Summer 8-21-2022

Engaging n Service Learning: Using Mixed Methods to Examine Community Partner Perceptions

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Engaging in Service Learning:

Using Mixed Methods to Examine Community Partner Perceptions

A Dissertation

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in Community Psychology

Presented to

The Department of Psychology

College of Science and Health

DePaul University

Chicago, IL

By

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August 23, 2022

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Acknowledgments

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Deanna Webster Pritchard. My appreciation and love for you continue to grow, and I simply would not have accomplished this goal without you. Thank you for all of it and everything. To my husband, Carl, your support and love have carried me through these past years. I am forever grateful to you. To Linden and Grey, you have brought so much joy and love to my life and have helped me keep everything in perspective. I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to my dissertation chair, Rev. Dr. Joseph Ferrari, for his support and encouragement throughout graduate school and on this project. I am also thankful to Dr. Megan Greeson and Dr. Howard Rosing for their mentorship and support. Finally, I am grateful to Dr. Olya Glantsman and Dr. Monica Ramos for their willingness to provide their perspectives and serve on my dissertation committee.

Biography

The author was born in Miami, Florida, on April 18, 1982. She graduated from South Plantation High School in Plantation, Florida, in 1999 and received her Bachelor of Science in Psychology, with a concentration in Community Psychology, from Georgia State University in 2003. She received her Master of Science in Professional Counseling in 2007 and her Master of Arts with Distinction in Community Psychology from DePaul University in 2018.

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Abstract

Outcomes for students engaging in service learning are well documented and accepted throughout educational literature. However, less is known about how community partners perceive service learning. A convergent mixed methods approach was used to examine the perceptions of community partners engaged in service learning activities. In the first phase of the current study, community partner perceptions were explored using extant focus group data. Five themes were identified: experiences with students, experiences with the Steans Center, service learning impacts on organizational capacity, perceptions of university partnerships, and other community partner perceptions. Experiences with students included five subthemes: (a) student work; (b) positive views and experience, (c) continued service beyond required hours; (d) reciprocity and mutual benefit; and (e) challenges. Experiences with the Steans Center included two subthemes: positive views and experiences and challenges. In the second phase of the current study, evaluation survey data was analyzed. Community partners rated experiences with students the highest, followed by experiences with the Steans Center, and finally, experiences with faculty. Additionally, community partners engaged in project-based service learning reported higher ratings for faculty and communication. Open-ended survey comments endorsed many codes from Phase 1; however, one emergent code regarding unclear expectations around relationships with faculty emerged. Finally, results from both phases of the current study were integrated. There were substantial areas of agreement between both phases of the study, which add to our understanding of service learning from the perspective of community partners and can inform service learning practice. However, disagreement between studies suggests more research is needed to understand how community partners view faculty and their role in service learning activities. Results of this study provide insight into how community partners experience service

learning and how university-community partnerships can better serve community partner

organizations.

Engaging in Service Learning:

Using Mixed Methods to Examine Community Partner Perceptions

Service learning has become an essential way for universities to engage students in learning within a social context by connecting them with communities to enhance learning and address community needs. As much as 70% of all undergraduates in the United States engage in service learning and community service (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012). At its best, service learning uses course-based service activities to achieve learning outcomes while simultaneously addressing community needs. Although many disciplines have utilized service learning as an applied learning pedagogy, research on service learning overwhelmingly focuses on students' experiences and outcomes, leaving a gap in our understanding of the community partner perspective, the utility, and the benefit for communities engaging in service learning activities (Bushouse, 2005; James & Logan, 2016; Vizenor et al., 2017). This persistent gap has been noted throughout the evolution of service learning programs and suggests that a foundational aspect of service learning, creating mutually beneficial relationships, is not well understood.

Experiential Education: Creating a Framework for Service Learning

Experiential education was established as a formal field of education in 1977, drawing from the earlier influences of John Dewey (1938) and his educational theory of learning by experience (Association for Experiential Education, n.d.). Experiential education is a teaching philosophy characterized by students engaging in a hands-on learning experience, reflecting on the experience, and applying it to their lives and communities (Association for Experiential Education, n.d.). Further, by increasing students' knowledge, skills, and clarifying values,

experiential education increases students' capacity to make meaningful contributions to their communities (Association for Experiential Education, n.d.).

Informed by Dewey's pragmatic philosophy, Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory defined learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience and results from the combination of *grasping* and *transforming*" (p.41). Kolb's four-stage experiential learning cycle uses two modes of grasping experience – concrete experience and abstract conceptualization, and two modes of transforming experience – reflective observation and active experimentation (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.

Stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle
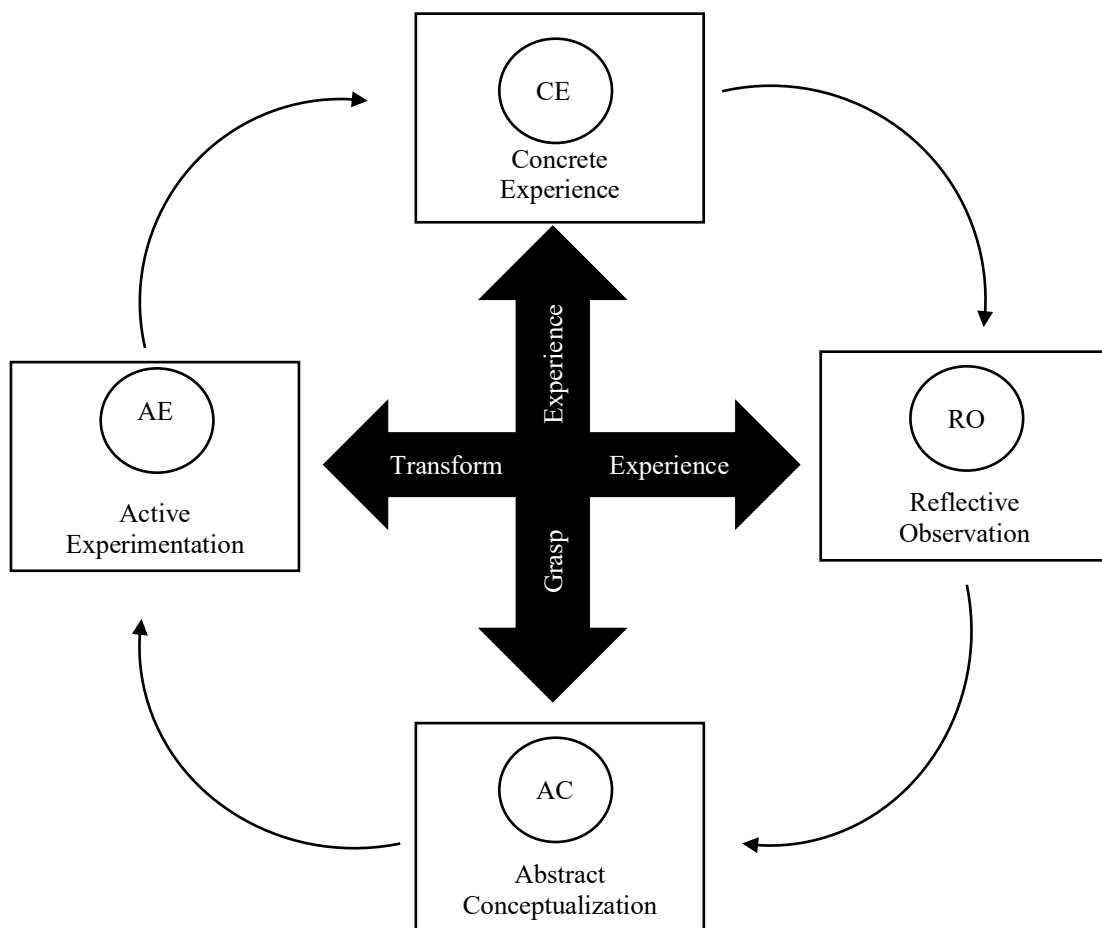
Students begin the process with a concrete experience that provides the opportunity for reflection. From there, students integrate their experiences and reflections to inform their thinking. Finally, as new ideas and concepts are contemplated, students are encouraged to act on their new ideas and ways of thinking. This recursive cycle encourages students to gain new knowledge, perspectives, and attitudes through new experiences (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009). Service learning is a form of experiential education based on reciprocal learning (Sigmon, 1979). This suggests that reciprocal learning happens in service activities when both the provider and recipient learn from and benefit from the experience (Furco, 1996).

Service learning. While early examples of experiential education were nature-based, outdoor educational experiences, the field has expanded to encompass various experiential educational methodologies. Furco (1996) described service-oriented experiential education (i.e., volunteerism, community service, service learning, field education, and internship) on a spectrum based on "the intended beneficiary of the service activity and its degree of emphasis on service and/or learning" (p. 3). Service learning is unique from other service-oriented experiential education based on its intended equal benefit to students and the community and equal focus on service and learning (Furco, 1996). According to Bringle and Hatcher (1995), service learning is a:

> "course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility" (p.112).

There are two primary ways in which service learning is discussed in the literature. The first is *service learning as a pedagogy*. This line of inquiry focuses primarily on service learning theory and practice in higher education, emphasizing how service learning is utilized by both universities (i.e., students, faculty, administration) and community organizations. Research on service learning pedagogy centers on using service learning to enrich student learning outcomes and promote student development. The second is *service learning as a social movement*. This line of inquiry focuses primarily on what service learning should be trying to accomplish and how it should be used. This body of research also focuses on outcomes (e.g., skills and knowledge to become engaged, active citizens), but there is a clear push for focusing on social awareness and action as the goal of service learning. The delineation between both lines of inquiry is not explicit, and there is overlap, but it does exist (Mitchell, 2008). Mitchell (2008) describes this duality as traditional service learning versus critical service learning. The current tension between traditional service learning and critical service learning has called to question the purpose and goals of service learning. However, given the historical roots of service learning pedagogy and the function of service learning in higher education, the current tensions in the field should not be surprising. It is essential to understand the origins of service learning pedagogy and the history of service and service learning in American higher education to understand better how service learning is viewed as a pedagogy, a social movement, and its current state.

Service learning pedagogy. The theoretical and philosophical frameworks John Dewey and Paolo Freire posited are essential to understanding how service learning works as a pedagogy and its potential impact on communities and society. Dewey and Freire are both humanists who centered their progressive philosophies of education around *experience*.

Although both are essential, Dewey is most commonly seen as the primary source for service learning theory and practice. Dewey is considered a philosophical pragmatist that sought to connect knowledge to experiences through action and reflection while emphasizing democracy and the role of education in connecting students to the community and the larger society (Deans, 1999). His focus on two dualisms, knowledge and action, and individual and society, provide the foundation for understanding service and learning and the nature of their relationship in education (Deans, 1999). Dewey's belief that the act of learning is a process of active experimentation and reflective thought laid the groundwork for experiential learning and, subsequently, service learning theory and practice.

Paulo Freire was a self-described radical who believed that literacy education, critical reflection, and collective social action are the ways to politically transform individuals and society (Deans, 1999). Freire and Dewey had many corresponding views on how education and learning should happen. However, Freire sought more drastic change around political oppression and power while choosing to confront culture, class, and race issues. He defined praxis as "action-reflection" and expected higher education curriculum to foster democratic participation while engaging in active, collaborative learning grounded in students' culture (Deans, 1999). Further, Freire asserted that to address the problems and needs in society, critical thought and the process of conscientization (i.e., critical consciousness) were necessary to understand dominant social myths and confront issues of power, oppression, and class (Deans, 1999).

The work of John Dewey and Paolo Freire is essential to understanding the role of service learning in higher education and the potential impact of service learning in communities and society. Although there is much overlap in how Dewey and Freire viewed educational theory and practice, where they differ is similar to how Mitchell (2008) describes traditional service

learning as service without acknowledging inequality and critical service learning as a method to combat inequality. Given some of the differences between Dewey and Freire, it is unsurprising that the current state of service learning reflects those differences.

Service learning as a social movement. An essential function of American higher education has been to serve the needs of society by providing an education that was reflective of the country's needs at that time. In 1636, Harvard College was established to educate clergymen and produce leaders for the new commonwealth. As America and the experimentation of democracy was beginning, colonial American colleges were educating future leaders that would expand and foster the ideals of democracy. By 1880, the country's needs changed due to industrialization and the changing economy.

The shift from agriculture to industry and local to national economics caused higher education to expand its offerings by providing vocational and technical training to meet the practical needs of the county. By the end of the 19th century, American higher education institutions produced scientific research, prepared individuals for professional careers, and provided a comprehensive liberal education. At the same time, social reform movements were taking shape. In 1889, Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr founded the first social settlement in the country, Hull House. At the turn of the century, John Dewey emerged as a prominent voice in psychology and educational reform. His progressive views on education were significantly impacted by the social issues in Chicago at the time, including homelessness, unemployment, and poverty. This expansion of higher education to encompass more disciplines and allow access to more people was done to serve community needs and educate citizens on democracy and civic responsibility. In many ways, these events laid the foundation for service learning.

In 1933, as part of the New Deal Program, the Civilian Conservation Corps was created as a community service project employing men to participate in environmental conservation projects in America's parks, forests, and public lands. Although the program was not perfect, it combined service, learning, and employment for over three million men. After World War II, access to higher education rapidly expanded with the introduction of the G.I. Bill and the influx of government funding to create infrastructure for research and professional fields. Community colleges, cooperative education programs, internship programs, and community service experiences continued to link education, service, and community.

