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# TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES THROUGH SERVICE-LEARNING PARTICIPATION: A CASE STUDY OF THE COLLEGE COUNTS PROGRAM

by

James O. Peacock

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in

Education

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

2008

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# ABSTRACT

Transforming Perspectives Through Service-Learning Participation:

A Case Study of the College Counts Program

by

James O. Peacock, Doctor of Education

Utah State University, 2008

Major Professor: Barry M. Franklin, Ph.D.
Department: Secondary Education

A case study has been conducted on the College Counts program, a well-integrated service-learning program, to examine the experiential learning of 10 former participants. It was the objective of this investigation to view the learning of 10 college students, through the lens of transformational learning, as they reflect on their experiences as participants in the College Counts program. Transformational learning theory was used as a lens to determine if high school students have the ability to engage in transformative learning. Students reported in their own voices transformative learning in one or more of the following forms: increased cultural inclusiveness, commitment to social justice, and/or shift in personal perspective and choices. Results of the study suggested that Mezirow's transformational learning theory should be expanded to include secondary students.

(144 pages)

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It is with a humble heart that I acknowledge the many people who assisted me in the journey of completing this study. First, I remember my grandmother, Goldie Blankenship Allen. Goldie was a proponent of education and she inspired many in our family to pursue higher education. I loved her dearly and treasure the sense of social justice she passed on to me.

I must thank the students who participated in the College Counts program, especially those students who granted me interviews during the summer of 2007. Their willingness to share their experiences of the College Counts program with me is greatly appreciated. Best wishes to each of you in your educational journeys and life.

Todd Milovich is an incredible human being. Thank you for granting me an interview—even more importantly, for reaching out to the elementary and secondary students of Cache Valley. Thank you for engaging students of all ages in collaboration, diversity, and reciprocity. You are a kind educator.

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James O. Peacock

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

In an era of accountability, standardization, and high stakes testing, the trend has been to narrow the curriculum to focus on and increase academic achievement of students, as demonstrated by standardized test scores. Standardization in K-12 education is not a new concept. Standardization has been the objective of the social efficiency movement since the turn of the 20th century and is directed at having every student achieve the same academic level at the same time without consideration of their unique interests, abilities, or students' most effective learning modalities. The social efficiency advocates believed the mission of education was to prepare students to fulfill their role in society, and the type of education one received was based largely on family socioeconomic status (SES). This preparation of students to fulfill specific roles would keep the economy advancing, and, according to Kliebard (2004), create an efficient, smoothly running society. John Franklin Bobbitt, one of the most notable supporters of social efficiency, viewed students as raw material in need of training for future roles. This line of thinking is evident in today's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation (Apple, 2000, 2001).

Apple (2001) argued there are political and social movements that make up the hegemonic alliance that influences the educational system to incorporate "right wing" views of educational outcomes. Apple identified four interest groups that are not necessarily in agreement on most political issues; however, they come together in support of NCLB because incorporated within the legislation is something specific for each

group. First, the neoliberals support the market; next the neoconservatives want to push a traditional curriculum with national standards; then the authoritarian populists want to incorporate God into the curriculum; and finally the new middle class are interested in maintaining their class standing within society (Apple).

The foundation for NCLB came from the Texas educational system that used a business model for educational reform inspired by business tycoon and former presidential candidate Ross Perot (McNeil, 2000). Following Texas' accountability system, Federal government officials developed an evaluation and accountability model using business efficiency methods to direct and control institutions that are designed to educate children–human beings. Standardization, according to Meier, is like establishing a floor, and is not the same as having high standards to govern the education of children. In fact, standardization in Texas has resulted in the highest dropout rate in the nation (Meier, 2002).

There are several problems with standardization; the most alarming is the increased dropout rates of high school students. Embedded in this phenomenon is the focus on remediation of those who hover close to an arbitrary threshold deemed as passing (Davenport & Anderson, 2002). These students, mostly children of color and living in poverty, are subjected to a remedial curriculum of only the subjects that have high stakes tests attached to them (McNeil, 2000). This leaves students without an opportunity to experience other areas of the curriculum like art, drama, social studies, science, career and technical education and explore interests where one might experience success. Even more troubling is the group of students that perform well below grade

level because remediation efforts are not directed at these students who are almost certain to dropout, along with their peers who are not successful with remediation (Davenport & Anderson). CNN (2005) reported that Texas ninth graders who school officials did not expect to pass the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) were retained in the ninth grade for up to three years and then promoted to the 11th grade. Many of these students dropped out because of their frustration of repeating the same classes as the year before. Valenzuela (1999) has argued that 50% of students who are retained for one grade do not make it through to their senior year of school. If students are retained for more than one year at the same grade level, then the dropout rate increases to 90%. Because students who struggle academically are at-risk for dropping out of high school, educators are constantly looking for instructional methods to engage students in the core curriculum so that students can complete their secondary education.

## Service Learning

There have been a variety of efforts to solve the problems of truancy and low academic achievement among American high school students. Service learning is one such effort that seems to be effective in helping students progress in both the cognitive and affective domains (Berson, 1997; Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). According to Furco (1996), service-learning programs are distinguished from other experiential education programs by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service (reciprocity), as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring. Wade

and Anderson (1996, p. 59) give a concise definition of service-learning, "…the integration of community service with academic skills and content." By engaging students in service to their community, teachers are able to provide students with several types of learning experiences. Students participating in service-learning activities have the opportunity to develop problem solving skills, communication skills, self-efficacy, and a connection to their community; furthermore, students can through critical reflection on their experiences begin the process of transformational learning (Kiely, 2002).

## Transformational Learning

Transformational learning is the process of learning through critical self-reflection, resulting in the reformulation of a meaning perspective to allow a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative understanding of one's experience (Mezirow, 1990, p. xvi). Transformational learning occurs when an individual experiences a change or shift in the way they see themselves, others, and their community. This shift or change occurs through critical reflection mediated by interactions with people who are supportive of their more inclusive new paradigm or frame of reference. This transformation results when one critically reflects on an event or series of events that has caused cognitive dissonance within the individual. In other words, the way a person sees herself or himself and their interactions with others or situations in their environment are not processed within the individual in a satisfactory manner–thus leading the individual to reflect on why it is that they believe and act the way they do. This critical reflection process provides an individual the opportunity to create a more inclusive paradigm that

will allow the individual to be at peace with themselves, their world, and those with whom they interact (Mezirow).

Transformational learning has found a home in the adult education literature (Cranton, 1994; Mezirow, 1978b, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1995, 1997; Mezirow et al., 2000; Taylor, 1998), but has not been identified in studies with students in secondary education. Mezirow (1992) left the door open for studies of high school students when he acknowledged that adolescents have the capacity to identify and critique events. He contended that the ability to question the underlying paradigms of the events and learning is primarily an adult attribute (Mezirow, 1992, p. 250).

An example of such a transformation comes from my personal experience. I was raised in an environment where gays and lesbians were harassed, ostracized, and judged based on their sexual orientation. This attitude was based on my religious and cultural upbringing by my family and immediate community members with whom I associated. I was somewhat uncomfortable with such attitudes and beliefs but accepted this point of view because it came from my parents and was supported by individuals within our religious culture.

This way of thinking changed when I was confronted with the situation of a friend announcing that he was gay. I saw many who shunned this person based on this new information of his open gayness and was not comfortable with reacting in a likeminded manner. I had two choices–change the way I believed or change the way I acted toward this individual. I reflected on why I believed the way I did and came to the realization that I was basically accepting the culture in which I was raised without seriously

considering the ramifications of believing and acting in such a manner. The more I thought about how I wanted to live and interact with gay people, the more uncomfortable I was with the earlier paradigm or world view that I had held. Not being gay, I do not understand fully what gay is; however, being accepting and loving of people regardless of their sexual orientation is how I choose to live. This change in my perspective has allowed me to become more comfortable with myself and this issue. Subsequently, in following years having a sister and additional colleagues come out as gay or lesbian individuals has strengthened this transformed paradigm, perspective, or world view. Transformational learning theory gave me an interpretive framework to understand the change that occurred in my outlook on the issue of homosexuality.

## Statement of the Problem

Transformational learning is important because it allows people to resolve conflict in their lives by adopting a more inclusive paradigm through perspective change. Although many adult educators agree that transformational learning is important, it is not clear if high school students have the capacity to engage in transformational learning.

Service-learning, which leads to well-documented gains in both cognitive and affective domains, could lead to transformational learning because students are engaged in experiential learning activities in which guided, critical reflection activities are an integral component of the program (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Some researchers have explored this possibility (Courtenay, Merriam, Reeves, & Baumgartner, 2000; Eyler & Giles; Feinstein, 2004; Flower, 2002; Kellogg, 1999; Kiely, 2005; Malone, Jones, &

Stallings, 2002; Pompa, 2002; Romo & Chavez, 2006; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004); however, they have focused on students of higher education and adult education. Thus, an exploration of student's experiences in Utah State University's (USU) College Counts program, a well-established service-learning program, has been conducted to determine what students are learning and also using transformational learning theory as a lens to view students' experiences.

## Purpose of the Study

Since the inception of NCLB, educators have been scrambling to find ways in which their school can meet the criteria for annual yearly progress (AYP). For each consecutive year, the school falls below the arbitrary percentage point deemed passing by the state, the penalties increase–the final sanction being a takeover from the federal government through state rules. This takeover would be a restructuring of the school, which may include the removal of present faculty and administration. The majority of actions taken by school districts in response to this legislation have been to narrow the curriculum by placing students in remedial settings where more drill and practice is the norm. For some students, this means their school curriculum has changed from taking a variety of courses in the fine arts, career exploration, social science, and physical education content areas to remediation courses in only the subjects tested. This practice has raised the frustration level of some students who lack the support structures needed to succeed in our current high stakes testing educational system. For far too many of our students, this frustration has led to their dropping out of school all together (Meier, 2002;

Valenzuela, 1999), with the negative societal results and consequences associated with underdeveloped skills and abilities.

Across the history of public schooling in the United States, progressive educators (Apple, 2000; Dewey, 1938; Kohn, 2000; McNeil, 2000; Meier, 2002) have challenged the views of social efficiency advocates. Dewey founded the University of Chicago Laboratory Schools (1894-1904), where he established his pedagogical beliefs. Schools exist today, across the nation that ascribe to Dewey's educational philosophies. Francis W. Parker School has been in existence since 1901 in Chicago and John Dewy High School in Brooklyn, New York, began in 2000. These schools teach real-world problem solving strategies, through child centered instruction, connecting students with their community through experiential learning. The goal of these schools is to graduate students with the academic skills for life-long learning, and equally important students with heart and soul.

Deborah Meier has created small high schools in New York City and Boston; Central Park East School in East Harlem, New York and Mission Hill School in Boston. These schools are built around trusting teachers to engage students in educational activities that develop life long learning skills. One of the main goals of the school is to develop a close relationship with parents, while surrounding students with adults who know them well. Meier (2002) was cognizant of the importance of student-teacher relationships and the positive correlation a good relationship has with student's academic achievement.

Instead of working students harder and testing them more frequently on material

that frustrates them, educators like Meier (2002) and McNeil (2000) believed we must engage them using John Dewey's notion of educative experience (Dewey, 1938). Claiming that thinking is the method of an educative experience, he identified five essential characteristics: (a) student is involved in a continuous activity that he/she is interested in, (b) student is presented with a problem that stimulates thought, (c) student gathers information and makes observations to deal with problem, (d) student develops possible solutions to the problem, and (e) student has opportunity to test ideas by application to make meaning clear and to discover the validity of ideas (p. 160). College Counts is a service-learning program developed by Todd Milovich, assistant director of financial aid at USU, which is designed to do just that–give students educative experiences by engaging them in meaningful community issues–equipped with the necessary resources, guidance, and support they need to solve or at least address more complicated social issues.

Students engaged in service-learning programs, such as College Counts, are given the opportunity through reflective involvement in their community to challenge or reinforce previously held beliefs. This process of service and reflecting on one's experience may result in transformational learning. This study examines the experiences of 10 College Counts students and uses transformational learning theory as a lens to help explain what they learned from their experiences. Transformational learning may occur in various forms (political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual) including a students' beliefs about the feasibility of obtaining a college education, their connection with people from groups with whom they are less familiar (race, SES, sexual preference),

and their connection to the community (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Kiely, 2005).

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of 10 students from a group of 28 who participated in the College Counts program between 2003-2006. I examined the student's experiences through the lens of transformational learning and documented in their own voices what they learned through participation in the College Counts program.

The research question for this study is "Using transformational learning theory as a lens, what can we learn about the experiences and perspectives of students participating in service-learning activities, specifically those activities that are part of the College Counts program?"

## Program History

The College Counts program at Logan High School evolved out of Todd Milovich's desire to help disadvantaged students get into higher education. Milovich has developed several outreach programs as part of his responsibilities in the Financial Aid Office at USU. I, Jim Peacock, am an administrator and counselor in the Logan City School District and I am also interested in engaging students in experiential learning activities. In 2003, Milovich and I established a partnership to develop the College Counts program.

Milovich's impetus for the College Counts program was shaped by the requirement for a portion of the federal funds that he administers to be used for community service programs that impact at-risk students. It was this legislation that

required 7% of federal work-study dollars to be spent on community service programs with a literacy component, that allowed Milovich to address what he perceived to be an injustice in our educational system. As Milovich saw it, many students were not treated fairly in our educational system, and an alarming percentage of them are minority students:

> My service-learning experiences started out because, just out of anger. Seeing people that were treated wrongly, who were marginalized in education from the very beginning of their experience. People who are sidelined, just because of race or language or a variety of different things, and it wasn't right. And I think, you know, you can't complain about something unless you're willing to do something about it.

Milovich started placing USU work-study students (USU students who qualify for financial aid and work at an approved site) in Logan School District's after school programs for elementary students. These college students were responsible for tutoring the elementary students in reading and math for an hour and then they helped the elementary students experience some kind of art activity. This activity ranged from making a musical instrument with craft materials to planning a full play production or musical event for the community. In 2002, Milovich had college students working in three of the six elementary schools in the Logan District. The number of college students who have participated in programs developed by Milovich has grown to 160 students, who are working in 26 schools in both the Cache and Logan City school districts. Under his guidance, the investment of work-study funds for community service has grown to 39%.

Milovich explained to me that service learning has become his life. It is his way of being a "decent human being" in the world. Milovich related a story to me that was a

life changing experience for him. After Milovich graduated from college with a degree in music, he sought out one of the best guitar teachers in the country. Duke Miller was that teacher. Duke was the number one jazz teacher in the country and he only took on a few students each year. Milovich was accepted as one of those students, but he was in for a big surprise. He thought he was going to fly down to California and be subjected to intense drill and practice sessions, but Duke ended up changing his whole way of thinking in just one sentence. Duke said to Milovich,

> By the time you get to me–you don't need a guitar teacher anymore. You can do anything you want with your guitar; you can learn anything you want. But for you to spend that much time to be good enough to get to me – something in your life has gone terribly wrong. My job is to find out what that is and to turn you into a decent human being.

This conversation with Duke changed Todd Milovich's future and ultimately led Milovich to USU and the outreach work he provides to the community. Milovich was no longer obsessed with being the best guitar player in the world. Rather, his focus was on that of being a decent person in the world. Milovich described the experience this way:

> I was like WHOOW, there's more to this than just me, you know. That was the first time in my life I thought like that. So, wait a minute, it doesn't matter that I'm the best player – it isn't about me anymore. This is about being a decent human being in the world. I've had that in my head since that day, since always, always. Am I being a decent human being? What does that mean? Cause I need to be a decent human being. It means so many things. It means caring, sharing, helping, you know. Honestly, how well I played did not matter after that exchange. It was just that dramatic. That puts life in perspective for me. It's just like such a life changing sentence for me.

I began teaching at Logan High School in 1989. I taught math, business, and technology until I became a counselor in 1997. I was a guidance counselor at Logan High School from 1997 until 2001. During the 2001-02 school year, I was assigned to be

the administrator at Logan District's South Campus Alternative High School, after which, I returned to Logan High School, and resumed my position as guidance counselor from 2002-2006. I have been an advocate for the College Counts program at the district level and at the various high schools and elementary schools in Cache Valley that have had their students participate in the program. It was during my graduate work in counseling and administration that I became interested in the potential of using service learning as pedagogy in order to reach the various learning modalities of students and to address the affective domain of learning.

During my time at Logan High South Campus, the 2001-02 school year, the staff and community council chose to implement service learning into the curriculum with the monies obtained from the School Land Trust Fund. In order to facilitate the use of service learning in the courses at South Campus, the teachers and I engaged in professional development activities in general areas of service learning. I arranged for an education consultant to guide my staff and me through a day of team building and service-learning activities. We studied a service-learning model that discussed important attributes of service-learning activities that are critical for student learning. For example, student voice – students should be a part of deciding what kind of service activities the class, group, or individual will engage in. Other dimensions of effective service learning that we discussed were reciprocity, importance of teacher background, student background, and community voice. Reciprocity, as mentioned earlier, is where those who perform the service understand that they are benefiting as much as those who are being served. Teachers bring a contextual history that is unique to the service activity,

and students, likewise, bring their experience and understanding to the service activity. This combination of contextual histories results in an experience for each person involved that is unique, and unlike another situation, involving different people, doing the same activities. Community voice refers to the issue of control. Service learning best practices necessitate the solicitation of ideas from those being served.

Because of this training, teachers were willing to incorporate service-learning activities into their courses. Some of the various service activities included: (a) environmental projects, (b) literacy projects, and (c) a fund raiser for the Red Cross a few days after September 11, 2001. Milovich was interested in how we were engaging students in service activities and inquired about the possibility of forming a partnership between USU and the Logan District so that our students could work together on various service projects.

As an initial step in the partnership between USU and Logan School District, South Campus students worked with USU students in the after-school program at Wilson Elementary School with the students who were considered the most at risk academically and socially. In addition to helping students with their homework, tutors helped the elementary students complete a project called “Build a Business,” where students planned and created a business based on an environmentally friendly theme. Projects like the “Build a Business” lasted anywhere from 6 to 8 weeks.

Three South Campus students participated in the first literacy project. The partnership required high school students to work with college students and VISTA volunteers from the Utah Conservation Corps. These students took over an elementary

classroom for a day. They guided the children through a variety of learning activities that helped them understand what it takes to be an author and create the various components of a book. Together the South Campus students and USU students provided the elementary students with activities in reading, writing, painting, making costumes, and constructing musical instruments out of simple materials.

The project had an environmental awareness theme; the children were assigned an ecosystem. Their writing, painting, reading and costumes were all associated with their assigned ecosystem. The project culminated with a reception that same evening where the parents visited the school to view the book of poems and paintings that the children created, and to watch their children participate in an Earth Day parade, with students marching around the auditorium dressed in their costumes and playing the instruments they had constructed earlier in the day.

The college students and the high school students met together several times in the month prior to taking over the elementary classroom, to plan the activities and purchase the supplies that were needed for the activities. This was a very successful event according to Milovich, and the parents I talked with at the evening reception. In fact, Milovich noted that one of the high school students from that first project at the Wilson Elementary in 2002 made a decision to attend college and, although he went through several false starts, he is now a committed student at USU.

At the beginning of the 2002-2003 school year, Milovich developed a plan to use available federal and state monies to provide six to eight Logan High School students a one year scholarship of tuition and books to USU for participating in the College Counts

program. The program's curriculum consisted of five main components: (a) weekly tutoring and mentoring with elementary students in an after-school program, (b) weekly planning meetings with group members and a supervisor from USU, (c) in addition to the year long mentoring and tutoring, students conducted three other service projects to benefit Logan High or the community, (d) various modes of reflection, including group reflections at weekly planning meetings, weekly journaling, and structured written reflections submitted three times (upon completion of service projects) during the program, and (e) visits to USU in order to make connections with key individuals and organizations at USU which would increase the potential for a successful transition to the university.

Through the College Counts program, high school participants design service activities and direct elementary age students in a variety of tutoring and mentoring activities. The program includes written assignments and other reflection activities that provide the high school students a chance to process their experiences. To date, 36 students have completed the program. In the spring of 2007, four of these participants held leadership positions in various organizations on the USU campus.

Given the goals and structure of the College Counts program, a study examining the process and student outcomes is warranted. Additionally, such a study may contribute knowledge about important educational experiences that are not only ignored by NCLB but kept out of school experiences by the pressure of standardization and high stakes testing.

