly. A study completed by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement divided civic engagement into three categories: civic action, electoral action, and political voice (Keeter et al., 2002). Keeter et al. (2002) provided the following definitions for each category.

“Electoral Action: Things people do around campaigns and elections.

Civic Action: Things people do to help in their communities or ways in which they contribute to charities.

Political Voice: Things people do to give expression to their political and social viewpoints” (p. 9- 10).

It is fundamental for citizens to contribute to their communities as their participation contributes to the nation’s present and future civic health (Lannegrand-Willems,

Chevrier, Perchec, & Carrizales, 2018). Individuals who partake in civic engagement have their voices heard by elected leaders (Lannegrand-Willems et al., 2018). Lannegrand-Willems et al. (2018) argued individuals who partake in civic activities have an increased sense of personal and civic awareness that can help break down barriers of insularity, leading to a greater trust in the democratic process. Individuals who are civically active in their communities help to foster a sense of belonging in healthy and democratic societies (Choudhary & Gupta, 2017). Knowing the needs of the community, these individuals can actively push for social and political change to address the challenges community members encounter. However, it can be difficult for individuals to get involved in their communities due to identity intersectionality. According to Rhodes et al. (2017) intersectional identities such as race, class, socioeconomics, and education impacts the opinions, preferences, and interactions among individuals in society. As a result, individuals' attitudes and beliefs influence their social interactions and community engagement.

The study, *Civic Engagement a Precursor to Well-Being*, completed by Choudhary and Gupta (2017) investigated the correlation between individuals' civic engagement and their attitudes, competencies, and skills. Researchers of the study sought to identify indicators of civic engagement that could predict the subjective well-being of individuals entering adulthood (Choudhary & Gupta, 2017). Data was collected from 300 participants, who were all unmarried, not working, or did not have a stable professional life (Choudhary & Gupta, 2017). Instruments used to collect data were a Civic Engagement Scale developed by Amy Doolittle and Anna Faul (2013) and a Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, Griffin (1985)

(Choudhary & Gupta, 2017). Both instruments captured the attitudes, behaviors, and well-being of participants in the study (Choudhary & Gupta, 2017). Choudhary and Gupta (2017) revealed civic engagement helps individuals grow into well-rounded individuals who remain connected with their communities. Choudhary and Gupta (2017) cited civic engagement participation supports students by equipping them with critical thinking and life skills needed to address challenges and critical issues in their communities. Choudhary and Gupta's (2017) study was comparable to this dissertation as both sought to find relationships between individuals participating in civic engagement and their holistic well-being. Both sought to consider how transactional civic engagement influences individuals' attitudes and beliefs.

Civic Engagement in Higher Education

A fundamental step in creating an educated functioning society begins with the civic education of those participating in the educational system. Over the past two decades, there has been an increased push in higher education to provide civic education and civic participation opportunities for students, as institutions aim to demonstrate a commitment to civic and community engagement. In higher education, civic engagement is associated with educational ideas related to public good, social responsibility, and democratic relations (Boland 2014). Institutions have begun to increase civic engagement initiatives to demonstrate the institutions' educational and public relevance. Research completed by Mlyn (2013) cited that many institutions of higher learning have incorporated aspects of civic engagement into its core identities. In addition, higher education institutions are supporting their civic engagement initiatives by putting forth instructional resources (Mlyn, 2013). Institutions who adopt a civic mission may

incorporate aspects of civic engagement and service learning into their curricular and co-curricular activities. Mlyn (2013) referenced several institutions that have made significant institutional investments in their civic missions by infusing civic engagement across all aspects of campus, and developing research centers, minors, and certificate programs, and instituting curricular service requirements for graduation. These institutions require undergraduates to complete a minimum of two service learning courses or internships during their academic careers (Mlyn, 2013).

As colleges cultivate a campus environment committed to civic engagement, students can use the knowledge acquired through service experiences to serve their communities informally. Civic and service learning projects that stimulate academic learning while building upon student's interest in community building, help students solve challenging community issues and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds (O'Leary, 2014). Boland (2014) states "civic engagement in higher education encompasses a diversity of goals, strategies, and activities" which provides "experiential learning with opportunities for engagement" (p. 180). Through civic engagement experiences students can engage in service learning through a diverse educational lens, producing informed and well-rounded graduates who are committed to becoming active and involved citizens in their communities, and allies for diverse populations (Boland, 2014; Mlyn, 2013; O'Leary, 2014).

College students' perspectives on civic engagement. Before enrolling into college, students' attitudes toward society are shaped by the perspectives of their family, friends, and surrounding community. Research completed by Gooden & O'Doherty (2015), analyzed the identity development of leaders in education, and found individuals'

perspectives and experiences are shaped by their families' beliefs and actions. Student families have a continuing influence on students' development in thinking and actions (Gooden & O'Doherty, 2015). As students enter higher education, they are encouraged to engage in civic engagement opportunities that will provide them with diverse experiences and perspectives on social and political issues. Barnhardt, Sheets, and Pasquesi (2014) noted, United States higher education has been called upon to use its agency to create democratic citizens by equipping students with civic engagement skills. Through civic engagement activities it is hoped that students will acquire a deep sense of responsibility to "contribute (their intellectual competence and skills, energies, and talents) to the communities that they encounter during and beyond college— to neighborhoods, professional communities, municipalities, or to their interest or social identity groups" (Barnhardt et al., 2014, p. 623).

A civic engagement study completed by several higher education institutions in the 1990s found a correlation between students' involvement in community service and their development of civic engagement attitudes, beliefs, and skills (O'Leary, 2014). The study consisted of focusing on the development and growth of students who were involved in programs or in classes that focused on community service and civic engagement (O'Leary, 2014). O'Leary (2014) cited past research suggests students who are involved in community service and civic engagement develop an understanding of the importance of community action and develop a sense of community. O'Leary's (2014) research study, sought to define the relationship between college students' attitudes and involvement toward civic engagement. The researcher collected data over the course of four years, studying participants from first-year students to senior year (O'Leary, 2014).

To collect data, the researcher used a Civic and Political Activities and Attitudes Survey; collecting participant responses at the end of each second semester of their freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year (O’Leary, 2014). Results from the study, suggested students who demonstrated a commitment to civic engagement on campus, have a high probability of being involved in the community in the future (O’Leary, 2014). O’Leary’s (2014) research demonstrated the relationship between student’s civic engagement participation and beliefs, by finding college students’ civic involvement is correlated to their attitudes and support of civic engagement during college. O’Leary’s (2014) study correlated to this action research study as the current study sought to explore if a civic engagement course can influence students’ attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives toward civic engagement. Similar to O’Leary’s study, this action research study examined how multiple civic engagement experiences influenced students’ civic knowledge, views, and commitments.

Although there are numerous benefits of becoming civically involved in college, millennials seem to have a decreased interest in civic activities. According to Strawhun, Perry, and Lloyd (2014), in modern society, there is a decrease in student interest and motivation toward civic engagement. Strawhun et al. (2014) associated students disconnect with civic engagement with students’ values and actual behaviors. Research completed by Kyriacou and Kato (2014) discussed the complex motives that prompt college students to take part in community service and civic engagement activities. Kyriacou and Kato (2014) highlighted students engaged in civic engagement activities: to help others, increase their employment prospects, or socialize with others. Commonly, civic engagement participation is associated with equipping students with employability

skills, in efforts to increase their job prospects (Kyriacou & Kato, 2014). Kyriacou and Kato (2014) findings reported 55.8% of students in their study related their civic engagement motivation to their career plans. It could be inferred that 55.8% of individuals who were interested in civic engagement; the 39.2% of individuals who wanted to develop a new skill; and the 36.7% of individuals who wanted to develop as a person, motivations correlated to their career plans (Kyriacou & Kato, 2014). Although students may volunteer with the intention of fulfilling employment or individual's needs, civic engagement participation can influence students' behaviors, values, and beliefs. According to Barnhardt et al. (2015), civic engagement gives students an understanding of citizenship, prepares them to engage civically after college, and provides other individualized desirable outcomes. Civic engagement serves to cultivate students' experiences as students interact with diverse populations, actively problem solve community challenges, and work together to help those in their communities (Kyriacou & Kato, 2014; Barnhardt et al., 2015).

Experiential learning in higher education. Students who participate in civic engagement have the opportunity to cultivate personal and social skills as students engage in academic, cognitive, and social development (Kyriacou & Kato, 2014; O'Leary, 2014; Barnhardt et al., 2015). In higher education, practitioners have sought to make the educational learning process engaging and relevant by adopting experiential teaching methodologies that engage and challenge students' personal growth. Experiential teaching methodologies include field- based learning and classroom based experiential learning (Schwartz, 2012). According to Lewis and Williams (1994) field based learning is a form of experiential learning that includes "internships, practicums,

cooperative education, and service learning” (Schwartz, 2012, p. 3). Classroom- based experiential learning integrates the concept of active learning in the classroom by including role-playing, games, case studies, simulations, presentations, and various types of group work (Schwartz, 2012, p.3).

To promote inclusivity outside of the traditional realm of education, higher education practitioners have developed experiential academic and social programs across the higher education continuum (Liang, Caton, & Hill, 2015). Through active student engagement, the learning process is accelerated as students learn to emerge and optimize opportunities. Liang et al.’s (2015) study examined the transformational influence of experiential learning by analyzing the relationship of educational travel programs (experiential) and learning outcomes by focusing on themes such as motivation, evading one’s comfort zone, and reflection. The study’s participants reported gaining intrapersonal and interpersonal learning skills that enhanced their worldview and their future interactions with others by being charged with the mission to successfully navigate their own travel experiences (Liang et al., 2015). Results from the study concluded, “motivation, departure from comfort zone, reflection and sharing, and travel biography” were four conditions that yielded as tools to facilitate learning outcomes pertaining to travel (experiential learning) (Liang et al., 2015, p. 232).

The study’s results demonstrated that experiential learning increases students’ content knowledge by bridging the gap of contextual understanding acquired through knowledge and real-world situations (Liang et al., 2015, p. 232). Additionally, the study exhibits how students come to recognize and challenge their place in the world by being immersed in various travel experiences and being prompted to develop and manage

diverse skills and attitudes (Liang et al., 2015, p. 232). Furthermore, experiential learning experiences in higher education provide students with the agency to better understand themselves and their relationships with their communities through holistic skills development (Liang et al., 2015). Experiential learning confirms and challenges students' skill sets by developing hands-on problem-solving experiments that encourage students to use higher level skills to construct deeper meanings.

Munge, Thomas, and Heck's (2018) article synthesized literature related to experiential methodologies by acknowledging the strengths, opportunities, weaknesses, and potential threats related to experiential learning. According to Munge et al. (2018), strengths and opportunities associated with experiential learning entail assisting students in developing transferable practical and technical skills that increase their personal and professional capacities. Experiential learning outcomes achieved by students' increase "student motivation toward learning tasks due to increased understanding of the purpose, value, and reason for the learning activity" (Munge et al., 2018, para. 9).

These findings correlated to the results of Laing et al. (2015), by demonstrating these common themes facilitate learning outcomes through the integration of theory and practice. Additionally, experiential learning prepares students to competently compete in a global workforce by equipping college students with transferable skills and knowledge. The research analyzed by Munge et al. (2018) found professional stakeholders favor job candidates who demonstrate versatility in knowledge across disciplines and their ability to adapt and progress with the changing job market. Experiential learning provides a supplement to theory by focusing on learner agency through experience.

Civic engagement in a multicultural context. Civic engagement and service learning courses provide students with opportunities to experience and expand their definition of cultural diversity. According to Pasquesi (2013) service learning helps students “understand and navigate difference,” by enhancing students’ “cultural awareness, leadership abilities, and communication skills” (p. 39). Additionally, Pasquesi (2013) cited that service learning courses have a positive influence on facilitating cultural understanding across diverse populations, which can help reduce stereotypes. Pasquesi’s (2013) research study examined multicultural initiatives in a service learning course. In addition, the study explored how service learning courses help students manage multicultural difference. Participants were enrolled in a yearlong course designed to help students develop public service leadership skills (Pasquesi, 2013). In the course, students explored how identity, power, privilege, and oppression influence their understanding of the world and as a leader (Pasquesi, 2013). Students had the opportunity to apply what they learned, during the spring semester. For the study, students completed a project that had them (1) analyze issues relating to diversity; (2) reflect on how their identity is related to the study’s environment; and (3) “practice social action skills” (Pasquesi, 2013, p. 41). Findings from Pasquesi (2013) study stated service learning has the potential to implicate social change as students engage in applying ideals of multiculturalism in real world contexts.

Research completed by Taylor and Trepanier – Street (2007) also examined multicultural initiative in civic education. Taylor and Trepanier – Street’s (2007) research study examined college students who were a part of Jumpstart, which was an AmeriCorps program designed to prepare at-risk children under five for school. Similar to this

research study, participants completed a pre and post survey that measured their attitudes toward civic engagement and community engagement (Taylor & Trepanier – Street, 2007). In addition, the study explored students’ confidence levels of working with diverse populations (Taylor & Trepanier – Street, 2007). The authors acknowledge that participants of the study were more diverse culturally and ethnically than the general United States population (Taylor & Trepanier – Street, 2007). Over 50% of the study’s participants identified as African American, Asian, Hispanic, or another race (Taylor & Trepanier – Street, 2007). Findings from the study cited an increase in students’ confidence levels (Taylor & Trepanier – Street, 2007). According to Taylor and Trepanier – Street (2007), the service learning project gave students a better sense of challenges facing the community. Results from the study cited students had increased awareness of their civic responsibilities, and an increased value for diversity (Taylor & Trepanier – Street, 2007). These two studies are similar to this action research study, as they both explored how multiculturalism and civic engagement can influence students’ understanding and interactions when working with individuals from diverse backgrounds. As the research study, the studies use similar methodologies, such as pre and post assessments and service learning projects, to examine how civic engagement courses and service learning influence students’ attitudes and beliefs.

The Benefits Associated with Civic Engagement

Individuals who are civically engaged have an increased awareness of social, political, and cultural issues. Johnson and Lollar (2002) stated many students who are educated in diverse environments have an enhanced ability to participate in a pluralistic democracy due to having cultural awareness and the development of democratic

citizenship through educational experiences of understanding and appreciating other races and cultures. In college, it is essential for students to engage in diverse experiences as many students come from schools or neighborhoods that are segregated by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and education. Many students come into college with preconceived notions and stereotypical views of individuals from diverse backgrounds based on opinions from their family, friends, media outlets, or singular, isolated encounters (Yee, 2016; Aronson, 2017; and the Opportunity Agenda, 2017). Pasarella, Sailsbury, Martin, and Blaich (2012) argued post-secondary education could be instrumental in fostering and preparing students to participate in a democratic society actively. For colleges to be transformational beacons, institutions must foster holistic campus environments that enhance learning and respect for diverse intellectual opinions, cultural heritage, and human difference (Johnson & Lollar, 2002). Educators must build intercultural competence activities into their curriculum, to foster intercultural development and cultural awareness.

In civic engagement classrooms, it is essential to incorporate intercultural competence experiences into the curriculum as students learn how to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds. Incorporating intercultural competencies into instruction may give educators tools to focus on cultural sensitivity, awareness, and differences; conversely, this gives students the critical proficiencies needed for them to live and work in a cross-cultural society (Mahon & Cushner, 2014). Students who are introduced to the ideas of cultural awareness understand their interpretations of reality will not equal to the reality of others (Johnson & Lollar, 2002). In the action researcher's civic engagement classrooms, students are encouraged to seek volunteer opportunities

working with individuals from backgrounds different than their own. However, students are only encouraged to engage in these opportunities after they have been introduced to the general ideas of cultural and social awareness. In class, students are expected to partner with students whom they do not associate with outside of class. Requiring students to work with students from diverse backgrounds helps students begin to become aware of and increase their awareness of cultures contributions, experiences, and beliefs (Johnson & Lollar, 2002). Through various group or partner activities, students are asked to communicate their philosophies on learning, understanding, and alleviating social and community challenges, and their willingness to actively participate in the community (Pascarella, 2012). Johnson and Lollar (2002) argued individuals who think differently should have the opportunity to confront their differences and cultivate an understanding of those experiences.

Challenges Associated with Civic Engagement

The challenges associated with conducting an action research study that focuses on civic engagement include the varying definitions of civic engagement, identifying the importance of civic engagement in higher education, and discussing cultural barriers.

The various definitions of civic engagement. Definitions of civic engagement in academics vary depending on the type of civic involvement the author is discussing. The different definitions of civic engagement present challenges as individuals attempt to conceptualize the meaning of the term. As institutions attempt to address social, political, and economic issues, terms such as service learning have become a synonymous term used to describe civic engagement. Brabant and Braid (2009) stated the definitions of the terms service learning and civic engagement are often obscure as one considers the civic

sphere and behaviors of citizens. Many institutions identify civic engagement by focusing on critical issues that impact their campuses' needs. According to Brail (2016), many universities acknowledge experiential learning can promote student learning by encouraging students to engage and work with diverse individuals in the community. As a result, the viability of civic engagement on college campuses depends on how universities address needs and resources needed to conduct experiential learning (Brabant & Braid, 2009). Brabant and Braid (2009) conceptualized the term by defining civic engagement as the relationship between politics, partnerships, and the accompanying movement. Brail (2016) supported this definition by defining experiential learning as student learning through community engagement, the understanding of difference, and the promotion of civic engagement.

Civic engagement is associated with many definitions; however, the most common definitions describe the concept as working to make a difference through the development of various skills, values, and civic ideals. Civic engagement is defined by various scholarly sources as working to make a difference in communities by developing a combination of knowledge, skills, and values to see oneself morally and civically as a change agent to alleviate social challenges (Cress, 2012; Cooper et al., 2014).