It should be acknowledged that up until this point, the history of American higher education was shaped by, led by, and served predominantly white men. There were some exceptions (e.g., the second Morrill Act of 1890), but in many ways, higher education was not accessible to minorities and women as they were considered second-class citizens. It is also essential to recognize that early American education was seen as the vehicle by which people would learn to be good citizens by participating in democracy, fulfilling their civic responsibility, and subscribing to social norms. However, this narrative was perpetuated by the people in power and excluded many. This matters because the Civil Rights movement was the beginning of significant changes in higher education.

Social movements dominated the 1960s and 1970's. With more people accessing higher education, more had to be done to meet the needs of students attending colleges and universities. Society was demanding change, and colleges and universities were one of the many institutions forced to respond. Altman (1996) suggests that at this point, higher education probably did not lead this change but followed society's demands. With the formation of the Peace Corp in 1961 and the Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) organization in 1964, there was a renewed

sense of civic responsibility and community service on college campuses. The Higher Education Act of 1965 defined historically black colleges (HBCUs) and created pathways for more diverse groups of people to attend colleges and universities. Social movements of the time significantly impacted policy and practice in higher education.

In 1984 the Campus Outreach Opportunity League, followed by the National Campus Compact in 1985, began to formally merge higher education and service by engaging students in service and social action to improve community life and fulfill their civic and social responsibility. The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, an amendment of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, created the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). It also authorized services and resources to VISTA, established Americorp, and Learn and Serve America, which provided grants to promote and support service learning. These actions served as a catalyst for the exponential growth of service learning programs across the United States.

Ernest Boyer, a former president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and former U.S. Commissioner of Education, authored many books and reports on the state of education in America. In 1990, Boyer argued that research is essential, but teaching, service, and the integration of knowledge are needed to make higher education more relevant to "*the world beyond the campus*" (p. 75). This was primarily based on how diversity was impacting higher education and the need to be able to educate all students. Boyer believed that higher education and society were more linked than ever and that higher education needed to acknowledge that connection and change its course. Before his death, in what is seen as a pivotal moment in the scholarship of engagement, Boyer (1996) insisted that "the academy must become a more vigorous partner in the search for answers to our most pressing social, civic, economic,

and moral problems" (p. 18) and that "the campus is being viewed as a place where students get credentialed, and faculty get tenured, while the overall work of the academy does not seem particularly relevant to the nation's most pressing civic, social, economic, and moral problems" (p. 19). The words of Boyer served as a call to action for universities to engage with their communities in teaching and learning. Community engagement practices, including service learning, became commonplace on college campuses from then on.

In 2009, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, in which service learning was a crucial component, and reauthorized the CNCS. Although federal funding to some programs has been drastically cut in recent years, service learning has become embedded in the American education system. These two lines of inquiry, service learning as a pedagogy and service learning as a social movement, have continued to evolve and bring us to the current state of service learning, where traditional service learning models are being critiqued and seen as lacking. In contrast, critical models of service learning are being used to address societal and community needs potentially overlooked by traditional models in favor of student outcomes.

Critiques of service learning. In 1998, as the proliferation of service learning occurred on college campuses, John W. Eby offered a provocative discourse titled *Why Service Learning Is Bad*. He argued that most of what we knew about service learning focused on the *learning* (i.e., student) side, not the *service* (i.e., community) side. At that time, most service learning research focused on students' benefits of engaging in service learning. He listed many reasons service learning is falling short and what could be done to address the deficits to strengthen the service side. Eby highlighted the lack of understanding around the impacts of service on the students and the communities they serve. For example, Eby discussed understanding needs and

how to respond to them. He asserted that service learning often defines need as a deficiency, or lack of, that gets transferred and placed on the client or the community with which students are working. Subsequently, in response to that need, students gain an exaggerated sense of importance by fulfilling that need and ignoring other resources and assets in the community. Eby essentially highlighted what happens in service learning when students interact with social systems; the focus is predominantly on student learning and not on the systems they interact with.

In 2008, Mitchell wrote a seminal paper describing service learning within two models: traditional service learning and critical service learning. According to Mitchell, traditional service learning emphasizes service, although it is unspoken. It does not address social and systemic issues, while critical service learning is rooted in confronting social and systemic inequities and seeks to change them through service. Underlying Mitchell's argument is the assumption that service learning is connected to social justice. This creates a narrative that service learning activities inherently confront social issues, which is not valid in all cases.

Both critiques offer similar yet different views on the challenges of utilizing service learning, and neither includes community perspectives on these issues. While these critiques of service learning are valid, there is a chance that by creating this dualism (i.e., traditional service learning vs. critical service learning), a value judgment is made on the type of service learning universities and communities engage in. Further, service learning aims to create a mutually beneficial experience that enhances student learning and addresses community needs. If that is the case, the focus should be on mutuality and include the perspectives of community partners, regardless of the type of service learning.

Community Engagement: Integrating with the Community

Literature on community engagement focuses on how higher education strives to address contemporary issues through interacting with communities (Jones & Lee, 2017). Service learning is a primary way higher education engages with communities. In a review of studies published in the *Journal of Higher Education Outreach and Engagement*, Jones and Lee (2017) found that most community engagement literature published in the journal addressed four main subjects: outreach and partnership, curricular engagement, institutional commitment, and foundational indicators. Further, the most researched topics, 22.9% of articles, focused on student service-learning experiences, student outcomes, and service-learning curriculum. Notably absent was the presence of articles focusing on "community voice."

A large body of literature focuses on *partnerships* as the level of analysis for service learning and community-focused research (see Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle et al., 2013; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Jacoby, 2003; Janke, 2013). This research focused on interactions between universities and communities (e.g., closeness, equity, integrity), the type of relationship (e.g., transactional, transformative, exploitative), and who is involved in the relationship (e.g., students, faculty, university staff, community partners) to establish a framework for university-community partnerships (Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle et al., 2013; Janke, 2013). While this literature is essential to understanding how partnerships are established and maintained, the lack of community partner perspectives also exists. Overall, within the community engagement literature, specifically service-learning literature, the absence of the community perspective continues to be a critique (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jones & Lee, 2017; Sandy & Holland, 2006).

Outcomes of Service Learning: Student and Community Research

There is a significant body of literature related to service learning, including the benefits of service learning, student outcomes, and university-community engagement practices. The primary body of research on service learning focuses on student outcomes and the impacts of service learning on students' attitudes, values, and beliefs. Three meta-analyses concluded that service learning programs positively affect students in various areas (Celio et al., 2011; Conway et al., 2009; Yorio & Ye, 2012). Celio et al. (2011) found that service learning produced statistically significant effects in five areas: attitudes towards self (e.g., self-efficacy), attitudes toward school and learning (e.g., academic engagement), civic engagement (e.g., civic responsibility), social skills (e.g., cultural competence), and academic achievement (e.g., student grades). Yorio and Ye (2012) found that service learning positively impacted three primary areas: understanding social issues (i.e., an individual's frame of reference that guides decisions making in terms of complex social issues), personal insight (i.e., an individual's perception of self), and cognitive development (i.e., task and skill development and academic achievement). Conway et al. (2009) found that service learning produces positive changes in academic (e.g., beliefs, attitudes, or knowledge towards those being served), personal (e.g., wellbeing), social (e.g., leadership skills), and citizenship (e.g., participatory and justice-oriented citizenship) outcomes. Overall, the effectiveness of service learning for student outcomes has been thoroughly researched and accepted.

Community partner experiences and outcomes. The primary focus of this study is understanding how community partners perceive service learning activities. While most service learning literature centers on students, more recently, there has been a renewed focus on understanding the experiences and outcomes of community partners who engage in service

learning with universities. Literature on community partner perspectives loosely falls into three categories - community partner perspectives on community partnerships, community partner perspectives on all types of experiential learning methods, and community partner perspectives on service learning. It can be challenging to differentiate between the categories, and it is not uncommon for them to overlap. However, although these groups are closely related, it is essential to understand community partner perspectives specific to service learning. Especially given the significant role service learning plays in higher education and its pathways into communities.

Literature on community partnerships is typically discussed within the community engagement literature. It is also common for service learning to be grouped in with other experiential education (e.g., internships and volunteering), making it difficult to ascertain the specific impact of service learning compared to different methodologies. Moreover, research on the community perspective over the past 30 years has been scant compared to student outcomes. By 1999, only eight published papers considered the community component of service learning activities (Eyler et al., 1999), and even then, most focused on students with more informal feedback from community partners. From 2000 to 2011, community partner perspectives were represented more in the literature than in the previous decade. As more attention was focused on community partners, we gained a better understanding of how community organizations view partnerships (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Jones, 2003; Liederman et al., 2003; Sandy & Holland, 2006), as well as the benefits and challenges for community partners engaging in service learning (see Birdsall, 2005; Blouin & Perry 2009; Bushouse, 2005; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Miron & Moely, 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000; Worrall, 2007). For instance, Ferrari and Worrall (2000) surveyed community agencies'

perceptions of working with faculty and students in service learning projects. Overall, most of the findings focused on community partners' motivation for collaborating with universities, with some focus on perceived benefits and/or challenges.

Over the past decade, research has considered community partner perspectives in a few different ways. Tinkler et al. (2014) collaborated with community partners to better understand what service learning practitioners should know about developing effective relationships. They primarily used semi-structured interviews, and community partners were directly involved with generating ideas and, ultimately, a list of recommendations to consider when working with community partners: (a) be attentive to the community partner's mission and vision, (b) understand the human dimension of the community partner's work, (c) be mindful of the community partner's resources, (d) accept and share the responsibility for inefficiencies, (e) consider the legacy of the partnership, and (f) regard process as important. This study is unique because community partners were directly involved in the research and the reporting of the findings, with two community members co-authoring the journal article. Even though the focus was on relationships and not benefits or outcomes for community partners, it provided an example of using community voice to guide research and practice in service learning. Additionally, the focus on reciprocity and ensuring the community's needs were prioritized in service learning activities were central to the study.

Cronley et al. (2015) focused on community partner perspectives on motivation and barriers to service learning participation by conducting focus groups with various representatives from community organizations. They found that community partners are motivated by and for students, from within (personal), and for participation in service learning. Additionally, barriers were noted on three levels - students, faculty/universities, and community partner organizations.

Community partners reported that barriers for students included having unrealistic expectations and a lack of communication, professionalism, and commitment. Similarly, for faculty and university barriers, unrealistic expectations and inadequate communication were barriers, but community partners also described insufficient community engagement practices. Finally, community partner organizations lacked resources and the structure to supervise students, had to overcome logistical issues, struggled to fit their organization's needs with the needs of the service learning course, and lacked sustainability.

Darby et al. (2016) used qualitative interviews to understand community partner perspectives on service learning as a form of diversity education. They explored perceptions of how to integrate students with very different backgrounds from those of the clients they serve into their organization. The first main finding was that 80% of community partners recognized students' initial anxiety and fear while interacting with clients different from them and asserted that it was due to a lack of social awareness. They also found that community partners acted as co-educators in situations where students struggled with fear and anxiety by teaching service learning students about diversity and actively finding ways to overcome fears to better relate to clients. The theme of community partners being co-educators was unexpected and highlighted the essential role of community partners in service learning.

James and Logan (2016) conducted an exploratory case study examining the community impact of a graduate-level service learning course. Using an adapted framework by Gelmon et al. (2001), they assessed how the service learning course impacted the organization. Findings suggested that the service learning course affected the organizations by building capacity and providing economic, social, and personal benefits. Community partners believed that increased labor for programming and more extensive visibility of the organizations' work in the larger

community were the most significant impacts. These findings are unique because they focused on one course utilizing service learning and attempted to measure community impact on numerous levels.

Petri (2015) examined community partner perspectives on service learning, focusing on the concept of reciprocity. She provided four ideas for how service learning facilitators can enhance their relationships with community partners: (a) reciprocity drives community partners' outcomes, (b) community partners value students' learning outcomes, (c) institutionalization of service learning matters to community partners, and (d) community partners want to contribute. Partners also identified challenges with service learning studies. Setting realistic expectations for the work being done at the organization, dealing with logistics, and the lack of follow-up or closure after service learning ended were the main concerns for community partners. These findings align with previous literature; however, a unique finding was that if service learning was not a priority or seen as meaningful by universities, it made community partners feel less important. This supported Petri's idea that reciprocity was essential for community partners, and community partners genuinely cared about outcomes for students and their organizations. Overall, the previously mentioned studies on community partner perspectives cite reciprocity and mutual benefit as essential for successful service learning activities.

Social Exchange Theory: Reciprocity and Mutual Benefit

Social exchange theory asserts that social behavior is an exchange process seeking to maximize rewards and minimize costs (Emerson, 1976). The exchange process relies on reciprocity as it is two-sided, mutually contingent, and mutually rewarding (Emerson, 1976). Further, the relationship between both parties evolves to become more trusting and committed, but there must be mutual commitment and mutual benefit for this to happen. Applied to service

learning, this would suggest that understanding the benefit to community partners is essential to understanding the efficacy of service learning.

Service learning has been examined through social exchange theory (e.g., Karasik, 2020; Miron & Moely, 2006) because of its distinction from other experiential education methodologies and its primary assumption of being mutually beneficial for both universities (i.e., students, faculty, administration) and communities. However, our understanding of mutual benefit is limited, specifically in service learning. Research has shown a detailed account of how service learning benefits students. Still, there is only a basic understanding of how community partners conceptualize and evaluate the benefit of engaging in service learning activities. Additionally, given the diversity of service learning activities, a more nuanced understanding of benefits is needed. Further, since mutuality does not ensure a fair and equitable distribution of benefits, a deeper understanding of how community partners perceive benefits can contribute to research on equity. Finally, relationships between university stakeholders and communities rooted in mutuality and high in reciprocity and equity are likely to be the most beneficial for all stakeholders (James & Logan, 2016).