# CHAPTER II

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Mezirow's conception of transformational learning is the theoretical lens I used for this study, with an emphasis on the student learning taking place in the affective domain. In this chapter, I review relevant service-learning literature and establish the definition for service-learning used in this study. Next, I present a review of the relevant literature for transformational learning theory. Finally, I review research that has examined the transformative nature of service learning, which sets the stage for this study.

## Service-Learning Research

Service learning has been described in various ways, ranging from its use as a synonym for community service to "an active pedagogy that integrates community service with academic study to enhance a student's capacity to think critically, solve problems practically, and function as a life-long moral, democratic citizen in a democratic society" (Benson & Harkavy, 2003, p. 4). For Benson and Harkavy "service-learning best accomplishes its goals by engaging students in collaborative, action-oriented, reflective, real-world problem solving designed to develop the knowledge and related practice necessary for an optimally democratic society" (pp. 4-5).

One of the concepts that distinguishes service learning from other experiential

learning activities is the element of reciprocity. Participants provide service to individuals and groups and in return benefit cognitively and affectively from the experience. Kendall (1990, p. 22) argued that service conducted in this manner "avoids the traditionally paternalistic, one-way approach to service in which one group or person has resources which they share 'charitably' or 'voluntarily' with a person or group that lacks resources." Kendall believed that a good service-learning program helps students see their service in the larger context of social justice and social policy, rather that in the context of charity. For example, participants working in a soup kitchen should be guided to reflect on how the experience has affected them personally, and additionally, to reflect on how certain policies and structures exist that perpetuate poverty, instead of simply reducing their experience to only feeding the poor.

For many educators the key to defining academic service learning is identifying the learning that takes place for students in the content area that is connected to the service experiences in which the student is participating (Furco, 2002; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Shumer, 2005). Other educators focus more on the service than any specific content area learning (Kendall, 1990; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1999). For this study, a broad view was taken to define service learning. Gary Hesser was one of the 33 service-learning practitioners who Stanton and his colleagues interviewed for their work in *Service Learning: A Movement's Pioneers Reflect on Its Origins, Practice, and Future* (Stanton et al.). I found Hesser's conception of service learning most helpful, and his definition is descriptive of the goals set forth for the participants of the College Counts program. While Hesser has been a professor of sociology and urban studies, and the

director of cooperative education at Augsburg College, he has a similar view to the position taken by Milovich and me, on what it means to engage students in service learning:

> I think of it as a continuum. At one end, experience-based learning enables one to work on very personal agendas. At the other end, there are agendas that strengthen the community. The question is, how do you teeter-totter balance so that it's feeding us as individuals yet not making us self-centered, reminding us of the community that's enabled us to be here?
>
> I've been working on something that pulls this together around themes of collaboration. Is everyone at the table being listened to? Are they all trying to share resources and empower one another? Is that what's happening? If it is, then we might want to call it service-learning. So, collaboration is one theme that informs everything I do. The other is reciprocity. Is everyone gaining? Is there reciprocity between service and learning? Is there reciprocity between servers and served? Is there reciprocity among student, faculty, and community? Is there give and take in which everyone engaged is feeling genuinely strengthened and empowered, and not taken advantage of?
>
> The third factor is diversity. Are we honoring the multiple gifts of everyone involved? Are we genuinely trying to learn from each other and celebrate those gifts, while at the same time trying to build some kind of cohesive community in the midst of all of that diversity?
>
> Whether it's cooperative education, internships, urban field experiences – whatever it is, I can call it service-learning if it's struggling with and trying to move to these three things. They create a tension to hold us accountable. If we address them, then we may legitimately call it service-learning. (p. 212)

It is the concepts of collaboration, reciprocity, and diversity that guide the work of the College Counts program.

Shumer (2005) conducted a Delphi study to determine the most important and influential studies that have shaped the history of service-learning research. Shumer sent out a questionnaire to a group of researchers and practitioners, who were included in the work of Stanton and colleagues (1999) as they identified pioneers in the field of service

learning. Shumer consulted with a representation of experts in the field of service learning, and asked them to identify and rank the most important bodies of research. Five studies (two research reviews and three research studies) were selected as the most influential. The reviews were conducted by Billig (2000) and Conrad and Hedin (1991), while the studies were contributions from Melchior and Bailis (2002), Conrad and Hedin, and Eyler and Giles (1999). I will begin by summarizing these studies, as they provide a sense of historical continuity and they are the most referenced studies by those conducting research in service learning and community service (Shumer).

Conrad and Hedin (1991) reviewed what we knew about service and experiential learning over fifteen years ago. They examined 27 different experiential learning programs at the secondary level across the nation. They noted the National and Community Service Act of 1990 was the most significant legislation in many decades for community service. It provided monies for the community service programs at the K-12 and college levels, as well as for full-time service corps that students may participate in after high school. This political action initiated two types of reform in the service-learning arena: (a) reform for youth, and (b) reform for education.

Those who sought to use service learning to reform youth used statistics noting the decline in volunteerism, as well as increases in crime, teen pregnancy, suicide and drug use (Conrad & Hedin, 1991). This focus saw service learning as a way to engage youth in the democratic process and make positive connections with their community. The other focus was that of educational reform; using service learning to strengthen the academic curriculum. This research was aimed at integrating service learning into the

regular activities of the school.

Conrad and Hedin (1991) made a case for using community service and experiential learning as a useful pedagogy. However, they acknowledge that very little can be proven about service learning because of the many challenges to conducting this type of research. The primary concern to replicating any study of this nature is the highly contextualized setting of service activities. In other words, the personal history of the students, the knowledge and attitudes of the teacher facilitating the service learning, and the quality of the service experience make replication of service-learning studies very difficult. Another challenge is the number of plausible outcomes to any single service activity; which make it complicated to determine the appropriate dependent variables.

Notwithstanding the difficulty of conducting service-learning research, Conrad and Hedin (1991) did report several positive results in their review. They discovered that problem-solving ability increased more for high school students involved in community service than for comparison groups. Furthermore, improvement occurred most when the problems encountered were similar to those presented in the test, and when the program intentionally focused on problem solving. Besides cognitive gains, they reported that students also experienced social and psychological development. They found that program quality affected student outcomes. It seems that regardless of the service activities utilized, in the various programs they reviewed, all students make gains in personal and social responsibility domains, as measured by questionnaires and interviews gathered in student self-reports.

In addition to the quantitative findings, which were mixed, they reported

qualitative data that broadened the knowledge base and provided "not only the general effect of a service experience but its particular and peculiar impact on each individual" (Conrad & Hedin, 1991, p. 748). The peculiar impact they document is that student's increased responsibility, and a stronger youth voice is created. They concluded their review of the research by claiming the case for community service as a justifiable pedagogy because of the mixed support from quantitative studies and more consistent positive support from qualitative data coming from students and teachers. Conrad and Hedin questioned whether service learning will ever be integrated into the core curriculum or remain on the fringes of the political and educational agenda.

Billig (2000) conducted a review of many more studies, completed between 1991 and 1999, than Conrad and Hedin (1991) reviewed, and concluded that the same issues identified by Conrad and Hedin remain as challenges today. The first challenge is defining service learning. Billig noted that there are various opinions about the definition of service learning; some still using community service and service learning interchangeably, while others make strong distinctions between the two terms. Is service learning a model, a program, pedagogy, or a philosophy? The answer depends on who you ask. Billig and other service-learning practitioners believe we need answers to the following questions. What key elements must be in place for a program to claim to be service learning? What are the effects and impacts of service learning? Do the characteristics of the participants matter? Do the characteristics of and the relationships with the service recipients influence outcomes? Do school characteristics matter? Research from the past ten years broadens our understanding to some of these questions

(Billig).

Billig (2000) discussed the viewpoints held by various organizations and stakeholders as to what constitutes service learning. While the definition of service-learning produces tension among many researchers, there is general agreement that its major components include organized experiences, focus on community needs, academic curriculum integration, time for reflection, opportunities for application of skills and knowledge, and development of a sense of caring (Bhaerman, Cordell, & Gomez, 1998). Findings of the study showed positive effects on personal and social development, civic responsibility, academic skills and knowledge, career exploration, and community member's perceptions of school and youth. Arguably, the most important factor to achieving positive results in the identified areas was program quality. Billig identified elements of program quality as follows:

1. Intensity and durations of programs are related to project outcomes
2. Increased responsibility, autonomy, and student choice affect impact
3. Direct, sustained contact with clients is responsible for more robust outcomes
4. Different kinds of reflection and specific teacher qualities affect the outcomes of service-learning programs

Billig (2000) concluded her review asking whether politicians and educators will come together in strengthening the service ethic of our youth or whether new priorities and old pressures of higher basic skills will keep youth service on the fringes of political and educational agendas.

Academic Outcomes of Service Learning: Cognitive and Affective

Many service-learning studies have investigated the academic outcomes for students who are engaged in service to their community (Astin & Sax, 1998; Conrad & Hedin, 1981; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco, 2002; Kraft & Wheeler, 2003; Melchior & Bailis, 2002; Volelgesang & Astin, 2000; Wade, 2004). Wade believed part of the mission in secondary education should be for teachers to establish a desire within our students, to understand our nation's creed, which includes "establishing justice for all." According to Wade, teaching social justice through the curriculum in K-12 settings, whether that is through the social studies classes, English classes, math classes, or an elementary class, is the responsibility of all teachers.

From her research with elementary to secondary teachers, Wade (2004) gave several examples of how teachers can incorporate service-learning activities, tied to the classroom curriculum, to help students understand the important issue of social justice. These activities range from having students locate primary writings surrounding the topic of investigation, to having the students collect oral histories, to simulations and role plays, to having students create interior monologues and two voice poems. These service activities give students opportunities to experience social justice issues, and by processing them through reflective activities, students have the chance to broaden their understanding of civic issues. Wade believes this kind of learning is vital for all students to be able to lead full and productive lives.

Kraft and Wheeler (2003) used a case study mixed method approach to examine the relationship between service learning and resilience in disaffected youth at an

alternative high school in the Midwest. They found that students involved in service-learning activities had higher attendance rates, higher GPAs, scored higher on the six-trait writing assessment, and had lower referrals to the principal for behavior issues.

Melchior and Bailis (2002) summarized the results of three national studies that were conducted between the years 1992-1998 and were all federally funded initiatives of the 1990 National and Community Service Act. This study compared the evaluations of the Serve America Program, the Learn and Serve America Program, and the Active Citizenship Today (ACT) initiative. The focus of these studies was on civic attitudes and behaviors. These studies showed positive impact on student attitude, communication skills, and involvement in community service. Results from this research showed that service experience directly connected to course curriculum produced the strongest results and, as in the Billig (2000) and Conrad and Hedin (1991) studies, they found that program quality affected student outcomes.

Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) conducted a quantitative, longitudinal study of 22,000 students at 177 higher educational institutions. They found students involved in service activities tied to course content enhanced their academic outcomes defined as GPA, writing skills, and critical thinking skills. The element of reflection was identified as critical to making connections between service and course content. Students used various forms of reflection to process their service experience. Among these are written papers and weekly journals, discussions with professor and group discussions with peers.

Astin and Sax (1998) also conducted a longitudinal, quantitative study investigating the academic outcomes for students involved in service activities. Over

3,400 students at 42 higher educational institutions took part in the study. They reported that students engaged in service options experienced a positive effect in knowledge acquisition, GPA, more time devoted to studies, and a higher level of preparation for graduate studies than their peers who did not participate in service-learning classes. The students having the greatest effect were education students participating in mentoring and tutoring programs, leading Astin and Sax to determine that students benefit most from service activities that parallel the content being taught in the classroom.

Conrad and Hedin (1981) investigated the academic outcomes for over 1,000 high school students participating in five different types of experiential learning programs: community service, political action, community study, internships, and adventure education. They studied the effects of these various forms of service programs on student's psychological, intellectual, and social development. Specifically, they looked at the differences between the service groups and the control group in self-esteem, social responsibility, personal responsibility, attitudes toward adults, attitudes toward others, career maturity, moral reasoning, and problem-solving skills. They discovered that students engaged in service activities scored higher on every scale measured than their peers in the control group, but under further analysis found that it did not matter which type of service program students were involved in, the gains were similar for each program.

Eyler and Giles (1999) conducted two studies examining the impact of service-learning on students. The first study surveyed over 1,500 students from 20 colleges and universities both before and after they participated in a semester of service. From that

sample an additional 66 students were interviewed to examine changes in problem-solving and critical thinking abilities during the semester of service. The second study incorporated interviews with 67 students at seven institutions to explore the nature of students' experiences with reflection in service learning. These studies confirmed that service has a positive impact on outcomes related to personal and interpersonal development, academic learning, and perspective transformation. What is not clear is what the outcomes are for participation in different types of service programs. Similar to the findings of the Conrad and Hedin (1981) study, student outcomes depend more on the individual experience of the student than the type of service program in which they are engaged.

What seems clear from the research is that students engaged in service to their communities benefit in their personal, social, and intellectual development. Researchers do not question whether service-learning participation affects students. The questions that need to be answered are, how much of an impact, what is it about the service program that causes the impact, and how often do impacts occur? It is not clear which outcomes are associated with various types of service programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999). It is clear that program quality, which was outlined above, has a direct connection to student learning in both the cognitive and affective domains (Billig, 2000; Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Eyler & Giles; Melchior & Bailis, 2002).

## Transformational Learning Research

Transformational learning theory evolved out of a study conducted by Mezirow

(1978a) where he focused on the change in perspectives experienced by women who participated in reentry programs initiated by colleges and universities in the United States in the 1970s. According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning occurs when individuals change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and then consciously develop new ways of thinking and acting in the world.

In Mezirow's (1978a) original study, he noted four types of learning: a person can learn how to do something, they can learn how something works, they can learn what others expect of them and how they will interact with that person based on this understanding, and the fourth pertains to the development of self-concept and an understanding of what is important and of value to the person. Mezirow then suggests that there is yet another kind of learning that involves an awareness of "how we are caught in our own history and are reliving it" (p. 101). In this type of learning we become critically aware of our cultural and psychological assumptions that influence how we see ourselves, others, and our relationships. It is the process of creating a personal paradigm for living our life. Mezirow (1978b) referred to this process as learning about meaning perspectives. "A meaning perspective refers to the structure of cultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to–and transformed by–one's past experience" (p. 101).

There are times when we are faced with situations or challenges where our meaning perspectives are not adequate to assimilate the new experience. This cognitive dissonance provides an opportunity to transform our meaning perspectives to create a new paradigm for living our life. This process will most likely include the assistance of

others who have a more critical awareness of the cultural and psychological assumptions that shape our histories and experience. As a person becomes more critically aware of their perspective and is exposed to alternatives, the opportunity for a change in perspective becomes an option. Therefore, "perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrating perspective; and, finally making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 167). Mezirow believed this kind of learning is "cardinal" for adult development.

Taylor (1998) conducted the most comprehensive critical review of literature surrounding the theory of transformational learning. He began with an overview of transformational learning, as developed by Mezirow, and included two other models of transformative learning developed by Robert Boyd and Paulo Freire. Next, he reviewed over 40 studies that explore seven unresolved issues: individual change versus social action, decontextualized view of learning, universal model of adult learning, adult development–shift or progression, rationality, other ways of knowing, and the model of perspective transformation. Finally, he outlined the necessary components and techniques needed to foster transformational learning in educational settings, including the roles and responsibilities of educators in creating an environment that supports critical reflection and the exploration of alternative perspectives.

In his overview of transformational learning, Taylor (1998) noted how the theory

"offers an explanation for change in meaning structures that evolves in two domains of learning based on the epistemology of Habermas' communicative theory" (p. 12). The first domain is instrumental learning, which is learning through task-oriented problem solving and the second is communicative learning, which involved understanding the meaning of what others communicate about values, ideals, feelings, moral decisions, justice, love, and democracy. When these domains of learning are combined with the reflective process and there is movement through the cognitive structures by identifying cultural assumptions and presuppositions, then transformational learning is occurring (Mezirow, 1991). It is the process of revising meaning structures through experience and reflection that constitutes transformational learning.

Mezirow et al. (2000) note that transformations can be epochal, sudden change of insight, or incremental, involving a series of transformations in related points of view. In either case one must go through some variation of the following phases of transformation that Mezirow identified as a result of his original study involving women participating in a reentry programs for college in 1978: a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared, exploration of options for new roles - relationships and actions, planning a course of action, acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan, provisional trying of new roles, building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. Taylor (1998) gave an example of transformation from his study on intercultural competency. The participant, an American, describes his

change in world view as a result of volunteering in Honduras for 2 years as a member of the Peace Corps:

> I definitely see the world in a whole different light than how I looked at the world before I left. Before I left the States there was another world out there, I knew it existed, but I didn't see what my connection to it was at all. You hear news reports going on in other countries, but I didn't understand how and what we did here in the States impacted on these people in Honduras, in South America, Africa, and Asia. Since I did not have a feeling for how our lives impacted their lives it was as if the U.S. were almost a self-contained little world. After going to Honduras I realized how much things we did in the States affected Hondurans, Costa Ricans. How we affected everyone else in the world. I no longer had this feeling the U.S. was here and everybody else was outside. I felt that the world definitely got much smaller. It got smaller in the sense of throwing a rock in the water creates ripples. I am that rock and the things I do here in the States affect people everywhere. I feel much more a part of the world than I do of the U.S. I criticize the U.S. much more now than I would have in the past. (Taylor, 1998, p. 175)

Three common themes associated with transformational learning are centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (Mezirow, 1995). It is one's experience that is the starting point of any transformational learning. Critical reflection refers to the questioning of our beliefs based on prior experience, usually as a result of cognitive dissonance that has arisen in one's mind and heart. Rational discourse is the process where transformation is developed. It is through rational discourse that experience and critical reflection are examined and processed. One reflects on their experience and examines the foundation of their assumptions and beliefs surrounding their world view (Mezirow).

Taylor (1998) recognized two main contributors to the theory of transformational learning, Robert Boyd and Paulo Freire. Boyd's conception of transformative learning is based on the analytical psychology of Carl Jung. For Boyd (1991), transformation is an

inner journey of individualization of discovering new talents, a sense of empowerment and a deeper understanding of one's inner self. In contrast to Mezirow's idea of transformation, which is based on cognitive conflicts one experiences in relationship to one's culture, Boyd is concerned with the conflicts within the individual's psyche and the processes that lead to transformation. The transformative journey is a process of discernment. Discernment is the processing of the past and planning for the future through personal insight.

For Freire, transformation is a social experience. He called the process conscientization (Freire, 1970) whereby those who are oppressed learn of the political and economical forces against them and take action to transform their world. According to Freire, education is never neutral. Education is used to either recapitulate the values of the dominant culture or to liberate the oppressed through the process of praxis, which is moving back and forth in a critical way between reflecting and acting on the world. Taylor (1998) situated Freire on one end of a continuum with the focus being on social transformation and Boyd on the other end with his focus solely on personal transformation; while he situated Mezirow in the middle of the two because he gives minimal attention to the social changes associated with personal transformation.

A number of criticisms have emerged over the past thirty years as researchers have explored transformational learning in various studies. According to Taylor (1998), the most controversial issue is that Mezirow's idea of transformational learning does not adequately connect personal transformation to social change. Other researchers have criticized Mezirow's lack of attention on social connection with personal transformation,

pointing out that personal transformation viewed separately from the context of social action could be problematic if the dominant ideologies that influenced the disorienting dilemma remain unquestioned (Collard & Law, 1989; Hart, 1990).

Another criticism is the major emphasis Mezirow places on critical reflection and the linear process of transformational learning (Coffman, 1989). Coffman conducted a phenomenological study by interviewing men and women in a master of divinity program over a 6-month period. She interviewed participants in their first, second, and last year of their program to see if transformational learning had taken place. What she found is that indeed perspective transformation was occurring, but not in a linear fashion. Students were continually reassessing their disorienting dilemma in relation to the cultural norms, thus experiencing a more recursive journey towards transformative learning. Out of this study, two important findings emerge: one, that emphasis should be placed in the affective domain as well as critical reflection–for participants to analyze their beliefs and values one must express their feelings; and two the transformational process is recursive rather that linear. Participants may go through the various phases of transformation several times as they create a more inclusive paradigm for living (Coffman).

