THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF ALUMNI MOCK INTERVIEWERS:

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAM DESIGN

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ABSTRACT


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Career centers in higher education must create environments that serve the needs of students and alumni. Alumni not only are a served population, but also are beneficial to student career development, and serve dual purposes as clients and volunteers. One program frequently offered by career centers that engages alumni volunteers is an alumni mock interview program. While the alumni volunteers act as interviewers to share their insights and professional experience, they too are clients, so their learning must be considered.

Existing mock interview program research primarily examines the student learning experience. This study addressed the research problem of the unknown learning

experience of alumni mock interviewers. The purpose was to explore with a group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program.

To achieve this purpose, the researcher employed a qualitative, single-case study approach drawing upon the experiences of alumni mock interviewers within a particular setting. Data was collected from 43 participants providing questionnaire ratings and 25 subset participants completing critical incident written responses and interviews.

Four major study findings emerged: (1) All described what they learned, with a majority learning the importance of creating a comfortable environment, delivering feedback, offering the program for students' preparation, and understanding current students' experiences; (2) All found aspects that contributed to their learning, with a majority describing having sample interview questions and staying in touch with students as helpful; (3) All found aspects that inhibited their learning, with a majority describing the lack of connection with fellow alumni mock interviewers and lack of industry knowledge of specific fields as hindering; (4) All described program design recommendations to foster alumni learning, with a majority recommending matching students with alumni based on industry and background, providing an opportunity to hear about alumni experiences, and offering advanced training to students.

The principal recommendations of the study have implications for higher education career service professionals on how to design mock interview programs to engage alumni in lifelong learning by considering the sources of knowledge within the program and utilizing adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks as guides.

DEDICATION

To my sons.

May you view this dissertation as a symbol of your unlimited learning potential.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

**Background and Context**

Career service centers in higher education have gone through many transitions

since their creation in the 1900s.  Their original purpose came out of a need for

vocational guidance, and since then economic conditions, labor demands, and university

needs have transformed modern day career service centers into "connected

communities." Now, the primary goal of career service centers is to help students build

connections with employers and alumni that will create networking and learning

relationships throughout their lifetime (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, pp. 5-7; Vinson,

Reardon, & Bertoch, 2014, p. 203).  This aligns with the mission of the National

Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) (2016):

> …the primary purpose of career services is to assist students and other designated
> clients in developing, evaluating, and/or implementing career, education,
> employment, and entrepreneurial decisions and plans.  Specifically, career
> services should help students and other designated clients to…link with alumni,
> employers, industry representatives, professional organizations, community
> service organizations, and others who will provide opportunities to develop
> professional interests and competencies, integrate academic learning with work,
> and explore future career possibilities. (p. 5)

Higher education institutions expect their career service centers to convene important

stakeholders into virtual and physical communities to meet the career and professional

needs of their students and "other designated clients," such as alumni (NACE, 2016, p.

23; Vinson et al., 2014, p. 203; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 115).  Furthermore, it

is an expectation of career service centers that they help their students "before and after graduation" with preparing for and managing their careers (Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 116). Career service centers must create an effective career development environment that brings together the community members while simultaneously serving the career needs of their students and alumni (Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 116). Alumni are not only a served population, they are also beneficial to student career development, so they can serve dual purposes within career service centers as both clients and volunteers.

Students and career service centers find alumni to have rich experiences and evolving career trajectories (Ashline, 2017, p. 599). Additionally, students often hold the advice of alumni with higher regard due to their perceived homophily with the students' experience (Agnihotri et al., 2014, p. 81). Alumni serve as the keepers of traditions and rituals, as well as a window into the students' potential futures (Martin, Moriuchi, Smith, Moeder, & Nichols, 2015, p. 116). Use of alumni in hiring practices has been very effective, as students perceive it to both increase their awareness of potential opportunities and help them to see someone similar to themselves within a specific role (Agnihotri et al., 2014, p. 79). Additionally, students have found that connecting with alumni during career exploration "recharges their drive to their personal goals" (Freeman, 2012, p. 163). Students also prefer to interact with employers and alumni face-to-face, so career service centers strive to provide engagement opportunities to students on campus (Agnihotri et al., 2014, p. 82).

One program frequently offered by career service centers that engages alumni volunteers is an alumni mock interview program, which helps students to prepare for

their entry into the workforce. This is an essential role of career service centers, as they need to assist students and alumni in "presenting themselves effectively as candidates for employment to potential employers" (Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 116). Interviews are the most common method of organizations to recruit prospective employees, however students often have minimal experience interviewing. Therefore, higher education institutions frequently offer mock interview programs where students can practice this skill (Lowes et al., 2016, p. 2). The overarching goal of mock interview programs is to prepare students for the format of upcoming real-world interviews in a safe learning environment (Huss, Johnson, & Butler, 2016, p. 49; Lowes et al., 2016, p. 5; McDow & Zabrucky, 2015, p. 634; Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 30). While the alumni volunteers are in the interviewer role to share their insights and professional experience, they too are designated clients of career services centers, so their learning must also be considered (NACE, 2016, p. 5).

## Research Problem Statement

Alumni learning is essential in mock interview programs as alumni (in addition to students) are a served designated client of many career service centers and their knowledge directly supports student career development (NACE, 2016, p. 5; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 117). Some mock interview programs examined did consider the learning opportunity for the interviewers, as well as those being interviewed, making sure to provide "parallel purposes" that were "mutually beneficial" (Huss et al., 2016, p. 53; Liu, McNeice-Stallard, & Stallard, 2015, p. 20). However, there is no research that specifically analyzes the learning experience of the interviewers in mock interview

programs, so the effect of the parallel purposes has not been studied. Furthermore, very little research asks for interviewer feedback in any regard. Most research regarding mock interview programs analyzes the performance of the interviewee, but there are some cases where interviewer performance is also noted (Barrick et al., 2012; Huss et al., 2016; Lowes et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2015; Perez-Sabater, Montero-Fleta, & Perez-Sabater, 2014; Valentino & Freeman, 2010). Additional research analyzes interviewees' and sometimes interviewers' evaluation of the event (Kilpatrick & Wilburn, 2010; Lowes et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2015; Reddan, 2008; Valentino & Freeman, 2010). Interviewers may be learning through programs that specifically aim to be mutually beneficial or through evaluations of interviewer performance and interviewers' evaluations of the event, however this learning has not been examined. Most research regarding mock interview programs solely examines the student learning experience, so the learning experience of the alumni mock interviewers remains relatively unknown. Therefore, this study seeks to address the research problem of the unknown learning experience of alumni mock interviewers.

**Research Purpose and Research Questions**

Through examining current research regarding mock interview programs, it is clearly evident that additional understanding of the experience of the alumni mock interviewers is needed. This understanding is necessary for career service centers to ensure that they are serving the career development needs of their alumni, which is mandated by their mission (NACE, 2016, p. 23; Vinson et al., 2014, p. 203; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 115). Specifically, knowledge of what alumni learning is taking place during a mock interview program, if this learning is being done in an effective way,

and how additional learning could take place within the program is unknown and will be investigated further as a part of this study. The purpose and research questions below will serve to guide this study.

**Research Purpose**

The purpose of this case study is to explore with a group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program. The descriptions of their experience will help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning.

**Research Questions**

1. How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program?

2. What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program?

3. What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?

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**Research Design Approach**

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In this section the study research design will be discussed in brief, including the setting and the methodological design. In order to examine alumni learning in a mock interview program, a mock interview program setting was needed. Additionally, in order

to ensure the researcher fully conceptualized their experiences, three methods of data collection were utilized: questionnaire ratings, critical incident written responses, and in-depth interviews.  Complete details of the methodology can be found in Chapter III.

**The Setting**

The mock interview program that served as the setting for this research was at a large, private, R1 research university in the northeast ("The Carnegie," 2012).  The researcher had familiarity with the setting through her professional experience and access to the participants through her personal network.  This institution was selected due to the diverse demographic composition of the alumni mock interviewers involved in the mock interview program.  The population was diverse not only in age and experience (with graduation years ranging from 1958 to 2018), but also in degree level (bachelors through doctoral) and degree specialization (comprised of degrees from 10 different schools within the institution).  There was also additional demographic diversity such as gender and race, which was unknown to the researcher and therefore determined through demographic inventories aligned to the chosen research methods.  Furthermore, the mock interview program that served as the setting provided additional complexity, as mock interviewers were available for both undergraduate and graduate students.

The mock interview program serving as the study setting was well established, which provided a substantial population of alumni mock interviewers.  The program took place two or three weekday evenings (from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) in both the fall and spring semesters, for a total of four to six evenings per year.  In advance of the evening, the alumni received an email with event logistics, but no advanced information on students, expectations, approaches, or goals.  To register, students were required to

submit their resume and the job description of a role for which they were interviewing or interested in interviewing. The students also received an email with event logistics before the evening. Alumni and students were ideally matched by industry of experience and interest; however, this was not always possible due to advanced alumni sign-up and late student registrations. The evening was a three hour commitment for the alumni mock interviewers, comprised of an optional one hour pre-session and two hours of mock interviews. The pre-session included dinner, a 10-15 minute training presentation, and time to review materials (made up of student resumes and targeted job descriptions, as well as sample interview questions). Additionally, alumni had time to connect with each other during the pre-session. The mock interviews were each 30 minutes long (20 minutes of interviewing and 10 minutes of feedback provided by the interviewers). Once the alumni completed their final mock interview, they went home for the evening. Alumni could choose to provide students with their contact information for follow-up conversations, but this was not required. The career service center followed-up with alumni after the program via email to offer thanks and provide information on the number of students that utilized the program.

Although the alumni mock interview program has existed for many years, the researcher considered the population of potential study participants only the 82 alumni mock interviewers that had participated as interviewers in the last five years (Fall 2014 through Spring 2019). This helped to ensure that their experience in the program was easy to recall. Since the population was limited, data collection methods were chosen wisely, so as not to fatigue the participants.

**Methodological Design**

Given the goal of the study is to examine the research questions within a particular setting, "purposeful selection" in a case study approach was used (Maxwell, 2013, p. 78). Case studies are commonly used in the social science disciplines, such as education (Creswell, 2013, pp. 97-98; Merriam, 1998, p. 26; Seidman, 2013, p. 9; Yin, 2009, p. 5). More specifically, there are precedents of the case study approach being used in the fields of learning processes and adult development (Merriam, 1998, pp. 36-37). A case study was the best method to understand the research problem as it was able to answer the research questions about a particular group of people confronting a specific problem (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The case study approach also allowed for examining group phenomena in a contemporary event, where behavioral events cannot be controlled (Yin, 2009, pp. 4-11). This is an especially useful approach when it is difficult to separate the phenomena's variables from their context, which was the case in this study (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Additionally, case studies are a strong methodological design for an in-depth understanding of a single-case within a bounded system, prescribed by time and place (Creswell, 2013, p. 97; Merriam, 1998, p. 27; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 37).

The case study used three methods to collect and triangulate the data: questionnaire ratings, critical incident written responses, and in-depth interviews. To view the details of these methods, please view the protocols in Appendix I, J, and K respectively. The questionnaire ratings allowed the researcher to collect specific data on the scope of the alumni learning experience (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 73; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 44; Seidman, 2013, p. 9). The critical incident written responses allowed the researcher to uncover additional alumni learning perceptions not articulated

through the other methods (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 83). The interviews were the

primary method for data collection and provided an opportunity for an in-depth

understanding of the alumni learning experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 48; Rubin

& Rubin, 2012, p. 3; Seidman, 2013, p. 10; Yin, 2009, p. 10). As discussed, the study

methodology is presented in greater detail in Chapter III. This methodology is also

informed by the conceptual framework for the study, which is detailed in Chapter II.

## Anticipated Outcomes

The results of this study are intended to illuminate the learning experience of

alumni mock interviewers, including not only what was learned, but also how their

learning could be positively impacted through identifying contributing and inhibiting

factors, as well as their recommendations for fostering additional learning. The study

findings and subsequent analytic categories will create an understanding of alumni mock

interviewer learning that will provide higher education career service professionals with

the necessary knowledge to design alumni mock interview programs that cultivate alumni

learning. Furthermore, the knowledge generated from this study has the potential to

expand the application of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks

to broader contexts in higher education alumni engagement. The anticipated outcomes of

the study are reliant on certain assumptions, which will be detailed next in this chapter.

## Assumptions of the Study

The first assumption of the study is that the alumni mock interviewers are indeed

learning. While what the alumni are learning is still unknown and will be explored

further through the research study, the researcher is assuming something is learned. The researcher did preliminary corroboration of this assumption through her pilot study conducted in Spring 2019, in which she found that a parent mock interviewer (a parent of a current student), who participated in the same mock interview program as the research setting, did indeed experience learning.

The second assumption of the study is that alumni remember their learning and can identify, write, and vocalize their account of such learning. Through the pilot study conducted in Spring 2019, the researcher also found that the parent mock interviewer was able to verbally account for his learning through an interview. The researcher further learned that alumni may not think of their learning in such terminology and therefore tailored the interview protocol to potentially lead alumni to the realization of their own learning.

The third assumption is that career service centers care about alumni learning and would factor this knowledge into program design if it were known. The researcher believes that career service centers do indeed care about alumni learning based on a review of career service center professional guidelines (NACE, 2016, p. 23; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 115). Additionally, the researcher's own experience working in career service centers for over a decade corroborates the professional guidelines. Both the literature and the researcher's professional connections identify a lack of knowledge of the alumni mock interviewer learning experience and how this can be hindered or advanced through mock interview program design.

**The Researcher**

The researcher's interest in the learning opportunities for alumni mock interviewers can be attributed to her own professional experiences as a recruiter and higher education administrator in career services. She has found that mock interview programs are highly utilized when available and frequently requested when they are not obtainable. Job searchers and students crave insights from professionals who have successful experience as interviewees, as well as professionals who have served in an interviewer role in their organizations.

However, she observed that while alumni mock interviewers bring a vast array of professional experience, the program structures in which she worked often provided only minimal training and no opportunity for learning from the alumni mock interviewers' experiences within the mock interview program. This presents a challenge for the alumni mock interviewers as they were unaware of interview experiences outside of their own and unable to provide any feedback about the themes that emerged while conducting the mock interviews. There were no opportunities provided for learning, thus the alumni mock interviewers appeared not to be creating any new knowledge or understanding of their expertise in interviewing.

The researcher's professional experience serves as both an asset and a source of potential bias. It has provided an opportunity to see a potential shortfall in the design of mock interview programs; however, it is important to note that her concept of mock interview program design is based on her own familiarity. The researcher has therefore approached this topic with an intentional openness and determination to remain critically reflective in her work. She hopes this work will resonate with career services center

administrators in higher education and encourage growth in the alumni mock interviewers, as well as the students they counsel.

## Rationale and Significance

Alumni learning has the potential to enhance the knowledge of both the alumni and the students receiving their guidance.  Insights into the alumni learning experience would have important implications for programming at career service centers, allowing for programs to be designed to engage both students and alumni in lifelong learning. Without the knowledge of the alumni mock interviewers' learning experience, effective changes would not be possible as little research exists in this area.

## Definition of Key Terms

Words can have multiple interpretations, so this section outlines several important terms.  The terms are a combination of cited definitions and working definitions based on the researcher's extensive reading on the research topic.  Although the terms are broad, they are essential for understanding the content of the study.

*Career Service Center* – a higher education unit housed in an adequate, accessible, and suitably located facility on an institution's campus to support the unit's mission and goals (NACE, 2016, p. 20).  Career service centers are responsible for career development of "students and other designated clients in developing, evaluating, and/or implementing career, education, employment, and entrepreneurial decisions and plans" (NACE, 2016, p. 5).

*Mock Interview Program* – a program where people temporarily assume the identities of

hiring managers and interview other constituents for the purpose of providing

them with an interview experience and feedback applicable to professional

interviews.

*Alumni Mock Interviewers* – within a mock interview program, the people serving in the

role as interviewers who are also alumni of the higher education institution within

which the mock interview program is based.

*Professional Experience* – experienced gained solely from being in a certain profession.

*Program Design* – a plan of action, which is developed to the point that others can

implement an event in the same way and consistently achieve its purpose

(Gargani, 2013).

*Learning* – The acquisition of knowledge or skills through study, experience, or being

taught ("Learning," n.d.).

*Knowledge* – awareness and familiarity of a certain subject.


**Organization of the Dissertation**


Chapter I provided an overview of the background, rationale, and significance of

this study.  Additionally, it defined the specific guiding research purpose and research

questions, as well as brief descriptions of the setting, methodological design, anticipated

outcomes, assumptions of the study, and key terms.  Chapter II is a review of the

literature relevant to the study including the purpose, design, and learning outcomes of

mock interview programs and adult learning theory and learning from experience

frameworks.  Chapter III describes the study's methodology and research design

overview.  The chapter further details the three methods of data collection, ethical

considerations, and limitations of the study.  Chapter IV presents a comprehensive

overview of the major study findings determined from the three methods of data

collection.  Chapter V proposes analytic categories that emerged from the study findings

based on themes of knowledge development and classifications generated from theory

and frameworks.  Additionally, it details the interpretations, revisited assumptions, and

literature contributions of the study.  Chapter VI provides final conclusions and

recommendations from the research.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Introduction and Overview**

Chapter I discussed the purpose and research questions that guide the study.  In

this Chapter, the researcher will review the purpose of mock interview programs

including variations in their design and structure.  This body of research includes the role

of career services in programming and alumni volunteer engagement strategies, as well as

mock interview program interviewer learning goals, major debates, and research

methods.  Additionally, adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks

are discussed, which are important elements of alumni mock interviewer learning.  The

shared components of the frameworks will be laid out: safe learning environments,

facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.  All

together this informs the research design, which will be discussed further in Chapter III.

**Rationale for Topics**

To collect information relevant to this study, the literature review process spanned

two years from Fall 2017 to Fall 2019.  Since the purpose of career service centers has

changed over time, publication date parameters for articles were primarily limited from

2010 onwards (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014).  Initial searches were conducted applying key

phrases, such as: "mock interview programs," "role of career services," "experiential

learning," and "alumni engagement." Searches were conducted utilizing peer-reviewed journals, periodicals, books, dissertations, and non-profit organization reports, including: Business Source Complete, Education Full Text, ERIC, Google Scholar, JSTOR, NACE, and ProQuest. The searches yielded valuable results that have helped to clarify the history, design, and study of mock interview programs, as well as the understanding, application, and development of experiential learning programs targeting alumni learning and engagement.

Within this study there are two areas of research focus: mock interview programs, as well as adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks. From these searches seven distinct topic areas were determined to be within mock interview programs: (1) role of career services in programming for students and alumni, (2) alumni volunteer engagement strategies, (3) progression and purpose of mock interview programs, (4) design and structure of mock interview programs, (5) alumni (mock interviewer) learning goals for mock interview programs, (6) major debates in mock interview programs, and (7) research methods of mock interview programs. Additionally, the search resulted in four distinct components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: (1) safe learning environments, (2) facilitator designed learning, (3) reflective practice, and (4) discussion based learning. A matrix of mock interview program studies can be found in Appendix A and a matrix of adult learning theory and learning from experience literature can be found in Appendix B.

**Mock Interview Programs**

In this section an overview of mock interview programs will be provided. Before detailing the designs and research that exists regarding mock interview programs, the study will discuss the role of career service centers in programming and alumni engagement. Then, the researcher will examine commonalities between existing mock interview programs and potential implications and relevance for this study.