Research on mutual benefit in community engagement is limited (see Karasik, 2020; Pasquesi, 2020; Peacock & O'Quin, 2006), with even less specific to service learning. Oberg De La Garza and Kuri (2014) prioritized mutuality in examining literacy education and outcomes in Latino students. They partnered with a local neighborhood association to ensure an "equal voice" was given to the community when identifying needs, designing service-learning objectives, interpreting the data, and determining the project's conclusions. Asghar and Rowe (2017) highlighted how reciprocity and reflection drove their community partnership and allowed for

more meaningful and impactful experiences. Although there is limited research, both examples emphasize the importance of mutual benefit and reciprocity in service learning.

Service Learning and Psychology

In 1995, the same year Boyer was writing *The Scholarship of Engagement*, Irwin Altman, a social psychologist, was presenting a paper at the 103rd annual convention of the American Psychological Association where he suggested the need for higher education to continually assess the needs of the larger society and our communities by reshaping our educational activities to meet those needs. *The Scholarship of Engagement* (Boyer, 1996) and *Higher Education and Psychology in the Millennium* (Altman, 1996) were published around the same time. While Boyer was calling for higher education to engage with communities to solve the pressing social issues of the time, Altman was calling on the field of psychology to do the same.

Altman (1996) argued that a "new compact with society" (p. 374) needed to be made regarding higher education, and as a result, the relationship between students, faculty, and the community needed to change. He proposed using a new conceptual model to guide thinking around how to create a more community-oriented focus for education. The model included foundational knowledge (i.e., the foundational knowledge of a discipline), professional knowledge (i.e., practical skills in a field), and socially responsive knowledge (i.e., connecting the curriculum to the community and directly addressing social issues). Altman used the term socially responsive knowledge interchangeably with service learning and asserted that no field is more suited to the idea of socially responsive knowledge than psychology.

In 1998, the American Association for Higher Education published a series on Service Learning in the Disciplines. The sixth in the series, edited by Bringle and Duffy (1998), focused on service learning in psychology. The issue focused on psychology's theoretical and empirical

contributions to service learning and the integration of service in psychology courses. Over the next decade, there were a handful of examples of successfully integrating service learning into psychology courses (see Chapdelaine & Chapman, 1999; Kogan & Kellaway, 2004; Kretchmar, 2001; Lundy, 2007; Stadtlander, 2002). More recently, literature on service learning in psychology includes using service learning in graduate education to help bridge the science-to-service gap (Grassetti et al., 2021), utilizing e-service learning as an alternative to in-person service learning during the COVID-19 pandemic (Schmidt, 2021), and using service learning as an effective way to reduce stigma and bias against individuals with mental illness in an undergraduate psychopathology course (Barney et al., 2017). Additionally, the APA Citizens Psychologists Presidential Work Group (2018) recommended using service learning to prepare "citizen psychologists" to use their education to benefit the community. Although psychology has utilized service learning in various ways, there is still a lack of research focusing on service learning from the community's perspective.

Community psychology and service learning. Community psychology and service learning have been evolving in tandem for over 50 years. While community psychology and service learning emerged from different disciplines (psychology and education, respectively), they have common interests. The field of *community psycholog*y was formalized in 1965 in the U.S. Although the use of service learning pedagogy as we currently know it was not prominent until the mid-1980s, the term service learning was first coined in 1967 (Sigmon, 1979). The field of community psychology evolved out of the need to attend to social issues detrimental to individual health by addressing community environments. Similarly, higher education uses service learning to educate students on various social problems through *experience* and promote taking action to address the needs of communities. The common purpose of addressing social

issues and attending to community needs makes community psychology uniquely suited to service learning pedagogy.

In 2010, the *American Journal of Community Psychology* published a special issue on service learning research. Reeb (2010) introduced the special issue and illustrated how community psychology values directly align with service learning pedagogy and outcomes. For example, social responsibility, respect for diversity, health and wellbeing, using an ecological perspective, and social action and change are shared goals and values for community psychology and service learning (Reeb, 2010). However, although community psychology aligns with service learning in many ways, research still predominantly focuses on student (i.e., individual) outcomes and perspectives. For example, Rosing et al. (2010) explored student perspectives on barriers, obstacles, and limitations of service learning. While this study was unique for its focus on the challenges associated with service learning, it only included students' perspectives on the process and did not consider community partner perspectives. Consequently, a gap in our understanding of the true impact of service learning activities on community partners, communities, and broader systems remains unexplored. Community psychology could potentially bridge traditional and critical service learning by focusing on the larger context of service learning and incorporating community perspectives into teaching and research.

The Steans Center: DePaul University's Service Learning Program

University-based service learning programs vary based on the institution's tradition and how service learning addresses its mission (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002). The Steans Center is situated within DePaul University, the largest Catholic university in the country. The mission of DePaul University is:

As an innovative Catholic Vincentian university anchored in the global city of Chicago, DePaul supports the integral human development of its students. The university does so through its commitment to outstanding teaching, academic excellence, real-world experience, community engagement, and systemic change. DePaul prepares graduates to succeed in their chosen fields and agents of transformation throughout their lives.

Guided by an ethic of Vincentian personalism and professionalism, DePaul compassionately upholds the dignity of all members of its diverse, multi-faith, and inclusive community. Through education and research, the university addresses the great questions of our day, promoting peaceful, just, and equitable solutions to social and environmental challenges. Since its founding in 1898, DePaul University has remained dedicated to making education accessible to all, with particular attention to including underserved and underrepresented communities. (DePaul University Division of Mission and Ministry, 2021)

DePaul University prioritizes teaching and learning, values diversity, and is committed to serving underserved and underrepresented communities, including educating first-generation college students. As a Vincentian university located in a major urban center, DePaul is inexorably linked to the local and global community, acknowledging the importance of service and the need to respond to contemporary social issues (DePaul University Division of Mission and Ministry, 2021). For many higher education institutions, service learning program goals include the development of citizenship and preparation of students for participation in civic life, moral and religious development of students, career preparation through real-world activity, and mutually beneficial relationship within the community (Kenny & Gallagher, 2002). This is true for DePaul University.

In 2001, the Irwin W. Steans Center for Community-based Service Learning and Community Service Studies was founded. This resulted from a university initiative to expand experiential and service learning into all colleges. The Steans Center develops and supports academic service learning, scholarships, internships, and other community engagement programming serving students, faculty, and community organizations. The Steans Center also houses the Monsignor John J. Egan Office for Urban Education and Community Partnerships (UECP) and the non-profit Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) Institute. The mission of the Steans Center is to develop "*mutually beneficial relationships* with community organizations to engage DePaul students in educational opportunities grounded in *Vincentian values* of respect for human dignity and the quest for *social justice*" (DePaul University Steans Center, 2021).

For the current study, the focus is on community-based service learning courses. Community-based service learning (CbSL) models are rooted in respect and collaboration and focus on partnerships of reciprocal exchange (Hammersley, 2013). Further, CbSL programs intentionally engage in experiences that involve social justice, systemic and structural inequality, power and oppression, and poverty (Hammersley, 2013; Jones, 2002). The Steans Center uses Academic Service Learning (ASL) as a pedagogical tool, intentionally integrating relevant and meaningful service with the community, academic learning, and civic learning. ASL is fully integrated with course content (i.e., theories, methods, concepts, and assignments) as a source of knowledge drawn from experiences developed through partnerships between the community and the university. Any course at DePaul that includes ASL can be categorized as Community-based Service Learning (CbSL). Further, CbSL courses are categorized based on the type of service learning experience provided in the course (see Table 1).

Table 1

Diversified Community-based Service Learning

Types of Service	Description
Direct Service	Students engage in service that directly benefits a community organization's existing programming (e.g., tutoring, providing health screenings, and serving food).
Project-based Service	Students work with a community organization to produce a tangible product by the end of the term (e.g., develop a website, create a communication plan, and develop a program).
Community-based Research	Students contribute to a research effort defined and driven by a community partner.
Advocacy	Students support an ongoing campaign to address a critical social, economic, and/or environmental issue in Chicago or internationally.
Solidarity	Students are engaged in a program or service that involves valuing the dignity of all people, respecting them as individuals, in the pursuit of justice, community-building, and peace.

Rationale for Current Study

In summary, service learning has become an integral part of higher education's attempt to meet the needs of society by educating students on current issues in society and equipping students to address those needs. Historically, service learning has focused on student outcomes to determine effectiveness. This focus addressed the goal of educating students through service learning activities; nevertheless, it does not address the community component of service learning. Research discussing service learning (e.g., community engagement, partnerships, service learning practice) consistently lacks community partner perspectives. The inherent focus on students is reasonable considering that universities are primarily tasked with educating students. Still, this persistent gap in the literature suggests that community partners' needs are not being addressed in service learning research. Further, when education extends into communities, as it should, universities must ensure reciprocity is present in those exchanges.

The current study sought to understand the perceptions of community partners engaged in service learning activities. A mixed methods approach was used to compare and analyze the similarities and differences of both qualitative and quantitative data. This methodological approach also addressed a gap in the literature, as most research on community partners is qualitative. For the current study, community partner perspectives were explored using extant focus group data collected by the Steans Center. Subsequently, quarterly evaluation survey data was used to measure and describe community partner ratings of experiences with students, faculty, and the Steans Center during service learning activities. The reason for using qualitative and quantitative data was to converge the two forms of data to bring greater insight into community partner perspectives than would be obtained by either type of data separately. For the first phase of the study, the guiding research question was:

- *How do community partners perceive service learning experiences with university stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and the Steans Center)?*

For the second phase of the study, the guiding research question was:

- *To what extent do community partners rate experiences working with university stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and the Steans Center)?*

After data analysis for both phases was complete, data integration was guided by the following question:

- *What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about community partner perceptions with the evaluation data measured on the quarterly survey?*

Method

The current study utilized a convergent mixed methods design informed by a pragmatic philosophical worldview across two separate but related phases. The central purpose of the present study was to provide insights into how community partners associated with service learning pedagogy perceive their relationships with multiple stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and the Steans Center) at a medium-sized, faith-based university located in the Midwest city of Chicago, Illinois. This study used extant focus group data collected during the 2015-2016 academic year (Phase 1) and quarterly evaluation data collected autumn quarter of 2016 through the winter quarter of 2020 (Phase 2) to address the research questions.

Context for Service Learning

This study was conducted in collaboration with the Steans Center at DePaul University, Chicago, IL. The Steans Center was established in 1998 (originally called the Office for Community-based Service Learning) to integrate service learning pedagogy into the curriculum of various programs and departments throughout the university. In 2006, the university received a Carnegie Foundation's Community Engagement Classification and is viewed as one of the top community-engaged institutions in the country. The current mission of the Steans Center focuses on developing mutually beneficial relationships with community organizations that provide service learning opportunities to students. Students engage with community organizations by participating in internships, scholarships, or academic service learning supported by the Steans Center.

On average, the Steans Center facilitates various community engagement initiatives and activities with over 4000 students, 95 faculty members, and 148 community-based organizations every academic year. Since its inception, various informal and formal research and evaluation

practices have examined different aspects of service learning activities supported by the Steans Center. Currently, the Steans Center conducts quarterly evaluations of students, faculty, and community-based organizations that participate in some form of service learning (i.e., direct service, project-based, community-based research, advocacy, and solidarity). This study focused on the data collected from community-based organizations.

Research Design and Philosophical Worldview

This study utilized a *convergent mixed method design*, bringing a more nuanced understanding of how community partners perceive service-learning activities within their organization. Integrating qualitative and quantitative data enables a more complete picture by using the strengths of both modes of inquiry (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Consequently, the rationale for a mixed methods approach is that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods are sufficient to capture community partners' diverse and nuanced experiences with service learning activities in their organizations. Specifically, in a convergent design, the goal is to obtain and analyze different but complementary data on the same topic to examine the relationship among variables (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Extant data were used in both phases of this study. The first phase consisted of *qualitative* data analyses in which community partner focus group data were analyzed. The goal of the qualitative phase was to identify themes generated by community partner focus group responses. The second phase consisted of primarily *quantitative* data analysis with some qualitative survey data analysis. The integration and interpretation of both studies were a primary focus. Integration is arguably the most crucial consideration for mixed methods research, but it is the least discussed element in the literature (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A convergence coding matrix was used to compare the focus group data with the survey data to provide a more comprehensive

understanding of community partner perceptions. The visual model of the procedures for the convergent mixed methods design of the current study is presented in Figure 2.

   Philosophical worldview. The current study aligned most with the pragmatic worldview. Rather than focusing on ontology and epistemology (Cherryholmes, 1992), pragmatism is concerned with the problem as it currently is, the context in which it exists, the expansion of knowledge about the problem, and finding solutions to address the problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Morgan, 2007; and Patton, 1990). A pragmatic worldview aligns with a mixed method approach. The strategies used for data collection and analysis (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) best addressed the current problem and are complementary, not contradictory. Further, pragmatism views knowledge gained only if it is useful and informs results. This worldview was suited to this inquiry, which sought to gain knowledge beyond the intent of mutual benefit in service-learning activities and understand whether the service-learning activities supported by the Steans Center were indeed beneficial for communities.