The importance of civic engagement in higher education. Institutions face prevailing issues, as many colleges begin to incorporate civic engagement into their missions. College stakeholders (administrators, faculty, staff, students, and alumni) disagree on the definition and role of civic engagement, and how in depth the institution should get involved in those activities. Brabant and Braid (2009) cited some institutions' "conservative tendencies often cause faculty, administrators, and educational governing

bodies to resist pedagogical reform that can aid in the process of empowering students to accept their civic responsibilities” (p. 79). Due to the political nature of civic engagement, institutional stakeholders have begun labeling institutions as being liberal or conservative based on their civic engagement participation. The report *Making Citizens: How American Universities Teach Civics*, discusses the new movement in higher education to transform the teaching of civics (Randall & Thorne, 2017). This article described this new movement as being too liberal and offers more conservative ideas to redefine civic engagement. In response to the report, many academic scholars used various media outlets to express their disagreement with the report. In addition to the political conflicts surrounding civic engagement on college campuses, institutions struggle with the decision to allocate resources to sustain civic engagement programs (Brabant and Braid, 2009).

Cultural barriers. Students are socialized to learn their culture, acquire knowledge, values, and beliefs from people, groups, or institutions (Saldana, 2013). Students learn overt and covert messages from their surrounding environments which influence their beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes (Saldana, 2013). According to Saldana (2013) schools are agents of socialization as teachers and curricula teach and reinforce conformity, skills, values, and beliefs. Students carry these learned behaviors with them to college. On campus, students fall within the silos of befriending individuals who share commonalities such as race, socioeconomic status, political views, sexual orientation, religious backgrounds, etc. Saldana (2013) argued social reproduction in schools transmits knowledge, values, and social norms to students. The institutional ideology of

socializing helps students contextualize how they perceive their dreams, power, and interactions with others (Saldana, 2013).

This presents challenges, as students do not interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds, having a limited view of the perspectives and experiences around them. If colleges are to help transform students into civically engaged and culturally aware citizens, colleges will have to provide curricular and co-curricular civic opportunities for students to get involved. Chen, Nimmo, and Fraser (2009) cited the importance of culturally responsive environments that allow students from the dominant group “to feel secure about who they are without the need to feel superior to others,” and allow nondominant group members to be able “to participate fully in both their home culture and society” (p. 101). Interacting with diverse populations allow students to have an increased self- awareness of their social attitudes and identity compared to those who do not share the same social privileges. Although Chen et al. (2009) and Saldana (2013) research focused on the benefits of educators becoming self-aware and its impact on students, the information provided can be applicable to teaching college students how to overcome cultural barriers and decrease their cultural anti- bias. Overcoming cultural barriers will help students become culturally aware and competent, and interested in other students’ backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives.

Theoretical Framework for the Current Research Study

The theoretical framework, which supports this research study, is based on Culturally Relevant Teaching in higher education, the Experiential Learning Model, and the Social Change Model of Leadership.

Culturally relevant teaching in higher education. The fundamental goal of diversity in higher education is to provide access, opportunities, and educate students on the topics of equity and inclusiveness. The ideology is defined as “the engagement across racial and ethnic lines comprised of a broad and varied set of activities and initiatives” (Karkouti, 2016, p. 405). In institutions of higher learning, “diversity is considered as a transformative tool that allows universities to attain their mission and contribute to the betterment of the society” (Karkouti, 2016, p, 405). However, in higher education, there is an illusion of inclusion as institutions face challenges of addressing diversity and inclusion initiatives. Since the integration of education, institutions have failed to embrace diversity because of institutions conservative nature (Karkouti, 2016). The conservative nature of institutions is an important aspect to understand as individuals study the framework of institutions’ educational practices.

For decades in the United States, individuals have fought for equal and equitable access to human and civil rights. Still today, individuals are seeking access to equal formal educational opportunities that offer intentional support mechanisms for the holistic success of all students (Lazenby, 2016). Higher education, institutions must begin to address the increasing proportion of students of color enrolling by ensuring educational success through equal access to all college resources (Pak, 2018). According to Pak (2018) colleges and universities must begin to foster campus climates where students receive academic and social support, feel connected to the campus, and feel cared for, respected, important, and valued. Higher education institutions must begin to create supportive climates on campuses by not only focusing on diversifying the student populations but also ensuring cultural sensitivity and legitimacy is echoed across campus.

The pedagogical approach of Culturally Relevant Teaching Pedagogy (CRT) helps to address culturally sensitive needs of students who fall within the category of the minority on various campuses. Developed by Gloria Ladson- Billings, CRT focuses on students' cultural identities to empower them “intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Pak, 2018, p. 79). Additionally, CRT builds bridges between students' home and school by validating and confirming students and their cultural heritages (Pak, 2018). Marciano (2017) stated CRT educates students from marginalized backgrounds by offering a culturally sensitive instructional framework. CRT encourages teachers and students to work together to increase their academic expectations by focusing on increasing understanding and educational outcomes toward students' social relations. By teachers acknowledging students' cultural backgrounds as strengths, students can gain academic and emotional support and encouragement from their instructor and peers. In the classroom, the tenets of CRT can influence the interactions between the instructor and students.

In order for institutions to better prepare students to live in a diverse democratic society, educators and administrators will need to work together to reevaluate and propose new initiatives to create an inclusive, diverse learning environment. Karkouti (2016) noted institutions can address the issues of diversity by incorporating diversity into the institutions' mission and promote equal representation of racial and ethnic minorities by

- A. Identifying “the issue of concern”
- B. Collecting data

C. Analyzing data

D. Developing “an action plan that systematically addresses the identified shortcomings” (p. 411).

In addition, educators will need to continue to examine the inclusiveness of their instructional practices and its impact to avoid marginalizing students of diverse cultural diasporas (Karkouti, 2016; Pak, 2018).

The Experiential Learning Model. Experiential learning bridges the gaps between the classroom and real-world by giving students opportunities to serve in the community. The Experiential Learning Model, which was conceptualized by David Kolb, seeks to study learners’ cognitive processes as they learn and apply the instructional material. Bergsteiner, Avery, and Neumann (2010) asserted experiential learning theory “posits that learning is a cognitive process involving constant adaptation to, and engagement with, one’s environment” (p. 30). Individuals draw from instructional material and experience to create their meaning of knowledge. According to Kolb, knowledge is the result of interactions as individuals apply theory and experience; therefore, experiences create knowledge (Konak, Clark, & Nasereddin, 2014). Bergsteiner et al.’s (2010) research argued learning is a holistic process that is the result of people making choices about how to interact and engage with their environments. These choices are thought to dictate and influence individuals’ future interactions. The Experiential Learning Model documents the learning process using a four-stage cycle of learning. The four stages of the Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle are

Feeling

Concrete Experiences- the learner actively experiments with a concept

Watching

Reflective Observation- the learner consciously reflects on that experience.

Thinking

Abstract Conceptualization- the learner attempts to generalize a model of what is experienced.

Doing

Active Experimentation- the learner applies the model to a new experiment. (Konak et al., 2014, para. 8).

As individuals learn, they are thought to use the variables of “doing vs. watching” and “thinking vs. feeling” (Konak et al., 2014, para. 9). According to Konak et al.’s (2014) research students must cycle through all four stages in Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle to have a completed learning experience.

The Social Change Model of Leadership. The conceptual approach to the Social Change Model of Leadership began in 1994 at the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles. The model was developed to be a working framework that supports the principles of “equity, social justice, self-knowledge, personal empowerment, collaboration, citizenship, and service” (Astin & Astin, 1996, p.18).

Initially, the model was developed to aid student affairs practitioners whose functional areas focused on student leadership development. However, as the framework of the model increased, researchers found their data to apply to not only student affairs practitioners, but to administrators, faculty, and students. There are two primary goals of the Social Change Model of Leadership: “to enhance student learning and development” by focusing on self-knowledge and leadership competence, and “facilitate positive social

change at the institution or in the community” (Astin & Astin, 1996, p.1). Social Change Model of Leadership examines leadership development by encouraging leaders to create climates that foster positive social change (Astin & Astin, 1996). The model uses three different perspectives to examine leadership development:

1. **The Individual** focuses on the development of personal qualities, self-awareness, and personal values.
2. **The Group** focuses on collaboration and interaction between groups and individuals.
3. **The Community/ Society** focuses on bringing about change for the common good (Astin & Astin, 1996, p. 19).

Additionally, the model has several critical values known as the 7 C's of leadership development for social change. According to Astin and Astin (1996) the 7 C's of Leadership Development for Social Change are:

Individual Values

Consciousness of self

Congruence

Commitment

Group Process Values

Collaboration

Common Purpose

Controversy with Civility

Community/ Societal Values

Citizenship (p.21).

Conclusion

Higher education is a transformative tool that provides students the resources and opportunities to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. As colleges incorporate civic engagement and diversity into their missions, institutions must provide educational resources to equip their students with the cultural knowledge needed to properly interact with diverse individuals on campus and in the community. The literature review for this action research study provided literary and theoretical frameworks describing the role of civic engagement in higher education.

Historically civic engagement has a rich history of requiring individuals in society to get involved in the democratic process to address public concerns and implement strategies to solve challenges in society. According to Keeter et al. (2002), civic engagement can be classified into three broad categories of electoral action, civic action, and political views. In higher education, civic engagement has become an essential initiative as institutions strive to produce civically active students. Mylon (2013) cited many colleges and universities are providing numerous resources to ensure their students become well-rounded civically responsible citizens. O'Conner (2006) and Boland's (2014) studies suggest that students who are involved in civic engagement have an increased understanding of cultural awareness and participation in democratic outcomes. Additionally, the literature review examined: college students' perspectives on civic engagement, experiential learning in higher education, the benefits, and challenges of civic engagement. Challenges of civic engagement included the varying definitions associated with civic engagement, the importance of civic engagement in higher education and cultural barriers.

The theoretical perspectives that framed the literature review and research study began with a discussion on Culturally Relevant Teaching in higher education. Culturally Relevant Teaching in higher education helps teachers and students explore how diversity impacts how we interact, befriend, treat, or oppress other individuals. Karkouti (2016) argued diversity in higher education could be used as a tool to transform society. By studying diversity, one is then able to understand how culture influences civic engagement participation in the community or classroom. Also, the theoretical framework discussed the Experiential Learning Model and the Social Change Model of Leadership. These two models focus on student development through experiential, hands-on approaches with the desire to facilitate personal, professional, and social growth through self-knowledge and leadership capabilities. Johnson and Lollar (2002) argued students who are engaged in diverse classrooms have an increased cultural awareness and civic competence.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The essential problem of practice was derived from the action researcher observing the consistent challenges and behavioral barriers of college students who participated in civic engagement. Also, the action researcher perceived the instructional practices used in civic engagement courses at the study's research site did not meaningfully engage students who enrolled in the courses. At the researcher's single gendered institution of higher learning, students participating in civic engagement and service learning courses were not implicitly and consistently engaging in classroom activities. The overarching goals of these courses are to equip students with indispensable skills and attitudes to prepare them to work in diverse settings.

As previously noted, civic engagement courses must incorporate impactful instructional strategies that will increase the cultural awareness and fill in the sensitivity gaps of their students. Brown (2016) cited how broadening students' cultural horizons equips them with the knowledge needed to interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds. According to Britt (2012), service learning classrooms can purposefully link service and practice, impacting how students see themselves in the world. By incorporating diverse instructional strategies, the action researcher believed that students who actively engaged in civic engagement courses could learn how to address and dismantle cultural barriers and misunderstandings.

This chapter will discuss the research methodology used to investigate the research questions:

1. How do the instructional strategies utilized in an introductory civic engagement course influence the attitudes and beliefs of college students around civic engagement?
2. How does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?

The study examined three instructional practices: peer conversations, civic engagement literature, and direct classroom instruction. To answer the study's research questions, the researcher used an action research methodology as it provided the most appropriate systematic inquiry for gathering information for this study.

Research Design

Rationale for selected methodology. Action research methodology was the most appropriate research method to effectively investigate this research study because action research allows for a critical examination of teaching principles (Mills, 2018). Sagor (2000) and Hine (2013) defined action research as a systematic process that is used to enhance educators' knowledge through direct research. It seeks to solve the challenges or address the questions teachers have that pertain to their classes (Sagor, 2000; Hine, 2013).

This methodology is further defined as a study conducted by individuals who have a vested interest in how the process of teaching and learning influences their schools' holistic environment (Somekh, 1995). These concerns arise as practitioners recognize and address challenges facing their organizations. In action research, the

researcher “identifies an area of focus,” “collects data,” “analyzes and interprets data,” and “develops an action plan” (Mills, 2018, p. 26).

Action research provided the researcher with a systematic, collaborative, and participatory method for investigating the research study (Hine, 2013). The researcher was able to act as a researcher and participant by reflecting on the needs of students, developing driving questions, and subjectively participating in the study. Additionally, this methodology assisted the researcher in gaining new knowledge that directly related to the researcher’s interest and classroom needs (Hine, 2013). A description of how each of these instruments was used is provided later in this chapter.

The researcher used a mixed methods research triangulation design to conduct the study. Mixed methods research comprehensively addresses the research questions by harnessing the strengths and weaknesses of qualitative and quantitative data (Tariq & Woodman, 2013). Tariq and Woodman (2013) argued mixed methods research provides researchers a variety of tools, devices, and inventions to collect and analyze data. Mills (2018) suggested researchers should use triangulation, to utilize multiple instruments, rather than solely one methodological technique, to increase the validity of the data. Triangulation design uses quantitative and qualitative data to offer a complete illustration and understanding of the research study’s phenomenon (Mertens & Biber, 2012). The researcher simultaneously collected quantitative and qualitative data and then integrated the collected data for results interpretation. According to Mertens and Biber (2012) triangulation design provides a comprehensive explanatory framework that demonstrates causation and variables relationships through the integration of quantitative data. Upon the completion of the study, the researcher interpreted and presented the study’s findings

through the methodological framework of action research design: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2014). The researcher also outlined an action plan and offered recommendations for future studies.

Context and setting of the research study. The context of the action research study took place at the action researcher's current institution, Southern College (a pseudonym), a small college in South Carolina. The college operates on a 4-1-4 Semester Plan, where the college's fall and spring semesters last about four months each with a short mini-session in January. The college has approximately 800 undergraduates enrolled in various academic programs (US News, 2016). Student populations at the college consist of 62.8% White, 8.8% African American, 6.3% Hispanic, 0.4% Asian, 4.5% of two or more races, and 15.8% of students' race or ethnicity unknown (Forbes, 2016). According to Forbes (2016), *America's Top Colleges*, 100% of the student population is on financial aid. The average financial aid granted and received by full-time, first time students is \$16,551 (Forbes, 2016). The college offers 25 majors and 28 minors. The faculty to student ratio is 11:1 (Forbes, 2016).

During the summer of 2015, the college restructured the Student Affairs Department. The new department was entitled the Division of Student Development and Success, which encompasses Student Life, the Wellness Center, Career Development, Diversity, Community Service, Leadership, Orientation, Student Activities, Religious Life, Academic Accommodations, Residence Life, Student Success Seminar, and First-Year Seminar. The department is also interconnected to different academic departments. The researcher currently serves as the Director of Community and Inclusion, focusing on diversity, inclusion, civic engagement, and community service initiatives.

Study’s time frame. The timeframe for the study was a 14-week period during the spring semester of 2018. During this timeframe, the action researcher collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The study began February 10th and concluded May 10th. The action researcher collected data within a framework of one hour and fifteen minutes twice a week. Each session occurred in the late afternoon from 4:00 p.m. – 5:15 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The action researcher collected data concurrently with each class session, maintaining a field notes journal that comprised of participants reactions, attitudes, and perceived engagement through classroom open-ended reflection. A schedule of the data collection and strategy implementation process is below.

Table 3.1

Study’s Time Frame

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Assignment Due</u>
Basic introductions and class expectations, discussions of leadership, notes to yourself	
No Class	Reflection Due
Tell Us What You’re About (TUWYA) Presentations	TUWYA Due
Tell Us What You’re About (TUWYA) Presentations, continued	
No Class	Reflection Due
Goal-Setting + Lollipop Moments in Leadership	
No Class	Reflection Due
Strengths Quest	Strengths Quest Complete
What is Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (EIL)? How does this play into our Strengths?	Have read EIL book, pages 1-108
Social Change Model overview – How does this impact our lives as Emotionally Intelligent Leaders?	Reflection Due
Servant Leadership	Reflection Due
Guest speaker from United Way of the Piedmont	Reflection Due
Consciousness of Self: Emotional Self-Perception, Emotional Self-Control	Reflection Due
Healthy Self-Esteem, Authenticity, Flexibility	Reflection Due
Coping & self-care – How can we complete everything we need to do, but still take care of ourselves?	Reflection Due
Exercising Self-Care – Guest speaker	Reflection Due

No Class – SPRING BREAK	
No Class – SPRING BREAK	
Achievement, Optimism, Initiative, Empathy	Have read EIL book pages 109 – 206
Vulnerability & Leadership – Brené Brown	
Developing <i>Emotionally Intelligent Leadership</i> : Coaching, Change Agent, Conflict Management, Teamwork, and Capitalizing on Differences (Shankman, Allen, & Haber-Curran, 2015)	Have read EIL book pages 207 – 237 Reflection Due
Work Day for Groups	
What makes a powerful presentation?	
Work Day for Groups	
Group Presentations	All materials for group assignment are due.
Group Presentations	
What is Your Legacy?	
Last class – Wrap up & discuss service learning opportunities.	Service Learning Reflection Due

Ethical considerations. While conducting the study, the researcher had an increased awareness of ethical considerations to avoid unethical behaviors and practices. In higher education, it is important to adhere to a code of ethics when considering faculty and students relationships. The action researcher had to adhere to ethical discourse as it relates to various aspects of faculty-student research relationships (Hardy, 2002). Ethical issues associated with faculty who are using their students to conduct research include challenges of honesty, respect, and objectivity (Hardy, 2002). According to Hardy (2002), student participants are less likely to be honest during the research process, as students may attribute a connection between their participation and their grade for the course. Hardy (2002) stated, it is the professoriate or instructors’ responsibility to demonstrate respect and fairness to student participants, and verbally articulate their rights and confidentiality as a participant.