**Role of Career Services in Programming for Students and Alumni**

In present day career service centers, assessment is determined not only through student placement, but also through metrics on engagement with university stakeholders including both students and alumni (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 12). Universities are finding it vital to nurture active and dedicated alumni, so it is a main initiative to enhance alumni relationships and strengthen the alumni brand (Martin et al., 2015, p. 107; Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 31). The expectation of career service centers' staff is that they will provide programming that is customizable, scalable, community based, and stakeholder convening (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 14). Additionally, they are expected to "arrange appropriate programs that use alumni and employer experience and expertise" (National, 2016, p. 23). Students themselves also expect a different kind of support, preferring tailored and customized information for their specific career plans (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, pp. 8-11). As expectations for career service centers increase, so do their organizational responsibilities within the university, including separate leadership and fiscal oversight. Career service centers have therefore been able to expand their services to include over 40 various programs (Vinson et al., 2014, pp.

205-206). One such program meeting the above criteria, which is frequently offered by career service centers, is an alumni mock interview program (Hartz & Parker, 2012, p. 70; Vinson et al., 2014, p. 206). It is important to understand the alumni experience within a mock interview program as alumni are essential to career programming, designated clients of career service centers, and members of the larger university community.

**Alumni Volunteer Engagement Strategies within Career Services**

Many institutions of higher education benefit from their alumni success not only through financial donations, but also through volunteer support (Agnihotri et al., 2014, p. 76; Martin et al., 2015, p. 107; Rau & Erwin, 2015, p. 109). This support is essential in creating programming that brings together members of the university community. In order to foster engagement with the alumni community, Ashline (2017) recommends connecting with alumni early and offering them "an outlet to share their successes and challenges" (p. 600). Connections should be meaningful and begin shortly after they become graduates, ideally offering alumni a way to give back while showcasing their development and lifelong knowledge acquisition (Ashline, 2017, p. 601). The intention should be creating an alumni network that is available to the broader university community and providing a space for alumni to share insights, while continuing to learn and grow (Ashline, 2017, p. 604). An alumni mock interview program provides a direct opportunity for alumni to engage on campus immediately following their graduation (Freeman, 2012, p. 163). It is an ideal time for alumni to share their interviewing expertise, as they will have recently gone through a robust hiring process. Alumni mock

interview programs have been shown to strengthen alumni bonds with the campus community (Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 31).

Martin et al. (2015) found that alumni loyalty is also strengthened through university traditions and rituals, activity and involvement, and the brand community (a lifestyle made up of the quality, brand, relationships, and affiliations with their education) (pp. 108-110). Additionally, there are some predictors of the demographics of active alumni including: household income, student activities, and emotional attachment (Martin et al., 2015, p. 109). Many career service centers will have access to alumni information such as current and previous employers and higher education activities, which can be helpful in targeting alumni interested in engaging with students on campus and continuing their learning experience (Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 31).

Once connected to the mock interview program, it is important for alumni to return as mock interviewers not only to strengthen their experience and knowledge as mock interviewers (which also provides greater benefit to the students), but also to reduce the effort utilized in the recruitment process (thus freeing up career service center staff to focus on the design and implementation of the program) (Hartz & Parker, 2012, p. 70). The program design should nurture and strengthen the "enduring bonds of loyalty to the institution" (Martin et al., 2015, p. 110). If the program is succeeding in connecting to alumni then the mock interviewers will return to the program and they will refer fellow colleagues to serve as mock interviewers as well (Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 32).

While it is important for career service centers to engage alumni in order to meet their educational missions, it is critical to note that career service centers are not responsible for alumni engagement with their institution, as this role is the main mission

of alumni development or institutional advancement (Rau & Erwin, 2015, p. 102; Stephenson & Yerger, 2013, pp. 774-775; Weerts, 2007, pp. 81-82). Career service centers are responsible for creating opportunities for interactions that foster lifelong career development for their constituents (NACE, 2016, p. 23; Vinson et al., 2014, p. 203; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 115). While career service centers utilize engagement strategies to help facilitate programming and engagement in learning, it remains outside of the current mission of career service centers to increase alumni engagement with their institution. Therefore, although alumni engagement is essential in higher education institutions for increasing institutional affinity and cultivating donors, engagement will not be examined as a part of this study (Rau & Erwin, 2015, p. 109; Stephenson & Yerger, 2013, pp. 774-775; Weerts, 2007, pp. 92-93). The study remains focused on the learning experience of the alumni mock interviewers and recommendations that can be made to further develop their knowledge creation, not their institutional engagement.

**Progression and Purpose of Mock Interview Programs**

As mentioned in Chapter I, the overarching goal of the mock interview programs is to prepare students for the format of upcoming real-world interviews in a safe learning environment (Huss, Johnson, & Butler, 2016, p. 49; Lowes et al., 2016, p. 5; McDow & Zabrucky, 2015, p. 634; Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 30). Some mock interview program research focuses on the skills a student needs to perform an effective mock interview (Norman-Burgdolf & Vanderford, 2016, p. 112); however, additional research includes secondary goals of mock interview programs. The secondary goals of the mock interview programs vary greatly, which can further explain some of the differences in

program design.  The secondary goals of mock interview programs include increased student performance through development of language and literacy, comfort and confidence, and rapport building.  It is important to note that neither the primary nor secondary goals of the mock interview programs examined are focused on outcomes for the interviewers, only the interviewees.  Additional details on the mock interview programs discussed below and their relevance to this study can be found in Appendix A.

Perez-Sabater et al. (2014) focused on the secondary goal of the importance of language and literacy in the workforce.  Their mock interview program was designed to increase certain skills: "sociopragmatic competences, flexibility, and the ability to communicate in different settings" (p. 2404).  Therefore, they assessed student interviews with a focus on language, grammar, and vocabulary.  Ultimately, they found that the interviews increased communication skills and critical language awareness, in addition to the overarching goal of making the students more employable.

Reddan (2008) found that mock interview programs served the secondary goal of increasing students' confidence and thus interview performance.  Students felt that the interviews provided them with the opportunity to "know what to expect" and thus "improved their self-confidence" and "ability to handle stress" (pp. 120-121).  Hartz and Parker (2012) also found that a key secondary component of mock interviewer programs was to increase students' confidence and ability to present themselves (p. 66).  Powell et al. (2015) also examined students' comfort levels with the interview process and found that 100% of students felt confident in their ability to interview after their mock interview (p. 686).  Huss et al. (2016) found that hiring simulations also served the purpose to "diffuse fears and build confidence" (p. 49).  In a similar secondary goal, Kilpatrick and

Wilburn (2010) found that mock interviews increased students' comfort with the interview process. This comfort "allowed students to enhance their job interview and networking skills" (p. 81). Lowes et al. (2016) found that mock interviews allowed students to build confidence by gaining insight into the interview process, perspective on their responses and behaviors, and experience in handling challenging situations (pp. 4-5).

The secondary goal of the program designed by Barrick et al. (2012) was to better understand the effect of rapport building on interview outcomes. They therefore measured interviewers' impressions after they met the students, but before they began the structured process of the interview and then again once the interviews were complete. Their goal was to better understand what knowledge candidates transmit about their personalities and verbal skills (pp. 337-338).

The mock interview programs examined all had clear primary and secondary goals related to the learning environment for students, but no articulated goals for the learning of the interviewers. Research regarding mock interview programs is missing the interviewer experience and therefore the relevant interviewer learning. The next section will examine the differences in designs and structures of mock interview programs that have been found in research.

**Design and Structure of Mock Interview Programs**

The design and structure of mock interview programs includes variations in the hosting community, the people serving in the role of the interviewers, and the interview format itself. These variations are relevant to the study as they demonstrate that although research on mock interview programs exists, the diversity within the design and structure

is significant. This has important implications for why this study will utilize one specific mock interview program in order to learn in-depth about the nature of the alumni learning experience.

**Design and structure: hosting community.** The first component of mock interview program design and structure is the hosting community. The hosting community incorporates research from a wide array of environments, including career and other courses, academic departments and professional organizations, and continuing education services. While not all mock interview programs examined will be housed in career service centers, their hosting communities all have a perceived responsibility for their career outcomes.

A common host of mock interview programs is a specific course (Hartz & Parker, 2012, p. 59). Career courses can be summarized in three categories: "career decision-making courses, job-search preparation courses, and courses geared toward specific disciplines" (Hartz & Parker, 2012, p. 63). All three of these categories were present in the literature. Perez-Sabater et al. (2014) examined a mock interview program that was a project within a semester long English course. Students determined the design of the program, with guidelines provided by their professor (p. 2403). Valentino and Freeman (2010) also examined a mock interview program that was part of a 1-credit required course for juniors in the Biology Department of St. John Fisher College (p. 30). The program and sample interview questions were designed through a collaboration between faculty and career service center staff (Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 32). Similarly, Reddan (2008) analyzed a mock interview program that was part of a third year course. However, this course was specifically related to employment. The design of the program

was determined through their professor, but students worked in groups (with the assistance of either an academic staff member or a career services staff member) to determine the interview questions (p. 116). Lowes et al. (2016) examined a program in the final practicum course for master of social work students. The researchers created the program, so they designed the format (p. 4). Norman-Burgdolf and Vanderford (2016) examined a 2-credit elective course entitled "Preparing Future Professionals," which was designed to enhance students' job market knowledge and develop required skills (p. 112). The faculty member, or course director, designed the interviews in this course. McDow and Zabrucky (2015) studied simulated interview outcomes of a required career development course for undergraduate business students. The interview questions utilized were selected from the options available from an interview software called Optimal Interview (p. 633). Barrick et al. (2012) also examined an elective course focused on career placement skills (p. 338). However, the interview question design was done by Barrick et al. (2012) to specifically determine the results of their five hypothesizes (p. 337). Rather than just one course, the College of Business at Rowan University collaborated with their Career and Academic Planning Center to add interview preparation into a variety of courses for senior-year students (Hartz & Parker, 2012, p. 67).

Another host was found to be student's departments in partnership with professional organizations. In Kilpatrick and Wilburn (2010), the students' accounting department and the Accounting Advisory Council (AAC) put on the mock interview program as part of a career day event (p. 78). The faculty and committee members created the interview questions and evaluation sheets in advance of the event. Similarly,

Powell et al. (2015) examined a mock interview program that was held by the Arizona Pharmacy Association (AzPA), who had a strong relationship with two pharmacy departments at Midwestern University College of Pharmacy – Glendale and at the University of Arizona College of Pharmacy. The interviewers were also given the interview questions in advance, designed by AzPA (p. 686).

It was also found that educational communities hosted mock interview programs for employees seeking additional certification or leadership responsibilities. In Huss et al. (2016) the interviewees were preservice teachers seeking the Georgia Professional Standards Commission Performance-Based Leadership certification or Educational Specialist degree to be licensed to teach in Georgia classrooms (p. 50). Teacher teams at schools in which the pre-service teachers were interning created the job vacancies and interview questions. In Liu et al. (2015) the interviewees (mentees) were future community college leaders and their interviewers (mentors) were current community college leaders in The Cross-College Mentoring Program (CCMP) made up of six community colleges in California (p. 15). Each mentor designed each mock interview specifically for their mentee, as they believed trust to be an integral part of the feedback and criticism process (Liu et al., 2015, p. 18).

**Design and structure: people serving in the role of the interviewers.** The second component of the design and structure of mock interview programs is the people serving in the role of the interviewers. Research shows that some structures see value in the interviewees also serving as interviewers, while other structures find non-student interviewers ideal. This is an interesting insight into mock interview programs. For the programs where interviewees also serve as interviewers, it suggests that interviewers may

also be learning valuable knowledge in this role (however this knowledge was not examined in these studies as separate from the total learning experience).  Secondarily, it demonstrates that while many mock interview programs had the opportunity to collect separate learning occurrences from their non-student interviewers, they did not, thus the interviewer experience is still unknown.

Perez-Sabater et al. (2014) reviewed a program in which students filled both the interviewer and interviewee roles.  This allowed each student to experience being interviewed and conducting the interview (p. 2404).  Reddan (2008) examined a program in which the students served on a panel of interviewers, in addition to being the interviewee themselves.  The panel was designed to allow students to better understand what interviewers are looking for (p. 116).  Kilpatrick and Wilburn (2010) examined interviews in which the students served as both interviewer and interviewee, but there was also a third role of an industry professional who watched the interviews and provided additional insights (pp. 78-79).  The mock interview program in Huss et al. (2016) also provided an opportunity for the interviewees to see the process from the role of the interviewer.  In this program the teacher candidates interviewed in groups with the candidates alternating between the role of interviewee and the role of observation recorder.  The candidates in the observation recorder roles were then encouraged to participate in the post-interview feedback sessions (p. 51).

Alternatively, some programs did not have students participate in the interviewer process or question creation. Therefore, the knowledge from question construction or experience from the interviewer perspective was only known by the interviewers themselves.  In the course examined in Norman-Burgdolf and Vanderford (2016), the

faculty member conducted the mock interviews with each student separately (p. 112). In the mentoring program in Liu et al. (2015), the mentors also conducted the mock interviews with each mentee separately (p. 18). The interviewers in Valentino and Freeman (2010) were alumni of the college with experience in the students' fields of interest (p. 30). They believed that having alumni mock interviewers is essential, because it also allows for students to meet local professionals and potential mentors (Hartz & Parker, 2012, p. 70). The interviewers in Lowes et al. (2016) were made up of a panel of social workers and senior level health professionals, as this would be the typical composition for interviews in the field of social work (p. 4). In the mock interviews conducted by Arizona Pharmacy Association (AzPA), students were interviewed exclusively by industry professionals affiliated with the association (Powell et al., 2015, p. 685). In Barrick et al. (2012) the interviews were also conducted solely by industry professionals. However, for the purpose of their study, the use of industry professionals was required, as it was their impressions that the researchers were examining (p. 338). The interviewers in McDow and Zabrucky (2015) were pre-recorded individuals asking specific questions through the Optimal Interview software program. The students watched the recordings of the interviewers and recorded their answers using webcams (p. 633).

**Design and structure: interview format.** The third component of the design and structure of mock interview programs is the interview format. Research shows that some programs utilized interviews based on specific fields and roles, while other programs kept interview questions void of industry knowledge and focused on behavioral questions. This diversity in interview format suggests that interviewer learning may vary between

programs, as some programs rely more on interviewers constructing the format than others.

Many programs included specific jobs based on the specific fields in their mock interview format. For example, the student program in Perez-Sabater et al. (2014) was based on a specific position in the field of Library and Information Management and included the title and job description (p. 2404). Similarly, the students in Reddan (2008) were given a specific position within the field of Exercise Science and it too included the title and job description (p. 116). Barrick et al. (2012) also structured their interviews around a specific role. They had a diverse group of students participating, and were looking for consistent interviewer impressions, which contributed to their decision to include a job description. Even though they had a common role, the interviews allowed students to practice additional behavioral questions and to focus on high-level techniques such as rapport building and their communication skills (p. 338). Other programs had each student provide a unique position. The students in Norman-Burgdolf and Vanderford (2016) individually chose a position in which they would like to work and their interviews were based off of that unique role. This role selection format was necessary for the students in the Preparing Future Professionals course, as the course was open to all students at the University of Kentucky regardless of major or degree level (p. 112).

Other mock interview program designs were not based on specific positions. The students in Kilpatrick and Wilburn (2010) did not have a role for their mock interviews, but rather the interviews consisted of general questions, designed to be applicable for any position (p. 78). Similarly, the interview questions utilized in McDow and Zabrucky

(2015) were based on questions frequently used in university recruiting (p. 633). The students interviewed in Powell et al. (2015) did not have a role for their mock interviews, but they were all pharmacy students being interviewed by pharmacy professionals; it was believed that less role specificity was needed (pp. 685-686). Likewise, Valentino and Freeman (2010) did not have a specific role, but the students were all biology students being interviewed by biology alumni (p. 32). Lowes et al. (2016) did not provide a specific role either, however they were social work students being interviewed by a typical social work hiring committee (p. 4).

The design and structure of the mock interview programs examined demonstrated variations in the hosting community, the people serving in the role of the interviewers, and the interview format itself. The hosting community was wide-ranging, but was always found to be those who felt responsible for the interviewees' career development. The people serving in the role of interviewers additionally varied, but their experience was only examined if they also served in the role of interviewees, and then only as an overall experience. The interview format also varied in its reliance on the interviewers to play a role in the question construction. The design and structure analysis found that while research on mock interview programs exists, the potential learning experiences of the interviewers may vary greatly.

**Alumni (Mock Interviewer) Learning Goals within Mock Interview Programs**

Reflective practices have often been encouraged in the student interviewees of mock interview programs, to encourage them "to think more about their own preferences and biases in the recruiting process" (Agnihotri et al., 2014, p. 84). Reflection helps students to understand their individual attributes, as well as the interview experience

itself (Freeman, 2012, pp. 157-160; Lowes et al., 2016, p. 3). Student focused reflective practices associated with mock interview programs also provide an opportunity for the students to better understand the motivations and strategies in recruiting practices. Additionally, experiential learning provides opportunities to shape students' beliefs about learning, lead students to insights about their perspectives, and create awareness of other student experiences (Kolb et al., 2014, pp. 214-215). Even though examining bias and understanding motivation would be similarly beneficial for the alumni mock interviewers, these same practices are seldom encouraged through program design. It is important to encourage these practices as they not only provide an opportunity for growth and development, but also maintain the culture of the higher education community, which promotes and encourages alumni involvement and learning (Martin et al., 2015, p. 111).

Many of the mock interview programs examined did contain a pre-interview training portion, however this was usually intended to cover logistics of the event, rather than developing a learning opportunity for the interviewers. If learning did occur in these pre-interview training programs, it was not accounted for through data collection methods, thus it remains unknown. For example, Barrick et al. (2012) required the business professionals serving as interviewers to complete a 2-hour training immediately before the interviews began, including: review of the job description and interview questions, utilization of the rating scale, and development of their 2-3 minute introductions (p. 338). Additionally, Valentino and Freeman (2010) provided a pre-event meeting space where the interviewers could meet career service center staff and biology department faculty, as well as review goals for the mock interview program, their interviewees' resumes, and sample interview questions (p. 32).

Some of the programs examined did take into account the learning opportunity for the interviewers, as well as those being interviewed, making sure to provide "parallel purposes" that were "mutually beneficial" (Huss et al., 2016, p. 53). Huss et al. (2016) found that teachers participating as interviewers felt they had improved in their roles as interviewers through the simulated hiring process (p. 51). Also, 17% of the interviewers planned to use the interviewee evaluation materials as future hiring rubrics (Huss et al., 2016, p. 52). They did note that for additional interviewer learning to occur, a feedback mechanism should be in place to allow interviewees to provide evaluations for their interviewers. The feedback mechanism would not only encourage interviewer reflection, but also allow for the interviewees to develop a more critical eye during the interview process (Huss et al., 2016, p. 53). Liu et al. (2015) also examined the learning of both the interviewers (mentors) and interviewees (mentees). Although their program design did not provide time for reflection after the interview process, they believe that following the mock interview program with a "debriefing" among a group of mentors and mentees would be advantageous for the learning of both groups (p. 20). Ideally, mock interview programs should develop the whole alumni mock interviewer, not just put in place mechanisms to collect feedback: "the goal of education is not solely cognitive knowledge of facts, but also includes development of social and emotional maturity" (Kolb et al., 2014, p. 217).