   The role of the researcher is critical to acknowledge because of the interpretive nature of qualitative research. The researcher's involvement with data collection in both studies is different. For Phase 1, the researcher did not collect the qualitative focus group data. The data was collected by the director of the Steans Center and a co-investigator as part of a larger study. However, salient elements of the researcher's positionality should be mentioned. The researcher is a student in the community psychology program. She has been the research and evaluation coordinator at the Steans Center since 2018. Before her research and evaluation coordinator role, her experience with service learning was minimal. Over the course of her employment, she has gained an understanding of service learning pedagogy and had first-hand experience with how

Figure 2.

Mixed Method Study Design

Aim: To examine service-learning through the experiences of community partners.

CONVERGENT MIXED METHOD DESIGN

Phase 1:
Focus groups exploring community partners perspectives of service learning experiences.

QUAL

Phase 2:
Multiyear evaluation survey exploring community partner experiences with students, faculty, and the Steans Center during service learning activities.

QUANT+ qual

Integration and Interpretation of Research Study Components

(QUAL+(QUANT + qual))

Note. Flowchart showing mixed method model including research aims, phase 1 and 2, and integration of data.

students, faculty, and community partners perceive service learning activities. Through this experience, the researcher began recognizing the disparities between university benefits and community partner benefits in service learning partnerships, which led to the current research. For Phase 2, some of the extant survey data were collected by the primary researcher in her role

as the research and evaluation coordinator at the Steans Center from 2018 to the present. The researcher administered the surveys and collected the data using standardized procedures guided by her role at the Steans Center.

The researchers' experiences may have shaped how she viewed, understood, and interpreted the data. It should be noted that the researcher did not interact with community partners beyond a general email requesting they participate in the quarterly evaluation. To address potential bias, verification procedures, including triangulation of data sources and incorporating perspectives from a range of service learning partners, were used to establish the accuracy of findings. Additionally, a review was done by the researcher's academic advisor and dissertation supervisory committee on all research procedures and data analysis in the current study. Two distinct but related phases were conducted for the current study.

Phase 1: Community Partner Focus Group

Phase 1 was part of a larger evaluation conducted by the Steans Center in October of the 2015-2016 academic year, whose primary goal was to develop protocols for collecting community partner feedback on assessments of the service learning pedagogy. The objective of Phase 1 was to understand how community partners perceive their experiences with service learning activities through the self-reported data from focus groups. Focus groups provide rich contextual data that can be used to understand the diversity of experiences for community partners. In Phase 1, the following research question was examined:

- *How do community partners perceive service-learning experiences with university stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and the Steans Center)?*

Participants and Recruitment

A total of four focus groups were conducted with 27 individuals representing various community partner organizations throughout Chicago, Illinois. The university's institutional review board reviewed and approved all study protocols. Demographic data for 9 focus group participants were missing. Of the available data for the 18 participants, 66.7% (n = 12) were female and 33.3% (n = 6) were male. Participants represented various types of organizations including advocacy (n = 11; 61.1%), not for profit (n = 8; 44.4%), arts and cultural (n = 4; 22.2%), historical preservation (n = 1; 5.5%), faith-based (n = 3; 16.7%), multipurpose service provider (n = 4; 22.2%), information and referral (n = 2; 11.1%), education (n = 5; 27.8%), transportation (n = 1; 5.5%), and health care (n = 1; 5.5%).

The larger evaluation study used purposive sampling to ensure a diverse sample that best addressed the research questions. To participate, individuals had to be current or former community partners who are/were involved in hosting DePaul service learning students and be between the ages of 18 and 64. Prospective participants were contacted by the co-investigator, the director of the Steans Center. Consistent with purposive sampling, only current or former community partners engaging with DePaul students were contacted. Potential participants were sent an email explaining the purpose of the study and requesting their participation. After potential participants responded to the recruitment email, they were confirmed and scheduled for a focus group. Response rates for the focus groups are unavailable.

Procedure

Interviewing procedures. All focus groups were conducted by the co-investigators (i.e., the director of the Steans Center and a professor in the School for New Learning) of the larger evaluation study. Focus groups were conducted in person during the daytime on DePaul's

campus. The informed consent form was explained at the beginning of each focus group and signed consent forms were collected before each focus group began. Focus groups took approximately one hour. Participants were not compensated for participating; however, lunch was provided.

       Interviewing protocol. The focus group guide was developed for the larger study. All completed focus groups were fully transcribed. The focus group guide contained two general sections. The first section focused on community partners' overall experiences with service learning at their organization. The second section focused on collecting and receiving feedback on communication practices. This study focused on the first section. Focus group questions specific to the current study include: 1) Describe your recent service learning experience with the university, and 2) What were the strengths and weaknesses of your recent involvement with the project/experience? Focus Group protocol and questions can be found in Appendix A.

Analysis

       All interview sessions were digitally recorded and fully transcribed by a professional transcription service, and a trained research assistant verified all transcripts. Transcripts were entered into NVivo for analysis. Open coding and thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006) were used to analyze the current data set. To become familiar with the data, the researcher listened to the audio recordings of the focus groups, and the transcripts were read and re-read in their entirety. Then the researcher began open coding by identifying the segments of relevant text and noted initial thoughts and ideas. After open coding was completed, similarities and differences among codes were discussed to refine codes and identify the most significant codes. Throughout the process, the researcher considered what needed to be revised over multiple iterations of the coding scheme. Initial codes were grouped into themes and used to create a codebook. Codes

were revised and restructured as needed. Themes were developed in an inductive manner to ensure any meaning derived was directly tied to the data. After the codebook was created, the final coding scheme was applied to all transcripts. Major themes were then added to the convergent coding matrix. Results of Phase 1 were written up and integrated after Phase 2 data analysis.

Phase 2: Quarterly Community Partner Surveys

Phase 2 was a multi-year evaluation survey exploring community partner experiences with students, faculty, and the Steans Center during service learning activities. The goal of Phase 2 was to assess how community partners evaluate and describe their service learning experiences with students, faculty, and the Steans Center during the academic quarter. In Phase 2, the following research question was evaluated:

- *To what extent do community partners rate experiences working with university stakeholders (i.e., students, faculty, and the Steans Center)?*

Participants

As part of the Steans Center's ongoing evaluation strategy, quarterly evaluations were administered to students, faculty, and community partners engaged in service-learning activities. To be included, community organizations had to have participated in a service learning activity connected to a course with students and/or faculty during the quarter the evaluation was distributed. Any community partners who engaged with students during the quarter were eligible to complete the survey. From autumn quarter 2016 through winter quarter 2020, there were 336 completed community partner surveys. Survey respondents were from various community organizations addressing a broad range of purposes throughout Chicago. Table 2 shows a breakdown of the community partner demographics.

Table 2

Community Partner Demographics

Responding agency type/function	$n = 336$	Percentage
Advocacy	70	20.83
Arts & Cultural	20	5.95
Education	58	17.26
Faith-based	53	15.77
Healthcare	19	5.65
Housing	37	11.01
Information & Referral	10	2.98
Multipurpose service provider	63	18.75
Not for profit	163	48.51
Other/Unknown	10	2.98
Total[a]	503	

Note. Percentages were calculated based on the number of responses to each question.
[a]Respondents could select multiple categories.

Procedure

Recruitment. Each academic quarter the research and evaluation coordinator at the Steans Center distributed a link to a Qualtrics survey (https://www.qualtrics.com), via email, to every eligible community partner sometime after week 10 in the current quarter. The survey was voluntary, but community partners were encouraged to fill out the survey, and a reminder email was sent approximately two weeks after the initial email.

Measures

The quarterly community partner evaluation survey included a demographic section and three primary sections: 1) Community partner experiences with students, 2) Community partner experiences with faculty, and 3) Community partner experiences with the Steans Center. Each section has a combination of quantitative and qualitative questions. For the quantitative questions, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with statements using a five-point Likert scale (i.e., 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). No formal data on the

reliability and validity of the evaluation items are available; however, items have apparent face validity. The qualitative components of the survey included open-ended questions with open text space for participants to elaborate on their perspectives or experiences. The complete community partner evaluation can be found in Appendix B. The overall response rate for all academic quarters was 47.89%. The response rates for each academic quarter are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3

Evaluation Survey Response Rates by Academic Quarter

Academic Quarter	Academic Year			
	2016 – 2017	2017 – 2018	2018 – 2019	2019 – 2020
		Percentage		
Autumn Quarter	62.50	51.72	48.00	43.18
Winter Quarter	42.31	49.35	47.50	44.83
Spring Quarter	-	51.80	27.14	-
Summer Quarter	20.00	80.00	33.33	-
Academic Year Total Response Rate	52.11	53.33	41.03	44.12

Note. Blank cells indicate that no data were collected or analyzed for that academic quarter.

Analysis

Using mostly descriptive statistical analysis and some inferential statistical analysis, data collected during the autumn quarter of 2016 through the winter quarter of 2020 were analyzed. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze individual survey responses and overall survey responses for each group (i.e., community partner feedback on students, faculty, and the Steans Center). Measures of central tendency, variability, and frequency distributions were analyzed. Additionally, independent t-tests and ANOVAs were used to explore the differences between project-based and non-project-based service learning.

The open-ended survey responses were used to confirm, enhance, or refine the quantitative survey responses. The qualitative survey data were analyzed with deductive coding

using the codebook generated from Phase 1. Also, emergent, inductive codes generated by the open-ended survey responses were added to the codebook generated in Phase 1. Open-ended responses in surveys typically do not allow for the generation of rich, detailed descriptions (Saldana, 2015); however, integrating the open-ended survey responses with the quantitative survey data and the qualitative focus group data should provide a complete and detailed understanding of community partner perceptions.

Data Integration

A convergence coding matrix was used to integrate the comprehensive data results, make interpretations, and expand our understanding of community partner perspectives on service learning. This was done using convergent coding to view a side-by-side comparison of the qualitative and quantitative results. By integrating the findings of both phases of the current study, the final research question was evaluated:

- *What results emerge from comparing the exploratory qualitative data about community partner perceptions with the evaluation data measured on the quarterly survey?*

The process involved actively searching and comparing themes for any patterns that arose. Themes and subthemes were grouped based on similarity of concept and interpreted to identify the meaning of these themes. Finally, themes and subthemes were searched for agreement and disagreement between phases. Agreement and disagreement were defined as convergence (i.e., finding directly agree), complementary (i.e., complementary information on the same issue), dissonance (i.e., findings appear to contradict one another), and silence (i.e., themes arising from one phase of the study but not the other).

Results

Community Partner Focus Groups

Phase 1 of the current research focused on community partner perceptions of service learning experiences with different university stakeholders, namely, students, faculty, and Steans Center. Across four focus groups in October 2015, several themes emerged in response to the two open-ended questions "*Describe your recent service-learning experience with the university*" and "*What were the strengths and weaknesses of your recent involvement with the project/experience*?" Overall, community partners characterized service-learning activities in five broad ways: (a) experiences with students, (b) experiences with the Steans Center, (c) service learning impacts on organizational capacity, (d) perceptions of university partnerships, and (e) other community partner perceptions.

Experiences with Students

When discussing experiences with service learning, community partners primarily discussed their experiences and interactions with students. Community partners reported many examples of how service learning students engaged with their organizations. Subthemes included successful experiences with service-learning students; students continuing service beyond required hours; reciprocal learning between students, community partners, and community members; examples of student work, especially project-based service learning projects; and challenges related to service learning students.

Student Work

In describing their experiences with service learning, community partners provided detailed descriptions of the work students carried out at their organizations. The work completed by students was commented on the most by community partners. In a few cases, the comments

about student work were neutral; in one case, a community partner reported poor quality of

work. Still, the majority of the descriptions of student work were favorable. For instance,

> *To see them working with students is also amazing. ... We have them work with our ...*
> *creative writing workshops program, which is where schools from all over Chicago,*
> *including the suburbs come out, and they do a ... 2.5-hour workshop with us where we*
> *lead them through different reading and writing activities, also allow them the*
> *opportunity to write their own short stories or poems. And the students have really just*
> *been really awesome with that ... just the way they engage with the students.*

Additionally, when community partners described student work, there was a distinction between

project-based service-learning activities and other types of service learning. In some cases, the

difference was explicit; in others, it was based on the description of the work.

> *We had ... students [in] a project-based class ... that at the end helped us update our*
> *website and then also created a brochure for parents about service learning that we*
> *kinda had but needed updates. ... that was really helpful to have by the end of the quarter*
> *... it's always such a short time ... but it was great for those two young ladies simulate ...*
> *here's the product. ... That was a really great experience.*

Overall, examples of student work provided insight into how service learning students are

impacting community partners' organizations and the communities they serve.

Positive Views and Experiences

Most community partners shared positive and successful experiences with service

learning students. This included favorable statements about service learning activities and the

overall experience of working with service learning students. In many cases, community partners

described instances where the experiences with students were beneficial to their organization and

the broader community. One participant explained how service learners helped their organization and the population they served:

> *All of the [service learners] are really good at figuring out where the needs are the most ... and it's really nice because ... the kids that we serve, their parents are very low income and ... are immigrants, so it's not like ... they can really help them traditionally [with] their homework. ... Which is where the DePaul students come in, so I've had only good experiences.*

In this case, service learners could identify their organization's needs and successfully address the needs of the population the organization serves.

For many community partners, service learning students were viewed as assets to their organization and essential to the work they do in their organizations. One community partner stated, "the students … have played really a key role and I think without them we would not have been able to do many of [the] things we have been able to do." Positive statements about student attitudes, student perspectives, and the impact of student work were mentioned most often. One community partner described how service learning students were vital to their organization:

> *My manager came to me yesterday and said, "can we get more service learners? How do we get more?"… I think that they offer very valuable help with our organization because right now we are ... short-staffed ... but we've had service learners ... and they've been awesome. They've had a can-do attitude. They bring new ideas to the center, which is very important because we do the work [every day], and sometimes, we're just going with the flow, and they're like, "oh well have you tried this?" And we're like "no," but they're really young and fresh, and so they have all these great ideas and ... we've implemented*

some of their suggestions ... on the day-to-day operations of the center, so it's an

excellent asset to us.