Ideal conditions and instructional practices have been identified to foster transformational learning in educational settings (Gallagher, 1997; Neuman, 1996; Saavedra, 1996). Saavedra identified the conditions essential for transformational learning to take place in a group setting. The most important factors for fostering transformative learning in a group setting are: (a) participants situating themselves historically, politically and culturally within the context of the group; (b) importance of

dissonance and conflict; and (c) opportunity for students to act on new ideas and world views. Saavedra found that it is particularly important for students' to situate themselves culturally and discuss issues of positionality (race, class, and gender) with respect to groups' purpose. She also recognized the learning opportunities that evolve out of dissonance and conflict within the group and the need for students to engage in experiential activities in order to test out their new ideas or change in perspective.

Gallagher's (1997) study of K-12 educators in a Drama-In-Education week-long inservice validated the need for experiential activities to foster transformative learning. Gallagher determined that dialogue alone is not sufficient for transformative learning; that students need experiences to process the modification in their world view that has taken place through critical reflection.

## Service Learning and Transformational Learning Research

Research that examined the transformative nature of service-learning participation has been limited to higher education and adult education. In my review of the literature, I found ten studies that used the practice of service learning to examine transformational learning. These 10 studies will be reviewed in the following section.

Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) conducted a qualitative examination of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership (IPSL) program, which has a 20-year history of providing intensive service experiences for American college students outside the United States. Students typically go abroad to study for one semester and are placed with community service agencies for 15-20 hours per week. Students

were enrolled in at least one academic course, taught by a local professor, where the goal of the course was to help students process their service experience and link it with the theoretical knowledge they were gaining in the classroom. The purpose of the study was to examine student goals and attitudes, their opinions, career patterns, and their experience.

The study determined that there were 1893 students that participated in the partnership from 1986-2000, of which 80% were female and 20% were male. Four researchers conducted the study, which included 17 partnership alumni, who participated in 40-minute individual interviews, as well as a focus group consisting of 4-5 participants, and finally a 75-minute plenary session which included all participants. The 17 participants came to New York City for a weekend in April of 2003 to participate in interviews and focus groups. The individual 40-minute interviews were conducted first by the four researchers, then the focus groups of 4-5 participants, and finally the plenary session concluded the gathering of data. Interviews focused on the transformative aspects of service learning, specifically the cross-cultural experience of participants.

In reporting the findings of the partnership study, Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) noted that many of the participants felt that their service experience played a transformational role in their life. They reported that eight of the seventeen participants said that they experienced a career change. Here is an example of how they reported their findings.

> Such was the case of Tamara, who said that she became a physician because of her service experience in London. Her interaction with the sick in hospitals in the UK made her decide to spend her life helping others. Tamara construed the impact of her service experience on career choice as direct cause and effect, but

for others the impact was less direct. (p. 143)

In the final analysis of their study on the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) made these conclusions: (a) many students experienced “reverse culture shock” as a result of their service experience; (b) students typically experience a transformation of their moral and intellectual character and work through this transformation with a reflective process; (c) many students develop a more critical perspective on American values, norms, behaviors, and beliefs; (d) many students noted the influence of the partnership experience on their career choices; and (e) students developed a sense of self-sufficiency and informed leadership.

Students who reported “reverse culture shock,” were referring to the difficulty they experienced upon their return from their service experience abroad. These students reported that they had a hard time with the strong emphasis most Americans have on consumerism. This resulted in a more critical view of American policies, values, and beliefs. These findings were supportive of the student learning Kiely (2002) reported in his service learning study in Nicaragua.

Kiely (2002) noted that the student learning in an international service-learning program is not always positive. He conducted a qualitative study on the Tomkins Cortland Community College’s international service-learning program, of which he was a cofounder and coordinator for 8 years. Kiely choose five cohorts to study from the years 1995-2001. There were 43 participants in the five cohorts and 22 participated in the interviews for his investigation.

A closer look at Kiely’s study (2002), in which he investigated the perspective

transformation of students immersed in an international service-learning program, revealed that students experience profound changes in their world view in at least one of six areas: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural. The following quote is an example of how these perspective changes are reported. It is from an interview with "Laura" 4 years after her experience in Nicaragua.

> I went through like two or three years really having a hard time finding people that thought that way, but then all the sudden along comes Ralph Nader who says it's a whole system that needs to be reworked, that's more environmentally conscientious… and social welfare and health care should be socialized and so on… some people come back and they see people in Nicaragua who are in a system that works against them. From my perspective if we were going to change things in Nicaragua we'd have to change the system…. So part of that means changing the way the U.S. works with Nicaragua on a more systemic level.

As a result of her experience in Nicaragua, "Laura" changed her career plans to be a nurse because she felt the U.S. had an unjust health care system. To fulfill her need to advocate for those who did not have adequate health care she took a position at a local nonprofit organization that supported universal health care. She also became the co-chair of the local Green Party because of her frustration with the dominant two-party system (Kiely, 2002).

Further analysis of Kiely's (2005) study revealed that transformational learning may not always lead to positive outcomes. When he continued his study of the Tomkins Cortland Community College international service-learning program, 2 years later, Kiely identified what he called the "Chameleon Complex." For instance, some students who initially experienced a political perspective transformation and express a willingness to work for social justice, found it very difficult to assimilate their new understandings into their old culture upon returning to the United States. In other words, they had a hard time

explaining their experiences to their friends and family and the profound impact they felt as a result of their service and reflections. Prior to Kiely's study, those who documented a perspective change in their students did so based on a student's desire to act on their service-learning experience, which was viewed as entirely positive (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Feinstein, 2004; Flower, 2002; Kellogg, 1999; Pompa, 2002). Kiely's longitudinal study provided further examination of such perspective transformations and suggested there is a need to develop strategies for helping students process their transformational learning in ways that allow them to more fully assimilate their learning into their culture upon returning to the United States (Feinstein, 2004).

Feinstein (2004) reported the transformational learning of 12 students who spent a semester in Hawaii studying "traditional ecological knowledge" through service-learning activities. The course was designed for students to make meaning out of their experiences with the environment through multiple exposures from different worldviews. The course used critical multiculturalism as a theoretical lens. Critical multiculturalism goes beyond learning about other cultures; it involves shifting the discussion to include relations of power and racial identities as part of the groups critique and possibility (Giroux, 1994). Students participated in a series of outdoor activities, combined with weekly classroom discussions to explore how participants respond to their experiences in the field. Two processes were facilitated in the classroom discussions. These processes were reflective discourse and critical reflection. Mezirow et al. (2000) identified these processes as paramount for transformational learning to take place. Reflective discourse is dialogue between participants, which leads to greater understanding by examining

alternative perspectives. Critical reflection is examining one's experience and exploring how they acquired their perspective or worldview.

The main goal of the course was to give students an environmental and cultural experience that was different from their prior understanding. Through interactions with local and indigenous experts students had an opportunity to gain a deeper love of the land and responsibility to the community and environment. According to Feinstein the most important aspect of the course was that it gave students with a Western perspective, a view of the environment from an indigenous perspective–Hawaiian perspective.

Feinstein (2004) reported that four of the students experienced personal and cultural transformation, although not at the same level. For example, Sylvia, through her participation in the course, was able to categorize her learning into a cultural context and thereby shift her identity "to one of a fighter for the environment" (p. 111).
Jasmine, on the other hand, experienced a deeper, more fundamental shift in her identity, as a result of her participation in the program. Feinstein noted, "Through investigating her self-identity, Jasmine discovered that there was a deep part of her she had never allowed herself to explore-the part of her that is Hawaiian. Through the focus of the course, she got in touch with this part of who she is. It was a combination of these two factors, which catalyzed a paradigmatic shift in Jasmine's self-identity" (p. 112). Here Jasmine tells of her most profound experience in the program, at the 'ai Kupele Cultural Healing Center with a Hawaiian healer, who was in charge of the center:

> I am in awe of the healer and his work at 'ai Kupele. It was a humbling experience. I did not fully realize the state of poverty that was in Waimanalo. The role that I now know 'ai Kupele plays is very important. What was interesting was his cure for Waimanalo. He was discussing the loss of people's

> relationship with the land. This was the best idea I could think of!
>
> It was exciting to see someone who was working this hard to save some people. I believe in his healing capabilities. I believe in ‘ai Kupele and their mission. It was at this experience that I figured out what I want to do with my life. The healer works to get people back in touch with the ‘aina. I decided I want to do similar work after experiencing what he does. His experiences and dedication to healing is inspiring to me.

Courtenay and colleagues (2000) reported the continued perspective transformation of 14 participants. Eighteen participants were involved in the original study, which investigated the perspective transformation of individuals who were HIV-positive. What Courtenay and his associates found was that in all fourteen cases the perspective transformations they had experienced two years prior had remained. They reported that participants continued to experience perspective transformation in the adoption of future-oriented perspective, greater attention to self, and an integration of being HIV-positive into their self-identity. Courtenay et al. identified three ways that participants demonstrated the sustainability of their perspective transformation: (a) they continued to view their HIV status as an opportunity to help others, (b) they maintained a sensitivity to life, and (c) they continued to act on these beliefs and serve others facing similar circumstances. “Pat” gives us an example of how participants were continuing to serve:

> I volunteer for Outreach… I sit on a board… I’m a patient advocate for a local Aids group… I sponsor a lot of women in recovery that are struggling to stay clean, but the ones that have HIV, you know, I work with their minds and try to keep them on a … positive plane about the disease.

Eyler and Giles (1999), as mention earlier under service-learning research, conducted the first national study assessing outcomes for service-learning participants in

higher education programs. Eyler and Giles used Mezirow's conception of transformational learning, but explain the process this way:

> Transformational learning occurs as we struggle to solve a problem where our usual ways of doing or seeing do not work, and we are called to question the validity of what we think we know or critically examine the very premises of our perception of the problem. (p. 133)

They combined the data from their survey, taken by 1,500 students in over 20 institutions; with the data they obtained by interviewing 67 students at seven institutions nation wide. Qualitative data gathered from the interviews was used to support the data obtained through the survey and shed light on the issues of program quality and transformative learning. Students were interviewed for about an hour at the beginning of the semester and again for an hour at the end of the course. These were problem-solving interviews focused on how the participant viewed their service and what issues they addressed as being problematic. Those that identified a shift from viewing their service as charity to that of social justice were viewed as experiencing transformational learning. One student reported her learning this way:

> I thought it would be better and our efforts would be more focused and make a bigger change if we worked on something that could have a long-lasting impact by changing the structure of something rather that just giving someone a can of food. (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 130)

Eyler and Giles (1999) reported that program quality increased the impact of service learning on perspective transformation. The characteristics of a high-quality program include placement quality, application, reflection, and diversity. Placement quality refers to students being assigned important responsibilities, interesting work, and challenging tasks. Application is the level of connection between the service and the

academic goals of the program. Programs with varied and high levels of reflection had the greatest impact for student transformative learning. Finally, the opportunity to work with students of different ethnic backgrounds creates opportunities for students to challenge old stereotypes and begin the transformative process.

Eyler and Giles (1999, p. 136) reported that 34% of the students they interviewed experienced transformed perspectives, as measured by students reporting that they see social problems in a new way." They concluded that "…involvement in service-learning, particularly in highly reflective programs, moved students toward a more systemic view of social problems and a greater sense of the importance of political action to obtain social justice (Eyler & Giles, p. 135).

Romo and Chavez (2006, p. 150) reported the transformative learning that preservice teachers experienced as a result of their tutoring in local schools (San Diego, California). The preservice teachers experienced various issues as a result of their service learning: immigration, poverty, race, culture, and language. One teacher wrote, regarding race and culture:

> By learning about the different stages of Helms's model of White Racial Identity Development, I have come to understand that my earlier neglect of obvious racism in the U.S. was normal. But through experiences like service-learning, I am slowly moving through the stages to become a more multicultural competent human being.

Another preservice teacher described her experience as follows:

> Though I had grown up being open to different cultures, there were just three cultures that I was surrounded with from day one. Now, I had to prepare myself to learn and accept about ten new cultures that I knew nothing about. I don't think I would have been able to do it on my own. But through my experiences with the South Sudan center, being a teaching assistant in numerous different classroom settings, and through class lectures, videos, and conversations, I found

a way to start.

There were 48 undergraduate and graduate students participating in this study. Data were gathered from essays that participants wrote as a part of their "Philosophical and Multicultural Foundations of Education" course. Romo and Chavez (2006, p.151) concluded that "…the preservice teachers demonstrated a transformation of their knowledge base, dispositions, and skills to function as multiculturally competent advocates for all students."

Malone and colleagues (2002), like Romo and Chavez (2006), also reported transformative learning of preservice teachers. Students from a private university in South Carolina participated in service-learning activities, involving the tutoring and mentoring of elementary students, twice weekly, as part of their education course. They used Eyler and Giles' conception of transformational learning as a theoretical lens for their study; which is, "Some people leave service-learning with a new set of lenses for seeing the world (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 129)." The studies are quite similar. Data were collected from reflection papers written for the university class by the students and the service was quite similar.

Malone and colleagues (2002, p. 68) reported that 62% of the students experienced a change in perspective in the personal domain and 44% in the area of career goals. Here one student describes their experience:

> I never dreamed that my tutoring experience would change the direction of my life. After this semester I now know that I want to teach after college. It was not that I thought I was such a great tutor, but something just felt right. I felt at home, like that was the type of place at which I could spend a lot of time.

Malone and his colleagues reported that the outcomes experienced by the students in their

study was similar to the outcomes experienced by students in the Conrad and Hedin study and Eyler and Giles; both studies were conducted nationally. Conrad and Hedin (1981) reported the outcomes for students involved in high school service-learning programs and Eyler and Giles reported on college students' service-learning experiences. Both studies show that students participating in high quality service-learning programs experience gains in four broad categories: (a) personal growth, (b) social responsibility, (c) academic learning and understanding, and (d) career development. Finally, Malone and colleagues found that students in this study realized the reciprocal nature of service learning, the tutor learning from the tutee and the tutee learning from the tutor.

Flower (2002) conducted a qualitative investigation with four college students who participated in service-learning activities within Pittsburgh's urban community. These students were enrolled in a course called Community Literacy and Intercultural Interpretation. The service-learning component involved student participation in an afterschool program at the Community Literacy Center, for seven weeks, where the four college students mentored high school students. The goal of the afterschool program was to increase their literacy skills, by helping tell the various urban issues that the high school students faced each day (i.e., school, respect, and gangs).

Flower's (2002, p. 186) goal for her students, was to lead them though an experience in intercultural inquiry, where,

> Partners in an intercultural inquiry attempt to use the differences of race, class, culture or discourse that are available to them to understand shared questions. Whether the matter at stake is education, work, social identity, racism, risk, or respect, an intercultural inquiry seeks rival readings of that issue that have the potential to transform both the inquirers and their interpretations of the problematic issues of the world.

Flower believes that instructors must be intentional about the outcomes they expect for students as a result of their service experience. She noted that transformative learning is a form of praxis (Freire, 1970), where students, as a result of struggling with issues in the community, have a transformed representation of both the issues and themselves. Flower reported that each of the four students involved in the intercultural inquiry experienced transformed perspectives as a result of their interaction with their tutees and processing the assigned readings, bringing together a host of different voices. Here she talks about the student learning of "Scott:"

> He has reframed his sophomore preoccupation with being a role model into an open question about the role African American men already played in the lives of the black teenagers he now knew. In addition, he has begun to shape an ongoing question about his own place in this story, as a white middle-class college boy from Vermont. At the same time, Scott is also developing new tools for inquiry, learning strategies for collaborative planning, research methods for collecting "rival readings," and a set of broader literate practices that support rivaling and intercultural interpretation. (Flower, 2002, pp. 190-191)

Flower (2002) reported that student transformations are not the result of any activity or program, but the result of seeking out rival reading, and different voices to challenge the attitudes we have. She concluded that intercultural inquiry transforms our relationships with others.

Kellogg (1999) conducted a qualitative study with 18 students enrolled in a semester environmental studies "Senior Project" class. Students participated in service-learning activities within the urban community, where the university is located. Kellogg describes the challenge of college students who have a very different life experience than those of the people in the urban community in which they serve. She uses Kahne and

Westheimer's transformative service-learning model to guide the activities in the program. The course was designed to enhance student's transformation in the following forms: moral, political, and intellectual. The students were assigned readings and given multiple opportunities for written and verbal reflection. Students organized several activities with neighborhood residents, which included trips to sewage treatment plants, local U.S. Environmental Protection Agency office. Students teamed with residents in identifying local environmental issues. Students and local residents participated in a training together to collect data and put together an information booklet related to the communities' environmental concerns.

Kellogg (1999, p. 69) found that students demonstrated a significant transformation in the moral, political and intellectual domains as a result of the service-learning experience. Here one of her students describes such a transformation:

> This course certainly changed my perspective on the civic connection between individuals and the urban community…having had the opportunity to work with community members on a serious problem was rewarding and provided me with a new-found sense of obligation.

Another student spoke of her experience this way:

> This class experience has affected my perception of urban communities…. My experience in this class has certainly made me more aware of the challenges of processing that information for the purpose of planning and problem-solving.

Kellogg concluded her study by recommending that instructors provide opportunities for students to discuss frustrations throughout the course. She believed that the reflection activities integrated in the course were critical for student learning to be transformative.

## Summary of Literature Review

Service learning, as pedagogy, dates back to theoretical perspectives of John Dewey and Jane Adams; however, the recent focus on service learning in higher education, may be a result of the changes documented in Putnam's book "Bowling Alone." Putnam (2000) talked about the distance created between community members and the loss of social capital as a result of reduced participation of community members in civic matters. The first President Bush created the Office of National Service in 1990, which gave universities the resources to engage students in community service activities. President Clinton expanded the federal commitment to national service by signing into law the National and Community Service Trust Act in 1993. This legislation increased the opportunities to serve for students of all ages.

The research over the last thirty years has shown that service learning makes a difference in the lives of students. Conrad and Hedin (1991) noted the student learning for secondary students in three broad categories: academic, social and personal areas. Eyler and Giles (1999) reported similar results for higher education students in the same areas of academic, social, and personal. What researchers do not agree on is what constitutes service learning, as there are many definitions that exist among those who study service learning. The definition of service learning used for this study is, activities that engage students in the process of collaboration, where diverse perspectives are valued, and the concept of reciprocity is established among participants.

Transformational learning is a relatively new theory, about 30 years old, which describes the process of learning through one's experience, by critically examining the

thoughts and feelings associated with an activity and creating a broader more inclusive world view through rational discourse (Mezirow et al., 2000). Mezirow claimed that three conditions must be present for individuals to undergo transformational learning: (a) the importance of an experience that causes one to question previous held beliefs, (b) critical reflection, which includes examining one's perspective about the experience and how one's perspective has been is formed, and (c) rational discourse, which is the dialogue one has with people who are supportive of a broader more inclusive world view.

For researchers interested in social change, Mezirow's focus on individual transformation, without looking at the social change that occurs as a result of transformative learning, is problematic. Studies included in this review show that much more attention must be paid to the affective domain in terms of fostering transformative learning, at least as much as is presently focused on critical reflection and rational discourse.

Transformational learning, resulting from participation in service-learning programs, has been studied in higher education and adult education participants. Researchers have not looked at the ability of secondary students to participate in the process of transformational learning. Transformational learning reported by service-learning participants was similar in each of the 10 studies. Kiely identified six forms or domains of perspective change: political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual. The remaining studies all reported participants experiencing transformational learning in at least one of three areas, personal, social, and intellectual domains. It is documented through at least ten studies that many college students and adult students

experience transformational learning by participating in service-learning activities. What is not clear is whether high school students given similar opportunities have the capacity to experience transformational learning. It is the objective of this investigation to view the learning of ten college students, through the lens of transformational learning, as they reflect on their experiences as participants in the College Counts program.

# CHAPTER III

# PROCEDURES

Qualitative research methods are ideally suited to study the concept of transformational learning through examination of students' participation in the service-learning program College Counts. Qualitative methods have the potential to provide a comprehensive picture of students' experience in the College Counts program. Creswell (1998) explained that qualitative studies are an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, rather than scientific methods that conduct experiments to make predictions. Qualitative researchers "assume that meaning is embedded in people's experiences and that this meaning is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions" (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). The primary objective of this study and all qualitative research is to understand the phenomenon, in this case transformative learning and service learning, through the eyes of the participants rather than the researcher. The contextual nature of experiential learning may not be conducive to generalizing outcomes but greater understanding may occur from such an inquiry. This deeper understanding of the processes involved in service learning can be used to inform program development and improvement.