**Major Debates in Mock Interview Programs**

Mock interview programs have many similarities in their challenges. The first challenge is the amount of time that needs to be allocated for the interviews to be arranged and take place. Some of the interviews ran 30-60 minutes (Barrick et al., 2012,

p. 338; Huss et al., 2016, p. 51; Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 32), and those that ran for less time led to student complaints about the short length of their interviews (Kilpatrick & Wilburn, 2010, pp. 79-81). Additionally, the interview programs utilizing working professionals required pre-matching, based on student and interviewer backgrounds, which was a time consuming process (Powell et al., 2015, p. 689). Overall, successful mock interview programs include lengthy pre-planning and longer events.

A second challenge for those mock interview programs using professional volunteers was recruiting enough of them to be interviewers. For example, Barrick et al. (2012) had 135 students and only 62 interviewers; so many interviewers were required to conduct multiple interviews (p. 338). Valentino and Freeman (2010) utilized alumni in a particular industry and determined that "finding enough interviewers is an ongoing challenge," especially since they saw student interest double from one year to the next (p. 32). Kilpatrick and Wilburn (2010) paired the mock interview program with another employer event, so it would be easier to recruit volunteers (p. 78). Norman-Burgdolf and Vanderford (2016) found that the diversity of their student base made it difficult to recruit a corresponding diverse group of interviewers. Given the time commitment needed from the volunteer interviewers, recruitment was a recurring challenge (p. 112).

A third challenge for mock interview programs was funding (Kilpatrick & Wilburn, 2010; Norman-Burgdolf & Vanderford, 2016; Powell et al., 2015). Kilpatrick and Wilburn (2010) noted that administrative costs were significant (p. 81). Powell et al. (2015) partnered with the Arizona Pharmacy Association (AzPA) so the event was free for the institutions, but students were then required to pay to register for the conference in order to attend the mock interview program (p. 689). Norman-Burgdolf and Vanderford

(2016) found that the program was not fully supported by the academic departments, so getting funding was also a challenge (p. 112).

**Research Methods of Mock Interview Program Studies: Commonalities and Differences**

In general, most mock interview programs were analyzed through qualitative methods in some form of bounded system or program (Huss et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2015). The researchers examined three main areas: interview performance (interviewee and interviewer), event quality, and course quality. Unfortunately, there was no research that specifically analyzed the learning experience of the interviewers and very little that even asked for interviewer feedback.

A great deal of research regarding mock interview programs analyzes the performance of the interviewee and in some cases the interviewer as well (Barrick et al., 2012; Huss et al., 2016; Lowes et al., 2016; Powell et al., 2015; Perez-Sabater et al., 2013; Valentino & Freeman, 2010). Huss et al. (2016) employed paper surveys immediately following the hiring simulation. The surveys were for both the interviewee and interviewer roles and were made up of 5-point Likert rating scale questions, as well as open-ended perception prompts. They also collected the data over the course of three spring semesters from 2013 through 2015 for comparison (p. 51). Powell et al. (2015) also utilized interviewee surveys, which were distributed both before and after the interviews in paper form and were designed to collect both demographic information, as well as changes in levels of confidence (p. 686). Barrick et al. (2012) developed feedback questionnaires designed to analyze the interviewee performance, which were completed by the interviewer. The questionnaires were made up of both structured and

unstructured questions.  The structured portion included behavioral questions based on a

5-point Likert rating scale, while the unstructured portion further examined their

secondary goal of rapport building (p. 337).  Similarly, the alumni mock interviewers in

Valentino and Freeman (2010) gave both written and verbal feedback to the interviewees

following each mock interview (p. 32).  The feedback entailed four components:

interview skills, career preparation, overall preparation, and overall impression (Freeman,

2012, p. 162).  Lowes et al. (2016) also asked the interviewers to give both written and

verbal feedback to interviewees, however it was based on open-ended questions (p. 3).

Additional research analyzed interviewees' and sometimes interviewers'

evaluation of the event (Kilpatrick & Wilburn, 2010; Lowes et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2015;

Reddan, 2008; Valentino & Freeman, 2010).  Kilpatrick and Wilburn (2010) had students

complete a post-event survey comprised of three 5-point Likert rating scale questions

related to the event characteristics: informative value, effective use of time, and

recommendation of the event to a friend (p. 80).  Reddan (2008) also utilized a portion of

their completion questionnaire to allow for open-ended questions regarding program

effectiveness and possible future improvements (p. 118).  Valentino and Freeman (2010)

had both student interviewees and alumni mock interviewers complete event evaluation

forms regarding program improvements (p. 32).  Liu et al. (2015) used 90-minute one-on-

one phone interviews to collect their data in which they asked question about students'

recommendations for the program (p. 16).  Lowes et al. (2016) collected interviewee

feedback on future suggestions for the event through verbal interactions.  They found this

to be challenging and recommended utilizing written evaluations or self-report

questionnaires in future iterations of the mock interview program (p. 9).

Since some of the mock interview programs were part of an academic course, they were evaluated using standardized course evaluations, which were not focused on performance or event characteristics (Norman-Burgdolf & Vanderford, 2016; Reddan, 2008). Norman-Burgdolf and Vanderford (2016) pulled anecdotal student comments from such evaluations in order to draw conclusions about the program's effectiveness (p. 112). Alternatively, Reddan (2008) utilized both a standard course evaluation in the form of The Measure of Guidance Impact (MGI) and a self-completion two-page, short answer questionnaire, specifically designed for the study analysis (pp. 117-118).

Overall, questionnaires, short written responses, and interviews or verbal feedback were the most common methods to examine mock interview programs. Even though these methods seldom extended to the interviewers in the mock interview programs, the research demonstrates that they would be viable tools for assessing learning from mock interview program participation. This study will therefore utilize similar methods of data collection. Complete details of the methodology can be found in Chapter III.

**Section Summary**

This section provided an overview of mock interview programs, including the role of career services, alumni volunteer engagement strategies, progression and purpose, design and structure, alumni (mock interviewer) learning goals, major debates, and research methods. Mock interview programs have been researched in various contexts, however the alumni or interviewer learning experience still remains unknown. In the next section the application of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks will be considered as a mechanism to better understand this learning.

**Adult Learning Theory and Learning from Experience Frameworks**

Adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks are relevant lenses with which to examine alumni mock interviewer learning within mock interview programs. Experiential learning theory has been widely used in program development and implementation in many educational settings (Kolb, Kolb, Passarelli, & Sharma, 2014, p. 205). This section will therefore examine and expand upon theories within learning from experience frameworks including the research of Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017). The theories comprise four components of learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning. The theories and frameworks will be assessed to determine their implications for this study, specifically how they impact alumni mock interviewer learning, learning practices, and potential learning adjustments to mock interview programs. In relevant cases, theory expansion and additional implications will also be discussed. A summary, by theorist, of pertinent methodologies and implications can be found in Appendix B.

**Safe Learning Environments**

The focus of this study involves the learning experience of alumni mock interviewers. Therefore, it is critical to understand the impact of safe learning environments, as it may directly affect the learning of the alumni mock interviewers. In adult learning theory and learning from experience literature, Knowles (1980, 1984),

Kegan (1982, 1994), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) speak about the importance of safe

learning environments and its direct impact on learning.

Knowles first introduced the concept of andragogy in 1968, which he defined as

"the art and science of helping adults learn" (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007,

pp. 83-84). He felt that adult education was extremely important to improving social

order (Boucouvalas & Lawrence, 2010, p. 41). Knowles came to view andragogy as a

continuum of teacher-directed to student-directed learning from pedagogy to andragogy

(Merriam et al., 2007, p. 87). Knowles believed andragogy to be based on a conceptual

framework, which he also referred to as a "model of assumptions" or "system of

concepts" (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 85). Knowles's model of assumptions has relevant

implications for alumni mock interviewer learning. He believes that every aspect of

program design is important and that adult education is essentially an "art form" (Sork,

2010, p. 164). Special attention should be paid to all details in the design including the

tone of the facilitator and the color and texture of materials (Sork, 2010, p. 164).

Knowles believes that the physical environment and the details of program design impact

the knowledge gained by the learners.

Kegan also believes in the impact of the environment on the learning and

development of adults, however he views the environment as both a physical and

psychological space. Kegan's work is founded on the theories of Freud, Erikson,

Kohlberg, and Piaget and expanded to include the impact of emotion and the

consideration of learning throughout the lifespan (Kegan, 1982, pp. 67, 116-117). He

developed the theory of Stages of Development, also referred to as Orders of

Consciousness or Forms of Mind Model (Kegan, 1982, pp. 86-87). He defines the stages

as: Impulsive Mind (early childhood), Imperial or Instrumental Mind (adolescence), Socializing Mind (adult populations), Self-Authoring Mind (adult populations), and Self-Transforming Mind (adult populations) (Kegan, 1982, pp. 118-120). Furthermore, he views the stages as an active and ongoing process based on the development of a person's meanings, which he believes are created through organizing the relationship of the self to the environment. Essentially, he aims to explain what an experience means to an individual and how they then assign meaning and construct truth (Kegan, 1982, pp. 115-116). However, different from Knowles, Kegan views the environment not as just one's surroundings, but also as an "internal psychological" space where increasingly complex development takes place (Kegan, 1982, pp. 115, 142). He calls this environment a culture of embeddedness or a "holding environment," which is a term coined by D. W. Winnicott (Kegan, 1982, pp. 115-116). Holding refers to support, but support that does not confine (Kegan, 1982, p. 162). Adults pass through a succession of holding environments during their lifespan through a process of confirmation (holding on), contradiction (letting go), and continuity (staying put for reintegration) (Kegan, 1982, p. 118). This process can be facilitated by both providing a strong holding environment at every stage and encouraging bridging to the next stage (Kegan, 1982, p. 186; Kegan, 1994, p. 43). Kegan's concept of a holding environment has clear implications for the learning environment of alumni mock interviewers. It demonstrates the impact on learning of not only the facilitator, but also of the individual learners and their potentially varied forms of mind. And shows the importance of both the physical and psychological support mechanisms that might be necessary for a positive learning environment.

Brookfield, similar to Knowles and Kegan, emphasizes the importance of the learning environment on the learning outcome. Brookfield believes that adult education experiences should be constructed through purposeful learning and critical thinking made up of integrating reflection and discourse (Archer & Garrison, 2010, p. 324). Furthermore, Brookfield (2017) poses that there are four lenses of critical reflection, which serve to illuminate different parts of teaching or instruction: *students' eyes, colleagues' perceptions, personal experience,* and *theory* (p. 62). By combining the view from all four lenses, one can see themselves in unfamiliar angles and through multiple perspectives (Brookfield, 2017, pp. 61-62). The first lens, *students' eyes*, is the view going on inside students' heads. This lens provides valuable insight into the students' concept of the learning environment; he believes understanding this is essential in order to build bridges in the students' learning. Brookfield believes that the learning experience should start with clarifying expectations and purposes, encouraging sharing of experience, and creating ground rules (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, pp. 9, 52-59). Beyond just assuming that the learning experience is effective, he further recommends utilizing an anonymous classroom assessment technique during the learning experience so that educator adjustments can be made (Brookfield, 2017, pp. 101-111). Some of his assessment techniques include: The One-Minute Paper, The Muddiest Point, The Learning Audit, or The Critical Incident Questionnaire (Brookfield, 2012, pp. 21-24). These four assessments are formatted to encourage reflection, including questions about areas of new knowledge, confusion, and engagement (Brookfield, 2012, pp. 21-24). The anonymity of the assessments provides an opportunity for accurate information, which learners are often reluctant to share due to potential repercussions. Additionally, it

provides an opportunity for facilitators to make any necessary educator adjustments based on the needs of learners in attendance (Brookfield, 2017, p. 63). Given the diverse demographics of the alumni mock interviewers, clarification, alignment, and adjustment would likely be necessities for an effective learning environment. Brookfield views the environment as crucial to learning both in the physical space, but also in the psychological space. He believes that considering and actively accounting for both allows for the ideal learning environment.

As demonstrated, Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) find an essential component of learning to be the learning environment itself. The learning environment of the mock interview program will therefore have a direct impact on the alumni mock interviewers. It is imperative that more is known about the experience of the alumni mock interviewers in order to understand the alumni mock interviewer learning, the impact of the practices being utilized, and the changes that could be made to foster additional learning. In the next section, the second component of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks will be discussed. The second component entails facilitator designed learning, which is also referred to as coaching and/or training.

**Facilitator Designed Learning**

As detailed, the focus of this study involves the learning experience of alumni mock interviewers within a mock interview program. Therefore, it is also important to understand the influence on learning of facilitation, coaching and training. The guidance of an educator may also directly affect the learning of the alumni mock interviewers. In adult learning theory and learning from experience literature, Knowles (1980, 1984),

Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) communicate the importance of facilitators and their direct impact on learning.

Knowles's model of assumptions also has implications for facilitator led learning environments. Knowles postulates that adults are self-directed and utilize the wealth of knowledge they accumulate through their years of experience (Boucouvalas & Lawrence, 2010, p. 41). However, he also believes that for adults to engage in learning, the learning must be related to their developmental tasks in their social role, of a problem solving nature, relevant to internal learner motivations, and well-defined as to why the understanding is necessary (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 84). Knowles's legacy is that adult learners are themselves a resource for learning, thus distinguishing them from preadult learners (Merriam et al., 2007, pp. 424, 434). But in order for this resource to be utilized in a learning environment, the facilitator must promote mutual respect amongst learners and facilitate each individual adult's purpose in learning (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419). This has direct implications for the learning environment within a mock interview program. Without the role a facilitator, it is possible the full benefits of the learning environment might not be reached.

While Kegan's Stages of Development are an active and ongoing process, he too believes that the growth from one stage to the next can be effectively supported through the therapeutic process, which he later refers to as sympathetic coaching (Kegan, 1982, pp. 86-87; Kegan, 1994, p. 43). He believes that coaching should be empathic and should entail the coach joining the learner not just in their development, but also in their made meaning (Kegan, 1982, p. 277). He sees the coaching role as essential to the development process and a "helpful part of the person's very *evolution*" (Kegan, 1982, p.

278).  For the coaching process to be effective, coaches will need to provide "naturally therapeutic contexts of support" (Kegan, 1982, p. 126).  In addition, the coaches will need to provide a bridging environment, so that people can more easily transition from one stage to the next (Kegan, 1982, p. 186; Kegan, 1994, p. 43).  A strong coach could therefore beneficially impact the learning of alumni mock interviewers.  Much like Knowles, Kegan believes that learning and development will occur naturally, but a facilitator or coach greatly enhances the process.

Kolb, similar to Knowles and Kegan, believes in the importance of a facilitator as part of the learning experience.  Kolb (1984) defines experiential learning through the definition of the learning process itself: "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 38).  He bases his ideas in the works of Lewin, Dewey, and Piaget.  The Lewin Experiential Learning Model is a four-stage cycle made-up of concrete experience, observations and reflections, formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, and testing implications of concepts in new situations.  The model emphasizes the here-and-now and the importance of feedback processes (Kolb, 1984, p. 21).  Additionally, Lewin's 1946 workshop training structure and targeted programmatic and moral outcomes became the basis of Kolb's learning cycle (Seaman, Brown, & Quay, 2017, pp. 5-7).  The workshop model left an impact on Kolb.  Kolb (1984) demonstrated this through his belief that an important role of education is to "stimulate inquiry and skill in the process of knowledge getting" (p. 27).  Additionally, he poses that the educational process is active for a facilitator, as it: "begins by bringing out the learner's beliefs and theories, examining and testing them, and then integrating the new, more refined ideas into the person's belief system" (Kolb, 1984, p.

28). More directly, Kolb (1984) suggests that experiential simulation or role playing can also help provide a conceptual bridge to process concepts into practices (Huss et al., 2016, p. 50). Similar to the ideas of Knowles and Kegan, Kolb finds that in order for adult learning to be maximized, a skilled educator or facilitator must be present. The effectiveness of a facilitator could have direct implications for the learning experience for the alumni mock interviewers within the mock interview program.

Much research in the learning from experience framework has expanded on the facilitator notions presented by Kolb (1984). For example, Kolb et al. (2014) examined the importance of the approach of the facilitator or educator in the learning process and suggests a "holistic, dynamic, relationship-based approach" (p. 206). Drawing on the "trainer" role in Lewin's group dynamics workshop and the work of Kolb (1984), they found that facilitation can include five components: creating a climate of trust and open communication, drawing out and building upon prior knowledge of learners, debriefing learning experiences, imputing expert knowledge, and evaluating and coaching learning strategies (Kolb et al., 2014, p. 208). They utilize these five components to create a spiral educator role profile made up of four roles cycling through learner focused and subject focused: facilitator, subject expert, standard setter and evaluator, and coach (Kolb et al., 2014, p. 220). They believe that experiential educators should attend to both the learner and subject matter, as well as disseminate ideas though both application and reflection, as "teaching is above all a profound human relationship" (Kolb et al., 2014, pp. 218, 229). The work of Kolb et al. (2014) demonstrates the facilitator's importance to the learning process and thus the importance of facilitators to the potential learning of the alumni mock interviewers.

Schon (1987) also believes in the importance of a coaching process through his examination of teaching through reflection-in-action. He conceptualizes his ideas on tacit knowledge and its usefulness in understanding new learning: "we can recognize and describe deviations from a norm very much more clearly than we can describe the norm itself" (pp. 23-24). From this idea, he describes knowing-in-action where one can skillfully perform without being able to verbalize how it is done. However, Schon (1987) believes that through observation and reflection upon our actions we can sometimes make knowing-in-action an implicit construction that others can understand, thus knowledge-in-action (pp. 25-26). Thinking back to how our knowledge-in-action has contributed to a certain outcome, is reflection-on-action, but we can also reflect during the action, which would create reflection-in-action. Schon (1987) describes the process of reflection-in-action as: the situation of the action, the responses to a surprise, the reflection on the surprise, and the ensuing on-the-spot experiment (p. 28). Schon (1987) believes that reflection-in-action can be learned, but the reality in which a practitioner is operating needs to be considered (p. 36). Schon (1987) suggests the utilization of apprenticeships or a practicum setting; he also suggests a coaching process (p. 38). He believes that the learning process depends on the "effectiveness on a reciprocally reflective dialogue of coach and student" (Schon, 1987, p. 40). Like Knowles, Kegan, and Kolb, Schon believes the coaching process has beneficial implications on the learning process. The coaching process would therefore have beneficial implications on the learning of the alumni mock interviewers in the mock interview program.

Additionally, Brookfield and Preskill (2005) believe in a facilitated learning process. Brookfield believes that education experiences should be constructed through

purposeful learning (Archer & Garrison, 2010, p. 324). Specifically, educators should act as facilitators by providing critical discussion prompts, as well as offering suggestions, observations, questions, and advice (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 10). The facilitators should also model and encourage participation by asking follow-up questions, rephrasing statements, and connecting contributions to one another (Brookfield, 2017, p. 10). Similar to Knowles, Kegan, Kolb, and Schon, Brookfield believes having a facilitated educational process would foster the learning experience. Having a facilitated educational process could consequently have implications on alumni mock interviewers' learning.

As demonstrated, Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) communicate the importance of facilitators and their direct impact on learning. The use of facilitator designed learning, coaching, and training within a mock interview program will therefore have a direct impact on the alumni mock interviewers. Since most of the theories and frameworks examined have an assumption of a facilitator, this component may be a necessary design element for an alumni mock interview program that fosters alumni mock interviewer learning. It is imperative that more is known about the experience of the alumni mock interviewers in order to understand the alumni mock interviewer learning, the impact of the practices being utilized, and the changes that could be made to foster additional learning. In the next section, the third component of learning from experience frameworks will be discussed, which is reflective practice.