In this example, service learning students not only filled a need at the community partners' organization but provided additional insight and added value to the organization. Additionally, the benefit of service learning students bringing a new perspective and energy to their organization was expressed by many community partners.

Continued service. Community partners noted many instances where service learning students worked beyond their required service hours during the academic quarter, continued to work at organizations beyond the academic quarter, or planned to continue service. In all cases, mentioning continued service was done positively and indicated a successful service learning experience. In some cases, community partners described continued service as a way to gauge the positive impact the service learning had on students. One community partner explained:

We had a student recently who came in for ... four or five hours out of just his time

because he was interested in ... helping us edit some of the student work, and that was

really helpful because sometimes at the end of the year, we ... get down to the line of

getting all that work typed up and sent out to the schools, so very helpful.

We had four people from DePaul, two of whom have asked to stay on with us. They want

to continue their relationship [one student] is going to continue helping me with our

yearbook because it requires a lot of technical, technological skills that I don't possess.

... Another student ... wants to stay on as a tutor with our high school students; she's

helping them write research papers, math, etc.

In both descriptions, service learning students spending additional time at their organizations benefited community partners. Service beyond the requirement led students to become more deeply involved in their organizations, and the skills they brought to the organization were a benefit.

Reciprocity and mutual benefit. Community partners discussed how service learning experiences created opportunities for reciprocal learning. Interactions with students created opportunities for exchanging knowledge and skills that benefitted students and their organizations. One community partner explained, "*The students have been awesome … we're all from different places, and so it's been … a rewarding experience. I learned from them, and they learn from us*." For this community partner, the service learning experience provided an opportunity for reciprocal learning and mutual benefit.

Reciprocity also extended to community partners viewed as educators and not just service recipients. Many community partners expressed the importance of facilitating students' experiences with communities they have not had exposure to and educating students on their organization's mission. In many cases, community partners discussed experiences with students who had never been exposed to diverse communities and how they played a crucial role in educating students about the issues facing people in those communities.

> *One of [the] best parts [was] working with the two very young women who … worked side-by-side with me doing office help. … I [loved] working with them … the wide-eyed youth they would show when I would … talk about our recidivism rates, I would talk about … look at how far this person has come and look at how transformed his life has been.*

Exposure to different communities other than one's own is inherent in service learning, and community partners view themselves as playing a role in educating students. However, in some cases, this can be challenging for community partners and students.

We've had some very interesting experiences; one student in particular ... whose father was a police officer and when she heard us talking about the problems of police crimes in oppressed communities [she] really couldn't handle it ... it was very personal to her, for her we were talking about her father. Now over the course of ... the project, she began to realize that we weren't talking about an individual police officer, we were only talking about a system, and the problem is the system ... that created these problems and not the individuals ... she really changed and began to see it in a different way, I don't want to say we convinced her because I don't know if that's fully true, but I think it had an impact on her and that was very ... positive for us.

When this community partner began discussing this example, it was described as "a problem." As the community partner explained further, it became clear that it may have been a challenging situation. Still, the community partner served as an educator and came out of the situation feeling a sense of accomplishment.

Lastly, community partners described many instances where service learning students fulfilled an immediate need at their organization, which was beneficial.

Our food service coordinator approached me yesterday and [asked] 'when are the next quarter of service learners coming?' And it just made me realize ... there's a lot of value there, and they're almost expected and ... welcomed ... I thought that was a really positive reaction; she's ... anxious to see them again ... It's fun to see people plugged into opportunities that really matter, and there's a lot of engagement with the community

in those moments and in that volunteer opportunity … it's a very mutually beneficial

relationship there, which is great.

Overall, the exchange of knowledge and skills benefited most community partners.

Challenges

Community partners also acknowledged the challenges associated with taking on service

learning students at their organization. There was a consensus that concerns around managing

students were the most challenging aspect of hosting service learning students. The most

common concerns around managing students were schedules, availability, consistency, and

reliability.

I think the problem … is just managing 6, 7 different schedules … it's only been recently

where it's really been a … struggle … so scheduling in general, managing different

schedules, I think is an issue, but that's always going to be a thing so.

Students are just like everybody else … they have problems that come up and sometimes

can't make it and … getting them to let us know in advance that they're not going to make

it or be there when they said they'd be there is … I think we are doing better now in that,

and the students are doing better, but for a while [it] was very frustrating.

Our high school classes run at night, and our open tutoring hours are 4 pm to 6 pm, and

… I don't think any of the DePaul students, actually, only one of the DePaul students,

could be there in those hours. So … three of the students were kinda stuck doing more

administrative, front office help, typing things for me or data entry or standing at the

coffee machine when I know what they were there for was direct contact with our

program participants.

In most cases, managing students is necessary to engage in service learning for community partners. However, in many cases, it creates additional work for community partners who are already overburdened. Additionally, while students do not set the number of hours they complete, how they fulfill the hour requirement varies. One community partner explained, *"Some students, not always but a few quarters every now and then, a couple of students will try and accomplish the 25 hours within a week."*

A few community partners discussed concerns about student motivation and fit with the work they are doing at their organization. Mandatory service hours and the type of work students engage in at the organization were attributed to students' possible lack of motivation. Overall, most community partners described challenges as burdensome but not insurmountable.

Experience with the Steans Center

After experiences with students, community partners most talked about their experiences with the Steans Center. Community partners discussed their positive experiences interacting with the Steans Center and the challenges they have experienced based on the policies and procedures. Of note, some challenges (e.g., the quarter system) are not within the control of the Steans Center but were equated with the university at large. Additionally, some community partners asked questions about how certain decisions are made and for clarification on policies and practices (e.g., student placement).

Positive views and experiences with the Steans Center

Many community partners expressed appreciation and satisfaction with their relationship with the Steans Center. In many cases, community partners expressed satisfaction with the amount of communication with the Steans Center.

> *I would say … how responsive you are … when there are questions or concerns, I've never had trouble getting … somebody to email me back right away … I think that communication is just really good, and I do think it's improved over the years.*

Further, one community partner explained, *"I think there is very good communication … I feel … there's … a trust and deep relationship, so anything that I have questions on I don't hesitate on asking, so there's open communication channels, and I like that."* Some community partners had limited interaction with the Steans Center; others reported positive interactions and relationships with specific members of Steans Center staff.

Challenges

Community partners were sometimes unclear regarding certain Steans Center decisions and policies, which left them confused and uncertain. In some instances, challenges with service hours (i.e., too few or too many) were attributed to the Steans Center even though the Steans Center does not set the hour requirement. Additionally, some community partners described issues with communication, especially if there was turnover at the Steans Center.

> *There was a time when our contact … left … DePaul and we … got cut off also from … everything basically … It was … a sudden thing, so I … was trying to communicate with somebody but was unable to ever get anybody else to communicate with me … I felt … baffled [because] we had had such a good relationship and our organization is really*

dynamic that we're able to accommodate all types of ... students ... Nevertheless, ... that

occurred ... and there was nobody really to try to communicate with after that.

Some community partners inquired about student placement and how courses are matched with organizations. In these instances, community partners expressed concerns about the match between the community partners and the students and whether there were ways to learn more about students before they started service learning activities. One community partner explained, "*We didn't know who they were or anything about them.*" Community partners described this instance and others as a way to ensure that student expectations align with community partners' needs and prevent disappointment from both sides. Lastly, community partners expressed the need for information about different programming at the Steans Center and more information about resources and support provided by the Steans Center.

Organizational Capacity

There were many instances where community partners directly or indirectly acknowledged service-learning students' impact on their organizational capacity. Most of the time, community partners discussed situations that were unique to them and the communities they serve, and other times, more general concerns such as staffing were mentioned. For example, some community partners serve children with unique needs, and background checks and additional training for students are needed. Additionally, some organizations are busiest during school breaks, and not having students available can be challenging, especially when students are eager to get hours during slower times at the organization. Lastly, community partners identified modifications and adaptations they have had to make to accommodate students (e.g., modifying their workflow to match the university schedule). In most cases, these

instances were not presented as unfavorable; however, they highlighted the organizational impact service-learning students have on community partners.

> *The majority of our programs involve working with children … and so every volunteer we get, typically if they're coming in for a particular program or they work in our bookstores, we do run background checks just for the safety of the children and the safety of our volunteers, the safety of our employees, um however when it comes to colleges, it typically depends … so it may be … looking to see how long are they expecting to uh volunteer with us, is it a one-time commitment? Is it an 'I need a certain amount of hours' type of commitment? So, figuring out that and then deciding ok, am I going to do a separate orientation for this group or are they coming for one time, I would need the entire group together, and where can I place them, what particular program or bookstore can they work with?*

> *I think for us that's why … we chose to do more … project-based [service learning] … A lot of our work is building relationships and … in those ten weeks, there's no way even if you came from the beginning. It's just really hard [because] we tried it, and there was a lot of … school visits or working with our student leadership group, and by the end, our students were like, 'Where's so and so? You know what about …' It's really difficult to … bring people into their lives and then, you know, take them away.*

Community partners are eager to have service learning students at their organizations. However, organizational capacity and the impact on the organization is a consideration for many community partners.

Perceptions of University Partnerships

One community partner focus group focused primarily on higher-level considerations for service learning throughout the university. This included issues around sustainable community partnerships and university responsibility to the community. In this focus group, community partners identified issues around power, shared resources with community partners and members, and treating community members as experts. One salient example highlighted how communities could view service learning.

> *A lot of times these places want to colonize the communities ... the Chicago Symphony would send somebody ... and said you know, we want to understand how to diversify [the] symphony, because we want ... black people to come, can we come up and talk to you and your people ... and I was like, yeah, but you got to pay us $1000 because then we're going to be acting as your consultants ... But no, they didn't want to do that, so we don't, we resist the colonizers.*

This same community partner described how academia could work with community partners and make it a "two-way street" so that students and universities can learn from community members who have invaluable information about community issues. Although this focus group was unique, it highlighted more significant issues surrounding how service learning is structured and situated in the university.

Other Community Partner Perceptions

In addition to the four main themes, community partners discussed other areas of interest during the focus groups. The community partners expressed two additional perceptions. The first perception was the connection between service learning and the DePaul mission and ministry. For two participants, completing service is fundamental to the university's mission and, in turn,

should be understood by students participating in service learning. While the example was about students, it includes the Steans Center and community partners' role in instilling that service learning activities are rooted in the university's mission.

> *I wish [the students] would understand the service, where it came from, the charism of Vincent DePaul and St. Louise de Marillac … I always question them, you know, because they're coming from DePaul University, you know it's a huge university, and it's eclectic, and it's universal and everything. But I still wish … there was an understanding of the reason for the emphasis on service, it's not just a humanitarian thing … in this university, it's based on the Vincentian charism, which came from St. Vincent DePaul … [and] St. Louise de Marillac. … And to understand that piece of who they were, … where this developed so … it is the essence of the foundation of DePaul University.*

The second additional perception was minimally discussed across all four focus groups. Most community partners did not mention faculty in their service-learning experience, and the couple that did only commented on the level of communication. A community partner explained, *"And the professor involved... she doesn't communicate very well…She doesn't even respond to emails or anything."* However, one community partner did describe having a good relationship with the faculty member.

Quarterly Evaluation Surveys

Phase 2 of the current research focused on quarterly evaluation surveys from 2016 to 2020. The evaluation surveys examined how community partners perceive service learning experiences with university stakeholders. The quarterly evaluation survey is divided into three main sections: 1) experiences with students, 2) experiences with faculty, and 3) experiences with the Steans Center. Community partners rated their agreement on a 5-point scale, with one

representing "strongly disagree" and five representing "strongly agree." Each section is discussed below, and a detailed breakdown of the survey results is presented in Table 4.

The qualitative survey data were analyzed using deductive coding with the codebook generated from Phase 1, allowing for additional inductive coding generated by the open-ended survey responses. At the end of each section, community partners were asked to "please share any particular successes or challenges you experienced with service learning students/faculty/the Steans Center." Additionally, the final survey question asked for "additional comments regarding experiences with students, faculty, and/or the Steans Center." The codebook generated from Phase 1 was applied to the open-ended comments using deductive coding. One additional emergent code was generated from the open-ended survey questions. Codes endorsed by the open-ended comments and the emergent code are noted in the final codebook. Appendix C is the final codebook with both the inductive and deductive codes.

Experience with students

As noted in Table 4, the first section consisted of three questions focused on the benefit of student work, the preparation of service learning students, and the communication between community partners and service learning students. For the first question, community partners stated their level of agreement with the statement, "The students' overall work benefitted your organization." On average, community partners *strongly agreed* that the work service learning students provided benefited their organization. This was the highest-rated question on the survey, and the open-ended comments reflected positive experiences with service learning students and the work completed at their organizations.

I had a group of really great students who were committed to the work we were doing and worked hard to accomplish their goals! They were self-sufficient, quick learners, and great at communicating with voters about the issues we were working on.

However, it should be noted that there were a handful of comments about student work not meeting expectations.