Since the purpose of this research was to examine the experience of high school students in a well-integrated service-learning program to see what can be learned about transformational learning in younger people, I chose the case study tradition as the most appropriate qualitative inquiry design. The case study approach allowed me to provide a rich and in-depth description of the experiences of ten College Counts students (Patton,

1990).

It is important to clarify my perspective and relationship with the College Counts program. Initially, in 2002, when Milovich and I began working together to engage high school students and college students in service-learning activities, I was completing a supervisory internship, in the administrative certification program at USU. The internship was split between secondary and elementary education to gain a broader experience. My responsibilities included being the administrator of Logan High South Campus and assisting the administrator of the after school program at the Wilson Elementary School.

In the 2002 school year, Milovich and I conducted a pilot group, which evolved into the College Counts program. With this first group, I was involved on a daily basis. I was an active participant in the planning of activities for the elementary students, as well as assisting both college and high school students in the implementation of these activities. I participated and observed all the phases of that first literacy project, which taught students what it takes to be an author.

This level of involvement changed after my assignment at Logan High South Campus was complete (at the end of the 2001-02 school year) and I returned to Logan High as a counselor. During the 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006 school years (which are the years of the program that were under investigation), I had a much more limited role in the College Counts program because of coaching responsibilities and the demands of my graduate course work. I did, however, serve as the liaison for the College Counts program between Logan High School and USU. During the 4 years of the College

Counts program that I studied, I was involved in the recruitment of Logan High Students, because of my role in the high school as a guidance counselor; however, I only nominated about 25% of the participants, as there were three other counselors at Logan High who encouraged students to apply for the program.

Because of my commitments to coach football and wrestling, in addition to completing course work in my doctoral program during this time, I was only able to attend about half of the weekly planning meetings each year. While I did participate in asking questions about what the students were learning (when I was able to attend their meetings) and suggested questions for their reflection papers to the college mentor that Milovich had chosen to work with the College Counts students, my role was much less prominent than the first year. Having noted my reduced role in the program, I kept in regular contact with Milovich and the college mentor about the activities and progress made by the College Counts students. Milovich gave me a copy of student reflections and kept me informed about the additional projects the students were involved with. I attended three of the four "Smile on Your Brother Benefit Concerts," and two of the four "Learning Fairs," where the College Counts students, along with college students, took over an elementary class for the day and guided students through literacy activities.

I believe that experiential learning and problem-based learning are the most educational activities that students can be involved in. I ascribe to the educational philosophies of John Dewey, Alfie Kohn, and William Glasser. I am supportive of the progressive educational movement that is child centered and based on intrinsic motivation. While I admit to having a bias towards progressive educational philosophies

and a humanistic view of life in general, procedures were put in place to make this study more reliable, rather than too influenced by my personal view of education. The following section describes the case study process and the justification for its use as the appropriate research design in this study.

## Case Study Research Design

A case study is the exploration of a "bounded system" or a case over time through in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context. "This bounded system is bounded by time and place, and it is the case being studied—a program, an event, an activity, or individuals" (Creswell, 1998, p. 61). The College Counts program was established in 2003, with 6-8 students participating in any given year, for a total of 28 students during the 4-year period 2003-2006. The finite number of students involved in the program qualifies it as a bounded system.

According to Stake (1995), the case study method is used by researchers to explore in depth a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. The case or cases are bounded by time and activity with the researcher using a variety of data collection methods over a prolonged period of time. Researchers employing case study methods typically use several data gathering methods including participant observation, interviewing, life histories, and document analysis. As mentioned above, I observed several of the activities and meetings that occurred during the four years of the program included in this study. I collected 285 pages of data from this 4-year time period. The data included the students' College Counts applications, their reflections, newspaper

articles that highlighted the program, and the transcripts of the ten students who participated in the interviews.

Merriam (1998) identified three types of case studies, depending on the overall intent of the study. Case studies are classified as being descriptive, interpretive, or evaluative. A descriptive case study provides a detailed account of the person, problem, program or educational issue under investigation. The main focus is to provide a rich description of the phenomenon prior to hypothesizing or theory testing. Interpretive case studies also contain rich descriptions; however, the main purpose with this type of case study is to support or challenge existing theory and perhaps generate new theory that will better explain the phenomenon being investigated. Finally, evaluative case studies are used when there are no obvious indicators of program success and judgment is required. The final result, after description and explanation, is a judgment based on the holistic picture generated from the evaluative study.

This case study was interpretive in nature because I investigated what students were learning through participation in the College Counts program, using transformational learning theory as a lens to examine student's experiences. The empirical data produced from this study would support expanding the theory of transformational learning to include the learning of young adults involved in a well integrated, long term, service-learning program rather than its present form, where it is viewed exclusively as an adult learning theory.

## Participants

A purposeful sample was selected to interview for this study (Creswell, 1998). Milovich, who had periodically worked with each of the participants since their transition to the university, suggested several students who would be rich cases to study. I included at least two students from each year of the program (2003-06), which provided maximum variation; however, I interviewed ten students to reach the point of saturation and redundancy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There were 28 students eligible for this study through their participation in the College Counts program, during the years under investigation. All participants are between the ages of 18-23 and were attending USU at the time of their interview.

## Data Collection

Data collection in case study research usually involves the use of multiple methods (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Patton, 1990) so the researcher can triangulate the data and thus increase the trustworthiness, believability, and value of the study. This case study includes interviews, observations, and documents that were analyzed to provide the empirical data needed to explore the theory of transformational learning.
I conducted the interviews in the student center at USU in July and August, 2007. Each student who was interviewed signed an informed consent form, see Appendix B. All 10 interviews were conducted in Dr. Schmidt's office, who is the Service-Learning Coordinator for USU, as well as a professor in the College of Natural Resources. Each of the interviews was recorded, and lasted approximately 45 minutes to an hour, after which,

I transcribed verbatim, coded, and analyzed the transcript for common themes, see Appendix A for interview guide. Once transcribed and coded, I e-mailed each student a copy of their transcript to be edited or added to, to make sure that participants were in agreement with the data collected (member check). Each of the participants returned my e-mail with feedback about the interview.

Documents, in the form of reflections, that were written when the students were in high school, were also analyzed and coded, along with transcripts and newspaper articles pertaining to the students and the College Counts program. And finally, observations of service activities were also included to triangulate the data. Merriam (1998) suggested that while researchers using case study methods employ multiple techniques for data collection, rarely are the strategies used equally. Since the purpose of this study was to capture the emic or participant's perspective, as I examined the experience of students engaged in service-learning activities, the data gathered through interviews was paramount to this investigation, while observations and documents provided supporting evidence to the understanding gained about transformational learning.

## Data Analysis

Deriving meaning or making sense of the data is the process of data analysis. According to Merriam (1998), there are three levels of analysis: description, category construction, and theory building. Description is the simplest form of data presentation. Moving to the next level of analysis requires the development of categories or themes within the data. Both of these activities are done simultaneously with the task of data

collection. The third level of data analysis, as defined by Merriam, is moving beyond providing description and developing categories into theorizing why things are the way we view them. Thus, data analysis is a complex process that involves moving back and forth from the concrete to the abstract, from description to interpretation (Merriam). In other words, the researcher must spend time reading the data, making notes in the margins as categories or themes emerge, then make interpretations based on theory or use these interpretations to generate new theory.

A constant comparative analysis was used in this study. The process described in the data collection section was used after each interview had been completed. The failure to analyze data simultaneously with data collection could leave the researcher overwhelmed and unable to manage the mounds of data that typically result in qualitative studies (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Data analysis was strengthened through member checks, peer review, and the use of a reflexive journal, increasing the trustworthiness of the study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Member checks were conducted through the e-mail with participants; while professors Dr. Franklin and Dr. Straquadine provided peer review. I met with Dr. Franklin after conducting the first interview and reviewed the data collected from the first participant. Dr. Franklin suggested an additional question to the interview and I added a question to find out if College Counts participants had continued to participate in service activities while enrolled in college. Dr. Franklin and I met again when the interviews were completed in August of 2007 and reviewed two more interviews and discussed the emerging themes. The use of a reflexive journal helped me keep track of ideas and questions that arose during the study. Dr.

Straquadine reviewed the literature on transformational learning and questioned the criteria for determining transformational learning.

For Mezirow and colleagues (2000), transformational learning is the reformulation of a meaning perspective, which allows for a more inclusive understanding of one's experience. Taylor (2000) noted that for some, almost anything would constitute transformational learning, but he is in agreement with Mezirow that transformational learning occurs when an individual has a broadening of perspective as a result of an experience that caused cognitive dissonance within the individual. For this study, transformational learning will be defined as a change in the students' perspective, which allows students to have a more inclusive paradigm or world view.

# CHAPTER IV

# FINDINGS

The guiding question for this work is using transformational learning theory as a lens what can we learn about the experiences of students participating in service-learning activities, specifically those activities that are a part of the College Counts program? The following section presents the origin and program description of the College Counts program and then the findings from student case study data collected over a 4-year time period. First, the contextual background of the College Counts program will be presented in order to explain the intent of the program and the pedagogy involved in the students' experience. Then, I develop detailed descriptions of students' reflections on their experiences in the College Counts program, focusing on student learning viewed through the theory of transformational learning.

## College Counts Program Description

The College Counts Service-Learning and Leadership Program, as it was referred to in the first year and simplified to College Counts in more recent years, was born out of Todd Milovich's desire to reach out to disadvantaged kids in the local communities and engage them in worthwhile projects that would increase their self-worth. Initially, he did this by setting up the America Reads program in three elementary schools with work study students from the university, yet his efforts have grown to include participation from students from three high schools, 160 students from USU, and students from 23 elementary schools in the local communities.

The College Counts curriculum has five main components: (a) weekly tutoring and mentoring with elementary students; (b) weekly planning meeting; (c) two additional service projects to be conducted as a group to benefit Logan High School or the community in the name of Logan High School; (d) various modes of reflection, including group reflections at weekly planning meeting, journaling that takes place weekly, and three scheduled written reflections submitted during the program; and (e) visits to USU in order to make connections with key individuals and organizations at USU to increase the potential for a successful transition to the university.

Through the College Counts program, participants design service activities and direct elementary age students in a variety of tutoring and mentoring activities. The program includes written assignments and other reflection activities that provide the high school students a chance to process their experiences. Unofficially for high school students, the program began in 2002 when three students from an alternative high school began working with university students in providing tutoring and mentoring for elementary students in after school programs. To date, 42 high school students have completed the program. The next section reports the experience of 10 of these students and what they learned from their participation in the College Counts program.

## College Counts Participants

All of the program participants completed an application process, which consisted of preparing a resume, writing a two-page essay about their future goals and how earning a college degree would be important to achieving these goals, and submitting a letter of

recommendation from a teacher or other adult mentor/leader. This application process provided demographic information pertaining to the student's culture, socioeconomic status, beliefs and values coming into the program.

The students involved in this program come from very diverse backgrounds. Forty-six percent of the students are classified as from minority groups, and 89% qualifying for financial aid at USU (see Table 1).

## Transformative Learning in the College Counts Program

The following section offers a description of students' experiences, as a result of their participation in the College Counts Service-Learning program. Individual cases provided empirical data to describe different forms of student learning. Findings from

Table 1

*Study Participants*

| Name | Year | Age | Gender | Race | College major |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Alejandra | 2002-03 | 23 | F | Hispanic | Accounting |
| Rebecca | 2002-03 | 23 | F | Caucasian | Biology |
| Yau | 2003-04 | 21 | F | Asian | Bio./Pre.Med |
| Kiyoi | 2003-04 | 21 | F | Asian | Bio./Educ. |
| Sham | 2004-05 | 20 | M | Indian | Business |
| Jennifer | 2004-05 | 21 | F | Caucasian | Elem. Educ. |
| Mari | 2004-05 | 21 | F | Asian | Bio./Educ. |
| Zach | 2005-06 | 20 | M | Caucasian | Philosophy |
| Li | 2005-06 | 20 | F | Asian | Biology |
| Jose | 2005-06 | 19 | M | Hispanic | Elem. Educ. |
| Todd | 2002-06 | 48 | M | Caucasian | Music |
| Jim | 2002-06 | 43 | M | Caucasian | Education |

this study indicate that students involved in the service-learning activities of the College Counts program triggered what can be described as transformational learning in at least three different forms. While the background of each student made for a unique transformational journey, students consistently identified one or more of the following dimensions of perspective change: social justice, cultural, and personal.

The social justice form of transformation is defined as developing a greater understanding of structural inequities through interacting with students living in poverty, as well as a commitment to the importance of rectifying those inequities. Cultural transformation is the realization that individuals are developed through a combination of their life experiences and that one's culture is not superior to another's. Expanding one's cultural perspective involves understanding and appreciating the value of experiencing and accepting the culture of those different from our own. Personal transformation involves re-considering one's lifestyle choices with regard to career choice, perception of service, and self-identity (Kiely, 2002). Next, I present the findings from the ten College Counts students who participated in the interviews.

## College Counts Student Cases of Transformation

### *Case 1: Alejandra*

Alejandra, age 23, was born in a small village in Mexico. She learned about the United States at an early age because her father spent most of the year there working to provide for his family. He came home for only 1 month each year to visit Alejandra's mother and seven older siblings. Alejandra had a desire to study and further her

education, something her two oldest brothers were unable to do because of the need to work and help provide financially for the family. Four days after graduating from Secondary School (middle school) Alejandra accepted a proposition from her aunt, to move in with her family and take over the duties of the house work. A year later Alejandra found herself in the United States, living with an older sister, and studying at a Utah high school, which she later graduated from in 2003.

For Alejandra, participating in the College Counts program allowed her to learn about the American culture, increase her own literacy skills, and change her perception about her ability to earn a college degree, as well as her perception about service to the community. Alejandra recounts her decision to apply for the College Counts program was because of her strong desire to learn about the dominant culture in the community:

> When I was told about this program, the purpose–to help elementary students and serve the community, I was unsure about how I would be able to fulfill Todd's expectations because of my lack of knowledge of the culture. However, I didn't want to waste the opportunity to find out how children were educated in the classrooms. So I decided to participate in the program and broaden my knowledge of the culture. After participating in this program I felt I understood better the culture by now knowing how children are educated in the first years of school. I learned what values are taught in the classroom. I even learned some of their songs and games that I never played in Mexico.

Alejandra was in a unique situation, working with elementary students in a tutoring and mentoring situation. She had some of the same issues with language and culture that the elementary students were facing:

> I have to mention that a lot of the after school club kids were Hispanic. Some of them were struggling with the language and others were there because they were not getting enough help from their parents, who didn't speak the language, to do their homework at home. And 2003, well this was my second year in the United States and my English wasn't really good back then, so through these interactions with kids my English was improved.

Alejandra also learned about the American culture through interactions with her peers in the College Counts program. Here she explained,

> Our group was very diverse. It was integrated with three Americans, one Asian, and two Hispanics, including myself. It was very difficult for me to socialize with them because that was my first time interactions with Anglo students my same age, but we spent a lot of time together in meetings, planning our projects, and even having fun. So, these interactions gave me an idea of what kids my age, like to do and how they think, which helped me to better understand the new culture I was trying to assimilate.

Alejandra believes the most relevant aspect of the College Counts program was the interaction between students at different education levels. College students ended up being role models for the high school students as well as the elementary students they were assigned to tutor in the America Reads program. These experiences gave her the confidence that she could earn a college degree.

> The College Counts program left me without a doubt with respect to whether or not to go for a college degree. I think it is great to have college kids helping high school kids, as well as elementary kids, and each of these groups interacting with the other. My interactions with college students reinforced my desire of becoming one of them. And after my participation in this program I convinced myself that being smart is just the harvest of years of experience and education, which was nothing I could not do.

Alejandra continued to serve the community while enrolled in college. During her first year in college, she was member of the multi-cultural club and active in many service opportunities through the group's activities. During her sophomore year in college, she took an active role in her church's youth group, "I was the advisor to the president. I was in charge of selecting topics for Sunday discussion. We also organized activities for days other than Sunday. I would get authorization from the church father, for the realization of those activities." This service was long term and came from a desire to really help

people. Alejandra learned about the reciprocal nature of service. She said:

> I think it totally affected my way of looking at the world. Now more than ever I believe if we want to change the world we live in we need to start from the bottom, and that bottom is our kids. For example, if we want a cleaner world, let's show our kids to not pollute the environment. That makes a difference."

When asked if the program made a difference in her life, Alejandra responded:

> Yes, it made a huge difference. I became more "open" as far as interacting with people. Remember this was my first interaction with people from the United States. And I put aside my bias–prejudices with respect to white people and their culture.

*Case 2: Kiyoi*

Kiyoi, age 21, has been studying biology for three years at USU, but may change her major to education or social work as a result of her participation in the College Counts program. From a young age, her parents encouraged her to become a doctor or a pharmacist. In high school, she stated her career goals in an essay that was part of the application process for the CCP:

> My future goals have mainly been chosen for me by my parents. They have always wanted me to become a pharmacist and because of that I've been motivated to enter the field of medicine. They never had a chance to get an education and I guess this is my gift to them. Their happiness means the world to me and I know that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life. I'm so glad that my parents have pushed me to do something that will not only benefit me, but so many people dying from illnesses. I would have never imagined that a simple pill could cure someone from a sickness or an illness until I enrolled in classes such as chemistry and biology in high school. The information I was learning was not only beneficial, but also very interesting.

While tutoring and mentoring students in the after school program, Kiyoi learned that she really liked working with elementary students. She continued to work for Todd Milovich in the College Counts program during her freshman and sophomore years in college.

When asked about her career choice 4 years later, here is what she had to say.

> When I was in the College Counts program in high school I had the same mentality as a lot of students that I associated with–that of wanting to be a doctor. But being involved in the program encouraged me to do things outside my realm of study. I started participating in more extracurricular activities because of it. Had I not been a part of that program, I don't think I would have taken part in all the involvement I have been here on campus. A lot of what I've been involved in came from connections made during that program in high school.
>
> I'm actually a biology major right now, but I want to switch my major to social work, because being in that program has made me change as a person. Before, I always thought I wanted to be this one person and only this one person, and I was influenced by this one person. Being a part of the College Counts group has encouraged me to get to know other people and I think that has influenced me to do other things and I learned what I'm good at. I'm more of a people person. This is why I want to do social work. I do want to help people, but not in the way that I originally thought. You know when people say they want to be a doctor, they say, "I just want to help people." But I think there are different aspects of help.

Kiyoi enjoyed her involvement in putting together the "Smile on Your Brother" benefit concert while in high school. The concert was held on December 6, 2003, at the KSM Music Store. The admission was free, but donations of canned foods, clothing, toys, and/or money were encouraged. The main purpose of the concert was to provide Christmas for five selected families, whose children participated in the after school program where the College Counts students served. Kiyoi described the event:

> After weeks of preparation and stress, the benefit concert was about to go down at KSM Guitars. A lot of prayers went out, in hopes of the concert turning out okay. The first show was by two local boys, who played guitars, as people started to scatter in the store. After ten minutes, the store was packed with people and a staircase filled with donations. We could tell that the people were enjoying the entertainment as they watched, while munching on cookies provided by Shaffer's Bakery and slurping down drinks provided by McDonalds.
>
> The different variations of musical entertainment were provided by local groups such as, Twisted Itch, Todd Milovich, Jim Peacock and his son - Taylor, and last but not least, Corporate Hero. The concert had a great turnout. We all had our

> doubts at the beginning, but during the concert we could see smiles on each others' faces. At the end of the concert we all helped put the store back in order and counted the donations. We had more donations than we ever thought possible. After counting and sorting all the donations, we had just about enough to fill the needs of the families for Christmas.
>
> This benefit concert was one of the greatest events that I was able to be apart of. I began to realize how much effort, time, and teamwork it took to put something as big as this together. I don't think there is anything that we could've done to make the concert a greater success; it was perfect. Afterwards, we also bought coloring books, mittens, and other presents for the five chosen families. On Christmas Eve, we left the box of presents and food on their porch. It was awesome!

Kiyoi also learned about social justice by working in the after school program. While in high school, she did not have the greatest of experiences working with college students who were assigned to her group. The levels of commitment from the college mentors she worked with seemed to vary between the elementary students. Kiyoi said, "Some of the college mentors would change how they interacted with the students–depending on how well the student read or could do math." When pressed further on this observation, Kiyoi attributed this behavior of the college students she worked with to the sheer number of elementary students in the program, "If the kids really struggled, then the college students didn't want to be with them. They would just try and get through as many students as quick as they could, you know–the more the better."