Reducing ethical abuse and challenges during the research process was essential when considering the well-being of the study's participants. Ponterotto (2010) stated it is essential for researchers to practice self-awareness, general competence, and cooperative commitment. When collecting data from participants, it is essential to eliminate the potential for unethical practices such as bias, authority, or confidentiality. Researchers should "develop methodological research skills so that they can select inquiry models most appropriate to the research question at hand and most consistent with the worldview of the people under study" (Ponterotto, 2010, p. 588). Participants, who agreed to participate in the study, were given a consent form and confidentiality statement to be signed and returned to the researcher at the beginning of the study. The confidentiality statement stated that each participant's name and answers would be kept private in a secure location. Participation in the study did not impact the students' academic outcome in the course or participation at the college.

Role of the researcher. In action research, the practitioner-researcher served in a dual role as an active participant and passive observer. According to Herr and Anderson (2005), it is essential for researchers to consider their positionality when considering their research, setting, participants, and quality of data. The researcher for this study is a mid-level higher education practitioner, serving in a dual role at Southern College as the Director of Community and Inclusion and Assistant Director of Residential Life. The researcher is a full-time faculty and staff employee, working in the functional areas of Diversity, Inclusion, Community Service, Civic Engagement, Leadership, and Residential Life.

The primary role of the researcher was serving as the Director of Community and Inclusion. In this role, the researcher worked collaboratively with administration, faculty, staff, students, and community members. As the Director of Community and Inclusion, the researcher was responsible for leading and organizing all professional development training around diversity, community service, and civic engagement for faculty, staff, and students. Additionally, the researcher advised all multicultural student organizations, developed programs that focus on cultural diversity, created civic engagement and service programs, and assessed all diversity, community service, and civic engagement programs that occurred at the college. In this capacity, the researcher regularly collaborated with colleagues from local colleges and universities. The researcher collaborated and consulted with local colleagues to develop and implement programming that promoted community awareness and inclusion.

At Southern College, the researcher observed that many student leaders engaged in civic engagement and community service initiatives. However, within their student organizations, many of these student leaders fostered environments that catered to serving the needs of individuals from homogeneous backgrounds. Consequently, many student organizations have been accused of being bias toward minorities. To cite one example, the action researcher noticed some students who graduated from the college's civic engagement program, joined the college's debate team. The goal of this team is to help students develop leadership skills by engaging in writing, debating, and discussing issues of international concern. Each year, the team selects new members. A majority of the team's membership encompasses students who are majority white, Christian, and heterosexual. The team has a proven history of struggling to keep students of color, as

these students have reported fellow members being culturally insensitive. For example, a white team member began to spread a rumor that a black team member and their family ate at the soup kitchen due to being poor black people. This comment was meant to demean the black team member by stereotyping her, alluding to the black student being given awards rather than earning them through hard work.

Additionally, the researcher observed students, who previously participated in civic engagement and service learning courses, engage in volunteer projects with a superiority complex. To cite another example, the action researcher noticed students' making sandwiches for children in need in an unsanitary environment. These individuals did not use gloves and laid the sandwiches on unclean table tops. Afterwards, the students served the sandwiches to the children in need. When the action researcher questioned the students about their actions, one student replied, "when you are hungry you will eat anything." The researcher addressed the comment by informing the student and her peers that individuals should treat others as they want to be treated. The researcher asked the students how would they feel if someone gave them sandwiches prepared in unsanitary conditions. The students responded by putting on gloves, fixing the sandwiches on plates, and not using the ends of the bread to make sandwiches.

In Developing Students' Twenty-First Century Skills Through a Service Learning Project, Sabat et al. (2015) discussed the increasing importance for students to develop knowledge, teamwork, and civic engagement skills. Sabat et al. (2015) asserted that service learning curricula help students develop experiential learning skills as they explore real-world experiences through an academic lens. The researcher used a balance of awareness to study and reflect on instructional practices. The researcher functioned in

multiple roles, serving as a lecturer and observer for the study's sample. The researcher worked to manage these roles and monitor behavior to increase validity, "minimize the impact of internal politics," and to "find an appropriate voice" (Hanson, 2013, p. 396).

Positionality. The experiences, identities, and perceptions of the researcher and participants had the potential to influence the data collected. Due to the researcher being the primary data collector and instructor, the researcher remained subjective and cognizant of their individual experiences, values, and beliefs associated with the study. Being aware of the influence of positionality was a key factor as the researcher worked to remain impartial while collecting data, reflecting on the study, and sharing the study's findings.

In the study, participants' may have been influenced by the role of the action researcher. As the Director of Community and Inclusion and Assistant Director of Residential Life, the researcher may have interacted with the students in various academic and extracurricular settings before the study. In this role, the researcher is responsible for providing programming and training in regards to diversity, inclusion, civic engagement, and service learning. Each month, the researcher hosts at minimum five programs developed to provide students, faculty, and staff opportunities to grow intellectually and socially as they engage in diverse curricular and cocurricular experiences. For example, the researcher's office hosts cultural heritage months and awareness weeks to acknowledge, celebrate, and explore the cultural diversity of the college. Many students attend these programs or trainings due to students being required to attend at minimum six cultural and community awareness programs a semester. Students have to pay a \$30 fine for each program less than the six required per fall and

spring semester. Additionally, the researcher serves as the Assistant Director of Residential Life. In this position, the researcher lives on campus in a residential hall, coordinates and guides a residential area, serves on the on call rotation for the college, directly supervises resident assistants, supervises programming that takes place in residence halls, review incident reports, responds to emergencies, hears student conduct cases, coordinates with counseling services, and works with maintenance to ensure a safe living environments.

During the research process, the researcher remained unobtrusive and observed students within their natural classroom setting. Ethical considerations, such as confidentiality, remained most important as participants identities were coded. Participants names were removed, and each participant was assigned a number. The number was associated with each participant the duration of the study. Each participant was aware of the research study and signed consent forms referencing the possibility of their work in the class being used for the study. All students completed the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire and an individual Service Learning Project. Eleven of the students participating in the research study participated in the interview segment.

The Intervention and Redesign of the Course

Peer to peer conversations. The researcher infused peer to peer conversations in the course to provide a platform for academic discourse among students. According to Turpen and Finkelstein (2010) peer to peer conversations provide students opportunities to engage in the instruction by prompting students to ask questions, evaluate problems, and justify their results. In the study, peer to peer conversations was a routine classroom instructional practice. Each class session provided time for students to work in small

groups with their peers to discuss class topics. After small group discussions, students would report to the entire class the details of their groups' conversation. These details outlined the ideas, opinions, and themes that arose during small group discussions. Table 3.2 Outline of Samples Peer to Peer Conversations facilitation guide used in the course.

Table 3.2
Sample Peer to Peer Conversation Facilitation Guide

<u>Topic: Time Management</u>	
<u>Reflection Question Number</u>	<u>Reflection Question</u>
Reflection Question 1	Work Smart, not Harder: How long do you need to spend on specific activities (i.e. classwork, on social media, spending time with friends, working, etc.)?
Reflection Question 2	Practicing Time Management: Discuss how your schedule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fosters productivity and efficiency • Increases or Decreases stress • Aids or Hinders you from completing your school or work • Creates or Eliminates space for activities and people that matter.
Reflection Question 3	Reflective Practice: Which statements represents your time management style? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I work on tasks that are the highest priority. • I complete tasks at the last minute. • I set aside time for planning. • I prioritize my <i>to do list</i>. • I know the amount of time I need to complete tasks. • I find myself dealing with distractions. • I use goal setting to decide my priority tasks. • I build in extra time. • I prioritize accordingly. • I am stressed about deadlines.
Reflection Question 4	Strategies to Improve Time Management: What are some additional strategies to improve your time management? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize tasks • Manage Interruptions • Avoid procrastination

Reflection Question 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule in Advance Overcoming Procrastination: Is procrastination a routine habit?
Reflection Question 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be honest with yourself. How to Beat Procrastination: What behaviors lead to you procrastinating?

The table is an example of a questions that facilitated peer to peer discussion. The table above outlines a class discussion on time management. This topic was important to discuss as many students reported not having enough time to complete class assignments, such as the hours needed for the Service Learning Project. Before this class session, students reported being too busy with other classes, sports, work, or other commitments to complete the Service Learning Project’s volunteer hours. This class discussion prompted students to reflect on the experiences outside the classroom. Students began by considering their current schedules and the estimated time they needed to complete activities. During this time, many students recalled aloud their schedules. Many students who played the same sport, discussed having to attend athletic practice at 5:30 a.m., eating breakfast at 8:30 a.m., and beginning class at 9:00 a.m. Some noted how they were sometimes late to practice due to procrastinating. Students were then asked to identify their time management skills and identify strategies to improve their time management skills. Additionally, students were asked to identify if procrastination was a part of their daily routine. If it was, they were asked to discuss was to overcome procrastination. From this discussion, many students found they had more time than they thought to complete tasks, including the Service Learning Project’s volunteer hours. Students were able to note where in their schedules they had time to volunteer in the community to fulfill the

Service Learning Project requirements. Some students found they had time during the day or early evening to volunteer at local nonprofits.

Additionally, peer to peer conversations were used as an instructional strategy to help students engage in a deeper understanding of the learning through peer learning. Peer to peer conversations encouraged students to speak more freely with less pressure to provide the right answer (Johnson, 2016). According to Johnson (2016) peer to peer conversations promote peer support and help students develop higher order thinking skills as students are given the opportunity to discuss ideas and discover methods of reasoning. Additionally, peer to peer conversations encourage students to collaborate as they complete classroom tasks (Turpen & Finkelstein, 2010). In the course, the researcher incorporated structured peer conversations to promote active learning and interactions between students. Students were encouraged to collaborate and clarify their understanding of topics discussed in class.

Course reading: *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*. The adopted text for the course was *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* by Shankman et al. (2015). *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* discussed an array of diverse topics and presented a number of opportunities that encouraged students to develop their leadership attitudes, beliefs, and skills (Shankman et al., 2015). Table 3.3 outlines the topics covered within the book.

Table 3.3
Topics Covered within the Book

<u>Sessions Themes</u>	<u>Chapters</u>
What is Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (EIL)? How does this play into our Strengths?	<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>

Social Change Model overview – How does this impact our lives as Emotionally Intelligent Leaders?	<i>Chapter 2: Environmental Awareness</i>
Servant Leadership	<i>Chapter 3: Group Savvy</i> <i>Chapter 2: Environmental Awareness</i> <i>Chapter 3: Group Savvy</i> <i>Chapter 16: Influence</i> <i>Chapter 18: Change Agent</i>
Consciousness of Self: Emotional Self-Perception, Emotional Self-Control	<i>Chapter 4: Emotional Self- Perception</i> <i>Chapter 5: Honest Self-Understanding</i> <i>Chapter 7: Emotional Self- Control</i>
Healthy Self-Esteem, Authenticity, Flexibility	<i>Chapters 6: Health Self-Esteem</i> <i>Chapter 8: Authenticity</i> <i>Chapter 9: Flexibility</i>
Achievement, Optimism, Initiative, Empathy	<i>Chapters 10: Achievement</i> <i>Chapter 11: Optimism</i> <i>Chapter 12: Initiative</i> <i>Chapter 13: Empathy</i>
Vulnerability & Leadership – Brené Brown	<i>Chapter 14: Citizenship</i> <i>Chapter 15: Inspiration</i> <i>Chapter 17: Coaching</i> <i>Chapter 19: Conflict Management</i> <i>Chapter 20: Developing Relationships</i> <i>Chapter 21: Teamwork</i> <i>Chapter 22: Capitalizing on Difference</i>
Developing <i>Emotionally Intelligent Leadership</i> : Coaching, Change Agent, Conflict Management, Teamwork, and Capitalizing on Differences (Shankman et al., 2015)	<i>Chapter 23: Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership</i>

The instructor grouped the text’s chapters based on their relationships. For example, chapters 4,5, and 7 are grouped together as students began to discuss *Consciousness of*

Self: Emotional Self-Perception, Emotional Self-Control Consciousness of Self:

Emotional Self-Perception, Emotional Self-Control. In this section, students began to examine their personal identities, perceptions, and beliefs.

According to Shankman et al. (2015), the purpose of the text is to help students explore the connection between emotional intelligence and effective leadership strategies. Within the introductory civic engagement course, the textbook served as a source of supplementary material that inspired the class' curriculum and instructional activities. The text helped the researcher manage lessons by assisting with the direction of lessons and facilitation of class discussions. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* served as the course's theoretical framework, as it provided contextual research to support leadership claims and theories (Shankman et al., 2015). The textbook was useful in helping students learn clearer and easier with the presentation of material. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* was an instructional source that helped structure assignments that engaged the learner (Shankman et al., 2015).

Direct classroom instruction. The researcher used direct classroom instruction throughout the course to ensure students received congruent instruction and adequate practice (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.). The instructor combined direct classroom instruction with topics covered in the book to teach students about leadership, civic engagement and service learning. The practitioner used Direct Classroom Instruction's Five Phases for Instructional Process to provide the appropriate integration for the transfer of knowledge.

Phase One: Direct Explanation. The researcher used a pre-assessment to bridge the gaps between students' prior knowledge and the new material set to be learned

(Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.). Using a pre- assessment allowed the researcher to develop learning targets and benchmark student learning measurements.

Phase Two: Demonstration and Modeling. The practitioner engaged students through questioning, the presentation of models, and additional hands on demonstration strategies (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.). The text for the course presented various leadership models to students. During this phase, the researcher used peer to peer assistance and small group learning to support student learning.

Phase Three: Guided Practice. Phase three of Direct Classroom Instruction encouraged students to engage instructional practices through independent learning (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.). In the study, students engaged in guided practice as they worked in small groups in and outside of class. Instructional strategies such as peer conversation and the integration of the text, *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*, provide students a high level of support as students engaged in strong procedural engagement learner (Shankman et al., 2015).

Phase Four: Corrective Feedback/Verification. Throughout the course, students received consistent constructive feedback to maximize their learning (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.). Students received descriptive feedback on assignments that provide students with the appropriate support in regards to their class performance and understanding of class material (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.).

Phase Five: Independent Practice and Problem Solving. In phase five, students actively engage by using the skills learned in class to actively problem solve (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.). In the course, students completed the Service Learning Project to demonstrate their ability to independently practice the skills learned in class.

The Service Learning Project promoted students to reflect on what the material learned in class, and apply those skills in a real world setting. The researcher monitored this process by evaluating the projects and providing feedback to students.

Participants

The action research study began by receiving approval from the University of South Carolina's Institutional Review Board. Subsequently, the researcher presented the research study's plan, goals, and objectives to Southern College's Institutional Review Board to receive permission to conduct the study on campus. The researcher then informed the Vice President of Academic Affairs of the research study being conducted.

The sample used in the study consisted of 22 college students enrolled in a leadership course that met on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 4:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. Students who participated in the study were selected based on convenience, due to being enrolled in the leadership course. All participants completed consent forms prior to the beginning of the study. The consent forms informed participants of the study's purpose, plan, and objectives. No males participated in the study, due to the institution being an all women's college.

The 22 participants are described using pseudonyms.

- **Katie** was a Black female student, who was a junior. She took the course to improve her leadership skills and abilities. Katie was the student government association's president. She was a community advisor (CA), a member of College Republicans, a part of the college's honor fraternity, and a member of the Association of African American Students.

- **Tammy** was a Hispanic female student, who was a senior. She took the course to enhance her leadership skills and abilities. During the course, Tammy applied to graduate schools to study counseling. Also, she worked in the Division of Student Development and Success as a Student Worker. Previously, Tammy served as a community advisor and summer worker for the Division of Student Development and Success.
- **Susan** was a White female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to boost her grade point average. Last semester, Susan participated in a theater production on campus. Susan was also a commuter student.
- **Bertha** was a Black female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to increase her self-motivation. Bertha was a student-athlete.
- **Jasmine** was a Black female student, who was a freshman. She took the course to improve her leadership skills, especially in accepting criticism. Jasmine was a student-athlete.
- **Rudy** was a Black female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to improve her grade point average. Additionally, she hoped to learn how to take charge and better communicate. Rudy was a student-athlete.
- **Lena** was a White female student, who was a junior. She enrolled in the class to improve her grade point average; however, she hoped to improve her leadership skills. Previously, Lena worked as a summer worker for the Division of Student Development and Success.

- **Whitney** was a White female student, who was a sophomore. She enrolled in the course to acquire skills that would help her academically and socially. At the time of the study, Whitney had not held any leadership position on campus.
- **Angela** was a White female student, who was a freshman. She is enrolled in the course to help her grade point average; however, she expressed interest in being excited about the service learning projects. At the time of the study, Angela had not held any leadership position on campus.
- **Sara** was a White female student, who was a freshman. She took the course with the hope of gaining skills that could assist in improving others lives by helping them make better decisions. At the time of the study, Sara had not held any leadership position on campus.
- **Sue** was a White female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to build self-confidence after having been bullied in high school. At the time of the study, Sue had not held any leadership position on campus.
- **Jessica** was a Hispanic female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to enhance her leadership skills. At the time of the study, Jessica has not held any leadership position on campus.
- **Nikki** was a Black female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to improve her grade point average and leadership skills in regards to being a leader and not a follower. Nikki was a student-athlete.

- **Sophia** was an international White, female student who was a junior. She enrolled in the course due to being interested in the concepts of leadership. Sophia was a student-athlete.
- **Cassie** was Black female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to improve her grade point average. Cassie was a student-athlete.
- **Reese** was a White, female student who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course due to being interested in finding leadership opportunities on campus and in the community. Reese was a student-athlete.
- **Sally** was a White, female student who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course due to having to raise her grade point average. Sally was a student-athlete.
- **Cassidy** was a White, female student who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course due to her interest in leadership. At the time of the study, Cassidy has not held any leadership position on campus.
- **Jackson** was a White, female student who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course due to being interested in the leadership course based on the course's description. Jackson was a student-athlete.
- **Janice** was a Black female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to improve her grade point average and enhance leadership skills. Janice was a student-athlete.
- **Ryan** was a White, female student who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course due to her desire to increase her leadership skills and engage in

a leadership position on campus. At the time of the study, Ryan has not held any leadership position on campus.