For the second question, community partners responded to their level of agreement with the statement, "The students were adequately prepared prior to starting service at my site." On average, community partners somewhat agreed that students were adequately prepared before beginning service learning at their organization. Student preparation was also discussed in the open-ended comments. One community partner commented, *"We now have two new wonderful women, extremely prepared and involved from the beginning of this quarter, have attended a board meeting, helped at our fundraiser, and attended numerous visits with children. Couldn't be more pleased!"*

For the third and last question, community partners stated their level of agreement with the statement, "There was sufficient communication between my organization and the student(s)." On average, community partners somewhat agreed that the communication with students was sufficient. While rated highly on the survey, the open-ended comments suggested that communication with students was challenging for some community partners. One community partner explained, *"I had a hard time at the start of the course with student communication."* In addition to challenges with communication, community partners described difficulties with student scheduling (i.e., finding time to complete hours with students' busy schedules), student reliability (i.e., students showing up when they say there will and completing

the work to expectations), and concerns around hours (i.e., getting hours signed off and students

attempting to complete all their hours in one week).

Table 4

Phase 2 Evaluation Survey Results

Survey Questions	Mean (SD)	Strongly Disagree (1) %	Somewhat Disagree (2) %	Neither Disagree nor Agree (3) %	Somewhat Agree (4) %	Strongly Agree (5) %	Mean Result
Experience with students							
The students' overall work benefitted your organization.	4.53 (0.97)	4.2	2.1	2.7	18.0	73.0	Strongly Agree
The students were adequately prepared prior to starting service at my site.	4.36 (1.03)	4.8	2.4	4.8	28.1	59.8	Somewhat Agree
There was sufficient communication between my organization and the student(s).	4.40 (0.98)	3.9	3.3	2.1	30.3	60.4	Somewhat Agree
Experience with faculty							
At the start of the partnership, I was able to establish a cooperative working relationship with the faculty member(s) teaching our service learners.	4.14 (1.03)	3.0	4.6	14.6	31.1	46.6	Somewhat Agree
Throughout the partnership, there was adequate communication between my organization and the faculty members(s).	3.96 (1.08)	3.0	7.3	19.8	30.4	39.5	Somewhat Agree
Experience with the Steans Center							
The beneficial aspects of the service students provided outweighed the amount of time and effort required of you/your staff to train and supervise service learning students.	4.36 (0.86)	1.2	3.1	8.0	33.8	53.8	Somewhat Agree
There was adequate communication between my organization and the Steans Center.	4.27 (0.82)	0.90	3.1	9.2	41.5	45.2	Somewhat Agree
The Steans Center provided the appropriate amount of support to you and your organization.	4.30 (0.84)	1.2	2.8	9.2	38.7	48.2	Somewhat Agree

In addition to the above survey questions, community partners were asked if they were aware of any students planning to continue their service at their organization beyond the course requirements. Of the 330 responses, 41.5% ($n = 137$) indicated that students planned to continue service beyond their required hours. This was also reflected in the open-ended responses. One community partner shared her experience with two students at her organization:

> *There were some great successes, too. One of the students asked me if she could continue volunteering [and] shared about her experience and all that she got out of it (and our clients too). I had another student who really came to our aid a few times … helping out at our front desk when she wasn't normally scheduled.*

Many community partners described students continued service at their organization as a successful service learning experience characteristic.

Experience with faculty

As noted in Table 4, the second section consisted of two questions focused on the relationship between community partners and faculty members and the communication between community partners and faculty members. One question asked community partners their level of agreement with the statement, "At the start of the partnership, I was able to establish a cooperative working relationship with the faculty member(s) teaching our service learners." On average, community partners somewhat agreed that they were able to establish relationships with faculty. The other question asked community partners their level of agreement with the statement, "Throughout the partnership, there was adequate communication between my organization and the faculty member(s)." On average, community partners somewhat agreed that there was adequate communication with faculty.

Compared to students, there were far fewer comments related to experiences with faculty, and comments varied more greatly. In some cases, community partners had no contact with faculty members; in others, they expressed positive views of their experiences with specific faculty members. In most cases, the interaction between community partners and faculty was limited. One community partner remarked,

> *I appreciate that they [faculty] send us their students, provide syllabi, and have assignments for students related to their work with us. It doesn't seem like the faculty members, and myself need to communicate that much. If any faculty member wants to talk with me about assignments or student service, I am happy to do so.*

For many community partners, the relationship with faculty was more ambiguous than their relationship with the service learning students. One community partner explained, *"We weren't aware that our organization was expected to have an ongoing working relationship with the faculty member."* Moreover, community partners indicated that most challenges with faculty centered around communication. More specifically, the lack of communication they have received from the faculty. In many cases, community partners remarked that they would like faculty to initiate more communication and have a higher level of engagement with faculty.

Experience with the Steans Center

The third and final section, as noted in Table 4, consisted of three questions focusing on the benefit and the equity of the service learning experience, the communication between the community partner and the Steans Center, and the support received from the Steans Center. For the first question, community partners claimed their level of agreement with the statement, "The beneficial aspects of the service students provided outweighed the amount of time and effort required of you/your staff to train and supervise service learning students." On average,

community partners somewhat agreed that their time and effort were worth the service provided by the students.

For the second question, community partners reported their level of agreement with the statement, "There was adequate communication between my organization and the Steans Center." On average, community partners somewhat agreed that communication between them and the Steans Center was adequate. Most community partners expressed positive views and experiences around communication with the Steans Center. Community partners often identified Steans Center staff they interacted with throughout the quarter. One community partner remarked, "I had excellent communication and follow-up with [Steans staff member] during the entire process and class."

For the third and last question, community partners stated their level of agreement with the statement, "The Steans Center provided the appropriate amount of support to you and your organization." On average, community partners somewhat agreed that they received adequate support from the Steans Center. Most community partners expressed appreciation for the support they received from the Steans Center. One community partner explained,

> *The Steans Center was very supportive and responsive throughout the entire quarter. They have been wonderful to work with, very organized, and good with communication ... [They] always provide sufficient support and are very responsive. It is apparent that the Center cares greatly about its relationships with its community partners and values our feedback.*

Finally, when community partners were asked if they would accept DePaul students in a similar capacity in the future, 96.9% ($n = 282$) responded 'yes," and 3.1% ($n = 9$) responded 'no.'

Descriptive Summary

An overall mean score for each section (i.e., combining experience with students, faculty, and the Steans Center) also was created and then analyzed. Table 5 provides a summary of overall evaluation ratings for each stakeholder group. As noted from this table, experiences with students were the most highly rated, followed by experiences with the Steans Center, and finally, experiences with faculty.

Table 5

Evaluation Survey Results by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
Students	330	4.42	0.92
Faculty	328	4.05	1.01
Steans Center	322	4.31	0.75

Project-based Service Learning

Additional project-based service learning analyses addressed themes discussed in the focus group and the evaluation survey. In addition to the overall mean scores, two other variables were created. One variable focused on an overall benefit average score. It included the benefit question from the experience with students section and the Steans Center section (i.e., "The students' overall work benefitted your organization" and "The beneficial aspects of the service students provided outweighed the amount of time and effort required of you/your staff to train and supervise service learning students"). The other variable created from the data focused on an overall communication average score and included the communication question from all three sections (i.e., "There was sufficient communication between my organization and the student," and "Throughout the partnership, there was adequate communication between my organization and the faculty member(s)," and "There was adequate communication between my organization and the Steans Center"). Type of service learning was converted into a dummy variable (i.e.,

project-based and non-project-based), and independent samples t-tests were analyzed. A

summary of the results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Differences in Evaluation Ratings Between Types of Service Learning

	Project-based			Non-project-based					
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t*	*p*
Students	124	4.54	.857	196	4.38	.906	318	1.52	.129
Faculty	124	4.43	.745	200	3.83	1.07	332	5.98	<.001
Steans Center	123	4.39	.725	198	4.26	.758	319	1.51	.132
Benefit	123	4.53	.751	198	4.40	.789	319	1.44	.150
Communication	124	4.39	.672	196	4.10	.754	318	3.52	<.001

Evaluation ratings. *Independent samples t-tests* determined differences in evaluation

ratings for community partners based on the type of service learning (i.e., project-based vs. other

types). Sum scores from each survey section examined community partners' overall evaluation

rating for students, faculty, and the Steans Center based on the type of service learning activity.

There were no statistically significant difference in community partner evaluation ratings for

students t (318) = 1.52, p = .129 or the Steans Center, t (319) = 1.51, p = .132 based on service

learning type. However, community partners' evaluation rating for faculty based on service

learning type was statistically significant, t (317) = 5.98, p < .001. This outcome suggests that,

on average, faculty evaluation ratings are significantly higher for project-based service learning

than for other types of service learning.

Benefit and communication. *Independent samples t-test* also determined differences in

benefit and communication to community partners between project-based and other types of

service learning. On average, community partners involved in project-based service learning

reported similar levels of benefit to non-project-based service learning. This difference was not

statistically significant, t (319) = 1.44, p = .150. This result suggested that benefit from service learning occurs across all types of service learning activities.

 Community partners involved in project-based service learning reported higher communication levels than in non-project-based service learning. This difference was statistically significant, t (318) = 3.52, p < .001. This suggests that, on average, community partners participating in project-based service learning report better overall communication than other types of service learning.

Additionally, *independent t-tests* were calculated on individual survey questions to understand the significance of the overall communication score. An independent samples t-test on communication with students involved in project-based service learning, (M = 4.53, SD = .867) and students involved in other types of service learning, (M = 4.34, SD = .994) was not statistically significant, t (321) = 1.71, p =.089. Additionally, an independent samples t-test on communication with the Steans Center for community partners involved in project-based service learning, (M = 4.34, SD = .782) and community partners involved in other types of service learning, (M = 4.23, SD = .853) was not statistically significant, t (321) = 1.10, p =.273. However, an independent samples t-tests on communication with faculty during project-based service learning, (M = 4.31, SD = .887) and other types of service learning, (M = 3.75, SD = 1.12) was statistically significant, t (303) = 5.04, p <.001. This suggests that the primary difference in rating communication may have been based on community partners' experiences with faculty.

Academic year. To ensure findings were not impacted by academic year, a 2 (project-based vs. non-project-based) by 4 (academic year: 16-17 vs. 17-18 vs. 18-19 vs. 19-20) *analysis*

of variance model examined the effects of the type of service learning on community partners' overall evaluation ratings for students, faculty, and the Steans Center.

There were no significant interaction effects between the type of service learning and academic year for students, F (3, 312) = 1.12, p = .339, partial η^2 = .011 or faculty F (3, 316) = .845, p = .470, partial η^2 = .008. However, there was a statistically significant interaction between type of service learning and academic year on community partners' overall evaluation rating for the Steans Center F (3,313) = 2.70, p = .046, partial η^2 = .025. A simple main effects test revealed in 2016-17, community partners' overall evaluation rating for the Steans Center was higher for project-based service learning (M = 13.37, SD = 2.15) than non-project based service learning (M = 12.07, SD = 2.56), a statistically significant mean difference of 1.30, 95% CI [.224, 2.374], F (1, 313) = 5.65, p = .018, partial η^2 =.018.

Finally, the same 2 (project-based vs. non-project-based) by 4 (academic year: 16-17 vs. 17-18 vs. 18-19 vs. 19-20) *analysis of variance model* evaluated benefit and communication. There was no statistically significant interaction between type of service learning and academic year on benefit F (3, 313) = 1.23, p = .300, partial η^2 = .012 or communication F (3,312) = 1.99, p = .114, partial η^2 = .019. There were also no statistically significant main effects for academic year on benefit F (3, 319) = 2.04, p = .108, partial η^2 = .019 or communication F (3, 318) = 2.159, p = .093, partial η^2 = .020. These findings suggest that no significant contextual events impacted the community partner evaluation ratings.

Integration Results

The integration of Phase 1 and 2 identified four meta-themes: community partner perceptions of students, community partner perceptions of faculty, community partner perceptions of the Steans Center, and organizational considerations. The integration of both

phases focuses on the level of convergence, dissonance, and silence between phases within the meta-themes.

Meta-theme 1: Community Partner Perceptions of Students. The results of the integration of data relating to students are presented in Table 7. There was agreement (convergence) between focus group participants and quarterly evaluation survey respondents that the work students completed during service learning benefited their organizations. While there were some different perspectives around student work at times (dissonance), the focus group participants and quarterly evaluation survey respondents viewed service learning students as beneficial to their organizations. This benefit also extended to specifically project-based service learning activities. There was also agreement that continued service learning was an indicator of successful service learning experiences.

Reciprocity and mutual benefit were only discussed in focus groups; however, there is no question on the evaluation survey about reciprocity. While community partners may not have remarked on mutual benefit, they did describe many beneficial experiences. There was also silence around student preparation, with only the evaluation survey addressing students' preparation before beginning service learning activities. There was dissonance regarding communication with students. Evaluation survey results rated communication with students relatively high yet focus group participants and open-ended comments suggested more variability in communication with students. Finally, there was agreement across both groups about the challenges with working service learning students. Namely, handling the logistics of hosting service learning students.