Interestingly, Kiyoi did not place fault on the college students she was working with, "I just felt that some kids needed more time and those certain mentors weren't patient enough. It is not like they were bad people, they weren't doing anything mean they just didn't have the patience for helping the kids who needed more time." The schedule was the responsibility of the college mentors. They were responsible for making sure that the kids participated in various activities and were ready for parents to

pick up by 5:30. Kiyoi realized that these college mentors were responsible for the structure of the program and the flow of activities was important; however, she was not satisfied with the kids who were left behind.

> I was more of a leader in staying back and helping those that needed a little extra help. I actually kind of enjoyed the kids that were at-risk, because when you read with them–then you see them the next day–you start to build a relationship with them. And once you see that they are getting better and better at reading; then you feel like you are actually doing something, just being there with the kids.
>
> That experience made a big impression on me, seeing how people treat each other differently. Which made me think about why I'm doing service, I don't look at my service as a charity thing anymore. It is something that is necessary for those students and whether or not you want to do it the need is there. I feel differently now than I did that first year. Maybe in that first year I would have said something like, "Wow, look what I did for that kid", but now I view service as a necessary thing. This is just who I am, I don't think it's a job or a task that you have to do; it's just something you do because that is what those students need!

*Case 3: Mari*

Mari, age 21, came to the United States from Thailand at the age of 16 with her mother and brother, Chris, who was 2 years older. Mari's mother had just been remarried to a chemist who was self-employed and struggling to get his business established when he received a 1-year grant to do research at USU. Mari was recommended by her counselor for the College Counts Scholarship. Mari was interested in securing a scholarship to attend USU; however, she wrote differently about her initial decision to apply for the College Counts program in her final reflection in May of 2005.

> When I applied for the College Counts Scholarship I kept thinking I need a scholarship to pay for my tuition next year. But after participating in the program I realized that it's much more than just a scholarship to me. I learned things that I couldn't learn anywhere else. It is a great experience and I wish it wouldn't end. I will miss all the kids, but maybe I can help with the program when I get into USU.

Mari continued working with the College Counts program her first year at the university. Milovich hired Mari to help with the America Reads program, which allowed her to work part time with College Counts students, as a mentor from the university. Reflecting back on her high school experience, Mari identified the weekly interactions with the elementary students as the most meaningful for her.

> Well each kid has totally different ideas, so you interact with each student in different ways. I learned about their culture here. In Thailand most of the restaurants close on Monday, but here in Logan they close on Sunday. People here go to church on Sunday, it's a Mormon town and I really respect that.
>
> So, during the reading time kids have to choose their reading partner, which is funny because one of the kids said to one of the student teachers (college mentors) 'you are funny but I don't want to read with you.' I realize that most of the time they were choosing partners to read with based on looks. I learned that isn't the way to judge people, by their looks, because most people have a different background than me I noticed the variety of personalities.

Mari, like some of her peers in the College Counts program, was contemplating a career change based on her experiences of working with the children in the after-school program. In her application for the College Counts program, she wrote, "I took an interior design class when I was a junior. I enjoyed that class so much, it gave me everything that I ever needed and I just can't take my mind off design. I love to do design work. I plan to work as an Interior Designer, the job where I can create with my imagination." Two years after completing the College Counts program, Mari considered a career change.

> Well, my major goal has always been interior design, but I learned from my experiences in the College Counts program, which was two years for me, that I really like working with kids. I think I will change my major to education and maybe even get a degree in elementary education so I can work with kids. I may go into secondary education and teach interior design. I'm still a little bit undecided, but I really like teaching elementary kids.

Mari talked about transformations in the personal realm when she described what she valued most from her experience in the College Counts program:

> After that program I gained a lot of confidence in myself to be able to communicate with people. That was only my third year in the U.S. and it was difficult to talk with people, but after my experiences in the program I became much more comfortable talking with people.
>
> The most important thing I learned was my perspective of how important the kids are to the brightness of our future. I recognize how important it is for us to teach them right. I remember this one student that I worked with who was in the fourth grade. He was always so nice at school and respectful. I was shocked to meet his parent, who was swearing and out of control. So who's the role model?
>
> There were a lot of college students that we worked with during the program. Some of them were majoring in elementary education. Sometimes I would ask one of them how to work with this student or another issue. They were good to offer advice, from working with the kids to getting started in college.
>
> I learned how to handle elementary students. Before my experience in high school I couldn't even imagine working with kids. Each of them is so unique and so bright. Each day they bring a new story to tell. The kids have different points of view; you have to change your ideas in order to go along with each one of them. I learned that I really like working with kids. I learned that each kid is very special.

Mari continued to be involved in service. As an active member of the Multi-Cultural Club, she was involved in service projects throughout the school year. When asked to summarize her College Counts experience Mari exclaimed, "It made a difference in my life!"

*Case 4: Li*

Li, age 20, grew up in Cache Valley but her parents came from Vietnam in search of a better life. Because of their struggle to make a comfortable living, they instilled within Li an understanding of the importance of education. Li's desire to earn a college

education led her to apply for the College Counts program. In her application essay, she wrote, “My parents have kept their dead-end jobs so that I could get a better education than they did. They always told me that in order to avoid working in factories, I would have to work hard in school and get a degree.”

Li learned about herself, her peers, and her connection to the community through her participation in the College Counts program. She recounts her frustration of working with the kids in the after school at the beginning of the year.

> First of all I thought teachers had it easy. They do the same routine year after year, but when we did that whole little ecosystem day at the elementary school, nature day, it was really hard because some of the kids were out of control. Trying to get 20 second graders to read a book or make a costume is quite the challenge. And it was frustrating because I didn’t realize it was that hard to be a teacher. Yea, I kind of eliminated that profession though this experience.

Li did learn a very important lesson working with the elementary students throughout the year, which she extrapolated to her relationships with her high school peers and on into making connections with people in her adult life. Reflecting back on her interactions with the elementary students Li stated, “Since I was the youngest kid in my family, I didn’t realize that I was like these kids at one point in time. So I learned to be more patient. Like not even only with the kids, but even with the members of my group. I just learned to be more patient with people.” Taking her thoughts further regarding relationships with people she states:

> So dealing with the poor, the rich, the bratty, the popular–whatever, it brings you back to high school. It was tough watching the kids be mean to one another just because they don’t have those little roller skate shoes or whatever, it kind of reminds me of high school–people will judge you based on what you have.

Li changed her perception about community service as a result of her experiences

in the College Counts program. During her senior year in high school, she visited with the student center coordinator, trying to identify scholarships for which she might be qualified. Community service seemed to be an important component of many scholarships and although Li did not really think too deeply at the time, she realized that she could serve. Here is what she had to say.

> I would say that I'm definitely more open to community service. At first it was all about the financial part, I knew I was going to get a scholarship from it. Before it was like I need to get my work done so I can have time for myself. But now, it's like I have to give back to the community, because when I was younger, you know the food pantry? We would always get food from there. That's how the community can help the part of the community that is in need. I feel like now I have to give back to the community, because they helped out my family when we were in need.
>
> I've helped my sorority get involved in community service. We help at the Child and Family Support Center, playing with the kids. We also raised funds for the National Conference for Community and Justice. That whole week of helping with NCCJ week was a lot of activities that promoted ending bigotry and racism.
>
> It makes me feel good to be involved in these kinds of activities because I'm a minority. But then again, all races will have to face racism, no matter what. And it's hard to change racism because it is embedded in people.

Li summarized her College Counts experience by focusing on relationships. She talked about learning to work with people of different nationalities as well as different personalities.

> Our group was really diverse. A couple of the students I already knew but through the process I think I got closer to all of them. I think if I had the chance to go back to high school, I would have been a lot nicer to other people that I didn't know. You know, step outside the box kind of thing. Even today in college it's like I don't know who these people are, but I can't judge by the way they look! I was always so impatient with other people, like if they didn't do things my way then I got an attitude. I just learned to be more patient with, like we talked about before, people of diverse backgrounds and different personalities. So, I just wish I could have gone back and redone the whole friendship thing.

*Case 5: Jose*

Jose, age 19, moved to Cache Valley at the beginning of his junior year from the Los Angeles area of California. He was born in El Salvador. Jose's dad came to the United States when he was only a year old, and his mother came to the United States to be with his dad when he was 4. Jose lived with his grandparents from the age of 4 until 7, when his parents were able to bring him to California. The College Counts program affected Jose in a few different ways; influencing his perspective culturally, in personal areas, and also on social justice.

Jose enjoyed his move to Utah and excelled in high school, both academically in AP Calculus, and socially in the Key Club, which is involved in service activities. Although Jose was quite successful in his transition during high school, he could relate to the children he was tutoring in the after school program. While his culture was different than most of the kids he was working with, he being Salvadorian and most of his students coming from Mexico, he, too, came to the United States as an elementary student. Jose did not remember having any trouble learning the English language as an elementary student; he spoke both Spanish and English fluently and interchangeably while living in the Los Angeles area. It was moving to Utah that forced him to look at some of his bias. Jose describes his move to Utah:

> I grew up around a lot of cultures, but it was mostly Black, Chinese, Japanese, And Hispanic, you name it, but it was never White people. So I came to Utah and it was like culture shock for me. I had never been around so many White people. I only had one friend in California that was white, the others were either bi-racial or of color. It was a struggle for me because I could no longer jump back and forth from Spanish to English. Here I had to concentrate on speaking only English because I didn't want anyone to get pissed at me because I was speaking Spanish.

It was an experience with a Caucasian student that opened his eyes to the challenges that people have in common. Jose recalled:

> This one kid I worked with, named Donavan, kept getting in fights everyday. Well, the days he attended he really struggled. His mom was nice and she encouraged him. I even knew his sister–she went to Logan High School. But I never understood why he was getting into all these fights and then I found out that his parents were getting divorced.

It was through getting to know the student that he could connect with Donavan and provide support in a difficult time. Jose related to Donavan's situation in this way.

> When I found out his parents were getting divorced, then I thought oh, wow, that stinks. Then I had a better understanding of why he was struggling. I could relate to what he was going through, even though he is White and I'm Hispanic. Because I told you about my parents coming to the United States, my dad when I was one and my mother left when I was four. I was living with my grandparents until I was seven when they brought me. So I could relate to him not having a dad. Even though I was one year old when my dad left - I never grasped the concept of having a dad until three years ago. When I first got to the United States I didn't treat him like a dad, I treated him more like a stranger until I got to know him. It took a long time before I had love for him like a dad.
>
> So I could relate to Donavan. When I was with him he was happy. He was like, "you're my big brother." And I would say sure, you are like my little brother–even though I already had one. So I played with him all the time. He never wanted to do his homework, but I didn't get down on him too hard, because he already had a pretty hard time. So what I learned is that things like losing your dad can cut across all racial lines. Race doesn't play into the death of a parent or having your dad leave because of divorce or like my dad leaving because of economic reasons.

Jose also learned about diversity from working with his peers in the College Counts Program and from Todd Milovich who helped Jose continue working with kids through the America Reads program. Jose admitted, "I guess I was a little biased, you know, White people think they are all that because they have been in the United States longer and we are immigrants and we're nothing." However, Jose did not really associate

with White people while living in California and so his perceptions of White people were based on perceptions formed through interactions with people of color. Jose explains:

> As a result of getting to know Zach, John, Bryan and even Shalease, she's biracial, but she grew up around white people her whole life. I got to learn about them and even the Mormon culture from some of them. I didn't even know what Mormon's were before I came here. I'm Catholic myself, but learning about other religions is pretty fun. It sort of breaks your boundaries when you meet one person who acts differently than you expect; you learn not to make assumptions. Just by meeting Bryan, I learned that white people can be funny, they can be cool, they can be accepting and they are not all what you would assume or at least what I had assumed white people to be.

One College Counts student taught Jose about the value of diversity. Zach was a bit of a loner in the group; he smoked cigarettes and usually had a mug of coffee left over from his morning visit to Café Ibis that he was carrying around. For Jose, Zach was annoying because Jose did not like "people who smoked or drank too much coffee, and he did both." Jose talked about his lost opportunity to gain a friend because of his bias:

> I found out a lot about Zach by working with him though out the year without really becoming friends. I didn't like that he smelled of smoke so I sat across the table from him when we had our meetings on Fridays. But it turns out he's a pretty cool guy. He's really smart. I learned that he teaches little kids how to make pottery. And that he's an artist himself; he has his own artist paddle. Zach also walks or takes the bus everywhere he goes. So maybe that cancels out the smoking, I don't know.

Todd Milovich also had a strong impact on Jose. When he first met Milovich, he was unsure of how he felt. Jose's first impression was, "Here's this stranger working with us and he has grey hair, ponytail, and he looks like one of those old hippie types." Milovich, who also smokes, did not make a great first impression with Jose based on his physical features and the fact that he smelled of tobacco at meetings. However, just like Jose's experience with Zach he learned that his previously held bias did not serve him

well as he worked with Milovich. Jose reflects on his interactions with Milovich:

> Actually he did help us a lot. At the end of the program he helped us with the connection to the university. He helped us with our financial aide package–filling out the FASFA forms. So, he would stop by Ellis Elementary once in awhile and help us with a project, but it was at the end of the year that he was the greatest help and then again during my freshman year in college. He's always saying if you need any help just come in here.
>
> Because of Todd I learned about age discrimination as well as cultural bias. He was different in a lot of ways. So here's this 40 something guy, he is White, he's a stranger, and he's helping us out. I knew he was helping us but I didn't feel that confident in him because he was a stranger, and older. I learned that you can't judge people on looks or age.

Jose continued to work with the College Counts program and Milovich as he transitioned from high school to the university. As a college mentor in the America Reads program, Jose was assigned to help a second grade teacher at Bridger Elementary School. He said he enjoyed working with the students in a classroom setting, as opposed to the tutoring he had provided to the students in the After School program. Jose was able to get to know the students working with them every day. The teacher, Mrs. I, appreciated Jose's help with the students and she knew Jose wanted to be a teacher, so she let Jose teach a Spanish lesson to the whole class.

> She said, yea go up to the board and teach the kids some sentences in Spanish. O.K., I said. Mrs. I. was having a parent teacher conference the next day and she wanted to have some Spanish words she could use at the conference. I thought that was cool. So I went up there and started teaching them. I was writing on the board and some of the kids weren't paying attention. Most of the kids that were messing around were Hispanic. They were like whatever, we already know this stuff–and they did. Mrs. I had to tell them to settle down so I could finish my lesson.
>
> I asked her what she thought about the lesson and she said I could have asked the Hispanic kids to help me translate the words, to help them get involved. They were the one's having a hard time, and that made sense–so I learned something. You need to get the kids involved that already know some of the material. It was

> fun, because they were all my students and I was teaching them. There were 20 kids and that was scary, pretty scary.

During Jose's second year in the program he confirmed his decision to become a teacher. Working with Mrs. I was a great experience for Jose and he was able gain the confidence needed to complete the education program at USU. Jose described the impact of the College Counts program on his career decision:

> This program has led me to find a college that I can afford and has allowed me to find a career that I believe I can enjoy. I found that of all the projects that I was involved in the College Counts program; the most valuable for me was working with the third graders at Ellis Elementary. They helped me decide that what I wanted to do with my life was teach. I enjoyed the time I spent with them.
>
> At first, I have to admit, I was nervous because I did not know how I would function around little kids who consider me a teacher. At first I found it weird to be called Mr. Jose, but after a few days of that I found it to be fun, because they were little kids who were looking up to me for help and advice. It was a struggle to begin with, but after learning some of the school's rules I was able to better help the kids. While teaching the kids they taught me that I enjoy helping kids learn.

Jose continued to work with the College Counts program. Now beginning his third year of working with Milovich and the America Reads program, Jose is a site coordinator for one of the after school programs at an elementary school in the Logan School District. He is a junior in the elementary education program at USU. In his final reflection paper of the College Counts program Jose noted:

> While in the College Counts program I have met people that I probably wouldn't have come in contact on my own. Besides me, there were seven other College Counts members who I had the honor and pleasure of working with. Each of these students was different, but we were able to work together and accomplish great things.
> Working on this reflection paper has been interesting. I did not realize that I owed a lot to this program. I thought I had come to the decision of becoming a teacher all on my own, but reflecting back on it I have concluded that I was undecided until I had the experiences at the Ellis Elementary. This program made

> it official.
>
> In the end, my experience with this service learning program has been great. I don't think I will be forgetting it anytime soon. Graduation is getting closer and my experience with this program has made my fears of college decrease because I believe I am better prepared to face the challenges that await me next.

Jose summarized his College Counts experience 2 years after writing the above reflection in this way:

> Well, my experience has broadened my perspective. For instance my experience with diversity was with Hispanics, Blacks, and Asians, but the College Counts program broadened that to White people. So even though we live in a nation that is mostly white I never considered them part of diversity. I always thought diversity means you're out of the country and a different color. But now I know it's not that at all. It is your culture and white people have their own culture too. So I guess it broadened my knowledge of what we consider diversity and multi-culture. White people can be included in all that.

*Case 6: Zach*

Zach was hit by a car while riding his bike on highway 91 in the fall of 2001. This happened just after the start of his ninth-grade year at Logan High. One of Zach's former teachers wrote in a letter of recommendation:

> I have watched with deep respect as he has willed and worked his way back to full mental and physical ability. His family provided foundational strength of unconditional love and strong guidance as he recovered from traumatic head and serious bodily injuries. Skilled counselors and faculty at Logan High School supported his academic goals. He has become a 3.5 student, ready to move on the university studies.

Zach was asked by his counselor to apply for the College Counts program in the fall of 2005, which was his second year as a senior. Zach was only able to take one class in the Spring of 2002, leaving him almost a year behind in earning credit for graduation. Zach began his sophomore year with two classes and then took three of five classes the last

half of the year. Through attending summer school and building up to a full schedule the last half of his junior year, Zach was able to get within five credits of graduation by the end of his senior year. Through his 504 plan, Zach was entitled to an additional senior year, which included the College Counts program.

Zach recalled that working with the elementary students gave him the opportunity to process issues associated with his traumatic brain injury:

> Remember that project where we spent the whole day with an elementary class. It was that literacy project with Earth Day as the theme. I could name that day as having a big impact on me because of having TBI my sensory input is pretty haywire. So staying with the kids all day made me start to work out my issues with feeling overloaded with stimulus. That was kind of the beginning of my complete healing process, forcing me to deal with the challenges.

Zach came to recognize the potential each student possesses, but it did not come easy. It took Zach a few days to find his niche with the students in the after school program. Here he describes his introduction into the after school program:

> It was intense. Since I've always kind of been an outcast I had a really hard time at first. Then I found that the kids who really didn't fit in–I really hit it off with them. The kids that the other mentors had a hard time dealing with because the kids gave them problems or whatever; I would always go help those kids. They liked me and I would help them with their homework. I would read to them and had them read to me. I also helped them with their math or any other homework they had that day.

Zach taught young kids as well as adults how to make pottery as a member of the faculty of the Alliance for the Varied Arts. It was his experiences with the students at Ellis Elementary that convinced him to finally accept an invitation to teach pottery skills at the Arts Center. Nevertheless, learning how to work with young students was not all that Zach learned from his interactions with the fourth- and fifth-grade students. Zach reflected on his year with the after school program:

> Specifically talking about diversity, well growing up in Cache Valley as an elementary student we didn't really see any diversity. Then in the last ten years we have a lot of immigrants moving here from Mexico. I had a weird kind of prejudice against Mexicans, or Hispanics, just because they are moving here and they are different–or look different. I kind of got over that because of the experiences I had in the College Counts program. They are just normal people. So they were a lot like me when I was a little kid–annoying.

The reflection process helped Zach become more accepting of himself as well as the students with whom he worked with. One of the challenges that he faced as a result of his injury was the vice of self criticism:

> Doing the reflection paper was a way of being critical without doing it in such a big way. That was the first thing I really liked about writing the reflection paper is that I could analyze myself but I could do it in a more friendly way than I usually do or did. Because I was in the habit of beating myself up all the time. So with the reflection paper I was forced to step back and look at what we were accomplishing and acknowledge that we were helping kids. It was a sense of accomplishment that I hadn't experienced. And I remember the projects we did because of the papers we wrote, otherwise it would just be 'I tutored this day and this day' and I wouldn't really remember what had gone on.

Zach gained a much stronger self-concept as a result of his weekly interactions with the elementary students. His relations with the college mentors at the after school club as well as his peers in College Counts added to this new self-confidence.