**Reflective Practice**

The focus of this study involves the learning experience of alumni mock interviewers within a mock interview program. Therefore, it is important to understand the influence of reflective practice within an adult learning environment. Learning from experience fundamentally involves reflecting on past experiences to understand future experiences, which is based on the work of John Dewey (1938):

> To reflect is to look back over what has been done so as to extract the net meanings which are the capital stock for intelligent dealing with future experiences. It is the heart of intellectual organization and the disciplined mind. (p. 87).

Earlier in Chapter II, the use of reflective practice was mentioned as a mechanism for interviewees to learn from experience, however it has implications for interviewer learning as well (Agnihotri et al., 2014, p. 84; Freeman, 2012, pp. 157-160; Lowes et al., 2016, p. 3). In learning from experience literature, Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) address the importance of reflective practice in adult learning.

Kolb's Learning Cycle (1984) defines the process and structure of experiential learning and highlights the importance of reflective practices. The model is made up of four adaptive learning modes or abilities: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The reflective observation mode provides the opportunity for one to examine their assumptions, beliefs, and experiences (Kolb, 1984, p. 28). Transformation in the reflective observation mode occurs through intention, which is grasping a figurative representation of experience through internal reflection (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). This transformation of experience is the process through which Kolb believes that knowledge is created (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Kolb believes that

without reflection, experiential learning cannot take place and therefore may be an important element in the learning of the alumni mock interviewers.

Schon's Theory of Reflective Practice (1987) also demonstrates the importance of reflection. He views reflection as occurring in two forms: reflection-on-action and reflecting-in-action (Schon, 1987, p. 26). Schon (1987) describes the process of reflection-in-action as: the situation of the action, the responses to a surprise, the reflection on the surprise, and the ensuing on-the-spot experiment (p. 28). Reflection-in-action enables learners to devise new methods of reasoning, as well as construct and test "new categories of understanding, strategies of action, and ways of framing problems" (Schon, 1987, p. 39). Additionally, Schon (1987) views the multiple levels and kinds of reflection as having a learning impact on the "acquisition of artistry" or development of in-depth skills (p. 31). Like Kolb, Schon sees reflection as an essential mechanism in the learning process. Therefore, reflective practices will likely have an impact on the learning of the alumni mock interviewers.

Boud and Walker's Model for Promoting Learning from Experience (1993) examines reflection on experience and possible barriers. They first go through their own steps of collaboration and explain how their current perspective was adopted from their experience. The steps they follow are: return to experience (determining what was significant), attend to feelings (working through feelings), re-evaluation (reappraising the experience), association (relating to previous learning and experience), integration (combining new and previous learning and experience), validation (testing validity), and appropriation (making it their own) (p. 73). They further developed their model to include three potential areas where barriers could have an effect: preparation (through

reduced learning potential), experience (through limited noticing and intervening), and reflective practice (through the raising of emotional factors) (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 80). They found that four steps helped to work with potential barriers: acknowledging their existence, naming them, identifying how they operate through their origins, and working with them (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 82). Boud and Walker (1993) believe that for reflection to be effective it must be introduced to the process from the beginning and included during and after (p. 76). Like Kolb and Schon, Boud and Walker find that reflection is a critical component in every aspect of the learning from experience framework. Therefore, reflective practice would be beneficial to the alumni mock interviewers' learning process.

Brookfield (2017) also finds critical reflective practice essential and details this through his four lenses of critical reflection: *students' eyes, colleagues' perceptions, personal experience,* and *theory* (p. 62). He finds his definition of critical reflection to be more radically political than other definitions; it is not only informed actions, but also actions that promote the ideals of fairness and social justice (Merriam, 2010, p. 407; Merriam et al., 2007, p. 147). Brookfield (2017) believes that critical reflection is necessary for "the pursuit of pedagogic, political, and emotional clarity" (p. 79). Additionally, critical reflection helps educators make informed actions, develop a rationale for practice, enliven classrooms, stay engaged, and model the democratic impulse (Brookfield, 2017, pp. 80-93). Brookfield, like Kolb, Schon, and Boud and Walker, believes in the importance of reflective practices in learning from experience, however he takes this reflection further, adding that it should have a critical component.

Therefore, critical reflective practice may be essential for the alumni mock interviewers to learn from their experiences.

As demonstrated, Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) address the importance of reflective practice and its direct impact on learning. The use of reflective practice within a mock interview program will therefore have a direct impact on the alumni mock interviewers. It is imperative that more is known about the experience of the alumni mock interviewers in order to understand the alumni mock interviewer learning, the impact of the practices being utilized, and the changes that could be made to foster additional learning. In the next section, the fourth and final component of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks will be detailed, which is discussion based learning.

**Discussion Based Learning**

As described, the focus of this study involves the learning experience of alumni mock interviewers within a mock interview program. Therefore, it is also important to understand the influence of discussion based learning. The use of discussion based learning may directly affect the learning experience of the alumni mock interviewers. In adult learning theory and learning from experience literature, Knowles (1980, 1984), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) assert the importance of discussion based learning.

Knowles (1980, 1984) finds that learning from experience is best utilized through the sharing of experience. Knowles believes that discussion encourages sharing of experiences, thus validating learners' previous knowledge while simultaneously encouraging them to consider the knowledge of the others (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419;

Merriam et al., 2007, p. 144). Discussion therefore provides an opportunity to learn

through utilizing the perspectives and experiences of others with which a learner has a

shared experience. Since the alumni mock interviewers share the experience of being

mock interviewers, discussion would positively support their learning.

Boud and Walker's Model for Promoting Learning from Experience (1993) also

promotes the benefits of discussion based learning. The model was created through a

discussion based approach, where the theorists reviewed their experience together and

then "discussed and attempted to articulate to each other what [they] were trying to

express" (Boud & Walker, 1993, pp. 78-79). The model promotes examining

independent assumptions and learning in a collective way to critically reflect at a

community level (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 76). They view their framework as a generic

template that could easily be applied to group discussions (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 75).

Additionally, Boud and Walker (1993) find the thoughts of others vital to the learning

process:

> Other people can provide an invaluable means of identifying the discrepancy or
> dilemma; they can often see what may be obvious but which is too close for us to
> notice. By supportively drawing it to our attention, they can help us learn from
> experience, even when they do not see themselves in that role. (p. 85).

Similar to Knowles, Boud and Walker find that knowledge from others can contribute to

additional learning outside of internal reflection. Discussion may therefore provide

valuable insights to the alumni mock interviewers, that may not be realized through

another mechanism.

Brookfield (2005, 2017) also believes in the importance of discussion to the

learning from experience process. Group discussions aim to uncover themes, solve

problems, and make connections amongst the group's individual experiences (Brookfield

& Preskill, 2005, pp. 33-35).  Brookfield and Preskill (2005) view discussion as necessary to reveal diversity of opinions, explore unsettled questions, and develop an appreciation of the human experience (p. 3).  To Brookfield and Preskill (2005), discussion is part of the democratic process since it promotes human growth and fosters mutual understanding (pp. 3-4).  Discussion also exposes new points of view, which can renew one's motivation to continue learning (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 4). Brookfield and Preskill (2005) found there to be four purposes of discussion: to reach critically informed understanding, to enhance self-awareness, to foster appreciation of diverse viewpoints, and to act as a catalyst of informed action (p. 6).  Brookfield and Preskill (2005) also found that there are 15 benefits of discussion for learners, discussion: opens diverse perspectives, increases awareness and tolerance, investigates assumptions, encourages respectful listening, develops appreciation of differences, increases intellectual agility, connects topics, respects experiences, demonstrates democratic discourse, creates knowledge, develops clear communication capacity, creates collaborative learning, increases empathy, develops synthesis and integration skills, and leads to transformation (pp. 21-22).  They do not believe that discussion must lead to agreement (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 7).  However, discussion should be facilitated in a democratic way that promotes hospitality, participation, mindfulness, humility, mutuality, deliberation, appreciation, hope, and autonomy (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 8).  Brookfield (2017) recommends employing techniques to facilitate critically reflective conversations aimed at this goal, such as Critical Incidents, Chalk Talk, The Circular Response Method, or Rotating Stations (pp. 121-126).  Educational literature can also be used to stimulate discussion and reflection (Brookfield, 2017, p. 171).  While

Brookfield believes strongly in discussion as a crucial vehicle for learning and the democratic process, he too mirrors the beliefs of Knowles, as well as Boud and Walker, in that discussion increases learning and leads to awareness and knowledge that might otherwise not have been realized. Therefore, discussion may be an essential tool for alumni mock interviewer learning.

As shown, Knowles (1980, 1984), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) communicate the importance of discussion based learning. The use of discussion based learning within a mock interview program would potentially have a beneficial impact on the learning of the alumni mock interviewers. It is necessary that more is known about the experience of the alumni mock interviewers in order to understand alumni mock interviewer learning, the impact of the practices being utilized, and the changes that could be made to foster additional learning.

**Section Summary**

This section explored adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks as lenses with which to examine alumni mock interviewer learning within mock interview programs. Specifically, the models and theories of Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) were examined as relevant frameworks to this study. The theories comprise four components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks, which were detailed in the section: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning. In the next section the integration of the concepts covered in Chapter II will be presented as a conceptual framework.

**Conceptual Framework**

The following conceptual framework is a visual analysis created from the concepts, ideas, and components discovered through the literature review process (see Figure 1).  This figure highlights the relevance of the research purpose to examine alumni mock interviewers' perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program.  The thick boxes in the conceptual framework are the areas that need further exploration, as the relationship of the alumni mock interviewer learning experience to these areas of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks is unknown.  The additional boxes in the conceptual framework represent the literature based connections of the foundational knowledge and known information relevant for the study.  The conceptual framework as a whole also forms the basis for the research questions to determine what alumni mock interviewer learning takes place, what practices contribute to or inhibit learning, and how learning could be additionally fostered, as this has not yet been explored in an alumni mock interviewer population.  The conceptual framework will further aide in determining data collection methods presented in Chapter III (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 58).
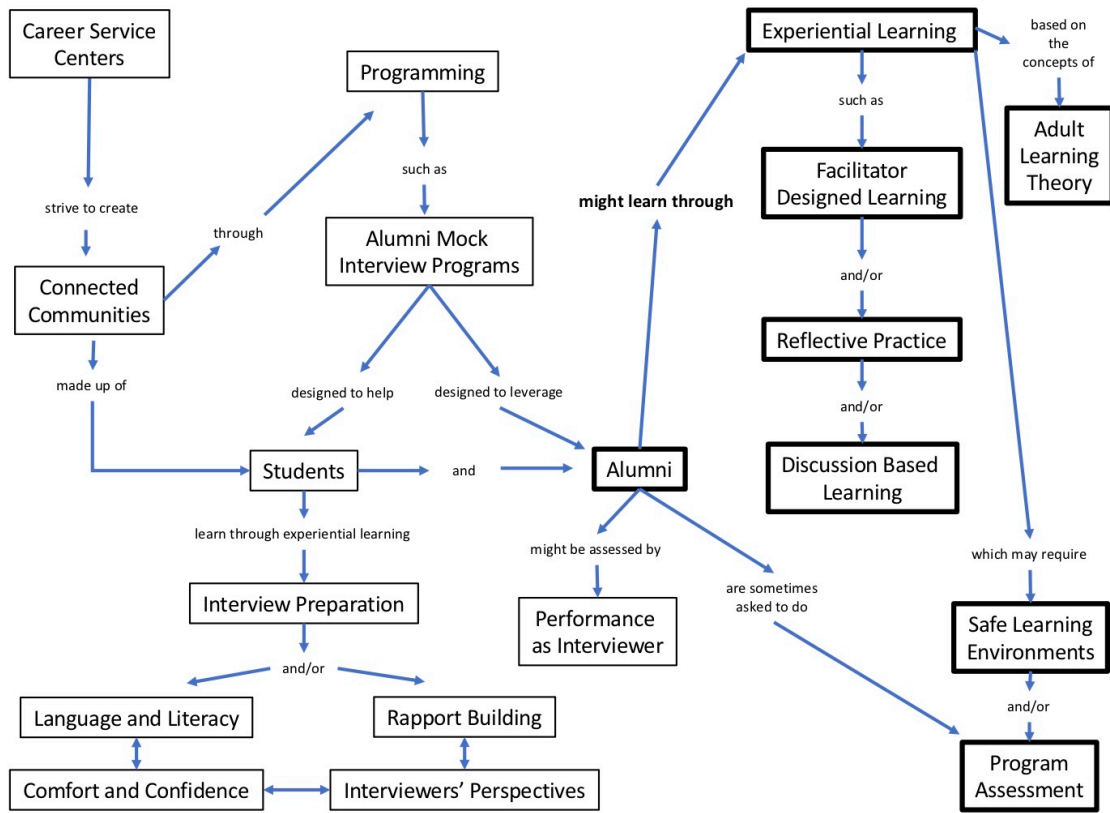
Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

## Chapter Summary

Chapter II provided an overview of the literature relevant to the study including the research on mock interview program learning and the theoretical frameworks of adult learning theory and learning from experience. Within the first topic, mock interview program learning was considered through its role in career services, progression and purpose, design and structure, alumni mock interviewer learning, major debates, and its research methods. Within the second topic, adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks were considered as lenses to examine alumni mock interviewer learning through safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective

practice, and discussion based learning.  Chapter III describes the study's methodology and research overview.  The chapter further details the study's research sample and design, three methods of data collection, data analysis and synthesis, literature on the methods, ethical considerations, and limitations of the study.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

**Introduction and Overview**

The purpose of this case study is to explore with a group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program. As discussed in Chapter I and II, the learning experience of the alumni mock interviewers remains relatively unknown. The descriptions of their experience will help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning. The methodology that was selected for this study is intended to illuminate the research problem and provide beneficial insights into alumni mock interviewer learning. Specifically, this study seeks to address the research purpose through three research questions: How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?

To best address these questions a qualitative approach was utilized. Qualitative approaches are based in process theory; rather than examining the relationship between variables, they seek to understand the processes that connect people, situations, and events (Maxwell, 2013, p. 29). Qualitative research was a relevant methodology for this

study as it seeks to understand the meaning of experiences for study participants, the

particular context and unique circumstances of the study, and the processes by which the

studied actions take place (Creswell, 2013, p. 47; Maxwell, 2013, pp. 30-31; Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016, p.15). Qualitative research was necessary for this study as it employs

multiple methods and complex reasoning to provide a richly descriptive, holistic account

of the research problem (Creswell, 2013, pp. 45-47; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 17).

Furthermore, qualitative research is beneficial when the intention is to both explore and

improve existing practices or programs, as was the intention of this study (Creswell,

2013, p. 47; Maxwell, 2013, p. 32). The researcher finds relevance in the definition of

qualitative research by Denzin and Lincoln (2011): "Qualitative research consists of a set

of interpretive, material practices that make the world more visible. These practices

transform the world" (Creswell, 2013, p. 43).

This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the research

methodology. The components of the methodology that will be described include: (a) an

overview of procedures (b) the research sample, (c) an overview of the information

needed, (d) the research design, (e) the three methods of data collection, (f) the

procedures for data analysis and synthesis, (g) an overview of ethical considerations, (h)

an overview of issues of trustworthiness, and (i) the limitations of the study.

## Overview of Procedures

The study procedures were comprised of two parts. The first part of the study was

a questionnaire sent to all 82 members of the population of potential study participants

(See Appendix I). The 82 members of the population of potential study participants were

invited over email to the questionnaire through a Qualtrics web address (See Appendix E).  The questionnaire began with an informed consent form and a demographic inventory (See Appendix C and H respectively).  At the end of the questionnaire, all 82 members of the population of potential study participants had the option to elect to participate in the second part of the study.  The second part of the study was comprised of a critical incident written response and an interview, both of which were done in the same scheduled session (See Appendix J and K respectively).  A total of 47 members of the population of potential study participants became sample participants through completing the questionnaire.

The sample participants that elected to continue to the second part of the study were invited over email in the order of their questionnaire submissions (See Appendix F). The researcher intended to continue to send email invitations to additional sample participants until the data saturation point had been reached, which was believed to be approximately 20 sample participants.  However, as only 18 sample participants responded favorably to the questionnaire election into the second part of the study, all were invited.  Since a greater subset of sample participants was targeted than had expressed interest in the second part of the study, a follow-up email was sent to the remaining members of the sample participants, which resulted in an additional seven sample participants electing to continue to the second part of the study (See Appendix G). A total of 25 sample participants became subset sample participants through either initially electing to do so in their questionnaire or electing to do so through the follow-up email.

Before the critical incident written response and interview began, the subset

sample participants needed to complete a new informed consent form and another

demographic inventory through a Qualtrics web address (See Appendix D and H

respectively). The second demographic inventory was necessary as the demographic

inventory completed before the questionnaire was disassociated with the sample

participants to protect their confidentiality. After all the interviews were finished, the

study procedures were complete.

**Research Sample**

As discussed in Chapter I, given that the goal of the study is to examine the

research questions within a particular setting, "purposeful selection" in a case study

approach was used (Maxwell, 2013, p. 78). Identification of the specific group was the

beginning phase of the case study research and from there a single site, or unit of

analysis, was selected (Creswell, 2013, p. 98; Merriam, 1998, p. 28; Merriam & Tisdell,

2016, p. 38). The researcher was able to identify a site for the study setting through her

professional experience. The mock interview program serving as the setting was a

single-case study, as the program was representative of mock interview programs

common in career service centers, as well as being ordinary and accessible, it was also

specific and complex (Creswell, 2013, p. 100; Merriam, 1998, p. 28; Yin, 2009, p. 48).

This single-case study was an instrumental case, which allows for an in-depth

understanding of the problem where themes were identified and an overall meaning was

derived (Creswell, 2013, pp. 98-99). This case study also served as an exploratory study,

since alumni learning in mock interview programs had not yet been researched; the

findings will lead to new insights in the field (Yin, 2009, p. 28). The case study was of a holistic design, as the entire alumni mock interviewer population in the last five years was invited to be participants in the research (Yin, 2009, p. 50). Furthermore, by using a single mock interview program, revelations about alumni learning were reveled without additional considerations over variations in practice (Yin, 2009, p. 30). This provided the opportunity for the case study to be evaluative and produce judgement, which further answers research questions two and three about practices that contribute to and/or inhibit learning, as well as recommendations to foster additional learning (Merriam, 1998, p. 39). Although this approach may have impeded generalization, it provided a detailed illustration of the complexity of the case and a clear understanding of the unit of analysis (Creswell, 2013, p. 99; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 38). Not only did this allow for a comprehensive appreciation of the group experience, but also it afforded the opportunity for theoretical understandings of the patterns of experience (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). Additionally, there is the anticipation that the in-depth understanding can affect and improve practice in the future (Merriam, 1998, p. 41).

The population of potential study participants was made up of 82 alumni mock interviewers that have participated in the alumni mock interview program, serving as the study setting, in the last five years (Fall 2014 through Spring 2019). The researcher had access to the participants through her personal network. The mock interview program took place four to six evenings per year. Alumni and students were ideally matched by industry of experience and interest; however, this was not always possible due to advanced alumni sign-up and late student registrations. The evening was a three hour commitment for the alumni mock interviewers, comprised of an optional one hour pre-

session and two hours of mock interviews. The alumni mock interviewers varied in gender (male and female), race/ethnicity, age and experience (with graduation years ranging from 1958 to 2018), degree level (bachelors through doctoral), and degree specialization (comprised of degrees from 10 different schools within the institution).