Table 7

Integration of Results: Convergence Coding Matrix for Meta-theme 1. Community Partner Perceptions of Students

Themes	Subthemes	1. Community partner focus groups (QUAL)	2.a. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (QUANT)	2.b. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (qual)	Convergence assessment
Student work		Majority response from community partners indicated beneficial experiences was through examples of student work; impact of student work	The students' overall work benefitted your organization. $M = 4.53$, *strongly agree*	Most community partners described successful examples of students work. However, some described instance or unacceptable or poor student work.	Convergence between QUAL & QUANT, some dissonance with qual
	Project-based service learning	Community partners specifically identified project-based service learning and its benefits.	Yes; $n = 125$, 38.5% No; $n = 200$, 61.5% There was adequate planning for the project-based service learning project. $M = 4.31$, *somewhat agree*	Community partners who participated in project-based service overwhelmingly described their experiences as positive and beneficial.	Convergence
Positive views and experiences		Majority response positive to service learning: benefit to organization; benefit to broader community; assets to organization; positive student attitudes & perspectives; essential to organization	N/A	Majority of community partners noted positive experiences with students.	Convergence
	Continued service beyond required hours	Community partner noted students continuing to work at their organizations beyond required service hours in quarter; beyond academic quarter; or have a plan to continue service	Are you aware of any students who are planning to continue their service beyond their course requirements? Yes; $n = 137$, 41.5% No; $n = 193$, 58.5%	Community partners commented on students continuing service.	Convergence
	Reciprocity & mutual benefit	Many community partners noted the exchange of knowledge and skills; community partners as educators	N/A	Not described	Silence
Preparation		Not described	The students were adequately prepared prior to starting service at my site. $M = 4.36$, *somewhat agree*	Not described	Silence
Communication		Variable response from community partners; some examples of positive and negative experiences	There was sufficient communication between my organization and the student(s). $M = 4.40$, *somewhat agree*	Variable response around communication with students.	Dissonance
Challenges	Managing students	Majority of concerns around scheduling, availability, reliability, and motivation	N/A	Community partners noted challenges with student schedules; consistency; reliability; motivation	Convergence
	Student hours	Minority of community partners reported student stacking hours, trying to complete all hours in one week.	N/A	Some community partners noted challenges with student hours.	Convergence

Meta-theme 2: Community Partner Perceptions of Faculty. The results of the

integration of data relating to faculty are presented in Table 8. There was dissonance and silence

relating to faculty perceptions. There was little to no mention of faculty in the community partner

focus groups. Because of this, there was silence on how community partners view their

relationships with faculty and the expectations for their relationships with faculty. Evaluation

survey ratings, while still favorable, were the lowest regarding faculty.

Further, there was dissonance around communication with faculty. Very few comments

were made in the focus groups about communicating with faculty, and they were mainly

negative. However, in the open-ended comments, there were far more positive and negative

comments about communicating with faculty.

Table 8

Integration of Results: Convergence Coding Matrix for Meta-theme 2. Community Partner Perceptions of Faculty

Themes	1. Community partner focus groups (QUAL)	2.a. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (QUANT)	2.b. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (qual)	Convergence assessment
Relationship	Not described among majority of community partners	At the start of the partnership, I was able to establish a cooperative working relationship with the faculty member(s) teaching our service learners. *M* = 4.14, *somewhat agree*	Majority positive comments about faculty; working with specific faculty members;	Silence
Communication	Not described among majority of community partners	Throughout the partnership, there was adequate communication between my organization and the faculty members(s). *M* = 3.96, *somewhat agree*	Variable response from community partners regarding communication. In some cases, communication was a challenge. In others, community partners described limited or no communication with faculty. For many, there was a desire for more communication from faculty.	Dissonance
Expectations for relationship	Not described	Not described	Many community partners expressed ambiguous expectations for relationship & communication with the Steans Center. For many, a more engaged relationship with faculty was conveyed.	Silence

Meta-theme 3: Community Partner Perceptions of the Steans Center. The results of the integration of data relating to the Steans Center are presented in Table 9. There was convergence and silence about perceptions of the Steans Center. There was agreement among both groups regarding positive experiences and adequate support from the Steans Center and its staff. Further, while there was agreement between the focus groups and the open-ended survey comments about the level of communication between the Steans Center and community partners, the evaluation rating on the survey remained high, which suggests dissonance. Also, the focus groups only discussed challenges with the Steans Center. Networking and university partnerships were also only addressed in the focus groups. Lastly, there was agreement about service learning reflecting Vincentian values and the university's larger mission.

Meta-theme 4: Organizational Considerations. The results of the integration of the data relating to organizational capacity are presented in Table 10. Focus group participants described unique concerns related to their organization that affected their experiences with service learning. These concerns were not transferrable to other organizations; nevertheless, they impacted community partners. There were differences in how both groups viewed issues surrounding human resources. Focus group participants described the additional resources they directed towards hosting service learning students.

Conversely, open-ended comments on the evaluation survey noted the presence of service learning students easing staffing concerns. There was complementarity regarding the impact of service learning students on the organization's infrastructure. Both groups described ways community partners accommodated service learners in their organizations.

Table 9

Integration of Results: Convergence Coding Matrix for Meta-theme 3. Community Partner Perceptions of the Steans Center

Themes	1. Community partner focus groups (QUAL)	2.a. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (QUANT)	2.b. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (qual)	Convergence assessment
Positive views and experiences	Majority of community partners expressed appreciation, satisfaction, interactions, & positive relationship with specific staff	N/A	Community partners noted positive comments about working with the Steans Center and with specific staff.	Convergence
Support	Majority of community partners felt the Steans Center supported them and was available to address concerns as needed.	The Steans Center provided the appropriate amount of support to you and your organization. *M* = 4.30, *somewhat agree*	Majority of community partners conveyed feeling supported by the Steans Center.	Convergence
Communication	Majority of community partners satisfied with level of communication with the Steans Center; Some reported challenges with staff changes and changing contacts	There was adequate communication between my organization and the Steans Center. *M* = 4.27, *somewhat agree*	Variable response around communication. Some community partners reported challenges with communication, while others were satisfied with level of communication.	Convergence
Challenges	Majority of concerns were around policies and procedures; student placement & fit; need for information about the Steans center programming, resources, & support offered by the Steans center	N/A	Not described.	Silence
DePaul Mission & Ministry	A couple of community partners expressed the importance of connecting Vincentian values to service learning and understanding the importance.	N/A	A couple of community partners noted how service learning reflects Vincentian principles.	Convergence
Networking	A few community partners noted the connection with the Steans Center provided opportunities to connect with other people/organizations.	N/A	Not described	Silence
University Partnerships	Community partners discussed considerations for service learning at the level of university partnership. Issues around sustainability and the universities responsibility to the community.	Not described	Not described	Silence

Table 10

Integration of Results: Convergence Coding Matrix for Meta-theme 4. Organizational Capacity

Themes	1. Community partner focus groups (QUAL)	2.a. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (QUANT)	2.b. Quarterly Evaluation Survey (qual)	Convergence assessment
Unique concerns	Community partners detailed needs specific to their organization that impacted service learning.	N/A	N/A	Silence
Human resources	Majority of community partners described the impact of service learners on their operations, specifically staffing and time and energy devoted to service learning students.	The beneficial aspects of the service students provided outweighed the amount of time and effort required of you/your staff to train and supervise service learning students. M = 4.36, *somewhat agree*	Community partners noted service learning students easing staffing concerns.	Dissonance
Impact of service learning students on organization infrastructure	Community partners noted modifying operations to align with academic calendar; selecting certain types of work/projects for students to participate in.	N/A	Community partners noted additional training, background checks, orientations for service learning students; as well as, accommodating students at their organizations.	Complementary

Discussion

Service learning continues to be a primary way for college students to engage with community organizations and the communities they serve (Finley, 2011; Kuh, 2008). The expectation of service learning is that students will engage with community partners around real-world challenges, and, in turn, their learning will be enhanced (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Furco, 1996). In addition, it is expected that community partners will benefit from the service provided by students (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Giles & Eyer, 1994).

The current research examined the perceptions of community partners engaging in service learning. This mixed methods study analyzed qualitative and quantitative data from multiple community partners over numerous years to provide a more complete and robust analysis. Integration of both phases identified important aspects of agreement and disagreement relating to the experiences community partners have with university stakeholders while

participating in service learning. These areas of agreement and disagreement could potentially extend our understanding of how universities interact with community partners. More specifically, ways to improve service learning experiences for community partners. Further, the current research addresses the persistent gap in service learning literature from the perspective of community organizations.

Findings from the present study demonstrated a relatively optimistic picture of community partners' perspectives towards working with university stakeholders. They suggest that community partners view service learning as beneficial to their organizations and student learning. There were multiple areas of agreement within the meta-themes emerging from the present study. For instance, community partners described positive experiences with students and the Steans Center. Community partners felt supported by the Steans Center and acknowledged the level of responsiveness shown when there were concerns. In relationship to students, continued service beyond required hours indicated a successful experience and a novel finding shared across all study phases. Additionally, community partners acknowledged how service learning reflected Vincentian values and its importance to the universities mission.

Community partners characterized their service learning experiences by the work students completed at their organizations. In both phases of the current study, community partners expressed positive views and experiences with service learning students, especially when highlighting student work and the benefit to their organization. The work students completed during service learning activities was the most positive and beneficial aspect of the experience for most community partners. Although this finding was expected, it was consistent and clear throughout all study phases (Miron & Moely, 2006; Blouin & Perry, 2009). The work

students completed was varied; however, on a basic level, it fulfilled a need within the organization.

The difference between project-based and non-project-based work was described in both phases of the current study. While there has been some research into project-based service learning (see Brescia et a., 2009; Bielefeldt et al., 2010), in most cases, it is discussed within specific subject literature (e.g., engineering) and not in comparison to other types of service learning. However, the current study offers a novel finding and shows the potential of project-based service learning. Further, project-based service learning ratings on communication and experiences with faculty were significantly higher. This suggests that the structure and process connected to project-based service learning could provide insight into ways of improving relationships and communication with faculty.

The challenges community partners faced working with students converged and seemed consistent with results in prior research (Karasik, 2020). For instance, managing student schedules and student hours continues to be a challenge for community partners. Additionally, concerns around student commitment, namely student reliability and motivation, also presented difficulties for community partners. While these challenges have been noted, there have not been many suggestions for improvements. For example, student motivation could be addressed by ensuring community organizations are a good match for students.

Dissonance (i.e., disagreement across phases) might be more challenging to understand in mixed methods research (Heslehurst et al., 2015). However, in the current study, the dissonance identified revealed some interesting and important findings. The critical area of dissonance across all phases of the study was communication. The evaluation surveys rated communication with students and the Steans Center relatively high. Still, the focus groups and open-ended

comments suggested a more varied experience for community partners. In some ways, the variance in communication with students and the Steans Center is a form of agreement. However, a more neutral rating on the evaluation survey would be expected. Further, challenges with communication are consistent with previous research (Bringle et al., 2009; Karasik, 2020) and suggest a continued focus on encouraging effective communication practices with students and the Steans Center. Communicating with faculty presented an even more significant challenge.

Silence might be expected in mixed methods due to the different research approaches; however, it can increase our understanding of the phenomenon we are researching (Heslehurst et al., 2015). In the current research, most of the silence stems from the limited scope of the evaluation survey. For example, reciprocity and mutual benefit support previous findings on how community partners view the service learning experience (Cronley et al., 2015; Darby et al., 2016; Karasik, 2020; Petri, 2015). Further, networking has been noted as a benefit to community agencies involved in service learning (Karasik, 2020). However, silence regarding issues around faculty is a more salient finding. For themes identified by silence and dissonance, there is an opportunity for more quantitative exploration. More specific questions around the actual experiences community partners had versus their expectations could help to explain the dissonance and silence as well as add to our understanding of how community partners perceive issues around communication and faculty.

Faculty are often grouped into "the university" but have an essential role in community partners' and students' service learning experience. Further, community partners expressed the desire to have more contact and engagement with faculty members. The silence and dissonance around faculty perceptions suggest a need for a clarification of the role faculty play in service

learning. Although faculty are primarily tasked with facilitating the learning in service learning, there seems to be a missed opportunity with community partners. This finding aligns with previous research on faculty not being present throughout service learning activities and not recognizing community partners' time devoted to service learning (Tinkler et al., 2014). The current findings suggest that community partners may not consider how faculty contribute to service learning if not explicitly asked about faculty.

An additional area of silence was the perception of university partnerships described by the focus group participants. Indeed, this silence may be due to the one focus group where higher-level implications for university partnerships did not follow the focus group guide. However, the topics discussed are salient given the current state of service learning. For example, many of the issues identified align with the goals of critical service learning and moving towards decolonizing service learning. A community partner described a situation where they "resisted the colonizers." While the described situation may have been hyperbole, the essence of what was being described was a confrontation of power and a demand to recognize the importance and worth of diverse communities. Additionally, much of what was discussed in this focus group touches on the differences between transactional and transformational relationships in university-community partnerships (Clayton et al., 2010).

While university-community partnerships apply to service learning, perhaps there are too many expectations placed on what service learning can and should accomplish. While essential to acknowledge, the tension between traditional and critical service learning rarely includes the community perspective. Eby's critique (1998) of traditional service learning centers around how service learning is framed and presented to students. This burden lies with university stakeholders educating and preparing students for service learning. Similarly, Mitchell's (2008)

critiques of traditional service learning in favor of critical service learning mostly focus on service learning rooted in social justice. Again, this burden lies mainly with universities. The current study revealed that community partners overwhelmingly found benefit in service learning, regardless of the orientation of the service learning activities (i.e., traditional or critical).

Limitations of the Present Study

This study provided insight into service learning from the perspective of community partners within one localized setting with potentially broader implications. DePaul University is an urban catholic university in a major U.S. city. The context of the study might limit the relevance of these findings to universities in similar settings. Also, the survey data collected is evaluation data and is limited in scope. While evaluating ratings are essential, it does not allow for deeper insights into one area or phenomenon. Additionally, no formal data exists on the reliability of the items on the evaluation survey. Lastly, complete demographic information on focus group and evaluation survey respondents (e.g., length of partnership with the Steans Center) could help contextualize the findings.