- **Everett** was a Black female student, who was a freshman. She enrolled in the course to improve her grade point average. Everett was a student-athlete.

Below is a chart showing a breakdown of the racial ethnicity of the participants. 52% of participants were White students, 38 % were Black, 7% were Hispanic, and 3% were biracial (two or more races).

Figure 3.1

Race/Ethnicity of Study Participants

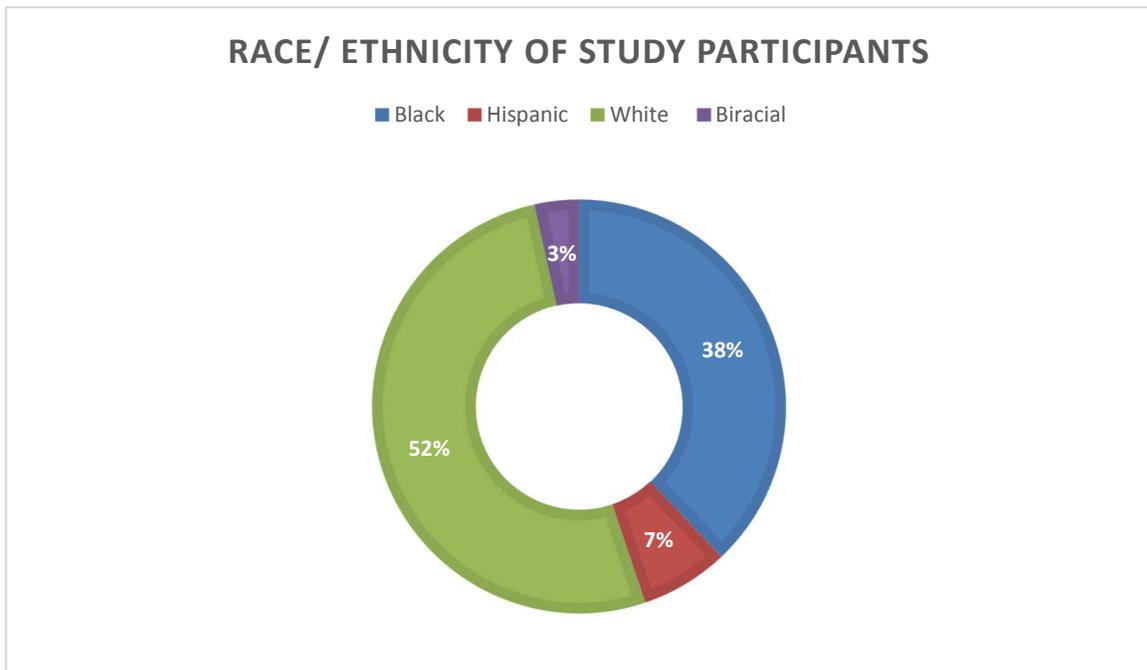


Figure 3.1 outlines the race and ethnicity of the study's participants.

Data Collection Instruments

Pre- questionnaire and post- questionnaire (appendix c). A pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire design measured participants' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives before and after the treatment. The researcher used the questionnaire, *Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire*, developed by Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, and Kerrigan in conjunction with Campus Compact (Waters & Anderson- Lain, 2014). Campus Compact is a national collation of higher education institutions committed to civic education and community development (Campus Compact, n.d.). Gelmon et al. and Campus Compact initially developed the questionnaire to assess service learning and civic engagement projects (Waters & Anderson- Lain, 2014). The assessment measures outcomes for higher education stakeholders in relation to civic engagement and service learning (Waters & Anderson- Lain, 2014). The design enabled the researcher to have quantifiable measurements of the participants' progress. According to Waters and Anderson- Lain (2014) this questionnaire is the primary assessment used by Campus Compact to better understand the effectiveness and quality of community engagement and service learning initiatives. Dimitrov and Rumrill (2003) cited pretest and posttest designs are primarily used by researchers to compare and measure the change in results from experimental treatments. Waters and Anderson- Lain (2014) stated assessments, such as the one used in this study, provide insight into the progress of student learning, comprehension, and engagement. The results of the test provide a vehicle for change as researchers examine the controls, interventions, and validity of the study (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). In this research study, the researcher used a pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire to measure the attitudes and behavioral shifts of participants.

A pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire were disseminated to participants before and after the study to assess the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs of the participants. The questionnaires were used to measure the students’ skills, attitudes, and beliefs concerning civic engagement and service learning. On the first day of class, all 22 participants received the *Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire* as shown in Table 3.4 (Waters & Anderson- Lain, 2014). The questionnaire asked students questions pertaining to their attitudes and beliefs about civic engagement and service learning. Additionally, the questionnaires asked students if they believed the class would help to enhance or change their attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement and service learning. The students’ answered each question by choosing one answer in the following category: strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree.

Table 3.4

Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
The service learning aspect of this course will help me to see how the subject matter I will learn can be used in everyday life.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The service learning, I will do through this course will help me to better understand the lectures and readings in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel I will learn more from this course if more time is spent in the classroom instead of in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

The idea of combining service in the community with university coursework should be practiced in more classes at this university.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I am already volunteering in my community before taking this service learning course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I feel that the community service I will do through this course will benefit the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I probably won't volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The service learning involved in this course will help me to become more aware of the needs in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
My interactions with the community partner will enhance my learning in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
I have a responsibility to serve my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Performing service in the community will help me clarify which major I will pursue.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The community service in this course will help me clarify my career plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The community service I will perform in this class will enhance my relationship with my professor.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
The work I will accomplish in this course will make me more marketable in my chosen profession when I graduate.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

The community service involved in this course will make me more aware of my own biases and prejudices.

The service I will perform in the community will enhance my ability to communicate in a “real-world” setting.

The community service aspect of this course will help me to develop my problem solving skills.

Most people can make a difference in their community.

This service learning course will help me become more comfortable working with people different from myself.

The community service I will perform in this course will help me learn how to plan and complete a project.

Participating in the community will help me enhance my leadership skills.

I can make a difference in my community.

I would like to enroll in additional service learning courses.

Note. Adopted from Gelmon et al. in conjunction with Campus Compact, 2014

The questionnaires were distributed via paper and filled out with a pen or pencil by the participants and returned to the researcher upon completion.

Student service learning project summary. Community service projects help students develop real-world skills and create a sense of social responsibility. Koldewyn et

al. (2017) research suggested service learning opportunities bridges academic and real-world experiences by allowing students to engage in activities involving community needs. These structured opportunities help students develop high-level thinking and developmental skills by intentionally placing students in environments where they connect theory and practice (Koldewyn et al., 2017). For the study, each participant individually completed the Service Learning Project. This project was designed by the instructor to integrate reading and class discussions into activities outside of the course. The project was designed to help students understand the material discussed in class more deeply and effectively by having each student engage in volunteer experiences. While volunteering students were to reflect on and use the various skills and strategies learned in class. Each participant had to complete a minimum of 10 hours of community service over the course of the class. Participants were to journal about their experiences and connect their experiences back to the information learned in class. At the end of the semester, participants turned in a summary of their experiences. In the summary, participants were to demonstrate a deep understanding of what they experienced as a volunteer and correlate those experiences to the topics discussed in class.

Interviews. Interviews help researchers gather create rapport and communicate directly with the interviewee. According to Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008) interviews help researchers explore participants' views, experiences, motivations, and beliefs related to the research. Interviews help to provide further data about exploring the studied topic by having the researcher ask questions that seek information and clarification (Gill et al., 2008). For this action research study, the researcher concluded the study by having participants complete not only a post questionnaire but also an

interview. The researcher selected 11 participants from the course to answer interview questions. The sample chosen represented a large majority of the research's sample. Participants were asked to complete an interview with the researcher during class hours to avoid conflicts of time and distractions. Gill et al. (2008) cited it is important for interviews to be conducted within a time frame where the interviewer and interviewee is free from distractions and has ample time to address all interview questions. To increase the validity of the interview's data, the researcher used a structured open-ended question interview process. The researcher asked participants the same questions in the same format. Table 3.5 list the questions that were asked to the participants during the interview segment.

Table 3.5

<i>Interview Questions</i>	
<u>Question Number</u>	<u>Questions</u>
1	What instructional strategies influenced your perspectives on civic engagement?
2	How did the class prepare you to engage in service learning opportunities?
3	What were some of the strengths of the course?
4	What are some things that could be improved in the course?
5	Would you like to share any additional comments?

Participants were asked about the class' instructional strategies that helped influence their civic engagement and service learning perspectives. Additionally, participants were asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the course. Participants had the opportunity to address and share any additional information they thought related to the study.

Data Collection Methodology

The researcher used the mixed methods triangulation design to collect data. Mills (2018) defined triangulation as the use of multi-instruments to collect data. Triangulation

enables the researcher to understand data through a comprehensive approach, as the data reveals trends and alignment among data responses. According to Mertens and Hesse-Biber (2012) and Mills (2018) mixed methods triangulation design provides a complete understanding of the data by fielding and equalizing the validity of both sets of data. The researcher used a multi-instrument approach to collect data for the research study (Mills, 2018). The instruments used to collect data included a pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire, a written summary of a Community Service Project, and interviews. The researcher used the data collected from the instruments to analyze how an introductory civic engagement course influenced students' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives about civic engagement. Figure 3.2 denotes the triangulation of the data.

Figure 3.2 *Triangulation of Data*

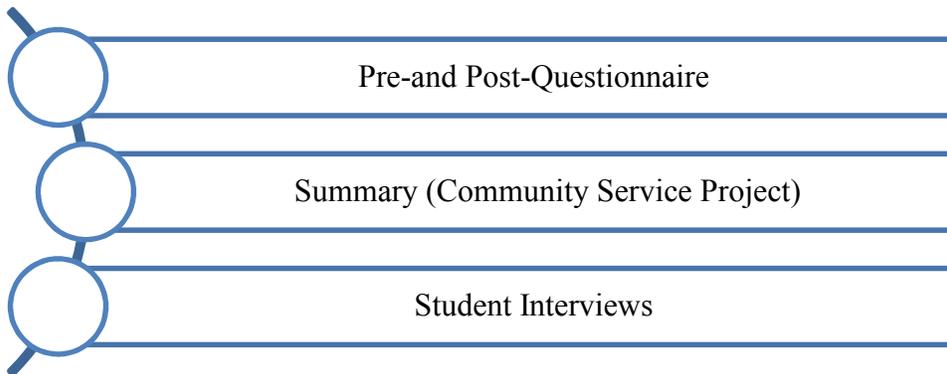


Figure 3.2 demonstrated the research study's triangulation of data.

The researcher also used the data to examine how the class prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities. Table 3.6, *Data Collection Methodology*, provides a detailed overview of the data collection methodology used in this research study.

Table 3.6
Data Collection Methodology

<u>Data Collection Method</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Documents</u>
Pre-Questionnaire / Post Questionnaire	Collection of data about students' motivation and understanding of civic engagement and service learning.	Twice during research	Appendix C
Community Service Project	Student work. Students worked individually to complete 10 hours of community service at a local nonprofit. Written summary...	Once during research	Appendix E
Interviews	Collection of data about students' experiences on learning and understanding civic engagement and service learning.	Once during research	Appendix D

The researcher used multiple instruments to collect data for the study. Mills (2018) suggested researchers use multiple sources to collect data to foster the strengths of qualitative and quantitative methodologies.

Data Analysis

Overview of Data Analysis. The pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire was administered at the beginning and conclusion of the research and were assessed using quantitative methods. The Service Learning Project and interviews were completed at the end of the semester. The researcher used qualitative methods to analyze data results. The researcher used descriptive statistics to summarize the study's quantitative data.

Descriptive statistics summarizes and organizes data by describing the data collected (Albright, 2018). Descriptive statistics involves organizing data, so it can be easily understood and does not seek to make inferences based on the sample of the study (Albright, 2018). A Likert Scale was used to collect quantitative data. According to Lane, Scott, Hebl, Guerra, Osherson, and Zimmer (2013), ordinal data compares the amount to which subjects possess the dependent variable. The central tendency can be used to describe ordinal data best. In research, central tendency is used to describe sets of data by identifying the central position of the data (Trochim, 2006). In the study, the mean was calculated by analyzing the statistical significance of participant responses.

Pre- Questionnaire and Post Questionnaire Analysis. The *Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire* served as the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire (Waters and Anderson- Lain, 2014). The questionnaires consisted of closed-ended questions. The questionnaires extracted self-assessment data by having participants rate their attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives toward civic engagement and service learning courses. The questionnaires asked students to indicate their agreement level with each statement. Closed-ended questions on the questionnaires provided quantitative data for the research study. The closed-ended questions asked participants to respond using a five-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, and strongly disagree. Descriptive data were used to analyze the questionnaires' data. Ordinal data was used to measure the central tendency of the data collected. Mean was found to be the suitable central tendency measure for the questionnaires. Using the mean value, allowed the researcher to examine the statistical significance. The results of the questionnaires were analyzed using the online survey tool software, Survey Monkey. Statistics were analyzed

for all participants who enrolled in the course. Survey Monkey (n.d.) analyzed the averaged the mean of the data by adding the number of respondents for each question and dividing that number by the figures added. In addition, Survey Monkey (n.d.) provided comparative data sets, allowing the researcher to compare the respondents' answers on the pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire. The researcher calculated the means of the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire and presented the results using a t-test. The t-test assessed if the means of the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire were statistically different from each other (Trochim, 2006). The pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire means exhibited changes in perspectives, attitudes, and skills about civic engagement and service learning during their duration in the class. Chapter 4 will provide tables outlining the data collected.

Service Learning Project Analysis. The researcher analyzed the students' Service Learning Project summaries by using descriptive design themes. Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, and Snelgrove (2016) describes themes as data that "yields practical results in the field of study" (p.101). The researcher used the qualitative online software, NVivo, to identify themes based on the students' descriptions of their volunteer services, the student's reactions to their service experiences, and how the students correlated their service experiences to the topics discussed in class. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis software that is designed to assist researchers in understanding their data by organizing, storing, categorizing, and analyzing qualitative data sets (NVivo, 2018). NVivo is designed to offer researchers successive data administration (NVivo, 2018). Themes were analyzed by classifying, comparing, and labeling the data from the summaries (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The researcher identified reoccurring ideas, comments, or

experiences of the participants, and grouped those experiences into various classifications (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Afterward, the researcher compared the themes within each category by documenting the relevance, pattern, and repetitiveness of the themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). The researcher then assigned categories labeled by a conceptual word or phrase that captured the significance of the ideas presented within that category (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). To conclude the Service Learning Project analysis, the researcher provided a concise definition of the themes that encapsulated and defined the study's research questions (Vaismoradi et al., 2016).

Interview Analysis. The researcher conducted an open-ended interview at the end of the research study with selected participants. These participants were chosen based on the students' class attendance and participation in class. The researcher asked each interviewee the same interview questions, in the same order to duplicate identical research patterns for each participant (Farrell, 2016). Open-ended interview questions allowed participants to give free-form answers to questions (Farrell, 2016). The qualitative software, NVivo, was used to transcribe the interview results. NVivo aided the researcher in recognizing and classifying themes based on the students' responses to the interview questions (NVivo, 2018). The researcher coded the data to interpret and identify themes from participants' responses (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Themes were discovered through comparison, categorizing, and labeling data from the interview responses (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). After documenting the patterns and repetition within the interview data, the researcher grouped respondents' statements according to the identified themes (Vaismoradi et al., 2016). Each participants' response was written then

typed to be organized and prepared for data examination. The researcher grouped evidence and ideas based on interview questions.

Research Procedure

The research procedures describe procedures, interventions, and instruments used throughout the study. Table 3.7 is a detailed account of the course design that describes how the instructor helped students engage in course content by reading the course’s text, through direct classroom instruction, and peer to peer instruction. Table 3.7 outlines each class session of the research study. The research procedure demonstrates the plan the instructor prepared and organized for the course. Table 3.7 provides a clear framework of the course’s content, providing a description of the instructor’s approach to teaching course content. Additionally, the research procedure documents what participants of the study could expect to learn each class session. Table 3.7 provides additional information on how instructional strategies were incorporated into the research study.

Each week, there were two class sessions held. The duration of each class session was one hour and fifteen minutes. Each class session built on the prior skills acquired in previous sessions.

Table 3.7

<u>Class Week</u>	<u>Description</u>
Week One	Participants completed the participant release form and the pre- questionnaire (see Appendix C). Participants filled out the forms during the first class session. The researcher had participants to fill out these forms to provide insight into the participants’ prior knowledge and skills pertaining to civic engagement and service learning. Participants’ responses were used to guide class discussions and reflection prompts. Additionally, participants were introduced to the course and the class’ expectations. The sessions, introduced participants

to the course's text, *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* (Shankman et al., 2015). The instructor used direct classroom instruction to discuss discussed concepts of leadership, service, and civic engagement. Participants were encouraged to engage in peer to peer conversations with their peers to discuss the concepts discussed in class. Lastly, participants wrote notes to themselves about what they hoped to accomplish over the next year pertaining to leadership and civic engagement. These notes were confidential, and the researcher did not read these.

Week Two

Participants presented their T UWYA (Tell Us What You're About) Presentations. T UWYA Presentations were visual aids created by students to define what was important to them, what they liked, and things that reflected who they were. Participants had full authorship of these presentations.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 2: *Environmental Awareness*

Chapter 3: *Group Savvy* (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phase Three: *Guided Practice*: Students had the autonomy to express who they were and what was important to them through their presentation.

Phase Four: *Corrective Feedback/Verification*: The instructor and students had the opportunity to ask each student questions about the information presented. These questions were asked as a means to provide further clarification on the ideas expressed during the presentations.