> I was completely convinced that I was worthless, and I had all these extra privileges because of my injury. But when I was doing the tutoring with the kids no one seemed to care about my injury and I had to deal with the difficulties that presented me as I worked with the kids. I had to find a way around some of the emotional challenges I had and that experience helped me. My experience also helped me learn how to communicate with people better and this has increased my ability to teach, which is important to me because I teach ceramics professionally now.

Zach was greatly influenced by Todd Milovich. He had seen Milovich perform at the local coffee shops, for a couple of years, and enjoyed his music. Zach was impressed with Milovich's outlook on life, "Todd always seems to be in a good mood, and he seems

to be really into whatever he's doing. He's a true artist." Moreover, while Zach knew Milovich as an artist before he entered the College Counts program, it was his interactions with Milovich during his second senior year that made a huge difference in his life.

> He definitely helped me with the transition to college. He showed me that there is room for all types of personalities in college. You know in high school you have certain people who are excluded and then you have those who fit the stereotype perfectly for what it takes to be successful. I guess that's what I thought college was like. Todd showed me that college could be different, because I wasn't going to college before I got into this program! Because I don't like stereotypes or cliques much at all, I got enough of that in high school. Todd kind of paved the way for me.

*Case 7: Yau*

Academically, Yau was not the typical College Counts student. She had a 3.99 GPA in high school and scored 27 and 28 on the ACT Math and Science sections, respectively. Yau took four advanced placement courses and four concurrent enrollment courses (classes that earn high school credit and college credit simultaneously), scoring high marks in each of the classes. Yau's parents came to the U.S. from Vietnam when she was in middle school, so language was not a barrier; however, she was not able to achieve high enough marks in the English and reading sections of the standardized tests to secure an academic scholarship in higher education. Yau was selected to be the Sterling Scholar from the science department her senior year at Logan High and held many leadership positions in the Governors Youth Council and the Youth City Council.

Another anomaly with Yau is that she had already participated in several community service activities before being selected to the College Counts program. She

volunteered for two summers at Logan Regional Hospital, one summer at a local nursing home, and participated in special projects at the Logan Library.

Yau had already made connections with USU by participating in an engineering summer program during her sophomore year in high school. She experienced the biotechnology summer academy the summer after her junior year and was a part of the Academic Decathlon each of her 4 years in high school. By the time Yau was admitted into the College Counts program she already had an appreciation for service to the community, a realization of the importance of education, and had decided on a career in medicine. Here is what Yau's physics teacher had to say about her in a letter of recommendation for the College Counts program:

> Yau stands apart from her peers in several areas. Not only does she have a grade point average of 3.99, but she has had numerous experiences outside the classroom which have added to her educational background. She does much more with her life than just study books and complete homework assignments. As a junior Yau was a team leader in the Governor's Youth Council. She was in charge of six other students who were charged with developing and presenting lessons and activities for a fourth grade class.
>
> This year Yau was elected secretary of the Governor's Youth Council. She has a great responsibility in keeping 40 club members apprised of upcoming activities, organizing presentation groups for elementary schools, and groups that present in the health classes here at Logan High School.

Yau was involved in the Governor's Youth Council and at the same time she was participating in the College Counts program. When asked about her experience in the College Counts program she remarked, "First of all I learned that I actually enjoy working with kids quite a bit." Yau became frustrated with some of her peers when working on the service projects during the year. The main cause of her frustration was that most of Yau's peers did not share her same work ethic,

> It was working with a lot of personalities. Some had that attitude of 'I could care less', while others were followers and did only what you asked them to do. I learned that not everyone works like I do. So my personality is if I say something then I'll deliver, and a lot of times that wasn't the case with my peers.

Yau felt that she gained valuable knowledge about the various personalities she would most likely be working with in her future profession as a medical doctor, "My experiences helped me get a broader perspective about the types of people that I'll be working with in the future." Yau learned something about diversity as she reflected back on her interactions with Todd Milovich.

> So Todd, he looks more like the hippy kind of thing. He's more into rock music and those types of bands. So I'm not used to that type of personality because my family, we don't listen to rock music or anything like that. And so it was really different for me when we were doing the Christmas fundraiser, for the families. And that type of music–like my eardrums were busted at the end of that thing. I'm just not used to that type of environment…my family would be like, 'let's go listen to classical music or something like that.'
>
> So it was really interesting and I'm glad that I got to know Todd. Because before I got to know him - maybe I had like a little stereotype or something with people who are different in terms of personality, they don't think like I do. But I was wrong.

Yau learned a great deal by working with the elementary students in the after-school program throughout the year. Here is what she said about students who struggle academically, "I guess I have a different understanding of what these kids go through. I never realized that they had such challenges. They wouldn't really say that much, but they would say little things that let me know that they had a hard time at home." Yau had always excelled academically and it would not be an understatement to say she was "driven" by her goal to become a doctor, so her interaction with the at-risk elementary students combined with the interaction of her peers, who were also quite different from

her, forced her to take a different view of at-risk students.

> I have a different perspective of my peers that may struggle. Before my experiences in the College Counts program I would see a student having a hard time and I would think, “that girl needs to work harder", but that was kind of a very shallow perspective that I had. After working with these kids I found out there were reasons why they were struggling.

Yau described yet another learning experience she had that occurred the summer after she graduated from high school. It was the second time she had volunteered at the Logan Regional Hospital and this time she was assigned to the emergency room, which really excited Yau. Here is how she tied her experience in the College Counts program to that summer spent in the ER:

> I’ve never had any experiences working with low income families before my participation in the College Counts program. I felt like the service we did was actually benefiting someone. And so it made me more aware of the people around me. And in working in the ER we would get a lot of people who didn’t have insurance. And as a health care provider I don’t think we should discriminate between those who can pay and those who can’t.
>
> The people working in the ER didn’t have a very good perception of the people coming in who couldn’t pay for their services, and they would get really irritated with them. The nurses felt and acted like they were paying for them to get health care. And if I hadn’t had the experiences of the College Counts program I would probably start adopting some of their attitudes that are negative. After all those who can’t pay for health care are people too!

Yau continues to be involved in service throughout her university experience. As the recipient of presidential and research scholarships Yau has the responsibility of training new students to the program how to do research. She also serves as a mentor for a couple of incoming freshman. Yau was elected to a leadership position for the Asian branch of the Multi-Cultural organization on campus for her senior year at USU. Yau will graduate in Biology, the spring of 2008, and has begun the process of applying to

medical schools.

*Case 8: Jennifer*

Jennifer is representative of the majority of citizens in Cache Valley, while close to half of her peers in the College Counts program were minorities. She is Caucasian, comes from the middle class economically, and her parents are familiar and supportive of education beyond high school. Jennifer's mother is a paraprofessional in the Special Education Department at Logan High School, and she informed Jennifer of the College Counts Scholarship. Here is what Jennifer had to say about her peers in the College Counts program:

> I remember the first group meeting. I didn't know anyone there. I felt like a minority because it seemed like each person was of a different race, and different ethnic background, and from a different place. I thought it was cool because I'd never had an opportunity to spend a lot of time with people of different cultures, in such a tight knit group. But I was nervous. I didn't know what to expect or what to do, or how this whole thing was going to work–you know the interactions between the group members.
>
> You know through all the service we did together; putting on the benefit concert and working at the Ellis Elementary School, I remember growing really close to them. I remember seeing them in the hallways at school and thinking there's someone I know and I can say hi. I think it was a really neat experience and I learned a lot about each of their cultures, and what they like to do. I got to know them quite well, and it sparked and interest for learning more about cultures all over the world. I learned more about Thailand from one of the group members who was from Thailand. One of them was from India, and I wanted to learn more about India as a result of getting to know him. By the end of the group I felt really comfortable with them and I still see the group members on campus or other places and I–we say hi to each other and check up on each other. It was a really cool experience.

Jennifer said that the reflection process was quite helpful. Reflecting on her experiences helped her understand the learning that occurred because of her experience.

"It gave us an opportunity to collect our thoughts and organize them and put them down on paper so that it stuck in your mind better, otherwise you would remember the emotions related to the experience with out being able to talk about what you really did." Jennifer's experiences with the elementary students helped guide her career decision. Jennifer's response to being asked, "what influence, if any, did your experiences in the College Counts program have on your career selection and university studies?

> It certainly did! When I first started high school I knew that I liked children and that I would end up working with them. But being in the after school club program, and tutoring there and working with the kids as often as I did, really said to me–Yes! This is what I want to do with my life. I love this and this is my career choice. The coolest part about the College Counts program was it allowed me to have that hope of going to college. It gave me the opportunity so that I could go to the university. Not only for one year, the scholarship actually paid for two years, because I was able to save up money during my first year to pay for my second year of school.

Jennifer was interested in the challenges of the elementary students she was working with. After working with them weekly for almost eight months here is her reflection two years after completing the College Counts program:

> I have a different understanding as a result of working with the kids because they tell you things that are happening at home. And before you don't know what's happening, so you're like, "those parents need to get off their butts and actually do their work with their kids." You just assume, or I assumed that were watching T.V. or just not doing anything at all. But now, after being with the kids and hearing a little bit of their stories and background, I understand that their parents work so hard and it's not that they are sitting around doing nothing. It is because they are working so hard that they don't have the time or the energy or the knowledge to support their children in school. And by using the after school club program and the College Counts program and the volunteers to help the kids get their homework done, that relives so much stress at home, so they can spend time with their families without the stress of homework.

Jennifer continued to be involved in service activities while in college. She sponsored a young girl in India:

> Every month I send a sponsor check out to her, and for birthdays and holidays I send an extra sum of money. She sends me pictures and letters. I don't think I would have done that had it not been for my experiences in the College Counts program, because I wouldn't have even thought about the people in India or even thought of doing something outside myself.

Jennifer worked for the Parks and Recreation Department as a supervisor over the after-school program at the Ellis Elementary School, the same school she tutored at during her senior year in high school. This was her parting comment on being involved in service, "Up here on campus I still find myself talking to strangers or picking up trash, trying to keep the world a better place. I guess I'm a people pleaser, but I love to make people happy and see that they are doing well. I think this way of service seems to be working for me." Jennifer will graduate in Elementary Education the spring of 2009.

*Case 9: Rebecca*

Rebecca was among the 50% of College Counts students who were Caucasian and born and raised in Cache Valley. For Rebecca, her involvement in the College Counts program allowed her to explore cultural issues, poverty issues, and how these issues affect her view of the world. Rebecca noted that her interactions with the elementary students exposed her to diversity.

> The students we were working with were in the after school club because they didn't have anywhere to go. I would sit down with the kids and read with them. There were multiple stations, one for math, one for reading, and another for science. I got to know the kids and their different personalities. I was able to form relationships with them. They each have their individual personalities and how they interact with one another was also very different. It made me appreciate them a lot more.

Rebecca learned about cultural diversity from her peers in the College Counts program. Here she described the group of high school students she worked with:

> It is true that we all lived in Logan and attended the same high school, but we all had very different backgrounds. We had students of different ethnic backgrounds. There were two students from Mexico, one from Indonesia, and two other white students besides myself. It was a good mix; we had all different kinds of viewpoints coming into our discussions as we planned to work with the kids.
>
> I also noticed when we were involved with the after school program that some of the students had trouble interacting with the group because they were not able to speak the same language. Thankfully, two of College Counts students spoke Spanish and they were able to ensure that these children did not feel left out or ostracized due to the language barrier.

Rebecca noticed that the diversity of the College Counts group was a benefit to the elementary students because the kids were exposed to a variety of personalities and viewpoints.

> We had such a broad range of people in our College Counts group. It really helped the kids to see such different individuals all interacting together. I mean there were all these different personalities interacting with the kids, so the kids benefitted from the different viewpoints. It was cool having everyone come together and somewhat work as one. We didn't have just the typical Cache Valley students in our group (white and middle class) it was students coming from different walks of life. So the kids got to interact with people who were not the same.

Rebecca was majoring in biology and will graduate from the pre-med program in the spring of 2008. She will begin applying to graduate school the fall of 2007, where she plans to earn a graduate degree as a physician's assistant. Rebecca noted that Todd Milovich was instrumental in her transition to the university, "Todd set up appointments with us after College Counts was over and he'd check up on us all the time–see how we were doing. He helped us register for our first few classes. By that time Todd had a chance to meet with all of us; he knew what classes Utah State offered and helped us chose the classes we needed."

Rebecca said that her participation in the College Counts program made a

difference in her life. She had planned to attend college since she was in middle school and her mother was a strong advocate for Rebecca furthering her education after high school. She did not plan on being able to make a difference in the life of another student, "I wanted to set an example for the children. Working with the at-risk students made me want to try harder to succeed. I truly believe that education is power and the sooner that you can get that across to young students the better." Rebecca changed her perception of the elementary students as a result of tutoring and interacting with them during the after school club:

> I think before I started working with the kids, I thought it would be a lot more difficult than it actually was. I thought they were going to be these mean little kids, but after working with them throughout the year I noticed my viewpoint changed. It turns out that they just need attention, someone to sit with them, talk with them, and help them learn. You could tell that some of the children were from poverty stricken households, but I think it was important that we all showed them respect and treated all of them equal. And once you showed them who you were and that you were interested in helping them, they opened up and allowed you to do so.

Rebecca's realization that she had more in common with the at-risk children in the after school program, the necessity of education, forced her to broaden her perspective of the world.

> The experience affected my view of the community…because we were interacting with the community and the children of that community. It made me appreciate the College Counts program for working with all these underprivileged children, giving them time. In a sense it made me change my viewpoint of the world, it really makes one think about how many children are living in extremely poor and terrible conditions. Their only chance at living a decent life is to get some type of education. And what we did with the students at that elementary school was open the door for them and give them a chance at a better life.

*Case 10: Sham*

Sham, age 20, is from India. He attended his first year of high school in his hometown of Gujart, India; then moved to California where he attended a semester of high school before moving to Logan, Utah. Sham is a conscientious student and performs at a high level academically. He speaks four languages fluently: Sanskrit, Gujarati, Hindi, and English. While at Logan High School, Sham completed two Advanced Placement classes with "A" marks and four college classes or concurrent enrollment classes with A and B+ marks. Sham graduated from Logan High with a 3.74 GPA.

For Sham, the College Counts program provided the financial means to begin his college career and pursue his dream of earning a Masters of Business Administration. In his application he explained that the economic downturn of his hometown Gujarat had a dramatic effect on his family. This crisis was caused by the political uprising and an earthquake, both of which occurred in 2001. Sham brought a great deal of diversity and experience to the College Counts group of 2004-05. Before leaving India in 2002, he was the president of his school's Cultural Club and participated in folk dancing, as well as the school's Cricket team–which won the district and state titles.

Sham's focus throughout the College Counts program was his transition to college and obtaining a business degree. During the "Smile on Your Brother" benefit concert, he chose to do the advertising and he communicated with several business owners to solicit donations for a raffle that took place during the show. Here he describes the value of that experience, "That was the first time I worked with a group to do

something, something meaningful. That helps you in the business world outside, after you get out of college and even in college." After the event, Sham wrote a reflection while still in high school and described his role:

> "Smile on Your Brother" was an excellent concert. We raised $300 for the cause of bringing a happy Christmas to three families. We lived the Christmas spirit to the families. Jose and I were in charge of advertising and marketing the concert. It was a reviving experience for me to go to the businesses and talk to them about the concert and the cause. I learned a lot from this experience about how to communicate and how people in business react to us. I went to 30 businesses and gave them flyers; some were really happy about what we were doing and were ready to be a part of this great project. I went everyday for three weeks to three or four businesses to explain our project. My sister came along with me to the concert to do mendi, Indian traditional tattoos. She did a great job and raised about $40 to contribute.
>
> I went to one of the families to deliver the gifts and yes, it was all worth it. We saw the spirit of love and happiness towards us. It was a great feeling and I would do this again just to see the smile on our brothers and sisters.

Sham reflected on his learning in the program primarily in terms of how his interactions with the college students prepared him to attend the university: "the college mentors helped me understand the difference between an 8-2:30 high school schedule and a college schedule, where you could have a class in the morning and then another in the evening." Sham explained the relationships he developed and the learning that took place between his high school peers, college mentors, and even the elementary students he was working with:

> What I learned most from the program was about interaction with people. I learned how to interact with college students, how to interact with peers–high school students, and with kids also. I had a great time learning from them all. I'm still friends with people I mentored with at the Ellis Elementary School. Brittany and I met while mentoring and we are still pretty good friends. We hang out sometimes. It was a great learning experience–learning how to deal with kids. It was good to learn about their backgrounds and reflecting your background with it and just learning about each other.

> Same thing with my high school peers–we definitely know each other better now from the activities we performed together. Jose works at a Mexican restaurant and I go see him sometimes. He's from Mexico and I learned a little about his culture. Richard is from around here, so we didn't specifically talk about his culture.
>
> I can definitely see they have different values than I have. They are both taking a break from school and earning money. The values I have grown up with–my parents taught me 'no matter what you have to finish college first, then you can do whatever the heck you want.' It's just that we come from different backgrounds.

Sham recognized that the relationships he fostered in the College Counts program broadened his learning, "I think the more you get involved with people, with service, your learning gets broadened. You learn more. I went to the Ellis Elementary more than I needed too because I became friends with the mentors from USU."

Sham continued his service activities as he began his studies at USU:

> My first year in college I was involved with the Indian Student Association. I also helped with this program where we mentored younger kids one-on-one once a week. The next year I ran for Public Relation Vice-President in the International Student Council. I didn't win, but I'm still involved with the Indian Student Organization and I help the leaders of that Kid Mentor program. I help them with the placement of mentors.

Sham will graduate in the spring of 2008. This is only his third year at Utah State and he will finish his bachelor's degree in accounting. This spring he will apply for admissions into several MBA programs throughout the country.

# CHAPTER V

# DISCUSSION

In the following section is a summary of the findings reported in the previous chapter and a discussion of the students' experiences and learning, using transformational learning theory as a lens. First, I will discuss my own personal transformative experience, as it relates to the scholarly literature. Then I will discuss how the empirical data collected from the students in this study support or relate to the literature in the areas of service-learning and transformational learning. Next, I offer an analysis of Todd Milovich's transformative experience. Finally, I will conclude this chapter by noting the improvements that can be made to the College Counts program and suggestions for future research for me and others interested in the fields of service learning and transformational learning.

## Summary of Findings

The guiding question for this work was, "Using transformational learning theory as a lens, what can we learn about the experiences of students participating in service-learning activities of the College Counts program?" The results of this research contribute to the empirical data and theoretical understanding of transformational learning through long-term engagement in a well-integrated service-learning program. This case study offers insight to the transformational process for young adults participating in a year-long service-learning program, College Counts. Specifically, this study identifies the transformative experiences of this author, the students in the College

Counts program, and the founder of the College Counts program.

## Personal Transformational Learning

I begin this section with an overview of changes in my personal perspective, which I gave as an example in Chapter I. The cognitive dissonance I experienced surrounding the issue of homosexuality was simply that I could not associate the teachings of Jesus Christ with the exclusion of people based on a human trait that is not a personal choice. My thoughts and feelings would revisit this uneasy reaction each time I heard someone say something derogatory about a gay person, based solely on their sexual orientation. For me, change was not strictly a linear transformation process; however, during my high school years, each time I would revisit this cognitive dissonance and reflect on why I felt bad, my level of uneasiness continued to grow.

My experience through my early 20s included a year and a half service mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS). This experience brought me in contact with a variety of personalities and faiths. I broadened my perspective about how I generally perceived people and how I viewed each person as valuable—regardless of cultural or religious background. It was not until years later that I began to celebrate diversity. During my awareness-expanding 20s, I interacted with gay people, which at the time I did not pay any special attention to. However, reflecting back, I remember feeling “these gay people I am associating with do not seem offensive,” which was contrary to the perspective I had acquired from my parents and other adult role models (i.e., religious instructors and church members).

After I completed my mission in California and Pennsylvania, I returned to Utah and completed a degree in marketing education and business administration. During this time I competed for the USU Wrestling Team, was married, and welcomed a little girl, my first daughter, into the world. Upon completion of my bachelor's degree, I obtained a position teaching math at Logan High School. During my seventh year of teaching, my second principal, Allison Dunn, reintroduced me to her husband, Steven Dunn. Steve was a professor at USU from 1985 to 1992, conducting research in exercise science. I had met him a couple of times because of my involvement in wrestling at USU, during my undergraduate years.