Another limitation is social desirability bias. Many community partners depend on service learning students and might be motivated to sustain their relationship with the Steans Center and the university. Further, the director of the Steans Center co-facilitated the focus groups in Phase 1. The presence of the director and the possibility of losing their connection to students might make community partners reluctant to express negative or critical views, especially if there is a fear of damaging the relationship and losing access to students and other university resources. To reduce this bias, future focus could groups be conducted by an outside researcher. Additionally, the community partner survey is not anonymous. Future versions of the

evaluation survey might consider eliminating the identification data at the beginning of the survey and replace with more general demographic data (e.g., type of agency, role in the agency, length of relationships with the Steans Center, etc.). If follow-up is requested more specific contact data could be given voluntarily at the end of the survey. However, the purpose of the focus groups and the evaluation survey was to identify successes and challenges relating to service learning. Also, building trust and maintaining relationships with community partners can counteract this bias; however, it takes time to establish relationships and nurture partnerships which are not easily accomplished.

Acknowledging the philosophical and practical limitations of utilizing mixed methods research is essential. A frequent argument in mixed methods literature is that quantitative and qualitative approaches are not compatible due to epistemological differences (Heselhurst et al., 2015). While that may be true in some cases, for the current research, the pragmatic approach was taken because of the evaluation data collected at one university setting, and because of the practical nature of the study. Further, there is a lack of published examples of data integration processes, limiting data analytic plans (Bazeley, 2009). In the current study, direct comparison through data comparison added depth to our current understanding. However, data integration was a slow and challenging process that may have been better suited to a team of researchers to allow for more perspectives and critical discussion.

Service learning is often associated with experiential learning and social exchange theories. Experiential learning theory is concerned with student learning and considers service as a way for students to have concrete experiences. This leaves out community partners and the communities they serve. Social exchange theory offers a way to understand the experience of community partners and their motivations for participating in service learning. Because there is

no single service learning theory, it is challenging to measure the impacts of service learning on all stakeholders. Even though reciprocity and mutual benefit were discussed in the current study, the lack of a unifying service learning theory is a limitation.

Implications for Community Psychology and Community-based Service Learning

As research into utilizing service learning in Psychology curriculum grows, there are opportunities for community partner perspectives to guide faculty in how to best approach service learning in their communities. The community partner perspective should be considered when developing a service learning curriculum for psychology students. Further, community psychology's commitment to social justice and community engagement makes it uniquely positioned to utilize service learning. If the classroom component of service learning is guided by the values of community psychology (e.g., ecological perspective, wellness, collaboration, empowerment), many of the critiques of service learning would be addressed.

Faculty members are primary stakeholders in service learning activities, and the connection between community partners and faculty appears tenuous at times. However, there were occasions where community partners reported very positive and enriching relationships with faculty. These experiences could provide insight into successful faculty-community partner relationships. Moreover, community partners want more engagement with faculty. Exploring ways to support faculty in building and fostering relationships with community partners would enrich service learning practices.

Future Research

With the exception of project-based service learning, most research on service learning does not differentiate between the type of service learning activities. The current findings suggest that the type of service learning (i.e., direct service, project-based, community-based research,

advocacy, and solidarity) may impact community partners differently. Further exploration into the different types of service learning would provide a more nuanced understanding of how service learning affects community partners and the communities they serve.

The current study only included the community partner perspective. While this was intentional, the additional perspectives of students and faculty could help to explain some of the areas of silence and dissonance. Further, little to no research focuses on the community members served by service learning students. The views of the community members would add to our understanding of the broader impact of service learning. Future studies that included data from students, faculty, the Steans Center, community partners, and community members would offer the most comprehensive understanding of service learning.

Finally, a better understanding of equity is needed to ensure that the amount of time, energy, and effort to facilitate service learning is equitable. In the current study, equity was not explored beyond one survey question. Further, equity should be evaluated across all university stakeholders. Additional research can provide insight into factors that contribute to equitable experiences for all stakeholders involved in service learning.

The current study examined service learning from the perspective of community partners. By using a mixed methods approach, a deeper understanding of how community partners experience students, faculty, and the Steans Center was accomplished.

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Appendix A

Assessment of Community Partner Perspectives on Academic Service Learning Program

Instructions for Focus Group Participants

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study. As mentioned in the email, we are trying to learn more about your experience with service learning programming at DePaul University. Dr. Susan Reed and I are conducting this study at DePaul University. There may be other people on the research team assisting with the study.

You are among 30 people that we hope to include in this research and you were selected because you coordinate DePaul service-learning students. You are participating in a focus group and your participation is voluntary, which means you can choose not to participate.

Over the course of the hour, you and other focus group participants will be asked a set of questions focused on your experience with service learning programming at DePaul University. The questions do not ask for personal information but rather your general ideas about your participation in the service learning project, the strengths and weaknesses of the program, and changes or improvements you would like to see to the program.

If you agree, the group's conversation will be recorded using a digital audio recorder that will allow the researchers to better document responses. The transcriptions will not include names of respondents and the recorder will be erased once the data has been transcribed into a Microsoft Word document.

Before we begin the focus group, we will ask you to read and sign the following consent form.

[Distribute Consent form and allow participants time to read it, sign it, and ask any questions]

I would like to emphasize that being in this study does not involve any risks other than what you would encounter in daily life. You may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed about answering certain questions. And we cannot promise complete confidentiality, because everyone in the focus group will hear what you have said and it is possible that they may repeat something you said to someone outside the group. We will do our best, however, to keep all information shared confidential and we ask you to please respect each other to keep what is said witin the group and to not repeat it. Please note that your organization's level of support from DePaul will not be impacted in any way by what you say during the focus group.

I would also like to emphasize that though you may not personally benefit from being in this study, we hope that what we learn will help your organization by supporting the improvement of service learning programming in support of your organization.

Statement asking all focus group members to respect each other by letting them talk and to keep what is said in the group and not to repeat it.

Lastly, I would like to reiterate that if there are any questions about your right as a participant, or any concerns, or complaints you can contact DePaul's Susan Loess-Perez, Director of Research Compliance, in the Office of Research Services at 312-362-7593 or by email at sloesspe@depaul.edu.

This focus group is being recorded for research purposes. Please let me know now if you do not agree to being recorded. You may request that the recording stop at any time. If no one objects, the recording will begin now.

[Begin focus group questions]

Focus Group Questions

1. Describe your recent service learning experience with the university.

   PROBES: Why did you participate in the service learning partnership? What were you hoping to get out of engagement?

2. What were the strengths and weaknesses of your recent involvement with the project/experience?

   PROBES: What would you consider to have been successful? How are you defining success? Do you feel your goals were met? Why?

3. What would you do differently?

   PROBE: Do you feel your needs have been met by participating with this service learning experience?

4. Have you been asked for feedback on these projects by the university/Service Learning Program? If not sure, would someone else have received a request for feedback?

   PROBE: Have you felt the questions were meaningful or useful for you? If so, how? If not why?

5. We would like your input on the design of our assessment strategy so that the information is worth your time and provides information for you as well as the university.

6. How can we best document the successes and challenges of your experience with service learning, both for our use and for yours?

7. What information would be most useful for you to have and how should we communicate it to you?

Appendix B

Community Partner Evaluation of Steans Center Support

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for collaborating with the Steans Center. Your participation in this evaluation will help guide the Steans Center in the improvement of our community-based service learning (CbSL) Partnership.

Your responses and suggestions serve as a guide for our center to critically evaluate how we prepare and engage others in service learning. Thus, please feel free to share both successes and challenges of working with the Steans Center. A staff member may follow up with you regarding any issues or concerns you faced in working with us. If you do not wish to be contacted about these concerns, please answer accordingly at the end of the evaluation.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Name of Organization
Your name and title within your organization
Email
Phone
Name of the point of contact at the Steans Center
Please tell us what course(s) and/or faculty you partnered with at DePaul

EXPERIENCE WITH STUDENTS

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

The students' overall work benefited your organization.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Somewhat agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Somewhat disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

The students were adequately prepared prior to starting service at my site.
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Somewhat agree
   c. Neither agree nor disagree
   d. Somewhat disagree
   e. Strongly disagree

There was sufficient communication between my organization and the student(s).
   a. Strongly agree
   b. Somewhat agree

  c. Neither agree nor disagree
  d. Somewhat disagree
  e. Strongly disagree

Are you aware of any students who are planning to continue their service beyond their course requirements?
  a. Yes
  b. No

Please share any particular successes or challenges you experiences with service learning students at your organization.

EXPERIENCE WITH FACULTY

At the start of the partnership, I was able to establish a cooperative working relationship with the faculty member(s) teaching our service learners.
  a. Strongly agree
  b. Somewhat agree
  c. Neither agree nor disagree
  d. Somewhat disagree
  e. Strongly disagree

Throughout the partnership, there was adequate communication between my organization and the faculty member(s).
  a. Strongly agree
  b. Somewhat agree
  c. Neither agree nor disagree
  d. Somewhat disagree
  e. Strongly disagree

What would improve your relationship with the DePaul faculty member?

Please share any particular successes or challenges you experienced with DePaul faculty members.

EXPERIENCE WITH STEANS CENTER

The beneficial aspects of the service students provided outweighed the amount of time and effort required of you/your staff to train and supervise service learning students.
  a. Strongly agree
  b. Somewhat agree
  c. Neither agree nor disagree
  d. Somewhat disagree
  e. Strongly disagree

There was adequate communication between my organization and the Steans Center.

a. Strongly agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Strongly disagree

DePaul's Steans Center provided the appropriate amount of support to you and your organization.
a. Strongly agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Strongly disagree

Please share any particular successes or challenges you experienced with the Steans Center.

FOR PROJECT-BASED COURSES

A project-based course is designed for the community partner to receive a finished product or deliverable at the end of the quarter. This past quarter, did you work with one of these classes?
a. Yes
b. No

If yes…

There was adequate planning for the service learning project.
a. Strongly agree
b. Somewhat agree
c. Neither agree nor disagree
d. Somewhat disagree
e. Strongly disagree

Please list the aspects of this service learning project that were positive (e.g., what went particularly well, benefits to your organization).

Please list the aspects of this service learning project that did not go well or were particularly challenging.

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

If you were to participate in a service learning project again…
a. What aspects would you, as a community partner, hope to do differently?
b. What would you suggest that the students, faculty members, or service learning staff do differently?
In the future, would you accept DePaul students in a similar capacity?

Please list any future CbSL ideas or projects (with time frames) at your organization that you are aware of at this time.

As noted earlier, a Steans Center staff member may follow up with you about any of the issues or concerns you may have faced in working with us. Please indicate whether or not you would feel comfortable being contacted.
   a. Yes, I am comfortable with someone from the Steans Center following up with me.
   b. No, please do not contact me about my responses to this survey.

We welcome any additional comments regarding your experience with the Steans Center and/or DePaul students and faculty.

Appendix C

Community Partner Perspectives

Codebook

Name	Description
Experiences with Students	This describes how community partners discussed their experiences and interactions with students participating in service learning activities.
Student work	This describes different activities carried out by service learning students in community partner organizations. This includes all types of service learning activities and descriptions of the work carried out by students. This also includes project-based service learning activities identified by community partners and instances where there was a specific project completed by service learning students during the academic quarter. *Endorsed by open-ended survey comments Community partners mentioned some instances where student work did not meet expectation.*
Positive views and experiences	This describes any positive, successful, and favorable experiences with students identified by community partners. This includes general statements and specific examples of experiences and interactions with students in service learning activities. *Endorsed by open-ended survey comments*
Continued service beyond required hours	This describes instances where students continued working with community partners after their service learning requirement was met. This also includes students completing more than their required hours during the academic quarter. *Endorsed by open-ended survey comments*
Reciprocity and mutual benefit	This describes how service learning benefits not only the students but also the community partners. This includes community partners as educators, community partners learning from students, and community partner fulfillment by participating in service learning.
Challenges	This describes the challenges community partners faced while working with service learning students. This includes challenges around managing students. *Endorsed by open-ended survey comments*
Experiences with the Steans Center	This describes how community partners discussed their experiences and interactions with the Steans

Name	Description
	Center while participating in service learning activities.
Positive views and experiences	This describes instances where community partners explicitly noted positive, successful, or beneficial aspects of their relationship with the Steans Center.
Challenges	This describes challenging instances or situations community partners had with staff, practices, or policies at the Steans Center. This includes logistical issues (e.g., scheduling, hours requirements, student placement, etc.) based on Steans Center or university policy that impacted community partners.
Service Learning Impacts on Organizational Capacity	This describes how service learning impacts the operations and administration of community partner organizations. Community partners, directly and indirectly, described how service learning students and activities impact the infrastructure and logistics of their work. *Endorsed by open-ended survey comments*
Perceptions of University Partnerships	This describes community partner feedback about higher level considerations for service learning throughout the university. This includes issues around sustainable community partnerships and university responsibility.
Other Community Partner Perceptions	This describes other experiences and perceptions community partners described. Specifically, experiences directly relating to the larger mission of the university and their experiences and interactions with faculty members while participating in service learning activities. *Endorsed by open-ended survey comments* *Community partners provided many more examples of their experiences and interactions with faculty.*
Emergent codes	Codes added through deductive coding of open-ended survey responses.
Unclear expectations around relationship with faculty	This describes instances where community partners expressed confusion around the level of involvement faculty should have in service learning activities. This includes unclear expectations around the type of relationship and the level of communication between community partners and faculty members.