Peer to Peer Conversations:

Students had the opportunity to interact with their peers through questions and answers pertaining to the T UWYA Presentations.

Week Three

Participants worked on setting short term and long term goals. Students set these goals to motivate them to work towards the things they wanted to achieve. Participants discussed what goals were more attainable than others, and how their goals could serve as a guide to their future. Additionally, participants watched Drew Dudley's: *Everyday Leadership* TED Talk about Lollipop Moments. The video and discussion afterwards prompted participants to redefine their ideas of leadership; particularly Servant Leadership.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 4: *Emotional Self- Perception*

Chapter 5: *Honest Self- Understanding* (Shankman et al., 2015)

Week Four

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The course text and a TED Talk was used to model instructional content.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students set goals and worked in small groups to discuss course material.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor provided feedback to students to help scaffold group discussions.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Students worked in small groups to discuss their goals, the lecture, and videos used in class.

Participants took Strengths Quest, which is a student development tool used to help participants understand and develop their top five strengths. Additionally, participants discussed how to develop their weaknesses, and surround themselves with talents and skills that are diverse from theirs. During this week, participants began to discuss what is Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (EIL) and how does EIL influence our strengths?

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 16: Influence

Chapter 18: Change Agent (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: Students reflected on course text and students took Strengths Quests.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: The instructor and students analyzed students' Strengths Quests Results.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor gave students suggestions on how to capitalize on their strengths and weakness per students' Strengths Quests results.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Students worked in small peer to peer groups discussing concepts pertaining to Emotionally Intelligent Leadership and Strengths Quests results.

Week Five

Participants were given an overview of the Social Change Model and discussed how social change impacted their lives as Emotionally Intelligent Leaders? Participants also began to discuss ideology pertaining to Servant Leadership, and why Servant Leadership is important.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 7: Emotional Self- Control (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: Students discussed the Social Change Model in relation to Emotionally Intelligent Leadership.

Week Six

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students worked in small groups to discuss how social change has or can influence their life. In addition, students began to discuss Servant Leadership.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor provided feedback to students as they discuss social change by encouraging students to reflect on current events and how those events have influenced their or someone they know wellbeing.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Students discussed the Social Change Model in small groups.

Participants continued their discussion on Servant Leadership, building upon concepts previously discussed in class. A guest speaker from the United Way of the Piedmont came to the second class session that week to provide a tangible example of Servant Leadership in the community. The guest speaker discussed how working as a Servant Leader has transformed their civic and community engagement, and their commitment to community service. Additionally, the guest speaker informed participants how they could begin their civic and service journey through various service opportunities offered through the United Way.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapters 10: Achievement

Chapter 12: Initiative (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The class sessions this week had a guest speaker from the United way to discuss Servant leadership.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students participated in class activities that provided tangible examples of Servant Leadership.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor and guest speaker encouraged students to go out into the community to engage in civic engagement or community service.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Students discussed their volunteer experiences and shared some of the organizations where they would be interested in volunteering in the community.

Week Seven

Using the *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* text, participants began discussing how attitudes and perceptions influenced the way individuals see themselves and others in the world (Shankman et al., 2015).

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 14: Citizenship

Chapter 15: Inspiration (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The lectures discussed how attitudes and perceptions influence our behavior and beliefs.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students completed a self assessment that examined their social perceptions.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor reminded students of the importance of being aware of implicit bias.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Working in small groups, students discussed their social identity and how those identities influenced their perceptions of themselves and others in society.

Week Eight

This week the class discussed the importance of participants needing to develop coping and self-care skills. The class discussion sought to answer the question, *how can we complete everything we need to do, but still take care of ourselves?* The discussion was needed as many students began to feel overwhelmed during the middle of the semester due to academics and co-curricular commitments. A guest speaker came to the second class session in the week to discuss the importance of *Exercising Self-Care*.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapters 6: Health Self- Esteem

Chapter 8: Authenticity

Chapter 9: Flexibility (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The lectures covered coping and self-care skills.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students developed coping and self-care skills.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor reminded students to take time for self-care in efforts to be their best person.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Students shared things that concerned them and how they planned to practice self-care skills.

Week Nine

Spring Break

Week Ten

Using the *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* text as a guide, the class discussed achievement, optimism, initiative, empathy, vulnerability, and leadership (Shankman et al., 2015). Participants had to discuss how these characteristics

and emotions influence a leader's ability to transform their organization or be seen as change agents in their leadership positions. Participants also discussed why it is important for leaders to embody each characteristic described (Shankman et al., 2015).

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 11: Optimism

Chapter 13: Empathy (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The lectures focused on well-known leaders and their leadership characteristics.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Using the text, students identified leadership characteristics that influenced well-known leaders and their followers.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor reminded students that leaders can influence their community positively or negatively.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Participants discussed leadership characteristics they have seen work positively and negatively.

Week Eleven

Using the *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* text, participants began discussing how to effectively approach and resolve diverse and challenging situations as leaders. The discussion included a mixture of chapters from part two and three of the book (Shankman et al., 2015). The chapters included: *Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership, Coaching Others, Change Agent, Managing Conflict, Facilitating Change, Building Teams, and Consciousness of Others* (Shankman et al., 2015).

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 17: Coaching

Chapter 19: Conflict Management

Chapter 20: Developing Relationships

Chapter 21: Teamwork

Chapter 22: Capitalizing on Difference (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The lectures discussed how to approach diverse and challenging conversations.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students had the opportunity to practice approaching these conversations.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor reminded students to listen actively and openly. Additionally,

Week Twelve

the instructor encouraged students to reflect on their how to positively approach difficult conversations.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Peers discussed their experiences with having diverse or challenging conversations. Students discussed their positive and negative experiences with the two concepts.

Participants were given information on how to create a powerful presentation. This information was important as the college does not offer a formal public speaking class, and many of the participants were formally presenting in front of their classmates for the first time. Participants were also given time to work in groups for their group presentations the following week.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Chapter 23: Developing Emotionally Intelligent Leadership (Shankman et al., 2015)

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 2: *Demonstration and Modeling*: The instructor provided examples on how to create a powerful and effective presentation.

Phases 3: *Guided Practice*: Students created their projects.

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor helped students complete their projects by answering questions and providing sample presentations.

Peer to Peer Conversations: Students worked together and individually to complete their civic engagement projects.

Groups presented their civic engagement projects.

Participants were divided into groups and charged with identifying a community problem. Groups had to examine the organization's leadership skills. Each group had to solve one problem that challenged the organization and offer recommendations for a potential solution. Each group presented their findings to the entire class and submitted a written report outlining their work.

Intervention Strategies:

Course text:

Students used the course text as a reference to complete their projects.

Direct Classroom Instruction:

Phases 4: *Corrective Feedback/ Verification*: The instructor gave feedback on students' presentations.

Phase 5: *Independent Practice and Problem Solving*:

Students presented their civic engagement projects, which included the Service Learning Project.

Week Thirteen

Week Fourteen	<p>Peer to Peer Conversations: Students were able to provide feedback and ask questions to their peers about their presentations.</p> <p>To wrap up the final week of the class, participants were asked <i>What is Your Legacy?</i> Participants were asked to consider everything they had learned in the class and discuss how they planned to apply the knowledge and skills sets in various situations. The last class served as a wrap up and discussion session on service learning opportunities. Participants completed interviews and the post questionnaire (see Appendix C).</p> <p><u>Intervention Strategies:</u></p> <p>Course text: The course text was used as reference during the class wrap discussions.</p> <p>Peer to Peer Conversations: Students discussed what legacy they would like to leave on campus or in their community.</p>
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Summary

The purpose of this action research study was to examine how an introductory civic engagement course influenced students' attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement. In addition, the research sought to reason how civic engagement classes prepared students to engage in service learning. To assess the data collected, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative instruments to assess participants. These instruments comprised a pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire, completion of a Service Learning Project, and interviews. Chapter Four of this dissertation will detail the analyzed data collected from the study using the various instruments described in this Chapter. In addition, Chapter Four will offer descriptions of the study's participants and present a discussion on research that supports the study's findings.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Overview of Study

Chapter 4 will explore and discuss the findings of the research study. The purpose of the study was to examine how an introductory civic engagement classroom influenced the attitudes and beliefs of college students. Additionally, the research focused on how a civic engagement class prepared students to engage in service learning. The study sought to answer the research questions:

1. How do the instructional strategies utilized in an introductory civic engagement course influence the attitudes and beliefs of college students around civic engagement?
2. How does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?

To answer the study's research questions, the researcher developed a triangular mixed methods action research design, collecting data using both quantitative and qualitative instruments. Quantitative data were examined using descriptive statistics, focusing on the central tendency mean measure. Qualitative data were examined using descriptive measurements of themes and codes. Qualitative data provided a comprehensive and first-hand description of the service learning experiences of the students enrolled in the course. Quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed concurrently using a mixed methods approach. The researcher provided tables and figures to present the results of the data.

Additionally, the Chapter will consist of a description, presentation, and discussion of the study's research questions and findings. The Chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings from the problem of practice, the significance of the study, and introduces the study's action plan.

Intervention/Strategy

The study sought to explore the instructional practices that influenced students in a civic engagement classroom and examine how a civic engagement class prepared students to engage in service learning. The interventions were incorporated into the study to measure the growth of students' perspectives toward civic engagement and service learning.

Pre- Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire. The pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire were integrated into the course to determine changes in students' attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives regarding civic engagement and service learning. The researcher incorporated the pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire to provide a quantitative benchmark of students' knowledge at the beginning and at the end of the course. The researcher adopted the Campus Compact assessment, *Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire* (Waters & Anderson- Lain, 2014). Questions from the questionnaire were easily understood by participants and did not yield issues with participants responding to the questions. Participants completed the pre- questionnaire on the first day of class to measure students' knowledge as they entered the class and before the interventions of the study. The primary intervention was the redesign of the course which focused on course literature, peer to peer conversations, and a Service Learning project. The last day of class, participants completed the post questionnaire. This questionnaire measured

students' knowledge as they were exiting the class and after the interventions of the study. The results of the pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire are discussed later in this Chapter.

Emotionally Intelligent Leadership. *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* by Shankman et al. (2015) was used in the course to help guide and facilitate instructional activities. Topics and content discussed in the course related directly to the textbook, providing students with additional points of references. Students were required to read and reflect on chapters from the text. Students were asked to consider how discussions from the book, related to their life experiences. Additionally, students were asked to consider how the text enhanced or challenged their emotional intelligence and leadership skills. To support chapters from the text, the instructor used TED Talk videos and also invited special guests to come speak to the class. The videos or speakers provided additional contexts and referenced ideas discussed in the text. Additionally, the book was used as a resource to facilitate peer to peer conversations, as students reflected on the content covered in their reading or class session. Students were asked to share their attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives toward the ideas presented during the instructional session. In addition, the text was a source of reference as students completed their individual Service Learning Project.

Peer to Peer Conversations. Peer to peer conversations were previously used in the course. Each class session, students engaged in academic conversations with their peers, as they discussed their thoughts, reactions, and attitudes towards the content covered during the class session. During these conversations, students were reminded to cultivate respectful conversations with their peers, remembering to be sensitive when

sharing their opinions. Students were reminded not to force their opinions on their peers, and allow everyone to share their personal opinions. A new strategy used in the course also required students to work with someone new each class period. The researcher noticed students would attempt to work with their friends in each class period. To combat this challenge, students were instructed to work with individuals they did not know or had not worked with before in the course. The instructor began this approach to increase students' social interactions with their classmates who were different from them. The researcher believed by having students engage in discourse with different people, students would be exposed to more diverse ideas. Additionally, the researcher believed students would learn how to work with people who shared different opinions. Before reacting, students were asked to practice active listening, and critical thinking before reacting to opinions that might conflict with their perspectives.

Direct Classroom Instruction. Direct classroom instruction practices were revised for the research study. The researcher integrated direct classroom instruction each class session by using Direct Classroom Instruction's Five Phases for Instructional Process (Kentucky Department of Education, n.d.).

Phase One: Direct Explanation. The researcher began the study by using a pre-assessment to benchmark student learning as they entered the course.

Phase Two: Demonstration and Modeling. The textbook, *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*, helped to guide classroom demonstration and modeling by providing leadership models and questioning (Shankman et al., 2015). The instructor used peer to peer conversations to support student learning and help students make sense of the material being learned.

Phase Three: Guided Practice. In the study, students engaged in guided practice each class period. In class, students worked in small groups, participated in peer conversations, and engaged in overall classroom discussions. These discussions stemmed from topics from the course's text book. Students were encouraged to engage in deep reflection and participate actively in discussions as during class activities.

Phase Four: Corrective Feedback/Verification. During the course, the instructor provided constructive feedback as students engaged in various activities. The feedback encouraged students to help maximize students learning and students' performance in the class. Students also provided the instructor with feedback by completing the study's interview and post assessment.

Phase Five: Independent Practice and Problem Solving. In the study, students completed a Service Learning Project that required them to actively solve a community problem, using the skills learned in class. The instructor provided assisted and offered feedback to students as they completed the Service Learning Project.

Service Learning Project. The Service Learning Project was piloted in the course the previous semester. However, adjustments were made to the instructions of the Service Learning Project. Adjustments made to the Service Learning Project for the study included students having to service at least 10 hours of community service with a local nonprofit organization, and students had to turn in a summary of their experiences that connected their experiences to the concepts discussed in class. In the previous semester, students were encouraged to volunteer and write a summary of their experiences. The researcher noticed this did not turn out well, as many students procrastinated completing the project. During the study, students were encouraged to begin their Service Learning

Project the first week of class. In addition, several guest speakers were invited to speak to the class about volunteer opportunities in the community. The instructor also reminded students weekly to complete the assignment as soon as possible, to avoid having to rush and complete hours at the end of the semester. Additionally, students were encouraged to engage in deep reflection as they completed course activities.

Interviews. The interview instrument was developed from the research question to determine the participants' perspectives on the competencies discussed in class. The researcher incorporated interviews in the course to collect additional data on the participants' experiences. Interviews were used to support and provide additional information about the participants' motivation, engagement, and interaction in class. The interviews were conducted at the end of researcher study.

General Findings/Results

Data were analyzed to identify, describe, and explore how a college level introductory civic engagement course influenced students' attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement, and how a civic engagement class equipped students to participate in service learning opportunities. Data were obtained from a pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, an individual Service Learning Project, and interviews. The data were analyzed according to the research questions presented earlier in the study. Data collected from the instruments were converted into means and themes and presented in the form of graphs and figures.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data consisted of a pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire that measured the students' knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs on civic engagement. The pre-

questionnaire and post-questionnaire measured the students' perceptions of civic engagement. A t-test was used to outline the students' attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement. The pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire t-test measured whether there was a significant difference after the intervention. The intervention of the study sought to determine if peer conversations, literature, and direct classroom instruction had an impact on the attitudes and beliefs of students within an introductory civic engagement course.

Pre-Questionnaire and Post-Questionnaire Results. The pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire utilized the Campus Compact assessment, *Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire* (Waters & Anderson-Lain, 2014). This questionnaire was used to determine students' progress as they engaged in civic engagement and service learning (Waters & Anderson-Lain, 2014). The assessment was developed by Campus Compact to analyze individuals who participate in service learning and civic engagement (Waters & Anderson-Lain, 2014). The assessment consisted of 23 Likert Scale questions that asked students to rate their understanding, attitudes, beliefs on civic engagement. The pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire asked students to rate their answer by choosing between strongly disagree, disagree, not sure, agree, and strongly agree for each statement. The questionnaire asked participants to rate their perspectives on the class' ability to enrich their attitudes or beliefs on civic engagement and service learning. The pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire assessed students' attitudes and beliefs toward the course, attitude, and beliefs toward civic engagement, and attitudes and beliefs toward service learning. Below and in Table 4.1 is a presentation of the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire scores, the increases, and decreases for each question, and the results of the samples t-test comparing the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire results.

Intervention pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire results. On the first day of class, a total of 22 participants completed the pre-questionnaire. The participants were the number of students enrolled in the course who agreed to participate in the study. The pre-questionnaire showed a mean of 3.89 (SD= 0.608) out of 5. After 14 weeks of the intervention, the group showed a post questionnaire mean of 3.79 (SD= .555) out of 5 (Table 4.1). The intervention group’s mean score decreased by 0.10, which suggests a decline in attitudes and beliefs toward civic engagement after the interventions.

Table 4.1

Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire Results

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Standard Deviation</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>
Pre- Questionnaire	3.8908696	0.60821582	4.1	1.86	4.62
Post Questionnaire	3.7965217	0.5559399	3.95	2.19	4.59

Seven questions showed an increase in knowledge or shifts in attitudes and beliefs from pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire, indicating positive shifts in behavior. The individual mean and differences in means, between the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire questions are shown in Table 4.2 and below.

- “The idea of combining service in the community with university coursework should be practiced in more classes at this university.” showed that participants favored the idea of combining academics and community service from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.00$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 4.09$), with a difference in means of 0.09.

- “I am already volunteering in my community before taking this service learning course.” showed an increase from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 3.48$) to the post questionnaire ($M=3.50$) with a difference in means of 0.02.
- “I feel that the community service I will do through this course will benefit the community.” showed an increase from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.24$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 4.27$) with a difference in means of 0.03.
- “Performing service in the community will help me clarify which major I will pursue.” showed that participants believed community service would help them clarify a major from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 3.19$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.32$), with a difference in means of 0.13.

The fourth question, although it shows an increase, reveals that students would be less inclined to participate in the community beyond the course. “I probably won’t volunteer or participate in the community after this course.” showed that participants disagreed that they will not participate in service outside of the course from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 1.86$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 2.19$), with a difference in means of 0.33.