Steve and I started training together in the fall of 1996. We even completed a couple of marathons together during the next couple of years. Steve and I also worked together professionally on a couple of consulting projects. Presently, Steve is a professor in the school of Education. In February 2008, he was selected Dean of Education, to begin July 1, at Newman University in Wichita, Kansas. Steve's research interests include service learning, multiple intelligences, and problem-based learning. I consulted with him several times as I explored the literature of multiple intelligences and service learning. The majority of these conversations took place on long, slow runs, on the canyon roads coming in from the east and heading out through the canyon in the south end of Cache Valley.

When I discovered that Steve was gay, I had to revisit those confusing feelings about how I viewed and interacted with gay people. I began to question why I felt the way I did and what I was going to do about my cognitive rationale and emotional being.

I consciously chose to reframe my perspective of how I would view and interact with gay people. I decided to accept, love, and celebrate all people with whom I had relationships and who happened to be gay. For some this may have been a small adjustment in thinking, or one of little consequence, but for me, my change went against some strong cultural indoctrination and potentially could have damaged relationships with my family members. Embracing and valuing gay people was a deep, foundational shift for me. As I reflect back, I can see how I have grown more confident in expressing my views, as I have associated with people who are supportive of how I have chosen to act around and with people–including individuals who are gay. This transformation has not been easy in many respects but in agreement with Mezirow's description of transformational learning it is a more inclusive paradigm that has continued to evolve.

My experience fits quite well into Mezirow's conception of how transformational learning takes place with the exception of his linear process, of the stages of transformation. For me, the process was quite recursive, as Taylor (1998) mentioned in his review of the research, but I did experience the phases of transformation Mezirow et al. (2000, p. 22) has identified as essential for transformative learning. The process of critically examining previously held beliefs that are causing cognitive dissonance within oneself is a rational process; however, I believe there is significant processing occurring in the affective domain as well. This is supportive of the criticism noted by Taylor when he referred to Mezirow's overemphasis of critical reflection and the cognitive processes, at the dismissal of the processes occurring within the affective domain.

For me, transformation has occurred in the area of social justice, for I see service

as a part of being a “decent human being in the world,” to borrow a quote from Milovich’s experience. Transformation has occurred and continues to take place in the cultural form. I have brought my personal view of myself down from the higher plane that I previously held for myself in relation to people who are different. I recognize the interconnectedness that we all share with each other and this world we live on, which may be viewed as a spiritual transformation. Finally, my transformation has resulted in personal restructuring of cognitive and affective beliefs, occurring in the following transforming forms: cultural, personal, social justice and spiritual (Kiely, 2002, 2005).

*Transformative Learning of Participants*

Next, I identify and describe the transformative learning for the participants of the College Counts program. This study gives empirical data to support the transformative potential for participants engaged in well-integrated service-learning programs. The outcomes noted by the participants of the College Counts program lend support to the research that suggests program goals and intentions are directly related to the types of student learning. Another connection between the student learning, in the College Counts program, and the professional literature of service-learning and transformational learning, is the importance of teacher characteristics. As I coded the transcripts from the ten students that participated in the interviews, it seems that three different situations initiated cognitive dissonance and thus triggered critical reflection and the processing needed for transformative learning to occur.

First, the diversity of the College Counts group caused the participants to challenge previously held beliefs about people who were different than themselves.

Second, the interactions College Counts students had with elementary students while they were tutoring and mentoring them initiated reflections around social justice issues, and third, many College Counts students had to examine issues of cultural diversity and social justice as a result of interacting with Milovich.

The learning that students experienced seemed to fit into three areas: cultural diversity, social justice, and personal transformation. Students experienced a broadening of perspective of cultural diversity, a stronger sense of the importance of social justice, and a stronger sense of self-efficacy and personal responsibility.

*Transformative Learning Influences*
*Cultural Perspectives*

According to Kiely (2002, p. 251), transformation in the cultural form is "a movement away from the dominant U.S. cultural perspective, questioning the U.S. culture and promoting a global hegemony." More simply put it means respect of all people regardless of their background or ethnicity. It means appreciating the value of experiencing and accepting the culture of those different from our own. Nine of the 10 students interviewed talked about their cultural transformation.

For Mari it was working with the elementary students in the after school program that triggered the transformational process in the cultural form. She had come from Thailand as a sophomore and was eager to learn about the American culture. Mari identified reading with the kids as having the strongest impact on her, "Sometimes when I read to the kids they can explain different things about what this animal is like, or what this is like–each kid has totally different ideas. I really have fun working with the kids. I

learned about the culture working here."

Alejandra reported having a change in perspective in the cultural form as a result of tutoring and mentoring the elementary students, as well as the interactions that took place with-in the high school group as they planned for the benefit concert and the literacy learning fair. Alejandra was very interested in learning about the American culture and believed that she could do this by experiencing the education of our youth in the elementary grades, "After participating in this program I felt I understood better the culture by knowing how children are educated in the first years of school. I learned what values are taught in the classroom." With respect to her peers, Alejandra had this to say, "The diversity of the group helped me learn about different cultures. We spent a lot of time together in meetings planning our projects and even having fun."

Yau learned about diversity and from her peers, the kids, and from Todd Milovich. She was very frustrated at the start of the year with her peers because they did not have the same work ethic that she had been raised to value. Yau is an over achiever and she wanted things to be completed in a systematic manner, "if I say something–then I'll deliver, and a lot of times that wasn't the case with my peers." By the end of her experience she had a different view of her College Counts peers and it was because of the working with the elementary students that she was able to broaden her perspective, "I have a different perspective of my peers that may struggle." Yau extrapolated from her interactions with the elementary students that her peers have different reasons for their struggles. How they are raised culturally determines to a great extent how they interact in school and what struggles they encounter, "After working with these kids I found out that

there were reasons why they were struggling."

Working with Todd forced Yau to restructure her perspective with regard to the "Old Hippie Type." Yau's involvement in the Benefit Concert was something that was very different than her experiences with her family. They would be much more inclined to attend a symphony at the university than a rock concert to raise money for a cause. But at the end of the experience and on into her first year of college Yau was forced to reframe her perspective of Milovich because of his assistance in her transition to the university. Here she described her position:

> So it was really interesting and I'm glad I got to know Todd. Because before I got to know him–maybe I had like a little stereotype or something with people who are different in terms of personality, they don't think like I do. But I was wrong. Going through high school we all have our little cliques, but that is something I learned in College Counts.

Zach and Jose seemed to experience transformative learning at a deeper level than their peers in the cultural form. Zach was one of the few College Counts students that could afford to attend the university without the help of a scholarship. I was Zach's guidance counselor and his mother had expressed her appreciation to me for giving Zach the opportunity to be involved in the program. She told me that because of the accident, Zach had received a settlement that would pay for schooling at just about any college he chose to attend. The problem was he was not motivated to continue his education.

For Zach, his interactions with Milovich gave him a different perspective of what kind of person could succeed at the university level. Zach had developed his idea of the typical college student from his observations in high school. It seems that there are certain types of students that are excluded from participating and being successful in high

school. Zach had extrapolated his high school experience into developing a narrow vision of what it takes to be a successful college student. Zach explained, "Todd showed me that college could be different, because I wasn't going to college before I got into this program! Because I don't like stereotypes or cliques much at all, I got enough of that in high school. Todd kind of paved the way for me."

It was the long-term interaction with the elementary students that triggered transformative learning. Growing up in Cache Valley Zach was not able to associate with ethnically diverse students in elementary school. The minority rate in the Logan City School District was less than 10% when Zach was in elementary school. By the time he reached high school that percentage was around 20.

Zach reflected:

> I had a weird kind of prejudice against Mexicans, or Hispanics, just because they are moving here and they are different–or look different. I kind of got over that because of the experiences I had in the College Counts program. I understand that some people are better off from birth, but from my experience in working with the kids I could drop that prejudice and I don't have to treat people differently because they're at-risk or a minority. I consider everyone at-risk now. And in that same line of thinking, everyone has potential. I think people can rise above these challenges.

Jose had a similar experience to Yau's with respect to meeting Todd Milovich and developing an opinion that had to be restructured because it did not fit in to their current world view. Jose talks about meeting Milovich:

> The first impression I got of him was a bit weird. I saw him with this ponytail. He's a stranger working with us; he has grey hair, ponytail, and he looks like one of those old hippie types. He drops the guitar next to the chair. He brought a guitar with him that first day we met. I thought, man this is going to be weird. I mean look at this guy! I was biased the first day I met with him. I'll tell you the truth, I was like–what is he going to tell us? He's some kind of kook or whatever. That is what I thought.

> Then he started helping us; I was totally wrong about him. Because of Todd I learned about age discrimination as well as cultural bias. He was different in a lot of ways. I learned that you can't judge people on looks or age.

Working with his peers in the College Counts group also forced him to look at his cultural bias. Living in Los Angeles exposed Jose to many different cultures; Black, Chinese, Japanese, Hispanic, but he did not associate with white people until he moved to Utah. Working with his peers forced him to reassess how he viewed white people, "It sort of breaks your boundaries when you meet one person who acts differently than you expect; you learn not to make assumptions. Just by meeting Bryan, I learned that white people can be funny, they can be cool, they can be accepting, and they are not all what you would assume or at least what I had assumed white people to be."

Li, Jennifer, and Rebecca reported transformative learning in the cultural form because of the interaction with peers. Li noted the diversity of her College Counts group as a major contributor to learning about diversity. Being the youngest child, she felt that she had been catered too in her elementary years and working with classmates from different cultures and with different personalities forced her to rethink how she wanted to behave in different relationships. Li talked about how she carried this learning over into her job in a department store at the local mall:

> It goes back to the whole situation; you can't judge somebody based on how they dress or where they are from. Even at work I've learned not to judge people, because if they come into the store in sweats and sneakers, that doesn't necessarily mean they won't buy something. They just might not want to wear their suit for the day. So, you can't judge a book by its cover. And I used to always do that, I admit it. I was bad at that in high school, but I wish I could take all that back. I think I'm definitely getting better at that.

Jennifer also attributed her cultural transformative learning to the relationships

she developed with her peers in the College Counts program:

> Going back to that group I worked with, it was an eye opener to learn about other cultures of the world. You can get stuck in the rut and not really look outside of your own world. A lot of times people just focus on their own personal issues, and what it is they are doing from day to day, and they don't take time to get out of their regular routine. But to participate in the College Counts program really opened my eyes to working with at-risk children, to cultures all over the world, and things that were possible for me to accomplish. Before that experience I didn't know these things were possible. Through the program I was able to see that there was more around me than the every day things.

Rebecca mentioned that the diversity of the group provided the elementary students with a variety of viewpoints. She noted that the Spanish speakers (including one of the Caucasian students–Jennifer) made the Hispanic students feel more comfortable during the tutoring sessions. Rebecca thought it was important that there were different viewpoints brought into the discussions and planning of the College Counts group, "We had such a broad range of people in that group. It really helped the kids to see such different individuals all interacting together."

*Transformative Learning Influences*
*Perspective on Social Justice*

Kahne and Westheimer's (1996) change paradigm of service learning that critically examines issues and promotes reciprocity vs. a charity model is descriptive of the transformative learning in the social justice domain. Student's transformative learning in the social justice domain is similar to the transformative learning Kiely (2002) identifies in the intellectual and moral forms. Kiely describes moral transformation as a movement toward greater solidarity with the poor; a deep reciprocal and mutual connection with people living in poverty (2002, p. 251). Eight of the 10 students

interviewed provided evidence of such learning. These students continued to be involved in service activities as they transitioned into the university, with a few taking on leadership roles in various student organizations. This next section provides empirical data of their transformative experiences in the social justice form.

Each of the students that I interviewed continued their service involvement at some level as they transitioned to the university. Five of the 10 students continued their involvement in the College Counts program. What is impressive is how the students felt about their service. Many of the students demonstrated a move away from the charity model to a position of social justice. This data supports previous work in service learning that concluded social justice service learning is perspective transformation, particularly when there is a movement from charity to social justice (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kahne & Westheimer, 1996).

For Rebecca working with the elementary students over a long period of time changed how she viewed her service. In the beginning she viewed the students as "mean little kids" that needed to work harder, "…but after working with them throughout the year I noticed my viewpoint changed." Rebecca wanted to set an example for the children she worked with, "I truly believe that education is power and the sooner that you can get that across to young students the better."

Rebecca realized that these children of poverty did not have the same opportunity or support form their family, like most middle class children do–such as her. Reflecting back on her experience, after more than four years have passed:

> In a sense it made me change my viewpoint of the world, it really makes one think about how many children are living in extremely poor and terrible

> conditions. Their only chance at living a decent life is to get some type of education. And what we did with the students at that elementary school was open the door for them and give them a chance at a better life.

Rebecca commented on how she felt about the students she was working with. Again looking back on her time with the kids, "You could tell that some of the children were from poverty stricken households, but I think it was important that we all showed them respect and treated all of them equal."

Li explained that her view of service had evolved from giving to serving. She told me how her family had been recipients of the local food pantry when she was just a child and that it made her feel good to give back to the community; however, she went on to explain that she felt the need to be involved on a different level. Li joined a sorority her first year at USU and she helped her sorority get involved in community service. One of the most important causes Li has been involved with is the National Conference for Community and Justice. Li explained, "That whole week of helping with NCCJ Week was a lot of activities that promoted ending bigotry and racism." She went on to say that "...all races will have to face racism, no matter what. And it's hard to change racism because it is embedded in people."

Li explained to me that her views on service had changed as a result of her involvement in the College Counts program. Initially she applied to the program because she was worried about the cost of attending college and really was not interested in the service aspect of the program. Li recalls the difficulty of working with the kids, "At first I was, oh my gosh I have to get here and I don't want to do this." At the end of the program she expressed a different perspective, "I would say that I'm definitely more

open to community service. Before it was like I need to get my work done so I can have time for myself, but now, it's like I have to give back to the community." Li told me about how her family was able to get food from the local food bank when she was in elementary school. Reflecting back on this time of her life and processing the service she had been involved with over the past three years made her feel as if she was giving back to the community.

However, Li's learning went further then a change in how she perceived community service. Li developed a deeper sense of social justice through working with the kids in the after school program. Here she describes the beginning of her transformation:

> So dealing with the poor, the rich, the bratty, the popular–whatever, it brings you back to high school. It was tough watching the kids be mean to one another just because they don't have those little roller skate shoes or whatever, it kind of reminds me of high school–people will judge you based on what you have. I think there will always be people like that.

As Li transitioned to the university, she continued her service work, not with the College Counts program because she learned that working with children was not for her, but with the sorority she joined. Social justice has become an important issue for Li. She was instrumental in getting her sorority to support the National Conference for Community and Justice, "It makes me feel good to be involved in these kinds of activities because I'm a minority. But then again, all races will have to face racism, no matter what."

Kiyoi's experience in the after school program forced her to look at social justice issues. Working with the kids as a tutor, she noticed that the college mentors did not treat

the kids equally. Kiyoi explained that she did not condemn the college mentors because it took a lot of extra time to work with some of the students who struggled academically. Kiyoi, much like Rebecca, benefitted from long-term service involvement. Here she summarized her perspective on her service:

> That experience made a big impression on me, seeing how people treat each other differently. Which made me think about why I'm doing service, I don't look at my service as a charity thing anymore. It is something that is necessary for those students and whether or not you want to do it the need is there. I feel differently now than I did that first year. Maybe in that first year I would have said something like, "Wow, look what I did for that kid," but now I view service as a necessary thing. This is just who I am, I don't think it's a job or a task that you have to do; it's just something you do because that is what those kids need!

Kiyoi was one of five students to continue her involvement with the College Counts program after she began her studies at USU and she worked a third year in the program before choosing other avenues to pursue. She got involved with the Multicultural Office, serving on different councils and that evolved into serving as one of the coordinators. Being selected as a coordinator connected her to the admissions office as the ambassador for recruitment of multicultural students. Kiyoi will be the president of the ambassadors program during her senior year at USU; which required her to administer the various activities for the recruitment of multicultural students.

Jose is a site coordinator for the Bridger Elementary School, which means he supervises the college mentors from the America Reads Program as well as the high school students in the College Counts program as they tutor and interact with the kids in the after school program. Jose's view of service has moved to a social justice perspective. Here he reflects on his work in the College Counts program that first year, tutoring students at the Ellis Elementary School:

> I ended up working with third graders. That is when I decided I want to pursue a career in ESL or something dealing with that. It sort of bugged me that the kids didn't know English. Not because they didn't know it, but it was more because that are ignorant about what was happening around them. People could be saying stuff behind their back or if they want to deal with something they couldn't. I know this because my parents are like that. They don't know English so when they get stuck there like, yes–yes… so they never know what they are saying yes to. They usually ask for my help when that happens. So I want to help these kids so they don't have that kind of experience, taken advantage of. I want them to be educated so they won't be vulnerable. I think instead of hating someone you should teach them about yourself.

Jose, like Li, came face to face with social justice issues of racism and poverty. His interactions with Todd and Zach forced him to look at his perspective of how he would judge White, old people, who smoked cigarettes, drank coffee, and were artists. Jose described this transformation:

> My first interactions with White people taught me that they, along with Hispanic people have the same kind of issues, whether it's a language barrier, poverty, family issues, something happened to you when you were a kid, fire or anything like that. Those can occur with all races. So even though we may be different colors, heights, widths, whatever, there are certain things that every one can relate to. There are some universal things we can all relate to; like love is universal. Well, struggles are universal too. Everybody instead of focusing on what makes us different we should look at what makes us the same.

For Alejandra transformative learning in the social justice form was triggered by the "leave no trace" presentations that her group gave to the students at the after school programs, at three elementary schools in the Logan School District. The College Counts students partnered with the leaders of the Utah Conservation Corps from USU to educate kids on ecology issues. Because of Alejandra's participation in these presentations and the processing that occurred through group reflections she came to realize that service can be more that charity, it can be an educative experience. Alejandra explained,

> I think it totally affected my way of looking at the world. Now more than ever I

> believe that if we want to change the world we live in we need to start from the bottom, and that bottom is our kids. For example, if we want a cleaner world, let's show our kids to not pollute the environment. That makes a difference.

Alejandra continued to be involved in service after high school. When she started her studies at USU she was a member of the Latino Branch of the Multicultural Club. Alejandra also worked as a college mentor as part of the America Reads Program for one year. During her sophomore year in college she became part of the leadership of the Catholic youth group on campus.

Yau's transformative experience with culture and diversity was noted in an earlier section. She reframed her view of different cultures and personalities as she worked with her peers and Todd in the various College Counts projects. Yau expressed an awakening to a more inclusive position for interacting with people who think, act, or look different than she does. Much of her learning came as a result of tutoring the elementary students. Yau explained that the more she got to know the kids the more she had to change her views about peers that didn't hold the same values. Her interactions with Todd had the same effect. Referring to Todd, Yau explained, "…it was really interesting and I'm glad I got to know Todd. Because before I got to know him–maybe I had like a little stereotype or something with people who are different in terms of personality, they don't think like I do. But I was wrong." It was this kind of learning that set the stage for a different level of social justice transformation the following summer.

Yau had volunteered at the hospital the summer before she started the College Counts program. After graduation from high school, Yau continued to broaden her experience in hopes of being better prepared to enter medical school and fulfill her dream of becoming a doctor. It was her second stint volunteering at the Regional Hospital and

she was assigned to the emergency room (ER). This was the summer after her College Counts experience and her work in the ER triggered transformative learning in the moral form. Yau describes how her experience in high school promoted transformative learning in a latter setting:

> I've never had any experiences working with low income families before my participation in the College Counts program. I felt like the service we did was actually benefiting someone. And so it made me more aware of the people around me. And in working in the ER we would get a lot of people who didn't have insurance. And as a health care provider I don't think we should discriminate between those who can pay and those who can't.
>
> The people working in the ER didn't have a very good perception of the people coming in who couldn't pay for their services, and they would get really irritated with them. The nurses felt and acted like they were paying for them to get health care. And if I hadn't had the experiences of the College Counts program I would probably start adopting some of their attitudes that are negative. After all those who can't pay for health care are people too!

Yau continued her service efforts through participation in the Asian Branch of the Multicultural Club at USU. Mari served in the leadership of that same organization and Sham is a member of the Indian Student Association.