All 82 members of the population of potential study participants received an invitation email to participate in the questionnaire method of data collection (See Appendix E). 43 elected to complete the questionnaire, becoming the sample participants. The final question in the questionnaire asked if they "would like to be contacted to participate in a writing prompt task and a follow-up interview" (See Appendix I). The sample participants also had the option to elect to continue with the second part of the study through a follow-up email (See Appendix G). 25 elected to move forward in the study, so they received an invitation email to participate in the second part of the study, the critical incident written response and interview (See Appendix F). Once the 25 sample participants completed the critical incident written response and interview, they became a new subset of the sample participants. The sample participants (those completing the questionnaire) and the subset of sample participants (those completing the critical incident written response and interview) were each asked to complete a demographic inventory before each part of the study (See Appendix H). Each part of the study also had a separate informed consent that must have been completed before that part of the study could take place (See Appendix C and D respectively).

The researcher initially estimated that the subset sample of participants necessary to reach the data saturation point would be 20 alumni mock interviewers. The researcher

noted that as the study progressed, it may be discovered that fewer or greater participants were needed to inform the study.  Due to the design of the study, data collection preceded data analysis, so while core concepts and themes were noted throughout collection, discerning the point of data saturation where no new information was forthcoming and no new perspectives were shared was not evident (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 101; Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 63).  The researcher therefore targeted a minimum of 12 interviews and a maximum of 30 interviews.  Guest et al. (2006) found that a minimum of 12 participant interviews was needed to reach data saturation, however they recommended more participant interviews if the population is heterogeneous (pp. 74-77).  Adler and Adler (2012) corroborates this sample size, recommending a range of 12 to 60 qualitative interviews, with a mean of 30 (p. 10).

The researcher distributed the questionnaire, as well as held the critical incident written response and interview sessions between January and March 2020.  Given the study design and the target ranges for sample and subset sample sizes, the researcher collected all survey responses for the duration of the survey (33 days from 1/14/2020 through 2/15/2020) and interviewed all interested participants for the duration of the interview period (40 days and 1/27/2020 through 3/6/2020).  The resulting research sample of 43 sample participants and 25 subset sample participants are believed to be more than sufficient to detail the findings; analyze, synthesize, and interpret the data; and draw conclusions and recommendations for the population.

**Overview of Information Needed**

The case study included 82 members of the population of potential study participants. Those 43 that completed the questionnaire became sample participants and those 25 that continued and completed the critical incident written response and interview became the subset sample of participants. The data was collected to determine (1) how do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? (2) what practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? (3) what recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning? The researcher therefore sought relevant information falling into four categories: contextual, perceptual, demographic, and theoretical.

**Contextual**

Contextual information is relevant to the study as it describes the setting in which the participants reside and that setting may influence their behavior (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, pp. 69-70). As noted in Chapter I, the alumni mock interview program serving as the setting for this study was at a large, private, R1 research university in the northeast ("The Carnegie," 2012). Additionally, the alumni mock interview program had existed for many years, so it is highly likely that it had influenced the behavior of the alumni mock interviewers. The researcher had access to and an in-depth understanding of the population and key personnel from her prior experience with the alumni mock interview program setting (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 201). Therefore, she utilized her own experience with the alumni mock interview program, as well as the demographic inventory and all

three of the data collection methods (questionnaire ratings, critical incident written

responses, and interviews) to further understand the context of the setting.

**Perceptual**

Perceptual information is relevant to this study as it represents what participants

believe to be true about the topic of inquiry, as perceived through their own assumptions

and worldview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, pp. 70-71).  Perceptual information was best

discovered through the interview process, but it relies on the interview questions and

interviewer to uncover the participants' descriptions of their experiences (Bloomberg &

Volpe, 2008, p. 70).  For the purposes of this study the perceptual information was

descriptions from the alumni mock interviewers of their learning experience in the alumni

mock interview program setting.  The information, while most prevalent in interviews,

was also found in the questionnaire ratings and critical incident written responses.

**Demographic**

Demographic information is relevant to the study as it helps to explain both what

may be underlying a participant's perceptions and the differences among participants'

perceptions (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 70).  As mentioned in the Research Sample

section, demographic information was collected from the sample participants before

completing the questionnaire, through Qualtrics (See Appendix H).  Demographic

information was again collected from the subset of sample participants before completing

the critical incident written response and interview (also through Qualtrics) (See

Appendix H).  The second demographic inventory was necessary as the demographic

inventory completed before the questionnaire was disassociated with the sample

participants to protect their confidentiality. The demographic inventories collected information on: age, gender, race/ethnicity, highest level of education, primary industry of professional experience, years of professional experience, level of professional experience, number of professional positions, number of mock interview nights attended, and if the alumni mock interviewers volunteered in other career focused capacities.

**Theoretical**

Theoretical information is relevant to the study as it is topical knowledge collected from literature sources that informs the conceptual framework, supports the study methodology, frames the data analysis and interpretation, and reinforces the conclusions drawn (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 71). While the initial literature review was conducted from Fall 2017 to Fall 2019, the review was ongoing throughout the data collection, analysis, and synthesis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 59). The literature review aimed to understand what is known about mock interview programs, as well as adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks. The distinct topic areas within mock interview programs were: (1) role of career services in programming for students and alumni, (2) alumni volunteer engagement strategies, (3) progression and purpose of mock interview programs, (4) design and structure of mock interview programs, (5) alumni (mock interviewer) learning goals for mock interview programs, (6) major debates in mock interview programs, and (7) research methods of mock interview programs. Additionally, the components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks explored were: (1) safe learning environments, (2) facilitator designed learning, (3) reflective practice, and (4) discussion based learning.

**Research Design Overview**

This section provides an overview of the research design, detailing the sequence of the steps followed to complete this study.

1. **Research Problem Identification**: A research problem was identified by the researcher through practice as an administrator in career service centers in higher education institutions. The researcher further developed specific research questions to provide insight into the research problem.

2. **Literature Review**: A thorough literature review was conducted on mock interview programs, as well as adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks. This literature review further informed the research design through problem definition, method determination and design, and data analysis.

3. **Identification of Setting and Participants**: Through the researcher's professional experience, an alumni mock interview program was identified to serve as the study setting. This specific alumni mock interview program was selected based on the continuity of the program over many years and the varied demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as the researcher's access to the participants through her personal network.

4. **Method Determination**: The appropriate research methodology was selected to collect the relevant data. The Teachers College Institutional Review Board was consulted to determine that external IRB review was unnecessary in order to conduct the study with participants from the selected setting.

5. **Proposal Hearing**: The research proposal hearing was held in early December 2019 on 12/9/2019. The researcher then incorporated all suggestions and

revisions from the researcher's sponsor and second reader. A revised proposal was submitted to the researcher's sponsor and second reader later in December 2019 on 12/16/2019.

6. **IRB Approval**: The required documentation was submitted to the Teachers College Institutional Review Board in December 2019 and approval to begin data collection was obtained in January 2020 on 1/5/2020.

7. **Questionnaire Invitation Letter**: After IRB approval in January 2020, the population of potential study participants was emailed an invitation on 1/14/2020 to participate in the first part of the study, which included the research purpose and logistical details (See Appendix E). Participants were asked to complete the following (in order) through a provided Qualtrics web address:

   a. **Informed Consent Form** (Part 1): Comprised of an invitation to participate, the risks, the rights, the possible benefits, the confidentiality of records, the dissemination, the contact information, and copies of the form (See Appendix C).

   b. **Demographic Inventory**: Comprised of 10 demographic questions (See Appendix H).

   c. **Questionnaire**: Comprised of 20 Likert scale rating questions (See Appendix I).

8. **Questionnaire Ratings**: After completing the informed consent form and demographic inventory, the participants answered 20 Likert scale rating questions related to their learning experience as alumni mock interviewers (See Appendix I). 43 sample participants participated in the questionnaire and it took

approximately 20 minutes to complete. At the end of the questionnaire

participants were asked if they were interested in participating in the second part

of the study.

9. **Critical Incident Written Response & Interview Invitation Letter**: If the

sample participants expressed interest in continuing with the study, then they were

emailed an invitation to participate in the second part of the study. The email

invitation included the research purpose and logistical details (See Appendix F).

The sample participants were invited in the order of their questionnaire

submissions and the researcher sent email invitations to all interested sample

participants. To reach the targeted subset sample size, the researcher also sent a

follow-up email to the remaining members of the sample participants to provide a

second opportunity to continue to the second part of the study (See Appendix G).

If they elected to continue after the follow-up email, then they also received the

invitation to participate in the second part of the study (See Appendix F). Sample

participants were asked to schedule a one-hour session with the researcher and

asked to complete the following (in order) through a provided Qualtrics web

address:

   a. **Informed Consent Form** (Part 2): Comprised of an invitation to

      participate, the risks, the rights, the possible benefits, the confidentiality of

      records, the dissemination, the contact information, and copies of the form

      (See Appendix D).

   b. **Demographic Inventory**: Comprised of 10 demographic questions (See

      Appendix H). The second demographic inventory was necessary as the

demographic inventory completed before the questionnaire was

disassociated with the participants to protect their confidentiality.

10. **Critical Incident Written Response**: At the one-hour session the subset sample

participants were asked to complete a writing prompt task.  The writing prompt

asked participants to briefly reflect and write an answer to a question (See

Appendix J).  25 subset sample participants participated in the writing prompt and

it took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

11. **Interview**: After the writing prompt task, the semi-structured interview took

place. The same subset sample participants from the writing prompt participated

in the interview and it took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

12. **Interview Transcription and Coding**: The interviews were then transcribed

through Rev and checked for accuracy by the researcher.  The audio-recordings

were subsequently deleted.  The transcripts were then coded by the researcher

using NVivo.

13. **Inter-Rater Reliability**: The researcher had two doctoral students in the Adult

Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College each code an

interview to ensure inter-rater reliability in July 2020, with a collective discussion

taking place on 7/30/2020.  Coding alignment was reached after one interview,

however if not, additional interviews would have been coded until alignment had

been established.

14. **Data Analysis**: The data from all three methods of data collection (questionnaire

ratings, critical incident written responses, and interviews) was analyzed

individually and collectively.  The data was also analyzed with the respective

demographic inventories. The conceptual framework informed the subsequent coding, analysis, synthesis, and interpretations of the data.

## Methods of Data Collection

As discussed in Chapter I, this case study is made up of three data collection methods: questionnaire ratings, critical incident written responses, and interviews. In Chapter II, these methods were found to be the three most common means of data collection within mock interview program research. The use of these three methods of data collection provides for method triangulation, in order to demonstrate that they support a single conclusion (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 106). Additionally, the three methods allowed for complementarity and expansion on the range of perceptions of the alumni learning experience (Maxwell, 2013, p. 102). Combined, they provided insights into what alumni select, write, and say about their experience. This analysis examines a specific instance, but illuminates a general problem, and provides guidance for similar situations in the field (Merriam, 1998, p. 30). Detailed information on the three data collection methods follows.

### Questionnaire Ratings

The first method was questionnaire ratings, which provided corroboration and supportive evidence to the primary data collection method, interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 73; Seidman, 2013, p. 9). The questionnaire generally provided a description of the sample and the participants' scale of experience in the mock interview program. Questionnaires are becoming increasingly popular in qualitative research as

they are able to broadly explore attitudes and preferences within a larger group and provide general information (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 44). Some researchers would consider this a mixed methods approach as it utilizes close-ended quantitative measures through the questionnaire instrument, as well as two open-ended qualitative measures through the critical incident written response and the interview (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 45). However, the questionnaire only collected ordinal data, with no prescribed distance between categories, so other researchers may not consider this a mixed methods approach, as it purely assigned a quantitative value to qualitative data (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 150). Regardless, the combination of a questionnaire and qualitative measures in a convergent design allowed for interpretations and comparison based on the strengths of both (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 45-46). The questionnaire further provided the opportunity for the entire sample of the study to have their experiences included in the results of the study. The questionnaire was especially helpful in describing the prevalence of the phenomenon and helped to better understand the second and third research questions, which ask what contributes to and/or hinders alumni learning, as well as what could foster additional alumni learning respectively (Yin, 2009, p. 9). The questionnaire also served as a useful method to introduce the participants to the purpose of the study in advance of the interviews, which were the primary data source. This potentially helped facilitate more in-depth responses during the interviews, as the subjects were already familiar with the purpose and therefore may have thought further about their experience in regard to the researcher's interests.

Although questionnaires are a common data collection method, all methods have weaknesses. Questionnaires cannot provide explanatory answers or guide in

understanding meaning (Seidman, 2013, p. 10; Yin, 2009, p. 9). Rather, the information

they provide is related to frequency and incidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 47; Yin,

2009, p. 9). The researcher therefore used the data collected from the questionnaire to

corroborate the data from the primary research method, interviews (Bloomberg & Volpe,

2008, p. 73).

   The questionnaire in this study was sent out over email to all 82 members of the

population of potential study participants (See Appendix E). The questionnaire itself was

administered through Qualtrics to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The

questionnaire was made up of 20, 5-point Likert scale rating questions, divided into three

categories based on the research questions: How do the alumni describe what they learn

through participating in the mock interview program? What practices and approaches

contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? What

recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni

learning? (See Appendix I). The last section of the questionnaire asked if the sample

participants "would like to be contacted to participate in a writing prompt task and a

follow-up interview" and provided space to write in their email address. The email

addresses provided were not connected to previous responses to protect the

confidentiality of the sample participants. If a sample participant expressed interest in

continuing in the study, they were then sent a new invitation email to schedule the second

part of study (See Appendix F). The sample participants were invited to the second part

of the study in the order of their questionnaire submissions. To reach the targeted subset

sample size, the researcher also sent a follow-up email to the remaining members of the

sample participants to provide a second opportunity to continue to the second part of the

study (See Appendix G). If they elected to continue after the follow-up email, then they also received the invitation to participate in the second part of the study (See Appendix F). Before taking the questionnaire, the sample participants completed the questionnaire informed consent form (See Appendix C) and a demographic inventory (See Appendix H). The second demographic inventory was necessary as the demographic inventory completed before the questionnaire was disassociated with the sample participants to protect their confidentiality. The questionnaires were completed by 43 alumni mock interviewers and took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

**Critical Incident Written Responses**

The second method was critical incident written responses. This method entailed having the interview subjects corroborate interview data by writing answers to a critical incident instrument before beginning their verbal interviews. This method is believed to uncover additional perceptions not revealed through interviews with a descriptive and inductive approach (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 83). Additionally, critical incident written responses allowed for time for reflection, which is not true of many qualitative data collection methods (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 83). Furthermore, they were a relevant mechanism to triangulate data and check the validity of data collected through the interview process (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, pp. 83-84).

Although critical incident written responses are a common qualitative data collection method, all methods have weaknesses. Critical incident written responses are abbreviated accounts, so the descriptive value is not as in-depth as other data collection methods and may be incomplete (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 83). The researcher therefore used critical incident written responses to corroborate data, but not as the

primary source. Critical incident written responses also rely upon participants' recall and the researcher's ability to accurately identify salient information (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, pp. 83-84). The researcher limited the specific years of alumni mock interview program participation to provide for better participant recall. The researcher also followed the study coding scheme while analyzing the data in order to provide as much consistency as possible (See Appendix M).

In this study, those sample participants that expressed interest in the second part of the study (at the end of the questionnaire or through the follow-up email) were sent an email inviting them to participate in a critical incident written response and an interview (See Appendix F). The critical incident written responses were conducted with 25 alumni mock interviewers, completed in writing at a scheduled session, and took approximately 10 minutes. The sample participants were invited in the order of their questionnaire submissions and the researcher sent email invitations to all interested additional sample participants. To reach the targeted subset sample size, the researcher also sent a follow-up email to the remaining members of the sample participants to provide a second opportunity to continue to the second part of the study (See Appendix G). If they elected to continue after the follow-up email, then they also received the invitation to participate in the second part of the study (See Appendix F). Even though the setting involved a specific mock interview program at a particular institution, all critical incident written responses and interviews with the subset sample participants were done offsite. The sessions for the second part were offered in two formats based on the preference of the subset sample participants: in-person at locations of convenience or voice only via cell phone. All 25 subset sample participants elected to use the voice only via cell phone

format.  Before the session, the participants completed an informed consent form (See

Appendix D) and a demographic inventory (See Appendix H).  At the beginning of the

session, the participants were asked to briefly reflect and write an answer to a question

regarding their experience as an alumni mock interviewer (See Appendix J).  The critical

incident written response was administered through Qualtrics, over email to an electronic

device as the voice only via cell phone option was the only one selected.  After the

critical incident written response was completed, the interview portion of the second part

of the study began.

**Interviews**

The primary data source for the study was qualitative interviews, as they provided

the necessary opportunity to understand how alumni learning is experienced (Merriam &

Tisdell, 2016, p. 48; Seidman, 2013, p. 10; Yin, 2009, p. 10).  The interviews took place

with alumni mock interviewers, as they were the ones who had direct experience with the

problem of interest and could determine what meaning they made out of their experiences

(Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 3; Seidman, 2013, p. 10).  The interviews were designed to be

in-depth qualitative interviews as the researcher was targeting rich and detailed

information by using open ended questions in a semistructured format (Rubin & Rubin,

2012, p. 29).  The interview data provided an in-depth understanding of the lived

experience and the meaning making of the alumni mock interviewers (Seidman, 2013, p.

9).  Interviews were further essential for this study as they provided the opportunity to

challenge long held assumptions of the researcher (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 3).  Since the

researcher has experience working on alumni mock interview programs, it was important

that there was ample opportunity to hear about experiences from alumni directly involved

in the program of interest.  The interview data clarified any pieces that were missing from

the questionnaire ratings and critical incident written response results, thus helping to

triangulate the results amongst the three data collection methods (Sekaran & Bougie,

2016, p. 106).

Although interviews are an important data collection method, all methods have

weaknesses (Yin, 2009, p. 106).  Interviews are only as useful as the information they

extract, so the wording used is a "crucial consideration" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.

117).  Another weakness is that it can be challenging to separate factual and subjective

responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 125).  Since interviews are "verbal reports only,"

the responses could be affected by poor recall or incorrect articulation (Yin, 2009, pp.

108-109).  To ensure solid questions, the researcher piloted the interview questions in

Spring 2019 and reworded the questions accordingly to avoid confusion, as well as solicit

information and opinions from the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 120).

Interviews could also be less reliable as both the interviewer and interviewee bring

"biases, predispositions, attitudes, and physical characteristics that affect the interaction

and the data elicited" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 130; Yin, 2009, p. 108).  The

researcher acknowledged the effects of social forces and was sensitive to how issues of

power and equity could affect participants and influence the data (Seidman, 2013, p.

101).

The interviews in the study were conducted with the 25 alumni mock interviewers

that participated in the critical incident written response.  The subset sample participant

interviews ranged in duration from 26 minutes to 72 minutes, with an average of

approximately 42 minutes.  This resulted in 1043 minutes or 17 hours and 23 minutes of

interviews regarding the subset sample participants' experience in the mock interview program. The interview protocol was made up of three main sections, which mirrored the study research questions: How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning? (See Appendix K). The interview protocol was changed after the Spring 2019 pilot study to include a researcher introduction of herself and the topic, as well as to clarify the questions in order to solicit alumni mock interviewer learning, rather than observed student learning (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 107). The interviews were audio-recorded for the purposes of transcription. After the audio-recordings were transcribed through Rev and checked for accuracy by the researcher, the audio files were deleted.