- “This service learning course will help me become more comfortable working with people different from myself.” showed that participants believed the course would help them comfortably work with diverse populations from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.24$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 4.45$), with a difference in means of 0.21.
- “The community service I will perform in this course will help me learn how to plan and complete a project.” showed that participants believed the course would

help them learn to plan and complete a project from the pre-questionnaire ($M=3.95$) to the post questionnaire ($M=4.05$), with a difference in means of 0.10. Six of the seven items demonstrate an increase in understanding and positive changes between the pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire suggest participants developed an understanding of civic engagement, community service, service learning, and working with diverse populations. The data suggested participants have an increased awareness and understand the impact of community service. These increases in understanding suggested students' changes in beliefs towards building a foundation for community and civic awareness.

Sixteen questions showed a decrease in the average of the means. Which indicates students' attitudes and beliefs about the course from the pre-questionnaire to the post questionnaire, have negatively shifted as it relates to their knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs. The individual mean and differences in means, between the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire for each question is shown in Table 4.2 and below.

- “The service learning aspect of this course will help me to see how the subject matter I will learn can be used in everyday life.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M=4.33$) to the post questionnaire ($M=4.09$) with a difference in means of -0.24.
- “I feel I will learn more from this course if more time is spent in the classroom instead of in the community.” showed a decreased from the pre-questionnaire ($M=2.95$) to the post questionnaire ($M=2.91$), which had a difference in means of -0.04.

- “The service learning, I will do through this course will help me to better understand the lectures and readings in this course.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.05$) to the post questionnaire ($M=4.00$) with a difference in means of -0.05 .
- “The service learning involved in this course will help me to become more aware of the needs in my community.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.10$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.95$) with a difference in means of -0.15 .
- “My interactions with the community partner will enhance my learning in this course.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.05$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.68$) with a difference in means of -0.37 .
- “I have a responsibility to serve my community.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.19$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.77$) with a difference in means of -0.42 .
- “The community service in this course will help me clarify my career plans.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 3.67$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.36$) with a difference in means of -0.31 .
- “The community service I will perform in this class will enhance my relationship with my professor.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 3.57$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.45$) with a difference in means of -0.12 .
- “The work I will accomplish in this course will make me more marketable in my chosen profession when I graduate.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.10$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.91$) with a difference in means of -0.19 .

- “The community service involved in this course will make me more aware of my own biases and prejudices.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.14$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 3.82$) with a difference in means of -0.32 .
- “The service I will perform in the community will enhance my ability to communicate in a “real-world” setting.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.38$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 4.14$) with a difference in means of -0.24 .
- “Most people can make a difference in their community.” showed a decrease from the pre-questionnaire ($M= 4.62$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 4.59$) with a difference in means of -0.03 .

The questions demonstrate a decrease in attitudes and beliefs in questions that directly related to the course equipping students with the skills needed to engage in civic engagement or service learning. This trend suggests participants did not have a strong correlation between the skills discussed in class and understanding how to use those skills in the community. Additionally, the data showed a decrease in participants believing they could use skills learned in the class during everyday life, and their desire to take another civic engagement course. This trend suggests participants had difficulty using transferable skills taught in class, outside the classroom.

One question showed neither an increase or decrease in knowledge from the pre-questionnaire to the post questionnaire. The individual mean and difference in mean for the question is shown in Table 4.2 and below.

- “The community service aspect of this course will help me to develop my problem solving skills.” showed no increase or decrease from the pre-

questionnaire ($M= 4.14$) to the post questionnaire ($M= 4.14$) with a difference in mean of 0.00.

The stagnation of the results suggested participants' attitudes and beliefs remained the same regarding the community service in the course developing their problem solving skills.

Table 4.2

Pre- Questionnaire and Post Questionnaire Means for the Assessing Student Service Learning Questionnaire

<u>Questions</u>	<u>Mean of Pre- Questionnaire Questions</u>	<u>Mean of Post- Questionnaire Questions</u>	<u>Difference of Means from Pre Questionnaire to Post- Questionnaire</u>
<u>Increases in Perspectives</u>			
The idea of combining service in the community with university coursework should be practiced in more classes at this university.	4.00	4.09	0.09
I am already volunteering in my community before taking this service learning course.	3.48	3.50	0.02
I feel that the community service I will do through this course will benefit the community.	4.24	4.27	0.03
I probably won't volunteer or participate in the	1.86	2.19	0.33

community after this course.

Performing service in the community will help me clarify which major I will pursue.

3.19 3.32 0.13

This service learning course will help me become more comfortable working with people different from myself.

4.24 4.45 0.21

The community service I will perform in this course will help me learn how to plan and complete a project.

3.95 4.05 .10

Decreases in Perspectives

The service learning aspect of this course will help me to see how the subject matter I will learn can be used in everyday life.

4.33 4.09 -0.24

The service learning, I will do through this course will help me to better understand the lectures and readings in this course.

4.05 4.00 -0.05

I feel I will learn more from this course if more time is spent in the

2.95 2.91 -0.04

classroom instead of in the community.			
The service learning involved in this course will help me to become more aware of the needs in my community.	4.10	3.95	-0.15
My interactions with the community partner will enhance my learning in this course.	4.05	3.68	-0.37
I have a responsibility to serve my community.	4.19	3.77	-0.42
The community service in this course will help me clarify my career plans.	3.67	3.36	-0.31
The community service I will perform in this class will enhance my relationship with my professor.	3.57	3.45	-0.12
The work I will accomplish in this course will make me more marketable in my chosen profession when I graduate.	4.10	3.91	-0.19
The community service involved in this course will make me more aware of my own	4.14	3.82	-0.32

biases and prejudices.

The service I will perform in the community will enhance my ability to communicate in a “real-world” setting.

4.38

4.14

-0.24

Most people can make a difference in their community.

4.62

4.59

-0.03

Participating in the community will help me enhance my leadership skills.

4.43

4.32

-.09

I can make a difference in my community.

4.38

4.23

-0.15

I would like to enroll in additional service learning courses.

3.43

3.09

-0.34

No Increases or Decreases

The community service aspect of this course will help me to develop my problem solving skills.

4.14

4.14

0

The increases in knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs from the pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire suggest the students have an increased awareness of the impact of community service and working with diverse populations. The decreases suggest students did not believe they could use the skills learned in class during their everyday

experiences. The decreases suggest the students' perspectives and attitudes did not increase and that they did not gain an understanding after the intervention.

Dependent samples t-test results. To compare students results on the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire a dependent samples t-test was conducted. Table 4.3 demonstrates summary statistics of student responses between pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire. The researcher compared students' responses between the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire after 14 weeks of the study's intervention. Collectively, students responses showed a pre- questionnaire mean of 3.80 (SD= 0.55) out of 5 (Table 4.3). Students responses displayed a post- questionnaire mean 3.79 (SD= 0.34) out of 5 (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

Summary Statistics of Students Responses Between Pre- Questionnaire and Post Questionnaire

<u>Questionnaire</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. dev.</u>	<u>Median</u>	<u>Min</u>	<u>Max</u>
Pre- questionnaire	22	3.80	0.55	3.86	1.65	4.69
Post- questionnaire	22	3.79	0.344	3.82	3.26	4.47

Table 4.4 demonstrates there was not a significant difference in the scores of student responses between the pre- questionnaire (M= 3.80, SD= 0.55) and post questionnaire (M= 3.79, and SD= 0.34) conditions; $t(22) = 0.01$, $p = 0.98$, shown below and in Table 4.4. The results suggest the intervention did not have an impact on the students' knowledge, attitudes, or perspectives from the pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire.

Table 4.4

Dependent t-test for Student Responses Between Pre- Questionnaire and Post Questionnaire

<u>Difference</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Err.</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>T-Stat</u>	<u>P-value</u>
Pre- questionnaire – Post- questionnaire	0.0016	0.1258	22	0.0128	0.9899

The results from the dependent t-test support the differences found in a majority of the student responses from the pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire. The students did not gain knowledge from the pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire, suggesting the students did not recognize how to transfer skills discussed in the course in real world settings. Additionally, the pre- questionnaire and post-questionnaire suggest the students' perspectives toward civic engagement did not change after 14 weeks of the intervention.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Service Learning Project

The researcher examined, identified, organized, and coded themes that arose from the service learning projects using NVivo software. NVivo is a qualitative and mixed methods data analysis software used by the researcher to analyze their data (NVivo, 2018). NVivo allows researchers to organize, store, categorize, analyze, and retrieve data by offering advanced “data management, query, and visualization tools” (NVivo, 2018). The themes that emerged in the individual qualitative Service Learning Project summary analysis were beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement, civic service and leadership, and constituent advocacy and outreach. Beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement addressed the development and changes of participants' attitudes and behaviors toward civic and community engagement. Civic service and leadership revealed the leadership skills students developed or used during their volunteer

experiences. Constituent advocacy and outreach discussed the interplay of experiences participants had as they engaged in helping organizations and individuals in their communities. Pseudonyms are used in this section to protect the identity and confidentiality of the study's participants.

Informing and transforming beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement. This theme discussed the developmental changes and perspectives of participants during their service learning experiences. Patterns within this theme included discussions on volunteer experiences, participants work within the community, and identified needs of members in the community. Participants discussed their understandings and perspectives about active community engagement. Summaries from the project discussed participants' reactions to their volunteer experiences. The summaries addressed whether the participants' attitudes and beliefs changed during their volunteer experiences, or if they remained the same. Rudy and Susan explained how the project influenced their perspectives on civic and community engagement.

Rudy stated:

I am going to be honest at first, I thought this class and these volunteer hours were going to be just a waste of time. All in all, both really helped me find myself again... I am not proud of that but, this class really opened my eyes to be thoughtful of others even as a leader it is important.

Susan discussed her service experience by stating:

Most people would dread beginning their community service. When I was informed we had to do community service for this class I immediately felt as if I wasn't going to be able to accomplish my goal... I too feel I have grown as a

person, leader, and student-athlete... I am very grateful that I was allowed the opportunity to impact someone else's life.

Cassie explained how the individual Service Learning Project influenced her beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement.

Cassie stated:

Classmates talked about how this experience changed them and how they wish they had did more of it. It was great talking and sharing our experiences with the community volunteering and how it changed us in our leadership skills. We had to take a survey on how the community opportunity helped us and let us learn new ways to achieve and relate to others.

One hundred percent of the participants expressed that the individual Service Learning Project helped to inform and transform their attitudes and beliefs about civic and community engagement. As demonstrated by participants' responses, the Service Learning Project emphasized the participants desire to engage more in-depth and more meaningfully in civic engagement.

Reese cited:

Interactions that I had with people that were around me while I was there helped me to see that even though it's not my favorite thing, there are connections that can be made with people you never imagined for them to be made with.

Reese's statement suggests that even though participants may or may not have enjoyed their service experiences, they recognized the value in serving and interacting with people in their community.

Enhancing civic service and leadership skills. This theme addressed the leadership skills students developed or used during their volunteer experiences. Students connected these skills to material learned in the course. Fourteen out of 22 participants stated in their summaries that their volunteer experience helped them develop leadership skills such as emotional intelligent leadership, communication, and listening skills.

Sally stated:

Overall, this experience shaped me more into an emotionally intelligent leader. I have to be aware of myself and my feelings before I choose a service project. I had to figure out what was important to me.

Ryan supported the idea of using the projects to help students become better leaders in their community. She determined:

They taught me the realness of the world, (visiting the foster care children) to be grateful for everything I have (building the house for homeless) and there will always be obstacles that you will face when completing a project (painting the conference room, twice.) These projects also taught me more about leadership and how to be a better leader.

Everett provided additional details on the skills she developed during the course and through the project:

Another important skill for effective leadership is communication and listening. I had to communicate with the director of operations to discuss scheduling and goals. It was important for me to actively listen to the instructions that she was giving and be open to asking questions if something was unclear.

Additionally, participants stated how the class prepared them to effectively engage in service as a volunteer during their Community Service Project.

According to Janice:

The community service also relates to when we talked about in class about goal settings and the different types of goals setting such as measurable goal- settings and realistic goals- settings.

Jackson noted how she discovered different leadership skills through the course and project. According to Jackson:

I learned a lot about myself and what I am capable of doing. I learned about how to use my strengths to give back to the community and people who might not have the same strengths as me.

Angela also discussed how she developed leadership skills, by stating,

The volunteer jobs allowed me to work on some of my interpersonal and leadership skills by observing the leadership skills of those around me.

Katie acknowledged the importance of having diverse skills and leaders in the community. She stated:

If you want people to come to you as a leader, you need to be vulnerable and nonjudgmental... Leaders come in all different shapes and sizes from everywhere in the world. Each one of them is just as important as the ones in the community.

Leaders make up a community where we learn from each other and grow.

Constituent advocacy and outreach. The constituent advocacy and outreach theme addressed how the experiences of participants encouraged them to engage in helping organizations and individuals in their communities. The patterns that participants

revealed dealt with their perceptions of the amount of access diverse communities had to resources. Several students discussed the impact their volunteer services had on various community groups.

Sarah cited:

This project influenced me to want to make a difference. My passion is to be an educator, so I have always wanted to make an impact on a child's life. But, now I know I am capable of more than just that. With helping through this nonprofit organization, I can provide them and their families a meal when they are not able.

Whitney noted:

Before going to the first soup kitchen, I was very nervous. I didn't know what to expect... I will continue to work in the soup kitchen for the rest of my life because of how much of an impact it has had on my life.

Jasmine stated:

Helping these people helped me value and be more grateful about what I have than wish for something I do not have. Who would have thought volunteering at the soup kitchen would impact my life so much? I am thankful for the opportunity just as much as they were thankful for me volunteering.

Participants expressed how their experiences changed their perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs toward constituent advocacy and outreach. Many participants, such as the participants above, described how volunteering and helping community members first hand was a rewarding experience. Numerous participants cited their volunteer experiences as being rewarding due to the projects giving them the opportunity to help make a difference in a family or an animals' life. Additionally, the project gave

participants the opportunity to reflect on their role in society as a civic leader or as someone who partakes in civic engagement.

Participants also revealed how the course and the project helped them achieve a level of self-awareness as they engaged in the community through service learning. Participants cited how the Service Learning Project helped them connect theory to practice by transcending their knowledge into practical actions. Katie cited,

I then also realized that I wasn't just getting a grade, but I was also making a difference in an animals' life.

Several students cited how the project increased their cultural awareness on problems that challenged the community. Bertha's statement suggested resources should be invested into local communities, rather than sent off to foreign countries. Bertha stated,

This made me more aware of the consciousness of others and the context. I feel a lot of the time, people are so quick to send more to other countries, but in reality, we need to do more to help our own communities as well.

Cassidy discussed the importance of understanding and working with people from diverse backgrounds.

Cassidy cited:

I also wanted to push myself more and to actually do something where I could reach out to a diverse group of people within my community... I thought that I could focus on an issue that I find close to my heart.

In their summaries participants discussed how working with the community created a sense of real-world cultural experience as participants were exposed to community challenges.

Interviews

The interviews sought to answer research question two, *how does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?*

Interview questions specifically asked interviewees to discuss instructional strategies that influence their perspectives in the course. In addition, students were asked to share how the course prepared them to engage in service learning. These questions sought to have participants explicitly articulate how their experiences in the class influenced their learning. Eleven students from the class were identified to participate in the interview process based on several factors: if the students attended the first day of class if the students missed no more than two class periods, and if the students participated in class regularly. These eleven students were chosen to participate in the interviews due to class attendance and participation. For the course, it was important for students to have regular class attendance and participation as the class supplemented the outside class activities. The instructor provided additional perspectives on the material read outside of class. Additionally, class discussions were used to encourage students to use their critical thinking skills as students cognized concepts and ideas. The students asked to participate in the interview attended the class regularly and actively engaged in course activities throughout the course. Throughout the course, these students interacted with the instructor and their peers by providing thoughtful feedback, challenging concepts discussed in the course, and sharing their attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives on civic engagement and service learning. These students demonstrated a deep understanding of the course concepts in regards civic engagement and service learning. The practitioner used NVivo to organize and manage data from the interviews. As with the Service

Learning Project, the NVivo helped the researcher store, categorize, and examine data (NVivo, 2018).

Each student interviewed was provided an opportunity to answer each of the questions outlined in table 4.5.

Table 4.5

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. What instructional strategies influenced your perspectives on civic engagement?
 2. How did the class prepare you to engage in service learning opportunities?
 3. What were some of the strengths of the course?
 4. What are some things that could be improved in the course?
 5. Would you like to share any additional comments?
-

Interview Questions Summary. Table 4.6 outlines a summary of the interview questions. The summary discusses highlights and collective perspectives of interviewees.

Table 4.6

Interview Questions Summary

Interview Questions Summary

1. What instructional strategies influenced your perspectives on civic engagement?

Ten out of 11 students discussed the instructional strategies that influenced their perspectives on civic engagement. The interviews highlighted several instructional strategies that influenced students learning. Outcomes discussed include: guest speakers, *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* concepts, peer to peer discussions, and videos.

2. How did the class prepare you to engage in service learning opportunities?

One hundred percent of interviewees cited the class helped to prepare them to engage in service learning opportunities through community engagement. According to the interviews, the class gave students the opportunity to interact with diverse individuals from the community. Students cite these interactions helped them engage in solving

community problems. Additionally, students cited the interactions helped them improve their leadership, communication, and collaboration skills.

3. What were some of the strengths of the course?

Two out of 11 students stated the class was well designed. The students cited they believed the class was well designed in helping students become leaders.

4. What are some things that could be improved in the course?

Eight out of 11 students cited the class could improve its instructional practices. Many of the students suggested adding more engaging activities into the course. Additionally, students noted the class should add more readings and projects to the course.

5. Would you like to share any additional comments?

No participants shared any additional comments about the course.

Themes. Themes that materialized in the qualitative Interview summary analysis were community engagement, leadership development, and class design and activities. Community engagement addressed the involvement and interactions of students as they engaged in a range of academic and social contexts. Leadership development revealed the students' leadership transformations as they engaged in experiential learning. Class Design and Instructional Activities discussed the instructional strategies that influenced students' perspectives of civic engagement and service learning.