Much the same as Yau and Li, Jennifer's social justice transformative learning came as a result of working with the elementary students. Jennifer is going to be an elementary school teacher and her experiences in the College Counts program confirmed that decision. What Jennifer did not plan on learning was a change in perspective with respect to poverty issues. Working with the elementary students in the after school club gave Jennifer a different perspective of why some students are at-risk. Here she explains how her view has changed:

> Yea, I use to think it's no big deal, those kids will figure it out. They will be able to handle it on their own. But now I look at these kids and still, they need so

> much help. They aren't going to make it on their own. They don't have the support at home and you or the people helping in the after school club are the ones that make the difference, or have the possibility of making a difference in the lives of these children. You can help inspire them so they can have a desire to go to college, or they have the desire to continue through high school, to have that understanding that school isn't really that bad. If I get my homework done it will be a good thing and that will benefit me overall. We were instilling patterns of achievement into the students, so that they will continue their education.

The transformative learning these students experienced and continue to experience is supportive of the learning Kahne and Westheimer (1996) identify in the moral domain. They note that there are two types of learning in this domain: (a) relationships that emphasize charity; and (b) relationships that emphasize caring instead of giving. Most of the College Counts students demonstrated a caring view of social justice, rather that an altruistic, charity viewpoint. Eight of the participants reframed their view of service to include a position of caring, instead of a charity view focused on giving, this resulted in a transformation from the charity viewpoint to one of social justice.

Student learning in this study is also consistent with Eyler and Giles (1999) studies that confirmed, "…that well-integrated service-learning changes the way knowledge is constructed and tested is an example of the link between service-learning and perspective transformation" (p.134).

*Transformative Learning Influences*
*Personal Decisions*

For Kiely (2002, p. 251), a transformation in the personal form requires a movement away from previous lifestyle." This would include critically examining the strengths and weakness of one's perspectives. Another way to view a personal

transformation is one who is reconsidering their lifestyle choices with regard to career choice, perception of service, and/or reframing one's self-identity. In this section, I will report on the students that experienced transformation that went beyond their understanding of service, to include a lifestyle change in their choice of career or major change in their perspective and/or self-identity.

Alejandra came to Utah from Mexico at the age of 16. She graduated from Logan High School 2½ years later. It is difficult to determine how much of the transformative learning that she experienced can be attributed to her experience in the College Counts program. She was still learning the English language as she was working with the elementary students. Research shows that students who tutor and mentor younger students experience academic gains themselves (Billig, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Alejandra's previous example of teaching children how to keep the world clean demonstrates that her perspective of service is one of education for change rather than just charity. Alejandra also spoke about how her interactions with her peers broke down biases that she held against white people.

However, Alejandra felt the most important learning for her was the example she received from working with the college students. It was these interactions that enabled Alejandra to reframe her perspective of self to include a college education. Here she explains her view:

> The College Counts program left me without a doubt with respect to whether or not to go for a college degree. My interactions with college students reinforced my desire of becoming one of them. And after my participation in this program I convinced myself that being smart is just the harvest of years of experience and education, which was nothing I could not do.

For Kiyoi, the transformation in the personal form took place as she worked with the elementary students. It also took place as she interacted with her peers in the various planning meetings and activities that occurred during the year she was in College Counts. Nevertheless, her transformative learning continued in the personal form as she got involved with various organizations on campus at USU. What she realized is that she liked working with people and she is seriously considering a change in her major from biology to social work. In one of her reflections in high school she wrote:

> My future goals have mainly been chosen for me by my parents. They have always wanted me to become a pharmacist and because of that I've been motivated to enter the field of medicine. They never had a chance to get an education and I guess this is my gift to them. Their happiness means the world to me and I know that this is what I want to do for the rest of my life.

During her junior year in college, 4 years later, she had this to say about her career choice:

> When I was in the College Counts program in high school I had the same mentality as a lot of students that I associated with–that of wanting to be a doctor. But being involved in the program encouraged me to do things outside my realm of study. I started participating in more extracurricular activities because of it. Had I not been a part of that program, I don't think I would have taken part in all the involvement I have been here on campus. A lot of what I've been involved in came from connections made during that program in high school.
>
> I'm actually a biology major right now, but I want to switch my major to social work, because being in that program has made me change as a person. Before, I always thought I wanted to be this one person and only this on person, and I was influenced by this one person. Being a part of the College Counts group has encouraged me to get to know other people and I think that has influenced me to do other things and I learned what I'm good at. I'm more of a people person. This is why I want to do social work. I do want to help people, but not in the way that I originally thought. You know when people say they want to be a doctor, they say, "I just want to help people." But I think there are different aspects of help.

Mari, like Alejandra, came to the United States at the age of 16. Both of these

young women were extremely interested in learning about the culture and furthering their education. Mari was quite interested in the financial gain of being involved with the College Counts program. However, as she reflected on her experience she explained, "…after participating in the program I realized that it's much more than just a scholarship to me. I learned things that I couldn't learn anywhere else."

Mari made up her mind to be an interior designer, based on classes she had in high school. Two years after completing the College Counts program Mari is considering a career change:

> Well, my major goal has always been interior design, but I learned from my experiences in the College Counts program, which was two years for me, that I really like working with kids. I think I will change my major to education and maybe even get a degree in elementary education so I can work with kids. I may go into secondary education and teach interior design. I'm still a little bit undecided, but I really like teaching elementary kids.

For Zach, participation in the College Counts program resulted in transformational learning in the cultural and personal forms. Earlier Zach discussed his learning with respect to diversity. He was able to break down some cultural bias that he had acquired in his elementary years through his interactions with the elementary students and his peers. However, the most important learning for Zach was the change in perspective towards himself:

> I was completely convinced that I was worthless, and I had all these extra privileges because of my injury. But when I was doing the tutoring with the kids no one seemed to care about my injury and I had to deal with the difficulties that presented me as I worked with the kids. I had to find a way around some of the emotional challenges I had and that experience helped me. My experience also helped me learn how to communicate with people better and this has increased my ability to teach, which is important to me because I teach ceramics professionally now.

Zach is now a sophomore at USU majoring in philosophy. He continues to teach ceramics in the community and is involved with service on a continual basis.

## Summary

Each of the students in this study experienced transformational learning in one or more of the following forms: increased cultural inclusiveness, commitment to social justice, and/or shift in personal perspective. Students' reflections did not provide compelling evidence of increased political involvement, changes in intellectual performance or explicitly spiritual outcomes. This is supportive of the work that Billig (2000), Shumer (2005), and others have conducted looking at outcomes for students involved in service-learning programs. These researchers have determined that the intent or academic goals of the program determine what kind of outcomes one can expect.

The intent of the College Counts program was to give high school students an experience that would connect them to their community and raise their sense of self-worth. Another goal of the program was to help students transition to the university; particularly students that might not have other opportunities or support systems assisting them to higher education. It seems logical that we would see students experience learning in the personal form with such an educational goal, but it was surprising to see students experience transformations in the cultural area and social justice area as well. A possible explanation for the unexpected outcomes is the diversity of each College Counts cohort and the diversity that the College Counts students experienced as they worked in the elementary after school programs.

This was not intentional during the first 3 years of the program but after reading the reflections of what the students were learning from each other, Todd and I have intentionally selected a diverse group of students to work with the past 3 years. Another contextual factor that we were unaware of initially was the exchanges that took place between the College Counts students and the elementary students. The College Counts students experienced an increase in cultural awareness, developed a stronger sense of social justice, and an increase in personal responsibility in part, because of these dynamics.

Another factor that is important in the transformative learning of the College Counts students is the duration of the service. Each of the College Counts students spent a minimum of eight months engaged in the tutoring and mentoring of at-risk elementary students. For half of the students involved in this study that service continued in the College Counts program for another year and in two cases an additional 2 years. These students had made a career change and were interested in accumulating additional teaching experiences.

One further observation is the importance of the teacher's background. The mentorship of Milovich, who models his commitment to cultural inclusion and social justice, influenced the learning of College Counts participants. Milovich described his own transformative learning when he told me the story of how he got involved in service-learning programs. He shared how Duke Miller changed his life with one sentence, "my job is to find out what went wrong and change you into a decent human being." Todd's perspective on life began to change in that one moment. He reflected often on what it

meant to be “a decent human being,” and this led him to change his career choice from studio musician or touring musician to come to USU and eventually engage hundreds of college students and 42 high school students in community service and service-learning projects, many of whom have experienced transformational learning.

This is supportive of Mezirow et al.’s (2000) emphasis on a disorienting dilemma triggering the transformative process. Todd explained that he reflected again and again on what it meant to be a decent human being, but he also mentioned that it was a emotional process as well, supporting Taylor’s (1998, 2000) notion that attention must be paid to the processes occurring in the affective domain as well as the critical reflection in the cognitive domain. Todd experienced cultural, intellectual, moral, spiritual, political, and cultural transformative learning as a result of his interaction with one teacher and his subsequent experiences in the service-learning/experiential learning programs he created. These outcomes are supportive of what researchers have identified as elements of a high-quality program (Billig, 2000; Shumer, 2005), which include long-term engagement in service, increased responsibility of students and student choice in service, different kinds of reflection, and teacher qualities affect the outcomes of service learning programs.

Returning to the criticisms of NCLB, outlined in the introduction of this study, a few observations are in order. The irony of NCLB is that it negatively affects people of color and poverty the most; those who the legislation was specifically directed to help. McNeil (2000) in her study of three magnet schools, in Houston, Texas, sought to find organizational models of schooling that supported authentic teaching and learning. McNeil found examples of such meaningful teaching in three urban magnet schools, in

Houston, Texas. Her observations in these schools took place during the implementation of high stakes testing and standardization. McNeil noted that the curriculum had been narrowed for students; teachers were instructed to prepare students for the high stakes tests at the expense of a well-rounded experience. She stated the central message of her study: "In reality these policies of standardization are decreasing the quality of teaching and learning in our schools, especially in the schools of poor and minority children (p. 9)."

In an era of accountability, standardization, and high-stakes testing, the teaching methods of problem-based instruction, experiential learning, service-learning, and authentic assessment are being replaced by methods of instruction intended to increase the scores on standardized tests (i.e., drill and practice; McNeil, 2000; Meier, 2002). McNeil's study in Texas could have as easily been conducted in Utah, for the effects of standardization and high-stakes testing can be seen nationwide, and if legislation is not adjusted to meet the individual needs of our children, then the legislation will support the privatization of our public schooling system. NCLB is not student-centered; the legislation is aimed at having all students learn at the same rate, regardless of their abilities and interests.

The results of this study show that the student learning experienced by the College Counts students is significant and long-term and could not be achieved within a classroom with prescribed instruction. Students need opportunities to problem-solve, develop positive relationships with peers, teachers, and community members. Furthermore, the results of this study indicate that student learning in the affective

domain is present among participants of the College Counts program. Is there a causal connection between student's service experience and the change and growth students experienced? This is impossible to assert based on this research; however, the students reported that their experiences in the College Counts program were important to changes in their perspectives, in the areas of cultural diversity, social justice, and personal choices. How important is it for students to make connections with their community? Some students do this naturally outside of school with their involvement with churches or civic organizations, but many do not. It is vital to our democracy to continue to have an intellectually educated citizenry, but it is equally important for citizens to be connected to their community and willing to participate in civic matters.

This study showed that those students who had meaningful service experiences in high school usually continued to be involved in service activities within their community. In the spring of 2008, four former participants of the College Counts program graduated from USU. Two other former participants of the College Counts program are scheduled to graduate fall of 2008. These results would support the integration of service-learning activities into the regular curriculum of our nation's high schools, to facilitate student learning in the affective, as well as the cognitive domain, through experiential learning, that instills problem-solving skills and reflective processes.

## Improvements for College Counts Program

An improvement to the program mentioned above is in the selection of the students. The application process has improved over the course of the program to include

an essay by the student as to their expectations of the program, their goals in life, and how education plays a part in their future; and a letter of recommendation from a teacher or other responsible adult figure in their life. An added criterion for selecting the students in recent years has been to intentionally include as much diversity as possible among group members. This would include diversity of race, socioeconomic status, range in academic achievement, and personalities.

Another element or criteria to improve the College Counts program is to be explicit with the intent of exploring issues of social justice. This goal of the program can be integrated into the students' orientation program, as part of their training to work in the afterschool program.

These improvements to the College Counts program will support the students' opportunity to experience transformative learning in the following arenas: cultural, social justice, personal, and possibly include intellectual, political, and spiritual arenas as well.

## Conclusions and the Need for Further Research

In this dissertation, I explored the role that transformational learning can play as a lens for understanding the experiences of students enrolled in a service-learning program. As a concept transformational learning points to deep and profound changes that occur in individuals as a result of certain key experiences that have the effect of altering and changing their perspective and world view. Having said that, however, it is important to note transformational learning is an illusive concept that is not readily identified. How much change must an individual experience in order to constitute transformational

learning is quite subjective; and exactly what caused the transformative learning is hard to pin down. There is no explicit metric that allows us to say with certainty that transformational learning has taken place. Rather, determining whether it has occurred or not requires an interpretive judgment on the part of an experienced observer. If transformational learning is to fulfill its potential as both a research tool and psychological state, we need more research that can identify more objective indicators of its presence. Without those indicators, it remains still a valuable interpretive lens but lacks clarity needed for guiding educational interventions.

Future research should explore the concept of reciprocity in greater depth. The elementary students' experience with the College Counts students would be valuable information to assess the level of reciprocity achieved during the year. It is important to include an analysis of affective processes as well as cognitive processes as service-learning experiences are examined through the lens of transformational learning.

Another area of interest would be to explore the importance of student choice in designing and implementing service projects. In the first semester of the College Counts program students are oriented in the tutoring and mentoring of elementary students and guided in the process of putting on a benefit concert. During the second semester, students have the responsibility of identifying a need in the community, developing a service activity and then implementing the plan. How does student voice effect how they think and feel about their service?

Educational interventions like College Counts involve the interplay between the program components themselves and the individuals implementing them. In this case,

the impact that College Counts plays on the lives of its participants is a product of both the service-learning and other experiences that students had in the program and with the program staff, particularly, Todd Milovich. Milovich is a dynamic and charismatic individual whose presence in the lives of the College Counts students played a role that cannot be easily separated from the curricular elements of the program. This of course is to be expected and in fact makes clear the vital role that teachers play in any kind of educational change. As a consequence, we need further research that examines how different teachers with diverse teaching styles influence the impact of service-learning on such outcomes as transformational learning.

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# APPENDICES

# Appendix A

## College Counts Interview

**College Counts Interview Guide**

Dear former College Counts participant:

You have agreed to take part in a study investigating the process of transformational learning, as a result of participation in the College Counts service learning program. Please reflect back on your senior year at Logan High and particularly your experiences in the College Counts program.

What year did you participate in the College Counts program?

What project or activity was most meaningful for you? What made this particular event special?

What kind of things did you do?

Who did you work with? Tell me about what you learned from this interaction.

What do you think you learned from your service experience?

Talk about the other high school students in your group–were these students people you would typically hang out with? What were your thoughts and feelings concerning your college counts group members after the program concluded?

Talk about working with Todd Milovich and the college students from USU.

Were there any events or experiences that surprised you during the College Counts program?

Did your experiences in the College Counts program influence your career choice in any way? If so, explain.

Do you view working with at-risk children any differently than you did before your participation in the after school tutoring and mentoring program? If yes, explain.

What were your thoughts about earning a college degree before participation in the College Counts program verses your thoughts and feelings at the completion of the program?

Has your experience in the College Counts program changed how you look at the world? How so? Can you elaborate?

Have you continued to be involved in service and leadership positions since your senior year in high school? If so, tell me about your involvement since completing the College Counts program.

Department of Secondary Education
2815 Old Main Hill
Logan Ut 84322-2815
Tele: (435) 797-2222

Date Created: June 25, 2007
USU IRB Approved 06/27/2007
Approval terminates 06/26/2008
Protocol Number 1835
IRB Password Protected per IRB Administrator

# Appendix B

## Informed Consent

**Informed Consent**
**Transforming Perspectives Trough Service-Learning Participation:**
**A Case Study of the College Counts program**

## Introduction/Purpose

My name is James Peacock and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Education at USU (USU). I am working with Dr. Barry M. Franklin, my committee chair. As part of my doctoral dissertation, I am studying transformational learning as it occurs through participation in the USU College Counts program, a well-established service-learning program. The purpose of the study is to examine how transformational learning occurs in young adults and to improve existing programs. Transformational learning is the process of learning through critical self-reflection, which results in a more integrative and inclusive understanding of one's experience (Mezirow, 1990).

## Procedures

As part of this study, you will be asked to spend approximately one hour in an interview, plus some time for follow-up and clarification questions. Participants will be asked to provide background information, reconstruct their experiences, and critically examine their experiences in the College Counts program.

## Benefits and Risks

We hope to learn more about the transformational learning process in young adults and how service learning participation can foster this learning. You will be provided the opportunity to verify the information that you provide in the interview(s). The information gained in this study is anticipated to expand our understanding of transformational learning and improve programming of the College Counts program. There is minimal risk involved in this study.

## Explanation & Offer to Answer Questions

This study has been explained to you and your questions have been answered. If you have further questions or research-related concerns, you may contact Professor Franklin or Jim Peacock by telephone or email (contact information listed on last page).

## Voluntary Participation and Right to Withdraw Without Consequences

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from this study at any time without consequence. If you choose not to participate, information that may have been gathered will not be included in the study.

**Confidentiality**

Your permission allows us to include your experiences and information in this study. All personal information will be kept completely confidential by replacing your name with a code to protect your personal identifiable information; thus, no one individual can be identified. The data collected and the code will be stored separately in a locked file cabinet in a locked room of Jim Peacock's. The code will be destroyed at the end of the study, January 2008.

**IRB Approval Statement**

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects at USU has reviewed and approved this research project. If you have questions about your rights you may contact them at (435)797-1821.

**Copy of Consent**

You/I have been given two copies of this Informed Consent. Please sign both copies and retain one for your files.

**Researcher Statement**

"I certify that the research study has been explained to the individual by me, and that the individual understands the nature and purpose, along with the possible risks and benefits associated with taking part in this research study. Any questions raised have been answered."

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| Dr. Barry M. Franklin | James O. Peacock |
| Principal Investigator | (435) 881-4474 |
| (435) 797-1836 | Student Researcher |
| Barry.franklin@usu.edu | jpeacock@scampus.logan.k12.ut.us |

I, _____ acknowledge that the researcher(s) have explained to me the purpose of this research, identified the risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have. I freely and voluntarily consent to participation in this project. I understand that all information gathered in this project will be completely confidential.

| | |
|---|---|
| _____ | _____ |
| Participant's Signature | Date |

# CURRICULUM VITAE

## JAMES O. PEACOCK

## EDUCATION

| | |
|---|---|
| 2008 | Ed.D.; Curriculum Instruction/Educational Leadership<br>Utah State University; Logan, Utah |
| 2002 | Administrative Endorsement<br>Utah State University; Logan, Utah |
| 1995 | Master of Science; Psychology<br>Utah State University; Logan, Utah |
| 1989 | Bachelor of Science; Marketing Education<br>Utah State University; Logan, Utah |

## EXPERIENCE

| | |
|---|---|
| 2007-Present | Dean of Students, South Campus, Logan City School District |
| 2002-2007 | Guidance Counselor, Logan High School |
| 2001-2002 | Administrator, South Campus, Logan City School District |
| 1996-2001 | Guidance Counselor, Logan High School |
| 1989-1996 | Teacher (Math, Business, Technology), Logan High School |

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Department Head of Counseling, Logan High
- Logan City School District MESA Coordinator
- Member of Logan City School District's Comprehensive Guidance evaluation committee
- Member of Logan City School District's calendar committee
- Member of Logan City Schools interview committees for teachers and classified personnel

- Served on due process, hearing committees, juvenile staffing committees and at-risk youth panels
- Served on safe school appeal hearings
- Assistant Wrestling Coach, Logan High School 2005-2008
- Head Wrestling Coach, Logan High School 1989-2001
- Assistant Football Coach 1990-2008
- Completed 56 marathons 1997-2008
- Wrestled at Utah State University 1986-1989
- Mission for Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) 1983-84
- Wrestled at Brigham Young University 1982-83

PRESENTATIONS

- Utah State Career and Technical Education Conference, Salt Lake, Utah, 2008
- Career and Technical Education Conference Orlando, Florida, December, 1997

MEMBERSHIPS AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Member of ASCD (Curriculum)
- Member Utah School Counselor Association

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

- Experiential learning, Service-learning
- Multiple intelligences
- Multicultural education
- Social justice
- Father, husband, running marathons, reading, and traveling