**Data Analysis and Synthesis**

As discussed in Chapter II, a literature review preceded data collection, and while this informs the study, the literature itself was not data to be collected. Data analysis began with data collection, as "analysis occurs both in and out of the field" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 197). The researcher wrote interviewer's comments and researcher's memos, as the data was collected, to stimulate critical thinking and reflect on the theoretical relationships among the data points (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 198; Miles, Hubberman, & Saldana, 2020, p. 7). Once all of the data was collected, the researcher began the process of making sense out of the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202).

For this study, questionnaire ratings, critical incident written responses, and interview transcripts were the sources of data. The questionnaire ratings data was analyzed first, as it was helpful in clarifying the phenomenon and understanding the outcomes (Yin, 2009, p. 133). The critical incident written responses and interview transcripts were then coded through a coding scheme based on the study's research questions and conceptual framework (See Appendix M).

Coding was helpful in pattern matching and explanation building (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 203; Yin, 2009, pp. 136-144). The researcher categorized the data through the simultaneous use of structural and conceptual coding. Structural coding is useful for studies with multiple participants, semi-structured data-gathering protocols, and exploratory investigations (Saldana, 2016, p. 98). Structural coding was used to determine and categorize conceptual phrases, relating directly to the three research questions, into four categories (Miles et al., 2020, p. 312; Saldana, 2016, p. 98). The first research question (How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program?) became the phrase "described learning." The second research question (What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program?) became two phrases "contributed to learning" and "inhibited learning." And the third research question (What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?) became the phrase "recommendations for program design." Structural coding involved a subjective process of interpreting the judgements and values of the alumni mock interviewers (Miles et al., 2020, p. 312). The four structural coding categories can be viewed in Appendix M.

Concept coding was useful for categorizing small observable actions into a bigger and broader scheme (Miles et al., 2020, p. 66; Saldana, 2016, p. 119).  Concept coding was used to find short phrases that summarized each idea within the transcript and categorized these ideas within their structural code category (Saldana, 2016, p. 119).  For example, the concept code "I learned about how to become a better interviewer" was categorized within the structural code of "described learning," as it related to the first research question.  While the concept code "The career center should match students and alumni based on industry and background" was categorized within the structural code "recommendations for program design," as it related to the third research question.  A complete list of the concept codes, within their respective structural codes, can be found in Appendix M.  Concept coding was especially helpful for this study as a tool that allowed for determination of generalizable concepts, which transcended the particular nature of the study (Miles et al., 2020, p. 66).

To ensure inter-rater reliability, the researcher then had two doctoral students in the Adult Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College each code an interview (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 252; Yin, 2009, p. 72).  The two doctoral students were given the interview transcript for Participant 1, the preliminary coding scheme, and a research overview (including the research title, problem statement, purpose, questions, and setting).  They were asked to code the full transcript using the codes provided, while simultaneously noting any changes, clarifications, or additions to the coding scheme.  The researcher and the two doctoral students then collectively discussed the interview, found minimal discrepancies in their coding alignment, and were able to quickly reach consensus.  The two doctoral students

utilized five more concept codes from the coding scheme than originally coded by the

researcher, which helped the researcher to expand her recognition and application of the

coding scheme. The discussion also provided additional code clarification on timing and

topics. For example, the concept code "It helped my learning by having a presentation

with information for the night" became "It helped my learning by having a presentation

*at the beginning of the evening* with information for the night." The researcher continued

to meet regularly with the two doctoral students during the coding process to discuss

points of uncertainty and receive critical feedback. After all data analysis was complete,

48 total concept codes were used: 44 for the primary analysis and 4 additional

clarification codes (See Appendix M). All coding was done through the NVivo coding

software, which was helpful in storing, organizing, and categorizing the large amount of

data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 221; Miles et al., 2020, p. 41; Yin, 2009, p. 128).

The list of steps for analyzing the data were as follows: (1) assign numerical

aliases on all transcripts and other data collection documentation, (2) determine trends in

the ratings data, (3) attach codes to responses and transcripts, (4) utilize two doctoral

students in the Adult Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College to

check coding inter-rater reliability and provide critical feedback (5) identify patterns and

relationships among variables, (6) compare differences in data collection methods and

samples, (7) note all reflections in analytic memos, (8) refine assertions and themes to

account for consistencies, and (9) contrast generalizations to known concepts and theories

(Miles et al., 2020, pp. 6-7; Seidman, 2013, p. 72; Yin, 2009, p. 72). Through the analysis

there was opportunity to evaluate, summarize, and conclude, which increases the

applicability of the case study (Merriam, 1998, p. 31).

**Ethical Considerations**

An important ethical consideration of the study was that participants were voluntarily involved and informed of all the possible risks (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 80; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 85). A pivotal component to ensuring consent procedures was the informed consent form signed by the study participants (Seidman, 2013, p. 63). The informed consent document included seven parts for the study: an invitation to participate (in what, to what end, how, how long, and for whom), the risks, the rights, the possible benefits, the confidentiality of records, the dissemination, and contact information and copies of the form (Seidman, 2013, pp. 64-65) (See Appendix C and D). A crucial element of the consent procedures was submitting them to the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (TC IRB). The IRB assured that the correct written informed consent was given to the study participants (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 70).

Another ethical consideration of the study was that the participants remain confidential (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 93; Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 85). To ensure confidentiality, participants were immediately assigned numerical aliases on all transcripts and other data collection documentation (Seidman, 2013, p. 72). There is no record matching the participants' real name with their alias. All records (original and with aliases), including contact information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, critical incident written responses, audio-recordings, and transcripts are kept only in digital form (Seidman, 2013, p. 73). After the audio-recordings were transcribed, the audio files were deleted. All files are stored on a password protected computer in password protected files at the researcher's residence in a locked cabinet. They are backed-up on a password protected external hard drive, which is also stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's

residence. Outside of the researcher, her sponsor, her second reader, her third reader, and the two doctoral students in the Adult Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College (who checked the coding for inter-rater reliability), no one else has access to the alias-assigned digital questionnaires, critical incident written responses, and transcripts. The Teachers College Institutional Review Board assured that the procedures utilized by the researcher ensured the confidentiality of the participants (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 71).

Another ethical consideration of study was the ethical challenges that arose while collecting the data. Berg and Lune (2012) refer to them as shades of gray and state that "shades of gray are often more prevalent than black and white" (p. 139). They recommended following the principle of doing "good work," which they define by: inviting, not persuading, participants to participate in the study; listening during interviews to best hear the participants' perspectives; avoiding asking leading questions to seek the desired answers; and recognizing that the researcher-participant relationship is inherently unequal (Berg & Lune, 2012, pp. 140-141; Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 88). To mitigate ethical challenges, the researcher used email templates (See Appendix E, F, and G) and protocols (See Appendix I, J, and K) to ensure the study embodied good work in ethics.

## Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness within qualitative research has been defined through different measures over time. For the purposes of this study, trustworthiness was defined through the terms utilized by Guba and Lincoln (1981): credibility (measure/construct validity and internal validity), transferability (external validity and generalizability),

dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 239). The researcher reviewed each term and detailed the strategies employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

**Credibility**

Credibility is making sure that the research findings "match reality" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 242). In order to establish credibility, the correct operational measures needed to be in place for the concepts being studied (measure or construct validity) and the participants' perceptions needed to match the researcher's portrayal (internal validity) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 242; Yin, 2009, p. 40). The most serious threats to validity in the research study came from the researcher and the participants. Although people believe themselves to be unbiased, their perceptions, descriptions, conclusions, experiences, and interpretations are not objective truth (Maxwell, 2013, p. 122). The study relied on a great deal of inference, made by both the researcher and the participants.

To ensure construct validity, the researcher conducted a pilot study in Spring 2019. The pilot study enabled the researcher to refine her protocols and reword the questions to avoid confusion, as well as solicit information and opinions from the participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 120; Yin, 2009, p. 42). To ensure internal validity, the researcher used her prolonged engagement in the field, as well as multiple data collection methods to make sure she had an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Creswell, 2013, pp. 250-251). Additionally, the researcher used triangulation of the three methods of data collection, to determine that they support a single conclusion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008,

p. 77; Sekaran & Bougie, 2016, p. 106). The researcher also utilized two doctoral students in the Adult Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College to each check coding inter-rater reliability and to collectively discuss the study findings, in order to offer suggestions and critical feedback (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Yin, 2009, p. 72). Employing the approaches of multiple methods of data collection, triangulation, and peer examination also helped reduce the impact of researcher bias (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Creswell, 2013, pp. 251-252; Maxwell, 2013, pp. 126-128; Yin, 2009, p. 72).

Although alumni perceptions of their experience are the best source to answer the research questions, they were also at risk of potential biases if unchecked against other sources of information, which is a validity threat to the data (Maxwell, 2013, p. 102). For example, since the questionnaire ratings, the critical incident written responses, and the interviews were reported by the alumni mock interviewers, there is a possibility for self-reporting bias (Maxwell, 2013, p. 128). One step used to address the threats of validity in the study was the use of rich data collected through intensive interviews (Maxwell, 2013, p. 126). The study interviews were designed to provide enough detail and variation that the reality of the situation was identifiable.

**Transferability**

Transferability is the extent to which the study findings can be applied to other situations or generalized (also called external validity) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 253; Yin, 2009, p. 40). In order to establish transferability, correct care was taken when selecting the participants and when interpreting the findings (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 341; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257). The researcher intentionally chose an alumni mock

interview program setting that was established and composed of participants with varied

demographic characteristics to aide in transferability.  Additionally, the researcher used

detailed descriptions of the setting and participants, as well as the findings to enable

accurate transferability (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78; Creswell, 2013, p. 252;

Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257).  However, since the study is a single-case study,

generalizability would be stronger if the findings were also found in similar research

studies involving other alumni mock interview program settings (Yin, 2009, p. 44).

**Dependability**

Dependability is the extent to which the results are "consistent with the data

collected" and could be replicated by following the practices and procedures of the study

(also called reliability) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp.

251-252).  In order to establish dependability, the researcher used triangulation of the

three methods of data collection and determined that they support consistent conclusions

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 252; Sekaran & Bougie,

2016, p. 106).  This demonstrated that the results are indeed reliable.  The two doctoral

students in the Adult Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College, who

each checked coding inter-rater reliability, further ensured the dependability of the study

(Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 252; Yin, 2009, p. 72).

The process of seeking agreement on the coding scheme and application ensured

consistent analysis of the findings (Creswell, 2013, p. 253).  Additionally, data

triangulation and peer examinations reduced the effect of researcher bias on the analysis

(Maxwell, 2013, p. 124).  To further ensure dependability, the researcher clearly defined

research procedures through the study protocols (See Appendix I, J, and K) (Yin, 2009, p.

41). The researcher also made sure to keep a research journal/log to reflect progress, as well as describe the methods of collection, analysis of the data, and rationale for decision making (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 252-253).

**Confirmability**

Confirmability is the notion that the study findings are the result of the research, not the result of the subjectivity of the researcher (also called objectivity) (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 87). Researchers should aim to remain objective, but not ignore the influence of their motives, assumptions, and agendas (Maxwell, 2013, p. 24). After all, "any view is a view from some perspective," so the study will always be shaped by the researcher (Maxwell, 2013, p. 46). Because of the researcher's familiarity with the topic, it is possible that she may have subconsciously ignored data that didn't fit in with her interpretation of the research problem and instead focused on data that stood out to her, which would be researcher bias (Maxwell, 2013, pp. 123-124). Therefore, it is important that the researcher addressed the theories, beliefs, and values she holds, so as to explain potential bias. In order to expose her beliefs, the researcher wrote her researcher description and assumptions in Chapter I (Maxwell, 2013, p. 46). To additionally increase confirmability, the researcher continued to reflect on her goals and assumptions throughout the duration of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 87; Maxwell, 2013, p. 46). The researcher also used her research journal/log to describe her rationale for decision making, so her interpretations could be examined later (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 78; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 252-253).

**Limitations of the Study**

Case studies, while the best qualitative method to address the study's research questions, do have limitations. Additional limitations of the research exist through the study itself. Discussed below are the limitations of the methodology and study related to (a) generalizability, (b) learning theory and frameworks, (c) participant recall and reactivity, (d) researcher bias and subjectivity, and (e) reader bias. In addition to discussing the limitations, the steps the researcher took to minimize their impact is also addressed.

**Generalizability**

Some researchers believe that case studies oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, which would lead to an incorrect understanding of the issue (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). While the analysis, synthesis, and interpretations of the case study fit the specific program studied, they also provided insights into other similar programs. The limitation within the analysis was accurately determining the generalizability or transferability of the findings. While the alumni mock interviewers' experiences were generalizable to some other alumni mock interviewers' experiences, they were not generalizable to all alumni mock interviewers' experiences, so care was taken when selecting the participants and when interpreting the findings (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 341; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257). The researcher intentionally chose an alumni mock interview program setting that was established and composed of participants with varied demographic characteristics to aide in transferability. Additionally, the researcher used detailed

descriptions of the setting and participants, as well as the findings to enable accurate transferability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257).

**Learning Theory and Frameworks**

The study was examined through the particular lenses of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks.  The learning from experience framework itself has limitations, which reside in the individuals involved in the learning process.  Boud and Walker (1993) touched on the fact that learning is really best understood by the individual learners, so it is hard to measure or describe the process that takes place: "...our lived experience can never be fully transmitted to another person, even when we go to great lengths to describe that experience" (p. 85).  They note, "...learning from experience is far more indirect than we often pretend it to be" (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 85).  Since the study relied on the alumni mock interviewers communicating their learning, the researcher took great care to collect data on their learning experience through three methods of communication: rating, writing, and speaking.

**Participant Recall and Reactivity**

It is also possible that the alumni participants deliberately or unintentionally distorted actual events (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 111; Maxwell, 2013, p. 81).  Many of the alumni mock interviewers involved in the program participated on different occasions and the origins and chronology of their learning might not have been easy to recall (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 115).  Seidman (2013) recommends asking participants to reconstruct their experience, rather than trying to recall it (p. 90).  The

study protocols aided the researcher in asking the participants questions that did not impede the reconstruction of the alumni mock interviewers' learning experience.

By interviewing the alumni participants directly, the researcher might have also influenced their responses through reactivity. The alumni mock interviewers may have been concerned about the researcher's reactions to their answers, since she had worked within the setting of the alumni mock interview program in the past (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 287; Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). While the researcher could not eliminate her effect completely, she reduced the effect by making sure to avoid leading questions. Having an interview protocol and researcher introduction established in advance helped reduce the likelihood of leading (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 107). Additionally, having an informed consent form, which included an assurance of confidentiality helped reduce participants' concern over sharing their experiences with the researcher (Berg & Lune, 2012, p. 90).

**Researcher Bias and Subjectivity**

The study was also limited by the integrity of the researcher, as the researcher was both the instrument of data collection and data analysis (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). The researcher's professional experience served as both an asset and a source of potential bias from her preconceptions (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009, p. 115; Maxwell, 2013, p. 124). Due to the researcher's familiarity with not only the alumni mock interview program setting, but also the participants themselves, measures were taken to minimize the impact of researcher bias. The use of rich data and triangulation of data collection methods helped reduce the effect of researcher bias (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Maxwell, 2013, pp. 126-128). The researcher also asked clarifying questions and explored unusual

and unanticipated responses in the interview process, as this allowed for a more accurate understanding of the alumni mock interviewers' experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16). Additionally, the researcher utilized two doctoral students in the Adult Learning and Leadership EdD Program at Teachers College to each check coding inter-rater reliability and to collectively discuss the findings, in order to offer suggestions and critical feedback (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 77; Yin, 2009, p. 72).

**Reader Bias**

In addition to researcher bias, reader bias is also a potential limitation of the study (Merriam, 1998, p. 42). Reader interpretation is necessary to connect the study findings and analysis to the readers' own world, through which meaning is derived (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 256). However, through this process the unconscious bias of the reader could be introduced. Since bias is often unconscious, it can be a challenging limitation to overcome. The researcher attempted to minimize reader bias by using "rich, thick description" in the findings section of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 256).

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**Chapter Summary**

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Chapter III provided a comprehensive overview of the research methodology. The components of the methodology that were described include: (a) an overview of procedures, (b) the research sample, (c) an overview of the information needed, (d) the research design, (e) the three methods of data collection, (f) the procedures for data analysis and synthesis, (g) an overview of ethical considerations, (h) an overview of issues of trustworthiness, and (i) the limitations of the study.

The population of potential study participants was made up of 82 alumni mock interviewers that have participated in the alumni mock interview program, serving as the study setting, in the last five years (Fall 2014 through Spring 2019). A qualitative case study approach was used to explore with this group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program. Data was collected through three methods: questionnaire ratings, critical incident written responses, and interviews. These methods supported the research questions and intended outcome of the study: to help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning.

Chapter IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

**Introduction and Overview**

The purpose of this case study is to explore with a group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program. To accomplish this purpose, this study seeks to address the following three research questions: How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?

As noted in Chapters I and III, the context of the mock interview program serving as the study setting impacts the alumni mock interviewer experience, which is detailed in the findings. The alumni mock interview program was at a large, private, R1 research university in the northeast ("The Carnegie," 2012). To help ensure that their experience in the program was easy to recall, the study participants were comprised of alumni mock interviewers that had participated as interviewers in the last five years (Fall 2014 through Spring 2019). The mock interview program took place two or three weekday evenings (from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.) in both the fall and spring semesters, for a total of four to six evenings per year. In advance of the evening, the alumni received an email with event logistics, but no advanced information on students, expectations, approaches, or

goals. To register, students were required to submit their resume and the job description

of a role for which they were interviewing or interested in interviewing. The students

also received an email with event logistics before the evening. Alumni and students were

ideally matched by industry of experience and interest; however, this was not always

possible due to advanced alumni sign-up and late student registrations. The evening was

a three hour commitment for the alumni mock interviewers, comprised of an optional one

hour pre-session and two hours of mock interviews. The pre-session included dinner, a

10-15 minute training presentation, and time to review materials (made up of student

resumes and targeted job descriptions, as well as sample interview questions).

Additionally, alumni had time to connect with each other during the pre-session. The

mock interviews were each 30 minutes long (20 minutes of interviewing and 10 minutes

of feedback provided by the interviewers). Once the alumni completed their final mock

interview, they went home for the evening. Alumni could choose to provide students

with their contact information for follow-up conversations, but this was not required.

The career service center followed-up with alumni after the program via email to offer

thanks and provide information on the number of students that utilized the program. The

aforementioned details of the program setting will allow for deeper understanding of the

study findings.

This chapter will provide a comprehensive overview of the study findings. The

sections of the findings that will be described include: the demographic summary, the

questionnaire ratings summary, and the four major findings (comprised of qualitative data

from the critical incident written responses and interviews). The findings represent an

objective portrayal of the study data, which in the case of the four major findings have

been reduced through coding and will be supported through participants' direct quotes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 107; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 199-200; Yin, 2009, pp. 188-189). The findings are offered to answer the research questions, through a direct interpretation, by presenting the data in meaningful ways (Creswell, 2013, p. 199; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202). Based on participants' descriptions of their experience, the findings further aim to help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning.