Community engagement. This theme discussed the students' perspectives on their experiences of engaging in the community. In the interviews, students discussed how community engagement enabled them to develop a contextualized understanding of the challenges individuals in their community encounter.

Katie stated:

We focused on a topic in our community that is a problem, for example our leadership project. We had to discuss pressing issues in the [local] community and [Southern College] community.

Rudy cited:

The service project helped [me] engage in the opportunities. And also the group project, it gave us a push to go out in the community and make things happen.

Susan agreed with Rudy by adding:

[This class] help [and] encourage to make changes in my community, where I live.

According to various interviews, the participants who engaged in the community perceptions changed before and after their community service experience. The changes in perception helped to cultivate a stronger relationship between the student and their community. In their interviews, Angela and Bertha cited how the community engagement portion of the class helped them develop self, social, and cultural awareness.

Angela stated:

[This class] taught me how to handle situations by putting the community first and thinking of others.

Bertha cited:

The class help me to be more involved and how my involvement can make a difference to the community.

During the interviews, several students noted how the class' community engagement helped them learn how to work with individuals from diverse backgrounds.

According to Sara:

I learned how to communicate with people that come from different backgrounds and connect to help a cause.

Tammy described:

We learned how to interact with others and reflect with ourselves.

Sara and Tammy acknowledge the importance of developing cultural awareness skills that will allow individuals to interact, work, and connect with people from different backgrounds.

Leadership development. The leadership development theme addressed how leadership components of the course helped to develop students' leadership skills. During the interview, participants describe instructional and classroom activities that helped them develop their leadership skills. Several students reflected on how the leadership skills and techniques discussed in class gave them an increased awareness of their leadership capabilities.

Cassidy cited:

Learning about various leadership skills and service opportunities was helpful.

Whitney noted,

Showed me how important leadership is. It also showed me how important goals are.

Sue stated:

I learned the skills and techniques that help make me a better leader which is vital to volunteering and making a difference in the community.

Many interviews discussed how the class text, *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership*, increased their understanding of how to become transformation leaders that provide civic and community services. As demonstrated by the interviewees' responses, concepts from *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* cultivated a desire for participants to reflect on their roles in society as change agents.

Bertha acknowledged:

The self-care worksheet also Emotionally Intelligent Leadership and also the group project it helped me want to do more in the community.

Rudy cited a class discussion that highlighted a topic from the text, stating:

“When we talked about the difference of sympathy. She gave good strategies to help with that and it could also help us in our community. And the videos helped.”

Sara, Whitney, and Jasmine cited how Emotionally Intelligent Leadership discussions on the importance of goal setting influenced their leadership development. Whitney noted Sara’s said:

Learning smart goals helped me set goals for my community engagement.”

Whitney noted, “the smart goals,” helped prepare her to engage in service learning.

Jasmine stated,

This class prepared me because when in a working environment you have to learn how to set goal[s] for yourself.

Class design and instructional activities. The class design and activities theme addressed the class design and instructional activities that influenced the attitudes and beliefs of participants and prepared them to engage in service learning opportunities. Many interviews cited concepts from the course’s text, videos, and class discussions as being beneficial components of the class instructional design.

Jasmine noted,

The Ted Talks were effective on civic engagement.

Cassidy cited:

The guest speakers who explained opportunities and importance encouraged me more.

Angela stated the use of “videos and class discussions,” was beneficial instructional activity.

Tammy appreciated:

When we had someone come talk to us about volunteering, and she described its importance.

The students’ statements support the idea that instructional strategies that focused on nontraditional methods for engaging in class conversations, direct classroom instruction, and experiential learning were favorable in helping students learn the course material.

The statements highlighted specific instructional practices or activities that influenced their learning within the study’s classroom setting.

Additionally, students outlined challenges that influenced their performance during the course. These challenges and recommendations are important to consider as it could suggest improvements for future research study’s. Two interviewees believed the class was well designed.

Bertha stated:

Nothing, I truly believe this course was well designed to help students become leaders.

Although Katie agreed, she expressed her discontent with her peers in the course.

Overall, the course was designed and executed well, the quality of students was not the best.”

Katie's statement stemmed from her peers articulating their reasoning for enrolling in the course. At the beginning of the course, multiple students articulated they enrolled in the course to help increase their grade point average. According to these students, they had been advised that the course, being an elective, was easier to pass and could boost their grade point average. Many students who fell within this category needed to pass the class with a grade of B or better in order to remain a student athlete or avoid being academically dismissed due to poor academic performance. Students in this category had attendance issues, did not turn in assignments on time, and did not actively engage in the first half of the course. However, the release of midterm grades changed students' engagement. After receiving midterm grades, students attempted to recover their grades by taking the class more seriously. Students attended class regularly and actively engaging in the course assignments.

Several students cited the class should provide more engaging activities.

Rudy cited the researcher should add more engaging activities.

More engaging activities that would make us want to show up to class.

Sara suggested to the researcher to include more course readings.

Having more reading required to focus on studying how to become involved.

Susan recommended:

More community service papers or projects dealing with solving issues.”

Findings from the interview question report the strengths of the course that influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement and service learning. The recommendations offered by the students cited opportunities for the researcher to improve the course. These

recommendations were interesting as students asked for more engaged hands on assignments.

Analysis of Data Based on Research Questions

The data collected in this study sought to indicate how a college level introductory civic engagement course influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. Additionally, the data collected sought to address how civic engagement courses prepared students to engage in the community. The research derived from the researcher's belief in the need and value of civic engagement and service learning courses. This study aimed to measure how an entry-level civic engagement course influenced students' perceptions of civic engagement, and how the course prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities.

Questionnaires. Questionnaires from the study demonstrated no significant difference in participants attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives. The pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire's data did not demonstrate students' growth. The pre- questionnaire mean was 3.89 ($SD = .60$) and the post questionnaire was mean 3.79 ($SD = 0.55$). Between the pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire participants scores decreased by 0.10, which suggest a decrease in knowledge and change in attitudes and beliefs toward civic engagement. Additionally, the dependent t-test for student responses between pre- questionnaire and post did not demonstrate significant results. The questionnaires findings suggest the service learning course in this study's instructional strategies did not influence students' perspectives on civic engagement. Seven questions from the pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire relating to volunteering and community service demonstrated rises in participants' developing an increased awareness of civic and

community engagement. Sixteen questions from the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire showed a decrease in students' attitudes and beliefs about the course. The results from these questions suggest students did not develop strong transferable skills that could be used in and outside the classroom.

Service Learning Project. Findings from the Service Learning Project suggest the individual Service Learning Project effectively influenced students' attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement and prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities. Participants' reflections reveal many themes students associated with their growth and development when comparing the class and their experiences. The researcher used qualitative data software, NVivo, to organize, categorize, and analyze the data from the project (NVivo, 2018). According to the findings, themes that emerged from the results included: beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement, civic service and leadership, and constituent advocacy and outreach. The beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement theme reported that participants recognized the importance of providing a service and interacting with different people in their communities. The theme of civic service and leadership reported participants felt their volunteer experiences assisted in the development of their leadership skills. The constituent advocacy and outreach theme described how the project increased students' self, community, and social awareness. Results from the reflections suggest the course prepared students to engage in the community by cultivating an atmosphere of growth, development, and exploration.

Interviews. Interviews discussed the instructional practices that influenced student learning. Additionally, the interviews demonstrated how civic engagement

classes prepare students for service learning opportunities. The interviews sought to answer the second question of the research study. Interviews were analyzed using NVivo, which helped the researcher categorize and examine data. Several themes arose from the interviews: community engagement, leadership development, and class design and activities. Interviews from the study revealed instructional strategies that influenced participants learning the most were interactions with peers and the community, and class projects. Participants felt the most influential instructional strategies of the course were the projects and class discussions. The class prepared students to engage in service learning by developing leadership skills, increasing student self-awareness, encouraging participants to explore diverse ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and values. Interviewees offered recommendations for improving the course by noting the constraints of the project, the amount of active engagement, and the rigor of the course.

Summary

In this chapter, study results and a discussion of the findings have been presented. The researcher sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the instructional strategies utilized in an introductory civic engagement course influence the attitudes and beliefs of college students around civic engagement?
2. How does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?

The data analysis and findings are presented in table and graph format. The data collection of pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire, individual service learning project, and interviews revealed hands-on, engaging instructional practices enhanced

participants learning, attitudes, and beliefs on civic engagement. The results of the study suggest direct classroom instructional activities, individual projects, and class discussions were instructional practices that influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. Additionally, the introductory civic engagement class prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities by equipping students with skills such as self-awareness, encouraging students to communicate and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and teaching transferrable *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* skills (Shankman et al., 2015).

This chapter outlined and discussed the findings of the research study. In Chapter 5, the study will conclude by discussing the conclusion, limitations, and offering recommendations for future studies. The researcher will reflect on the study and outline the next steps of the research study. Additionally, the researcher will offer recommendations to improve the study, offering implications for future practices. The researcher will discuss the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction and Overview of Study

This action research study aimed to understand how an introductory civic engagement course influenced the perspectives and viewpoints of college students on civic engagement. Additionally, the research study sought to understand how the course prepared students to engage in service learning. The research setting included a liberal arts college located in South Carolina. Data was collected using a mixed methods triangulation approach to examine students' perspectives on civic engagement during the study. Findings from the study suggested the civic engagement course prepared students to engage in service learning by equipping students with the skills needed to effectively engage in civic engagement and service learning.

The researcher of the study received approval from Southern College's Institutional Review Board. The sample group of the study included 22 women between the ages of 18- 21, who were enrolled in the college's civic engagement course. Each participant received information and signed research approval documents to participate in the study. Participants completed a pre-questionnaire at the beginning and a post-questionnaire at the end of the study to measure their perspectives, attitudes, and beliefs toward civic engagement and service learning. During the study, participants also completed a Service Learning Project. Structured interviews provided additional data regarding participants perspectives, attitudes, and behaviors relating to civic engagement

after the treatments of the study. Data from the study was used to examine potential difference among students before and after the research study.

Recap of Problem of Practice

The study's problem of practice was identified through a collective and systematic analysis of attitudes and behavioral patterns of the students at Southern College who participate in civic engagement. The researcher of the study observed many students at the study's research site developed friendships with other students who shared the same physical, social, or economic characteristics. Many students at this institution rarely had interactions with students from diverse backgrounds. However, this aspect of socialization is not an anomaly as most people develop relationships and spend a significant amount of time with people who are similar physically or share their same beliefs and values (Hackett & Hogg, 2014; Kim et al. 2015). According to Kim et al. (2015), students may miss opportunities to develop diverse relationships due to navigating through homogeneous communities. Consequently, students are not prepared to effectively work with diverse communities as they engage in civic engagement.

The practitioner of the study observed the research site's existing instructional strategies in civic engagement or service learning courses did not purposefully engage students. At the study's site, students who participated in civic engagement or service learning courses did not implicitly engage in classroom instruction or activities. Subsequently, students were not meeting the overarching objectives of the courses which were to equip students with transferable skills and attitudes to work in diverse academic and social settings. Research by Brown (2016) and Walter (2018) concur that instructional strategies within the classroom should promote cultural awareness, in efforts

to broaden student cultural and social horizons. Brown (2016) cited broadening students' cultural horizons will equip students with the knowledge and skills needed to interact with diverse individuals. Civic engagement and service learning classrooms can intentionally and actively link theory, practice, and service while prompting students to reflect on their viewpoints of the world (Britt, 2012). As noted by various researchers, the researcher was also inclined to believe that incorporating diverse instructional instruments would prompt students to engage in civic engagement courses actively, learning how to work with diverse communities effectively.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do the instructional strategies utilized in an introductory civic engagement course influence the attitudes and beliefs of college students around civic engagement?
2. How does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?

Purpose of the Study

This study was implemented to explore how a civic engagement course influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. The study also examined how a civic engagement class equipped students to engage in service learning opportunities. The overall results of the study were provided to key stakeholders at the college such as administrators, faculty, staff, students, and community members. Data from the study has the possibility to help stakeholders make informed educational decisions regarding how

to develop and implement instructional strategies that promote active participation in civic engagement classrooms.

Recap of Methodology

This study sought to analyze a civic engagement course's influence on the attitudes and beliefs of students pertaining to civic engagement. In addition, the study examined how a civic engagement class prepared students to engage in service learning. In order to answer the research questions, the researcher used an action research methodology to design the research study (Mertler, 2014). The researcher used mixed methods research triangulation design; simultaneously collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. Collecting both quantitative and qualitative data provided the researcher with a comprehensive framework of the variables relationships in the study (Mertens & Biber, 2012). The researcher used a variety of instruments, interventions, and devices to investigate the research questions. Instruments used to collect data for the study included: a pre-questionnaire, post questionnaire, individual Service Learning Project, and interview. The research study site was a liberal arts college in South Carolina. Data were collected twice a week over a 14-week period during the spring semester of the college. Students enrolled in the course served as the sample for the research study. The sample for the research study was selected based on convenience. The researcher used descriptive statistics to summarize the data collected (Albright, 2018).

The researcher began and concluded the research study by assessing students' attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement and service learning with a pre-questionnaire and a post questionnaire. Questions from the questionnaires are outlined in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this research study. The questionnaires asked students to rate their

perspectives on a five-point Likert scale on the course's ability to enhance their attitudes or beliefs about civic engagement and service learning. Data from the questionnaires was used to benchmark the students' perspectives, attitudes, and skills at the beginning and the end of the course (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Throughout the study, students engaged in various direct instructional strategies such as reflection, classroom conversations, group, and individual projects. Additionally, students completed an individual Service Learning Project and reflected on their experiences by connecting theory to practice. This project was essential as it bridged the academic and real-world experience gap by connecting classroom instruction to the community (Koldewyn et al., 2017). Interviews in the study provided support and documented participants motivations, engagement, and interaction in class. In research, interviews provide clarification on participants' experiences, beliefs, and motivations throughout the study (Gill, 2008).

Recap of Results and/or Findings

Data from the study was analyzed to describe, explore, and answer the study's research questions. The researcher used three instruments to obtain data: a pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire, an individual Service Learning Project, and interview. Results from this study suggest direct hands-on, engaging instructional practices enhanced students' attitudes and beliefs on civic engagement. Additionally, the instructional practices prepared students to engage in service learning by equipping students with diverse skill sets needed to work in different communities. Data from the study was collected and presented in Chapter 4.

Questionnaires. The researcher administered a closed-ended pre- questionnaire and post- questionnaire to participants at the beginning and end of the study. A total of 22

students completed the questionnaires. Questionnaires from the study showed participants attitudes, beliefs, and perspectives transformed during the study. The researcher analyzed the data using a password protected online survey tool. The pre-questionnaire mean was 3.89 ($SD= .60$), while the post questionnaire means 3.79 ($SD= 0.55$). As a group, participants scores decreased by 0.10, suggesting a decrease in knowledge and positive changes in attitudes and beliefs toward civic engagement. Seven questions from the questionnaires demonstrated an increase in participants' developing an understanding of community awareness; while sixteen questions from the questionnaires showed a decrease in students' attitudes and beliefs about the course. One question regarding the course helping students to develop problem solving skills showed no difference between the pre and post questionnaire.

Service Learning Project. The study required participants to complete 10 hours of community service and journal about their experiences. At the end of the study, participants turned in a summary of their experiences that demonstrated how participants volunteer experiences related to the topics discussed in class. The researcher used NVivo to analyze the data from participants' summaries (NVivo, 2018). The researcher identified three overarching themes from the summaries: beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement, civic service and leadership, and constituent advocacy and outreach. The beliefs and attitudes toward civic and community engagement theme described participants recognizing the significance of serving and actively engaging in their communities. The civic service and leadership theme conveyed participants' feelings toward their volunteer experiences regarding their leadership skills. The theme constituent advocacy and outreach described how participants acquired an increase of

self, community, and social awareness through the project's service learning. Findings from the Service Learning Project suggest this instructional practice was effective as the project influenced students' perspectives on civic engagement. Additionally, the data revealed the instructional practice prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities by prompting students to use the skills learned in class as they engaged in volunteer opportunities.

Interviews. The researcher conducted structured open-ended interviews to provide further clarification regarding the study's research questions. Interviews explored the various instructional strategies that influenced students' perspectives. In addition, the interviews provided further insight into how the class prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities. Findings from the study revealed instructional strategies that influence students' perspectives were peer interaction in the classroom and community interactions from the Service Learning Project. Participants cited the most important instructional strategy was the Service Learning Project and the class' discussions. Interviews from the study revealed the class prepared students to engage in service learning by increasing students' self-awareness, developing leadership skills, prompting students to explore diverse ideas, attitudes, and behaviors.

Description of the Action Researcher as Curriculum Leader

As a curriculum leader, the researcher of this study plans to advocate for several changes in the course studied. The findings from the study revealed several adjustments need to be made to the course, to support the growth and development of students. The results of the pre-questionnaire and post questionnaire did not yield significant results for the study as the pre-questionnaire benchmarked students' attitudes, beliefs, and

perspectives on civic engagement. The researcher would first recommend service learning courses at the college of study begin to incorporate a pre- questionnaire and post questionnaire to benchmark student learning. Using the questionnaires at the beginning and end would help faculty and staff understand what aspects of civic engagement and service learning need to be covered in the course.

The researcher, also suggests more of the college's courses begin to design curricula that would give students the opportunities to apply what they learn through performing community service. The individual Service Learning Project from the study demonstrated a unique teaching strategy that encouraged students to use academic knowledge and skills to engage and address community needs. This project revealed how an introductory civic engagement course, with a service learning component, has the potential to link formal curriculum instructional practices and community service. Results from the study, suggest experiential learning, such as service learning, allows students to use the knowledge and skills learned in class to identify and address community needs. Educators who begin to incorporate service learning into their classrooms provide a holistic learning environment for students as they can engage in academic and social settings actively. As cited by Sabat et al. (2015) service learning provides students with 21st-century skills needed to increase academic, social, and civic engagement. By providing high-quality service learning to students, educators can create a community of learners who are invested in their neighborhood, local, country, and global community.

Additionally, the researcher recommends educators to not only provide opportunities for students to serve in the community but also educators should consider incorporating civic discussions into their curriculum. The individual Service Learning

Project and interviews illustrated how students developed an increase in self and community awareness through classroom instructional activities. Students reported how classroom instruction and service learning opportunities helped students develop and explore skills related to civic engagement. The researcher noticed many students did not know about current issues in their local communities. The instructional strategies and activities of the course prompted students to identify, discuss, and engage in problem solving concerning current issues in the community. Educators should facilitate healthy civic discussions within their classrooms about the challenges in the local community, promoting students to develop feasible solutions to community challenges. Data from this study suggest these discussions may increase students' awareness of community challenges and give students the opportunity to exchange diverse knowledge and opinions.

In addition, the researcher recommends the college of the research study begin to fund civic engagement and service learning courses. Results from the study demonstrated direct instructional strategies such as guest speakers or actively engaging in the community enhanced students understanding of civic engagement and service learning. By funding civic engagement and service learning courses, instructors will be able to offer advance instructional opportunities for students to engage in civic engagement. For example, instructors would be able to take their classes on service learning trips. Additionally, funding would provide instructors the opportunity to provide advanced levels of the course.

Action Plan

The research findings for this study will be shared with administrators, faculty, staff, students, and other educational leaders at the college in which the study was implemented. The results of the study will be used as a reference to foster diverse and engaging curriculum and instruction practices within civic engagement courses. Findings from the study will be presented to faculty and staff members who teach civic engagement and service learning courses. The presentation will demonstrate the behavioral and social changes students develop within these courses when the practices outlined in this study are used. The results of the study will also serve as professional learning opportunities for administrators, faculty, and staff. Through individual meetings and professional development training, individuals will examine the behavioral and perspective changes of students throughout the study. Additionally, these educational leaders will explore how the course of study prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities.

The researcher will work to redesign the course to incorporate suggestions offered by participants of the study. Participants from the course recommended adding more engaging projects, including more reading related to civic engagement, and inviting more speakers. Redesigning the course could increase students' engagement within the course. Additionally, the researcher of the study will work improve the course by working collaboratively with faculty, staff, and students to encourage dialog in hopes of offering new insight and improvements. While the study sample is small, the results of the study document participants attitudes, beliefs, perspectives, and behavior shifts. The study's findings can be a resource to faculty and staff who are concerned and question how to

redesign the course and engage students in civic engagement and service learning classrooms. Findings from the study can demonstrate to students the transferable skills gained by enrolling and actively participating in a civic engagement or service learning course. The results of the study may provide an opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to work together to make educated decisions when structuring the instructional strategies of civic engagement and service learning classrooms.

In addition, the research will be shared with local nonprofit organizations and for profit agencies to provide more research and context on the importance of civic engagement and service learning classrooms. The researcher of the study plans to present their findings at local, state, and national conferences. Findings from the presentation will expand the knowledge of individuals who question the importance or use of civic engagement or service learning courses. Adding to the research and information available about civic engagement and service learning in higher education will provide valuable information for other researchers to serve students, colleagues, colleges or universities, stakeholders, and community members.

Recommendations for Policy/Practice

Findings from the study demonstrated how a civic engagement classroom enhanced students' understanding and commitment to civic engagement and service learning. Recommendations for educational practice concerning civic engagement and service learning include fostering classroom environments that promote the exploration of civic engagement through service learning.

The primary recommendation from the researcher is for future researchers to experiment with course redesign. Results from the interviews suggest adding more

speakers, including more projects, and adding more readings to the course. Findings from the study suggest guest speakers provided insight into the field of civic engagement. Guest speakers communicated their real world experiences of working or volunteering in the community. These speakers discussed how their volunteer experiences changed their career paths. In addition, the researcher suggests adding additional civic engagement and service learning projects throughout the course of the semester. Students recommended including more projects to the course. The service learning project gave students the opportunity to explore community challenges in the context of a real-world setting. Results from the Service Learning Project and interviews cite how these experiences influenced students' perspectives on engaging in the community. The researcher also suggests including daily class readings that discuss civic engagement and service learning. Additional readings would include articles on current events, newspaper, blogs, personal experiences, journals, magazines, and social media. Adding these readings can help students make direct connections between the course text, class activities, and projects. The reading can introduce students to key concepts and theories that support class discussions and activities.

Additionally, the researcher recommends for educational leaders to begin to incorporate aspects of civic engagement and service learning inside their classrooms. Educators should embed opportunities within their curriculum for students to engage in service. Educational leaders should provide service opportunities to allow students to develop skills and experiences while giving back to the community (Center for the Study of Social Policy, 2011). Findings from the study yield students who undertake projects and volunteer in the community, outside of traditional classroom learning environments,

develop a deeper connection to their community and have an increased awareness of the challenges that influence their community.

In addition, the researcher recommends state policymakers and educational institutions provide adequate funding to support civic engagement and service learning initiatives. According to the Center for the Study of Social Policy (2011), the integration of civic engagement and service learning within the classroom curriculum provide enriching learning environments for students, as they engage with the community and reflect on their learning experiences. The researcher of this study concurs with the Center for the Study of Social Policy's (2011) recommendations for state policymakers and educational institutions to provide funding for service learning opportunities. The research included in this dissertation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy (2011) reveal students who actively engage in civic engagement and service learning have a higher probability of engaging in civic duties such as voting, volunteering and advocating for the betterment of their communities.

Also, the researcher recommends faculty purposefully incorporating conversations of race into their curricula. Results from the Service Learning Project and Interviews show students benefited from engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds. During the interviews, several students cited the course prepared them to engage in service learning by providing opportunities for them to interact with individuals in the community (Appendix F). One student acknowledged that learning how to work with people who are different helped them communicate, interact, and reflect with people who are different (Appendix F). Another student cited that working with others helped her create a sense of self and cultural awareness (Appendix F).

Lastly, the researcher suggests that civic engagement and service learning classes should become a part of the general education requirements on college campuses. As discussed in this dissertation, civic engagement provides hands on learning opportunities for students to practice the theories they are learning about in class. These courses teach students important transferable skills that can be applied in and outside the classroom. In this research study, Service learning courses The Service Learning and Interview data suggests students learned how to become active civically engaged community members. According to the data, the class provided students the opportunity to engage in civic engagement and service learning. Instructional strategies such as peer to peer conversations, direct classroom instruction, and course readings prepared for students to volunteer in the community by providing a contextual framework. Additionally, the class prepared students to work with diverse individuals through experiential learning. Service learning courses students the opportunity to

Implications for Future Research

For future practice and research, there are many implications for researchers or educators to consider. The researcher of this study first recommends for researchers to conduct a similar study by expanding the sample size and using a broader demographic. For this study, the research sample included only women between the ages of 18- 21 years of age. In future studies, researchers should include both males and females in the study to yield useful data regarding the difference in gender as it relates to civic engagement and service learning. Future studies may examine potential differences among genders as it relates to attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives shifting as students learn and engage in civic engagement and service learning activities.

Another implication for future study is for researchers to expand the time frame of the study. Although the study collected data over a 14-week period, researchers may inquire to explore the implications of measuring students changes in behaviors toward civic engagement and service learning over the course of a year. By studying students changes in behaviors about civic engagement and service learning it may be possible to show statistically significant results, as students develop an understanding of how to convert theory to practice. Additionally, the researcher may seek to examine how the academic standing of students influences their understanding and perspectives. For example, the researcher may find significant changes in only freshmen participants when compared to seniors who participate in the study.

In addition, the researcher suggests completing the study with individuals who have a genuine interest to engage in civic engagement and service learning. Students enrolled in the course for a variety of reasons. However, as discussed in Chapter Four, a number of students enrolled in the course to boost their grade point average. A number of students had been advised the course was less rigorous than core courses. This perception conveyed through participants actions and engagement in the course until they received their midterm grades. After receiving their midterm grades students actions and engagement in the course increased considerably. It could be inferred by the researcher that completing the study individuals who have an interest in civic engagement and service learning could provide significant changes in the study's results.

Summary

In conclusion, the study's problem of practice identified how the attitudes and behaviors of some college students created cultural challenges as they participated in

civic engagement. Within the classroom, the researcher perceived the instructional strategies in civic engagement or service learning classrooms did not purposefully or implicitly engage students in instructional activities. Consequently, students were not meeting the overarching objectives of the courses; which were to equip students with transferable skills and attitudes, so students could work cohesively in diverse academic and social settings. The researcher asked the following questions to find a solution to the problem of practice:

1. How do the instructional strategies utilized in an introductory civic engagement course influence the attitudes and beliefs of college students around civic engagement?
2. How does an introductory civic engagement course prepare students to engage in service learning opportunities?

The study employed a triangulated mixed methods design, where data was collected through a pre-questionnaire (Appendix C), post questionnaire (Appendix C), Service Learning Project, and interviews (Appendix D).

The study began and concluded, by participants completing questionnaires that assessed their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward civic engagement and service learning (Appendix C). The questionnaires measured behavioral shifts of participants before and after engaging in direct classroom activities related to civic engagement and service learning. Questionnaires from the study revealed a change in participants attitudes and beliefs. Results from the Service Learning Project revealed several themes about practices that influenced students in a civic engagement classroom, and how the class prepared students to engage in service learning opportunities. Participants felt the course

prepared students to engage in the community by fostering an atmosphere of growth, development, and exploration. Data from the interviews demonstrated participants felt the class prepared students to engage in service learning by developing leadership skills, increasing student self-awareness, encouraging participants to explore diverse ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and values.

Therefore, an introductory civic engagement course influenced the attitudes and beliefs of college students on civic engagement by incorporating direct classroom instructional practices, peer conversations, and literature related to civic engagement. The civic engagement classroom prepared students to engage in service learning by actively engaging students in various instructional strategies mentioned in this dissertation. The results of this study indicate differences in students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors on civic engagement and service learning. The researcher's reflection about this research study suggests futures studies will need to be conducted with larger demographics and research samples.

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APPENDIX A

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at Converse College. I am currently enrolled in the Doctor of Education Program in Curriculum & Instruction in Curriculum Studies at the University of South Carolina and am in the process of writing my Dissertation in Practice Proposal. The study is Classroom Engagement in a College Service Learning Class. The purpose of this action research study is to examine ways to enhance students' engagement in college service learning classes by employing effective culturally mediated peer-to-peer conversations.

For the purpose of this study, I aspire to use Converse College's Emerging Leaders Service Learning Course. The Emerging Leader Program is a zero credit course designed to help students reflect on and understand their roles as student and community leaders. The study will document students' civic skills and attitudes during a service learning course. Participants will complete an open response written interview before and after the study discussing their attitudes toward social or cultural trends or issues, and how they believe it will influence their services in the community. Student participants will complete a pre and posttest. Participants will be tested using a civic and attitudes questionnaire to assess the students' attitudes and skills set on civic engagement and working with diverse backgrounds. The test will scale the students' civic engagement skills and attitudes progression throughout the course. Each week, students will fill out a five question survey documenting their perception on their instructional practices, student engagement, cultural awareness, and learning. Participants will be assigned a code number that will be used on their documents instead of their name. Participants' names will not appear on the questionnaires they fill out. The survey results will be pooled for the dissertation project and individual results of this study will remain absolutely confidential. Should this study be published, only pooled results will be documented. No costs will be incurred by either your school or the individual participants. These assignments or questionnaire will not interfere with the students' academic or emotional well-being.

Students, who volunteer to participate, will be given a consent form to be signed and returned to the primary researcher at the beginning of the survey process. Participants will have the option to drop out of the study at any time.

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION The purpose of this study is to learn how peer-to-peer conversations affect student's civic engagement on campus and in the community. By conducting this study, we hope to shed light on how peer-to-peer conversations may influence and help develop students' civic skills and attitude perceptions.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURES As a participant in this study you will be asked to complete a questionnaire and short written interview at the beginning and end of the course. During the process, you will be asked to complete short surveys. Your total participation should last only during the Emerging Leader class time.

CONFIDENTIALITY The information provided by you is confidential and your identity will not be revealed. Only the researcher will have access to your information. This information will be kept securely in locked files in a locked file cabinet in the Office of Community and Inclusion. Your name will not appear on any of the questionnaires you fill out. You will be assigned a code number that will be used on your documents instead of your name. No documentation linking your name with your code number will exist. Your information will be analyzed on a group basis so that individual information will remain confidential.

QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS You may ask questions at any time during the study. For more information about the study contact Kimberly Seibles at 596-9196. At the end of the study, you may call one of the researchers for a final report of the grouped results.

_____ I agree to participate.

_____ I do not agree to participate.

Name (print)

Signature Date

APPENDIX C

ASSESSING STUDENT SERVICE LEARNING QUESTIONNAIRE

<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. The service learning aspect of this course will help me to see how the subject matter I will learn can be used in everyday life.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2. The service learning I will do through this course will help me to better understand the lectures and readings in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3. I feel I will learn more from this course if more time is spent in the classroom instead of in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4. The idea of combining service in the community with university coursework should be practiced in more classes at this university.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5. I am already volunteering in my community before taking this service learning course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6. I feel that the community service I will do through	<input type="checkbox"/>				

this course will benefit the community.					
7. I probably won't volunteer or participate in the community after this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8. The service learning involved in this course will help me to become more aware of the needs in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9. My interactions with the community partner will enhance my learning in this course.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
<i>Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.</i>	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
10. I have a responsibility to serve my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11. Performing service in the community will help me clarify which major I will pursue.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12. The community service in this course will help me clarify my career plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
13. The community service I will perform in this class will enhance my relationship with my professor.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14. The work I will accomplish in this course will make me more marketable in my chosen profession when I graduate.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

15. The community service involved in this course will make me more aware of my own biases and prejudices.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16. The service I will perform in the community will enhance my ability to communicate in a “real-world” setting.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
17. The community service aspect of this course will help me to develop my problem solving skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
18. Most people can make a difference in their community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
19. This service learning course will help me become more comfortable working with people different from myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
20. The community service I will perform in this course will help me learn how to plan and complete a project.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
21. Participating in the community will help me enhance my leadership skills.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
22. I can make a difference in my community.	<input type="checkbox"/>				
23. I would like to enroll in additional service learning courses.	<input type="checkbox"/>				

* Adopted by Gelmon et al. in conjunction with Campus Compact

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What instructional strategies influenced your perspectives on civic engagement?
2. How did the class prepare you to engage in service learning opportunities?
3. What were some of the strengths of the course?
4. What are some things that could be improved in the course?
5. Would you like to share any additional comments?

APPENDIX E

DIRECTIONS FOR COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

Each student will complete 10 hours of community service over the course of the semester, at an agency of her choice. Students will document when and where they did their service, and will keep this record with their journal. Students will then write a summary of their experience to turn in at the end of the semester. The summary should be between 3/5 typed pages, double spaced. Included in the summary should be a description of the volunteer services, the student's reaction to this service, and how this community service relates to the topics discussed in class. The paper should not be a complete summary of the experience – please reflect deeply on your experiences. Students should observe the leadership of those in charge of the service, and analyze the leadership styles used.

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

This section presents the findings of the interviews.

1. What instructional strategies influenced your perspectives on civic engagement?

Katie: “The speaker and focus on Servant Leadership. It encouraged me to engage in my community. It strengthened the importance of knowing the community and people around me.”

Tammy: “When we had someone come talk to us about volunteering, and she described its importance.”

Bertha: “The self-care worksheet also *Emotionally Intelligent Leadership* and also the group project it helped me want to do more in the community.”

Rudy: “When we talked about the difference of sympathy. She gave good strategies to help with that and it could also help us in our community. And the videos helped.”

Jasmine: “The Ted Talks were effective on civic engagement.”

Sara: “Learning smart goals helped me set goals for my community engagement.”

Susan: *Did not answer statement.*

Cassidy: “The guest speakers who explained opportunities and importance encouraged me more.”

Whitney: “The smart goals.”

Sue: *Did not answer statement.*

Angela: “Videos and class discussions.”

2. How did the class prepare you to engage in service learning opportunities?

Katie: “We focused on a topic in our community that is a problem, for example our leadership project. We had to discuss pressing issues in the [local] community and [Southern College] community.”

Tammy: “We learned how to interact with others and reflect with ourselves.”

Bertha: “The class help me to be more involved and how my involvement can make a difference to the community.”

Rudy: “The service project helped [me] engage in the opportunities. And also the group project, it gave us a push to go out in the community and make things happen.”

Jasmine: “This class prepared me because when in a working environment you have to learn how to set goal[s] for yourself.”

Sara: “I learned how to communicate with people that come from different backgrounds and connect to help a cause.”

Susan: “Help [and] encourage to make changes in my community, where I live.”

Cassidy: “Learning about various leadership skills and service opportunities was helpful.”

Whitney: “Showed me how important leadership is. It also showed me how important goals are.”

Sue: “I learned the skills and techniques that help make me a better leader which is vital to volunteering and making a difference in the community.”

Angela: “Taught me how to handle situations by putting the community first and thinking of others.”

3. *What were some of the strengths of the course?* 4. *What are some things that could be improved in the course?*

Katie: “Overall, the course was designed and executed well, the quality of students was not the best.”

Tammy: “More time on project development.”

Bertha: “Nothing, I truly believe this course was well designed to help students become leaders.”

Rudy: “More engaging activities that would make us want to show up to class.”

Jasmine: “I don’t [think] there is anything [that] will improve this course.”

Sara: “Having more reading required to focus on studying how to become involved.”

Susan: “More community service papers or projects dealing with solving issues.”

Cassidy: “Making the class more challenging.”

Whitney: “The group project.”

Sue: *Did not answer question.*

Angela: “Make activities more engaging.”