## Demographic Summary

The following table is a summary of the participant demographic information (See Table 1). The table shows the demographic information for the sample participants, who completed the questionnaire ratings, as well as the subset sample participants, who elected to also complete the critical incident written response and interview. To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the study findings, all participants' individual demographic information can be found in detail in Appendix L, which is arranged in the order of questionnaire submissions.

Table 1. Summary of Participant Demographic Information

| Question Number | Demographic Question | Questionnaire Information (n = 43) | Critical Incident Written Response/Interview Information (n = 25) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Age range | 21-25: 1<br>26-30: 13<br>31-35: 10<br>36-40: 2<br>41-45: 6<br>46-50: 2<br>51-55: 1<br>56-60: 1<br>61-65: 3<br>66 or older: 4 | 21-25: 1<br>26-30: 7<br>31-35: 4<br>36-40: 0<br>41-45: 3<br>46-50: 2<br>51-55: 1<br>56-60: 0<br>61-65: 3<br>66 or older: 4 |

| Question Number | Demographic Question | Questionnaire Information (n = 43) | Critical Incident Written Response/Interview Information (n = 25) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Gender | Male: 26<br>Female: 17 | Male: 12<br>Female: 13 |
| 3 | Race/ethnicity | Asian/Pacific Islander: 15<br>Black: 3<br>Caucasian/White: 15<br>Hispanic: 1<br>Latino: 2<br>Multiracial: 3<br>Other: 4 | Asian/Pacific Islander: 10<br>Black: 1<br>Caucasian/White: 10<br>Hispanic: 0<br>Latino: 2<br>Multiracial: 1<br>Other: 1 |
| 4 | Highest level of education | Bachelor's Degree: 17<br>Master's Degree: 9<br>Professional Degree: 13<br>Doctoral Degree: 4 | Bachelor's Degree: 12<br>Master's Degree: 4<br>Professional Degree: 7<br>Doctoral Degree: 2 |
| 5 | Primary industry of professional experience | Architecture/Design: 1<br>Computer Science/Tech: 2<br>Consulting: 4<br>Education/Teaching: 2<br>Engineering/Energy: 1<br>Fashion/Consumer Products: 2<br>Financial Services/Banking: 17<br>Government/Military: 1<br>Health Care/Pharma: 1<br>Law: 2<br>Marketing/Advertising/PR: 3<br>Non-Profit/Social Services: 2<br>Other: 2<br>Science/Research: 2<br>Transportation/Automotive: 1 | Architecture/Design: 1<br>Computer Science/Tech: 1<br>Consulting: 4<br>Education/Teaching: 1<br>Engineering/Energy: 1<br>Fashion/Consumer Products: 1<br>Financial Services/Banking: 7<br>Government/Military: 1<br>Health Care/Pharma: 1<br>Law: 1<br>Marketing/Advertising/PR: 2<br>Non-Profit/Social Services: 0<br>Other: 1<br>Science/Research: 2<br>Transportation/Automotive: 1 |
| 6 | Years of professional experience | 0-4: 4<br>5-9: 13<br>10-14: 7<br>15-19: 5<br>20-24: 5<br>25-29: 1<br>30-34: 2<br>35-39: 2<br>40-44: 2<br>45 or more: 2 | 0-4: 3<br>5-9: 7<br>10-14: 2<br>15-19: 1<br>20-24: 4<br>25-29: 1<br>30-34: 1<br>35-39: 2<br>40-44: 2<br>45 or more: 2 |
| 7 | Level of professional experience | Entry: 2<br>Intermediate/Experienced: 6<br>Management, First: 8<br>Management, Middle: 13<br>Management, Senior: 14 | Entry: 1<br>Intermediate/Experienced: 4<br>Management, First: 5<br>Management, Middle: 5<br>Management, Senior: 10 |
| 8 | Number of professional positions | 0-4: 21<br>5-9: 17<br>10-14: 4<br>15-19: 1 | 0-4: 11<br>5-9: 12<br>10-14: 1<br>15-19: 1 |

| Question Number | Demographic Question | Questionnaire Information (n = 43) | Critical Incident Written Response/Interview Information (n = 25) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | 1: 6<br>2: 7<br>3: 7<br>4: 3<br>5 or more: 20 | 1: 2<br>2: 4<br>3: 4<br>4: 1<br>5 or more: 14 |
| 10 | Volunteer in other career focused capacities | Yes: 27<br>No: 16 | Yes: 16<br>No: 9 |

Overall, the sample population represented a diverse demographic composition, however it is important to note the following details regarding the sample responses to the 10 demographic questions.  In question (1) age range, there was the most representation in the 26-30 and 31-35 age ranges (53% combined) and very little representation in the 51-55 and 56-60 age ranges (4% combined).  In question (2) gender, there was more male representation (60%) than female representation (40%).  In question (3) race/ethnicity there was no representation in the Arabic or Indigenous/Aboriginal categories (each 0%) and the most representation in the Asian/Pacific Islander and Caucasian/White categories (each 35% for a total of 70%).  In question (4) highest level of education, there was the most representation at the bachelor's degree level (40%) and the least representation at the doctoral degree level (9%).  In question (5) primary industry of professional experience, five of the 20 possible categories were not represented: Arts/ Entertainment/ Media, Communications/ Journalism/ Publishing, Food Service/ Food Production, Hospitality/ Tourism/ Sports/ Recreation, and Real Estate/ Materials/ Construction (each 0%) and Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance had the most representation (40%).  In question (6) years of professional

experience, 5-9 years had the most representation (30%) and 25-29 years had the least

representation (2%).  In question (7) level of professional experience, there was an

increasing representation from Entry Level (5%) through Management, Senior/ Executive

Level (33%).  In question (8) number of professional positions, there was the most

representation in the 0-4 range (49%) and the least representation in the 15-19 range

(2%).  In question (9) number of mock interview nights completed, the largest

representation was five or more nights (47%) and most alumni mock interviewers

responded that they had participated in more than one night (86%).  In question (10)

involvement as a volunteer in other career focused capacities, there was more

representation of career volunteer experience (63%) than no other career volunteer

experience (37%).

Overall, the change in demographics from the sample participants to the subset

sample participants was minimal.  In question (1) age range, percentages stayed at a

similar representation, with less than a 10% change in each category.  In question (2)

gender, there was decline in male representation (down to 48% from 60%) and an

increase in female representation (up to 52% from 40%).  In question (3) race/ethnicity,

there was an increase in the Asian/Pacific Islander and Caucasian/White representation

(each 40% for a total of 80%).  In question (4) highest level of education, percentages

stayed at a similar representation, with less than a 10% change in each category.  In

question (5) primary industry of professional experience, one of the previously

represented categories was no longer represented (Non-Profit/Social Services) and there

was a decrease in representation of Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance

(down to 28% from 40%). In question (6) years of professional experience, percentages

stayed at a similar representation, with less than a 10% change in each category. In question (7) level of professional experience, percentages stayed at a similar representation, with only one category having a 10% change: Management, Middle Level (down to 20% from 30%). In question (8) number of professional positions, question (9) number of mock interview nights completed, and question (10) involvement as a volunteer in other career focused capacities, percentages stayed at a similar representation, with less than a 10% change in each category.

**Questionnaire Ratings Summary**

The questionnaire was made up of 20, 5-point Likert scale rating questions, divided into three categories based on the research questions: how do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? (questions 1 through 6), what practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? (questions 7 through 12), and what recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning? (questions 13 through 20) (See Appendix I). The table below shows the questionnaire responses of all participants by both count and percentage (See Table 2). The questionnaire questions were all directed in the positive "I have learned more…," "I have learned from…," or "I would enjoy…," therefore comparisons amongst the responses are aligned for evaluation. The table and subsequent overview describe the prevalence of phenomenon through frequency and incidence (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 47; Yin, 2009, p. 9). It is important to note that the summary is intended to broadly explore

attitudes and preferences through a scale of experience, rather than a calculation of

statistical significance (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 44).

Table 2. Summary of Questionnaire Responses

| Question Number | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I have learned more about how to conduct an interview. | 1<br>2% | 5<br>12% | 7<br>16% | 18<br>42% | 12<br>28% |
| 2 | I have learned more about how to answer interview questions. | 1<br>2% | 5<br>12% | 7<br>16% | 23<br>54% | 7<br>16% |
| 3 | I have learned more about current employment trends. | 3<br>7% | 6<br>14% | 14<br>33% | 17<br>39% | 3<br>7% |
| 4 | I have learned more about higher education career services. | 0<br>0% | 4<br>9% | 9<br>21% | 24<br>56% | 6<br>14% |
| 5 | I have learned more about current college students. | 0<br>0% | 3<br>7% | 1<br>2% | 24<br>56% | 15<br>35% |
| 6 | I have learned more about my alumni peers. | 4<br>9% | 15<br>35% | 9<br>21% | 11<br>26% | 4<br>9% |
| 7 | I have learned from the training presentation provided by the career center staff. | 3<br>7% | 3<br>7% | 13<br>30% | 20<br>47% | 4<br>9% |
| 8 | I have learned from the materials provided by the career center staff. | 2<br>5% | 4<br>9% | 13<br>30% | 20<br>47% | 4<br>9% |
| 9 | I have learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions. | 3<br>7% | 12<br>28% | 11<br>25% | 15<br>35% | 2<br>5% |
| 10 | I have learned from informal conversations I have had with the career center staff. | 1<br>2% | 6<br>14% | 13<br>30% | 20<br>47% | 3<br>7% |
| 11 | I have learned from conversations I have had with the student interviewees. | 0<br>0% | 1<br>3% | 4<br>9% | 25<br>58% | 13<br>30% |
| 12 | I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers. | 2<br>5% | 11<br>26% | 13<br>30% | 10<br>23% | 7<br>16% |
| 13 | I would enjoy reading relevant articles and written materials. | 2<br>5% | 6<br>14% | 10<br>23% | 15<br>35% | 10<br>23% |

| Question Number | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | I would enjoy viewing an interview role play/simulation. | 3<br>7% | 8<br>19% | 6<br>14% | 19<br>44% | 7<br>16% |
| 15 | I would enjoy participating in an interview role play/simulation. | 3<br>7% | 7<br>16% | 6<br>14% | 20<br>47% | 7<br>16% |
| 16 | I would enjoy receiving coaching or feedback on my interviewing techniques. | 0<br>0% | 2<br>5% | 3<br>7% | 18<br>42% | 20<br>46% |
| 17 | I would enjoy being matched with students in my discipline. | 0<br>0% | 3<br>7% | 6<br>14% | 13<br>30% | 21<br>49% |
| 18 | I would enjoy reflecting on my experience. | 0<br>0% | 1<br>2% | 5<br>12% | 26<br>60% | 11<br>26% |
| 19 | I would enjoy a discussion with my alumni peers. | 0<br>0% | 2<br>5% | 8<br>19% | 22<br>51% | 11<br>25% |
| 20 | I would enjoy creating a sense of community with my alumni peers. | 0<br>0% | 1<br>2% | 7<br>16% | 21<br>49% | 14<br>33% |

Overall, the most common determination for all questions was Agree with 16 questions having Agree responses and agreement percentages ranging from 35% to 60% within individual questions. However, there were four questions where this was not the case. One question had a determination of Disagree: "6. I have learned more about my alumni peers." One question had a determination of Neutral: "12. I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers." And two questions had determinations of Strongly Agree: "16. I would enjoy receiving coaching or feedback on my interview techniques" and "17. I would enjoy being matched with students in my discipline."

When considering just three values: Strongly Disagree/Disagree, Neutral, and Agree/Strongly Agree, it was found that 16 of the 20 questions had over 50%

Agree/Strongly Agree responses.  Only one question had the majority of the participants

(44%) elect Strongly Disagree/Disagree: "6. I have learned more about my alumni peers."

And three questions, while still having the majority of participants (46%, 40%, and 39%

respectively) elect Agree/Strongly Agree responses, had more even distributions between

the three values: "3. I have learned more about current employment trends," "9. I have

learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions," and "12. I

have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers."

To further understand and triangulate the data, it is important to note any changes

in the questionnaire outcomes based on the responses of the subset sample participants

that elected to continue to the second part of the study, comprised of the critical incident

written responses and interviews.  The table below shows the questionnaire responses of

these subset sample participants, by count, percentage, and percentage change from the

sample participants' responses overall (See Table 3).  It is important to note that this table

and subsequent overview are intended to broadly explore attitudes and preferences

through a scale of experience, rather than a calculation of statistical significance

(Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 44).

Table 3. Summary and Comparison of Interview Participants' Questionnaire Responses

| Question Number | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I have learned more about how to conduct an interview. | 0<br>0%<br>**-2%** | 2<br>8%<br>**-4%** | 5<br>20%<br>**+4%** | 12<br>48%<br>**+6%** | 6<br>24%<br>**-4%** |
| 2 | I have learned more about how to answer interview questions. | 0<br>0%<br>**-2%** | 2<br>8%<br>**-4%** | 5<br>20%<br>**+4%** | 14<br>56%<br>**+2%** | 4<br>16%<br>**0%** |
| 3 | I have learned more about current employment trends. | 2<br>8%<br>**+1%** | 3<br>12%<br>**-2%** | 10<br>40%<br>**+7%** | 9<br>36%<br>**-3%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-3%** |

| Question Number | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | I have learned more about higher education career services. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 3<br>12%<br>**+3%** | 5<br>20%<br>**-1%** | 13<br>52%<br>**-4%** | 4<br>16%<br>**+2%** |
| 5 | I have learned more about current college students. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 3<br>12%<br>**+5%** | 0<br>0%<br>**-2%** | 15<br>60%<br>**+4%** | 7<br>28%<br>**-7%** |
| 6 | I have learned more about my alumni peers. | 3<br>12%<br>**+3%** | 9<br>36%<br>**+1%** | 5<br>20%<br>**-1%** | 7<br>28%<br>**+2%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-5%** |
| 7 | I have learned from the training presentation provided by the career center staff. | 1<br>4%<br>**-3%** | 0<br>0%<br>**-7%** | 8<br>32%<br>**+2%** | 13<br>52%<br>**+5%** | 3<br>12%<br>**+3%** |
| 8 | I have learned from the materials provided by the career center staff. | 0<br>0%<br>**-5%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-5%** | 9<br>36%<br>**+6%** | 12<br>48%<br>**+1%** | 3<br>12%<br>**+3%** |
| 9 | I have learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions. | 1<br>4%<br>**-3%** | 7<br>28%<br>**0%** | 5<br>20%<br>**-5%** | 11<br>44%<br>**+9%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-1%** |
| 10 | I have learned from informal conversations I have had with the career center staff. | 1<br>4%<br>**+2%** | 3<br>12%<br>**-2%** | 5<br>20%<br>**-10%** | 15<br>60%<br>**+13%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-3%** |
| 11 | I have learned from conversations I have had with the student interviewees. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 1<br>4%<br>**+1%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-5%** | 14<br>56%<br>**-2%** | 9<br>36%<br>**+6%** |
| 12 | I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers. | 1<br>4%<br>**-1%** | 8<br>32%<br>**+6%** | 4<br>16%<br>**-14%** | 6<br>24%<br>**+1%** | 6<br>24%<br>**+8%** |
| 13 | I would enjoy reading relevant articles and written materials. | 1<br>4%<br>**-1%** | 5<br>20%<br>**+6%** | 2<br>8%<br>**-15%** | 12<br>48%<br>**+13%** | 5<br>20%<br>**-3%** |
| 14 | I would enjoy viewing an interview role play/simulation. | 2<br>8%<br>**+1%** | 4<br>16%<br>**-3%** | 4<br>16%<br>**+2%** | 11<br>44%<br>**0%** | 4<br>16%<br>**0%** |
| 15 | I would enjoy participating in an interview role play/simulation. | 1<br>4%<br>**-3%** | 5<br>20%<br>**+4%** | 4<br>16%<br>**+2%** | 11<br>44%<br>**-3%** | 4<br>16%<br>**0%** |
| 16 | I would enjoy receiving coaching or feedback on my interviewing techniques. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-1%** | 0<br>0%<br>**-7%** | 13<br>52%<br>**+10%** | 11<br>44%<br>**-2%** |
| 17 | I would enjoy being matched with students in my discipline. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 2<br>8%<br>**+1%** | 2<br>8%<br>**-6%** | 7<br>28%<br>**-2%** | 14<br>56%<br>**+7%** |

| Question Number | Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 18 | I would enjoy reflecting on my experience. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 0<br>0%<br>**-2%** | 0<br>0%<br>**-12%** | 18<br>72%<br>**+12%** | 7<br>28%<br>**+2%** |
| 19 | I would enjoy a discussion with my alumni peers. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 1<br>4%<br>**-1%** | 4<br>16%<br>**-3%** | 14<br>56%<br>**+5%** | 6<br>24%<br>**-1%** |
| 20 | I would enjoy creating a sense of community with my alumni peers. | 0<br>0%<br>**0%** | 1<br>4%<br>**+2%** | 4<br>16%<br>**0%** | 11<br>44%<br>**-5%** | 9<br>36%<br>**+3%** |

Overall, the percentage change from the sample participants' responses was minimal. It was again found that the most common determination for all questions was Agree. 16 questions had Agree responses and agreement percentages ranged from 44% to 72% within individual questions, which is slightly higher agreement than the sample participant Agree response percentages (35% to 60%). However, there were notable changes in the determination for three questions. One question moved from an Agree to a Neutral response: "3. I have learned more about current employment trends." One question moved from a Neutral to a Disagree response: "12. I have learned from conversations I have had with other mock interviewers." And one question moved from a Strongly Agree to an Agree response: "16. I would enjoy receiving coaching or feedback on my interview techniques." Additionally, three questions saw an over 10% increase in their agree percentages: "10. I have learned from informal conversations I have had with the career center staff" increased agreement by 13%, "13. I would enjoy reading relevant articles and written materials" increased agreement by 13%, and "18. I would enjoy reflecting on my experience" increased by 12%.

When considering just three values: Strongly Disagree/Disagree, Neutral, and Agree/Strongly Agree, the subset sample responses directly aligned to the sample responses. It was again found that 16 of the 20 questions had over 50% Agree/Strongly Agree responses. Similarly, only one question had the majority of the participants (48%) elect Strongly Disagree/Disagree: "6. I have learned more about my alumni peers." And correspondingly three questions, while still having the majority of participants (40%, 48%, and 48% respectively) elect Agree/Strongly Agree responses, had more even distributions between the three values: "3. I have learned more about current employment trends," "9. I have learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions," and "12. I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers." Although there were some notable changes in the questionnaire responses when examining the subset sample, the results remain very similar to the sample participant responses overall.

## Findings

The qualitative findings of this study, from the critical incident written responses and interviews, were examined with the intent to answer the study research questions. The following four major findings were uncovered in the data collection:

1.  All subset sample participants described what they learned through participating in the mock interview program (100%), with an overwhelming majority learning the importance of creating a comfortable environment (96%), delivering feedback (92%), offering the program for students' preparation (88%), and understanding current students' experiences (84%).

2. All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to contribute to their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing having sample interview questions (84%) and an opportunity to stay in touch with students (76%) as helpful.

3. All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to inhibit their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni mock interviewers (84%) and lack of industry knowledge of specific fields (72%) as hindering.

4. All subset sample participants described recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster alumni learning (100%), with a large majority recommending matching students with alumni based on industry and background (76%), providing an opportunity to hear about alumni experiences (76%), and offering training to students before participating in the mock interview program (72%).

**Presentation of Learning within Findings**

The alumni mock interviewers often used the term "learning" overtly in their statements, which appears in many of the findings. However, in certain instances when the alumni were asked about their learning, their chosen language omitted this specific term and an obvious connection to learning. In these instances, the alumni mock interviewers mentioned elements of their learning where the application seems unclear. Through the theoretical lenses of the study, the applicability of these potentially tangential references to learning become pertinent. For example, when asked about

experiences that impacted their learning, the alumni mock interviewers cited aspects of

the mock interview program environment (such as the dinner, event timing, and the mock

interview duration), as well as specific materials (such as sample questions and student

packets). Therefore, these aspects have been included within the major findings below

and additional analysis into their relevance is presented in Chapter V.

**Finding 1**

> *All subset sample participants described what they learned through participating in the mock interview program (100%), with an overwhelming majority learning the importance of creating a comfortable environment (96%), delivering feedback (92%), offering the program for students' preparation (88%), and understanding current students' experiences (84%).*

The alumni mock interviewers were asked to describe what they learned through

participating in the mock interview program. The majority of alumni mock interviewers

articulated the importance of eight learning realizations from the mock interview

program: (1) comfortable environment, (2) feedback delivery, (3) program necessity, (4)

current students, (5) better interviewer, (6) interview process, (7) interview assumptions,

and (8) international students. A complete list of the described learning of the subset

sample population can be found in Appendix N. Table 4 provides a summary of research

Finding 1.

Table 4. Outline of Finding 1

| Finding 1 |
|---|
| All subset sample participants described what they learned through participating in the mock interview program (100%), with an overwhelming majority learning the importance of creating a comfortable environment (96%), delivering feedback (92%), offering the program for students' preparation (88%), and understanding current students' experiences (84%). |
| The majority of subset sample participants described their learning in the following categories: |

- **Comfortable Environment**
  - The importance of creating a positive and comfortable environment in an interview (24 of 25, 96%)
- **Feedback Delivery**
  - The importance of feedback delivery to the learning process (23 of 25, 92%)
- **Program Necessity**
  - The necessity of the mock interview program for students' preparation (22 of 25, 88%)
- **Current Students**
  - The current students and their experiences, skills, and challenges (21 of 25, 84%)
- **Better Interviewer**
  - How to become a better interviewer (17 of 25, 68%)
- **Interview Process**
  - The interview process, including ideal questions and answers (16 of 25, 64%)
- **Interview Assumptions**
  - My own assumptions and beliefs about the interview process (13 of 25, 52%)
- **International Students**
  - International student populations and their differences from domestic students (13 or 25, 52%)

**Comfortable environment.**  Almost all of the alumni mock interviewers described learning how important it was to create a positive and comfortable environment for the students in the mock interviews.  Many of the alumni mock interviewers mentioned sympathizing with the students' apprehension.  Participant 16 talked about this specifically "…it definitely taught me to have empathy, to create a welcoming, warm environment for people who obviously are nervous."  Participant 6 expressed feeling similarly "You just have to meet the stranger, bring them in, make them feel comfortable and get them talking."  And she continued "You're just helping these kids out and making them comfortable, because it's scary when you first do it and you feel for them." Participant 20 talked about relating to the students' experience through forming a deeper

connection "You have to connect on a human level first. We can worry about the other stuff later."

Many of the alumni mock interviewers also talked about the strategies they had learned to help the students feel more comfortable in the environment. Participant 41 used the technique of having the students speak about themselves "I would first try to make the kid comfortable and [try] to get to know more about the kid." Another alumni mock interviewer used a comparable introduction technique to ease into the mock interview:

> [I] make them feel comfortable by asking some more questions about themselves early on at the beginning, and then diving into the interview questions. Creating this bit of a structure per interview. (Participant 35)

One alumni mock interviewer similarly used the technique of having students talk about themselves, but added that good listening was also important to make the students feel more comfortable:

> I think be a good listener. I think the interviewers should ask questions but also allow the student to speak and if it's hard for that student to speak, kind of be prepared with other questions that may not be as career-focused just to kind of get them speaking. Ask about the school year or the classes, maybe any vacation plans. Something that's a little bit less career-focused just to ease some of the nerves. (Participant 21)

Another strategy employed by an alumni mock interviewer was to make the interview more conversational to increase the students' level of comfort:

> I would try and set the scene in a very friendly, conversational way because, at least in my few jobs over my career and the ones I've stuck with and the ones I like, that was how the behavioral interviews were conducted. (Participant 19)

The alumni mock interviewers described learning the importance of creating a comfortable mock interview environment through their empathy and the strategies they employed to reduce students' nervousness in the experience.

**Feedback delivery.** Most alumni mock interviewers described learning that feedback delivery was important to the students' learning process. The alumni mock interviewers discovered the importance of feedback through students' reactions to hearing their feedback. Participant 26 talked about the moment she saw students realize the value of the feedback "I could help them do an interview and immediately give them feedback and then immediately see them be like 'oh that makes sense,' or 'oh that's good to know.'" Another alumni mock interviewer similarly talked about the positive reaction students had to the feedback process:

> I'm always aware of it. I'm always aware of how to say things in the feedback that can be heard. I do that in all aspects of my life. I'm very conscious of the effect of my words on the listener and the choice of words that can get them to hear what you're trying to say rather than become defensive or shut down. There's a little of that always in the process. But when I see the kids' reactions, I get the feeling that it's useful to them, and the way I'm doing it is working because I can hear the things they say and see. (Participant 27)

Related to Participant 27, other alumni mock interviewers learned that their approach to delivering feedback was crucial to the process. Being positive was important, so the students would engage with the critical information:

> I always start with a positive. I always lead with a positive. And then if there are any areas of improvement, I always say, "And this will make you a better candidate." So, I'm giving this feedback in spirit of "This is for you. This doesn't mean that you didn't do well, this just being that this is something that you can improve upon." And I felt like everybody was very receptive to that. I've also spoken about myself in terms of feedback that it's not always easy to receive feedback and in your professional career you will receive feedback on reports, on speaking engagements, on adherence to deadlines. So, feedback [is] something that you will receive until you're ready to retire. So, it's nothing that students should be afraid of. (Participant 21)

In addition to staying positive in the feedback session, one alumni mock interviewer described her strategy of asking students questions about their desired feedback to help them embrace the process:

Because the students…really very much want feedback. They very much want to hear what we think of them. And so, I try to be positive, and if they need a little help in some areas to point that out. (Participant 5)

And she continued:

And so, I would encourage [the interviewee] to almost begin that feedback session with an idea of what do you want to know from me about your performance? What's the biggest question that you have for me about what just happened here? (Participant 5)

Other alumni mock interviewers learned different delivery strategies to encourage

the students to think critically about their feedback.  One alumni mock interviewer talked

about utilizing a conversational approach to delivering feedback:

Some of them I realized that it's better to spend more time having a normal conversation and try to make sure that the student would understand the feedback more. So instead of saving the last 10 minutes in the feedback, or the last five minutes, I would start doing that much earlier and not as a tool in terms of like, oh, I think I should tell you what to say. But more in terms of like, okay, so tell me, why did you not bring up this thing that was mentioned in your resume? Just like try and have a more organic conversation than in an interview format. (Participant 41)

And he continued:

So, the point of it is so that they can learn and they can understand the feedback in a way that they can actually implement it and it doesn't like demoralize them. Right? That's not the aim here. So, I think I probably just learn how to give feedback in a much better way and not in like, "Hey, you should have done this." And like "show me, do this." That wasn't the approach that I took. So, I guess, that's what I learned that giving feedback is important, but giving it in the right manner is also pretty important. (Participant 41)

Participant 6 talked about how the students really do want the feedback "I think

the people that come to these sessions are really looking for feedback and looking for

help."  She continued that in order to have students appreciate the feedback portion, she

used a technique of signifying the end of the interview portion:

I think saving the last five, 10 minutes to just go through it. And what I thought was most rewarding was before I gave them any feedback, I would say, "Okay,

great. This part of the mock interview is done and just take a breath and say how do you feel?" And I think that was really rewarding, because that's the first breath of normalcy that comes back into their lives and they're like, okay. And then I listen to their reaction. A lot of them are very hard on themselves. They're like, "Oh, I don't think that went well," or like, "I really hated that," or "I was really nervous." And then just reassuring them and [saying], "No, you seemed totally comfortable. You did this really, really well." And then walking them through everything that they did. I thought that was the most rewarding part about it. (Participant 6)

One alumni discussed learning the importance of the duration of the interview in creating a space where the students would be open to receiving feedback:

Since they're spending time with you that they felt, the more time they spent with you, the more comfortable they felt opening up and being receptive to feedback (Participant 1)

And Participant 13 learned that it wouldn't be possible to deliver feedback well if the alumni mock interviewers hadn't really listened to where feedback was necessary "…it also requires really listening and finding out where the weak point is and just addressing that." Most of the alumni mock interviewers learned the importance of feedback delivery and articulated this learning through students' reactions to the process and the techniques they took in feedback delivery (positive, conversational, questioning, and segmenting). Additionally, the alumni mock interviewers learned that feedback delivery required spending time and truly listening to the students.

**Program necessity.** Most of the alumni mock interviewers learned the necessity of the mock interview program for students' preparation. The alumni mock interviewers described how the mock interview program gave the students a place to practice interviewing for upcoming professional interviews:

I would always start my mock interviews, asking the student what motivates them to come and I would say nine times out of 10 there was always, "I just did the first-round phone interview, I have an in-person interview." A lot of times they were coming in to actually prep or get processed because they had something

coming up or they were already in the process of interviewing with the company. (Participant 2)

Additionally, the alumni mock interviewers found that the program allowed the students to build their confidence.  Participant 15 talked about the importance of proving to the students that they are ready "So sometimes it's just to show them they really are ready."  Another alumni mock interviewer spoke of how without this chance to build student confidence in their interview abilities, there was potential to derail professional interviews:

> I learned that small fears and concerns known only to the interviewee can derail an otherwise talented and worthy job candidate. Those fears and concerns may seem unimportant to the interviewer but they have a powerful effect on someone's confidence. Exploring those and discussing them so that the interviewee felt prepared was critical in preparing them. (Participant 13)

And she continued:

> It is the greatest pleasure…when you see somebody's eyes light up, and they never thought of that, and it frees them from a fear, and it frames a response in a way that they can repeat and name. (Participant 13)

The alumni mock interviewers found that learning the techniques and approaches through the program gave the students the confidence to progress into professional interview settings.  Participant 23 recalled that students really benefited from the program "The students who I spoke with, and a few who I've stayed in touch with, I think were generally appreciative and benefited from it."  And he continued to talk about the importance of the confidence the program built in the students:

> I quickly realized how important the program is since, in applying the tenets of experiential or "hands-on" learning, students directly learned relevant professional skills (i.e., having a strong CV, how to prepare for a job interview, presentation skills – both verbal & visual, and how to engage in a dialogue with the interviewer). Students got to learn a useful set of interpersonal and communication skills from [University Name] graduates, who are leaders within many fields, and this exposure benefits them not only for their interviews, but in

the workforce. As a mentor, preparing [University Name]'s students to make the transition into the workforce also allows them to think about and then pinpoint what their strengths are even further. Doing so allows them to present themselves in the most positive way possible, increases their confidence, and, as students who I kept in touch with confirmed, played a role in their getting hired. (Participant 23)

Alternatively, some alumni mock interviewers also learned that the program was a good place to learn the basics of how to interview, even with little previous knowledge. Participant 41 saw the value for every student "I mean I think it's good practice for everyone to do it." She described further how it was helpful even to those students that were struggling:

> And then some of them they had all the experience, but they weren't able to articulate it. So, I think it's also important, what I learned was, that it was also how you put forward your gifts. (Participant 41)

Similarly, Participant 16 found the mock interview program to be a safe learning environment, even for those students that weren't prepared "this is an environment for them to learn and practice and fail if they need to." Another alumni mock interviewer also found that the program was helpful for those students who were not yet prepared to interview:

> …and most times they're in their little spiffy suits and they're about to forge…They've chosen to do graduate school, they have hopes and dreams to do with it. But they don't know how to get there. (Participant 22)

The alumni mock interviewers learned the necessity of the program for students' preparation. They found that the program created an opportunity for students to practice for upcoming professional interviews and build their confidence, as well as learn interview basics.

**Current students.** Most of the alumni mock interviewers described learning about the current students and their experiences, skills, and challenges. Many of the

alumni mock interviewers were excited to learn about the current students' academic

experiences:

> I love hearing the energy of the students and, in some cases, their excitement about what they're studying and learning, and how they're thinking about the world and their place in it. (Participant 20)

Another alumni mock interviewer felt similarly about hearing of students' academic

experiences:

> So just seeing what they're going to do with their studies, what they learned at [University Name] it's really cool. It's fascinating. Each case is different. And just [seeing] how they intend to make their mark, and how [University Name] helped towards that. So that's something I really liked. (Participant 23)

One alumni mock interviewer expressed the same enthusiasm about learning more about

the students themselves:

> I always felt I learned something new from the students who participated in the mock interviews. No specific incident comes to mind, but I was always amazed at how busy and accomplished the current [University Name] students are and blown away by the number of activities and job/internships they have already had in their lives. Their resumes were always very impressive, especially when they are able to balance so many extracurricular activities while still maintaining high GPAs. They are overachievers! (Participant 1)

Alternatively, some alumni mock interviewers were excited to learn about the

students' experience, but noted that they also learned that the students were concerned for

their futures:

> Yeah, the interview is a fun way to see what the students are up to, what's happening on campus, what are the interesting jobs that people are having. The debrief is nice to meet with students and hear about what their challenges are, what worries them about the future. That was always enjoyable. (Participant 19)

Other alumni mock interviewers learned of similar student concerns about their futures.

Participant 15 spoke of their nervousness "…they're so nervous about the overall future."

Participant 24 also recalled the students' concerns "Some of them took me off guard,

because you can feel the pressure that they're under." He originally thought that this

concern was unfounded, but learned that students were often really relying on successful

interviews for their futures:

> Oh, everyone is a smart and happy camper and everyone is just being greedy and aggressive and I'm used to that kind of crowd. But, you come across people who are…This is like their shot… (Participant 24)

He continued:

> …in interviewing these students, it reminded me of the pressure and anxiety they have in getting to this point in their careers. In that what it took them to pursue their academic dreams were aspects that are difficult to put on a resume and I hoped that whomever they interviewed [with] would appreciate their struggles and achievements. (Participant 24)

Another alumni mock interviewer described her surprise that the students were concerned

over their futures:

> I was just very surprised by the lack of confidence and it seemed like coming from [University Name] they would at least feel more confident about their studies and about their grades. (Participant 21)

However, she also noted that understanding this generation was learning that she took

back to her professional environment:

> It's always helpful for me to meet with the new generation or the next generation because I think it's good exposure and it's good for me to understand kind of where this generation is coming from. So that's part of the reason that I really like working with students and meeting students because it does help me understand some of the more junior professionals I work with. (Participant 21)

The alumni mock interviewers learned a great deal about students' experiences and more

surprisingly about students' concerns for their futures, which was stimulating information

for them that was sometimes utilized in their professional environments as well.

**Better interviewer.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers described learning

how to become a better interviewer from the mock interview program. Participant 41

learned from her experience the right and wrong ways to be an interviewer "From a few

of [the mock interviews], I was able to learn about how to give the interview and how not

to give it." Another alumni mock interviewer described learning to ask better questions

to assess a candidate's true story through the interview process:

> I learned…in the process to learn how to ask good questions and basically how to form or know a person. Know his or her story by like a short period of time or by looking at his or her resume and that's [what matters] most in everything that I learned during the process. (Participant 32)

One alumni mock interviewer described how participating in the program enabled

him to better assess candidates in his professional role:

> I think what I was able to bring back was improved ability to assess candidates because I felt like just doing more interviews gives you a better data set in your own mind of what makes for a stand-out interview, what makes for a strong candidate versus what types of things don't bode as well. So, taking that back to my regular job, I was able to, I think, improve the value that I could add in hiring discussions or in [an] interview debrief discussion… (Participant 3)

Other alumni mock interviewers explained how they learned to be more

empathetic as interviewers and to consider individual students' situations:

> I think I learned to just be a bit more aware of the situation the students were coming from, the diversity of situations that [they] are coming from, maybe if they were not presenting things in the most polished way. You still learn to look a bit behind that, you learn to be a bit more approachable. You became a bit more nuanced I think as an interviewer. Definitely. (Participant 10)

Another alumni mock interviewer also expressed a newfound empathy for candidates in

the interview process:

> I think as an interviewer, it definitely taught me to have empathy, to create a welcoming, warm environment for people who obviously are nervous and maybe have a lot on the line, whether they're interviewing for a job or some sort of opportunity. (Participant 16)

Through the mock interview program, the alumni mock interviewers learned to become

better interviewers by asking better questions, strengthening their ability to assess

candidates, and developing empathy for candidates' backgrounds and unique situations.

**Interview process.**  Many of the alumni mock interviewers described learning

about the interview process, including ideal questions and answers.  One alumni mock

interviewer described the importance of learning to create good questions in order to have

a successful mock interview:

> Asking the right questions helps the interviewee through the process of what
> the interviewer is trying to get from them and how they are trying to understand
> what it means. First, learning how to do good follow-up questions. Learning how
> to structure your questions properly, to not confuse the interviewee, et cetera.
> (Participant 18)

Another alumni mock interviewer similarly found that structuring interview questions in

a specific hierarchy created successful mock interviews:

> I think that if you start with questions that are straightforward to answer and
> then build up to where there's a, "I did this, I used this program or I used this
> method," from the students, and then you build up to the more complex questions
> about maybe conflict resolution or the challenges, or doing things differently. I
> think the best technique to get good responses is probably building up from
> simple questions to more complicated questions. (Participant 35)

Additionally, the alumni mock interviewers found that learning how to structure

interview question responses was important in the mock interview process.  One alumni

mock interviewer described learning a specific technique to answer behavioral interview

questions:

> One of the more recent things I learned involved encouraging students to use the
> STAR method in answering questions posed from interviewers. The STAR
> method involves the student framing their answers by describing the Situation,
> stating their Tactics for solving the problem, listing their Actions taken, and the
> final Resolution. Using this framework, I was able then to listen to the students'
> replies and pinpoint areas where they might have left out an important piece of
> information. (Participant 5)

She continued:

> …if you follow then, this STAR, I mean, that's just right out in front of you. I start to identify, okay, that was a situation. And even if you don't even feel confident, then you can ask, what actions did you take? And guide them a little bit too. But I do feel that those pointers to us telling us look for this, look for this STAR. This is what we're telling them to do. Look for it, see if they're doing it. That was really important, and it definitely gets across. (Participant 5)

Another alumni mock interviewer also mentioned the importance of learning the same technique to answering interview questions and how she utilized the technique to aid in student learning:

> I definitely had to coach a lot for STAR because it was like I would ask them tell me about this experience or what you learned and they would just give me the S in STAR, like the situation. And then I had to probe and say, okay, so what did you do? And that's the task and the approach. And I think they had the content, it was just about putting it together in one response. (Participant 6)

Other alumni talked about this technique for answering interview questions, as well and its relevance to their mock interviewer process:

> For example, give me a project that you have worked on in the past. Okay. Well here's the project, here's the problem statement, here's the action that I have done, here's the skill. (Participant 30)

The alumni mock interviewers learned about the interview process in question creation and hierarchy, as well as response structure techniques.

**Interview assumptions.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers described learning about their own assumptions and beliefs about the interview process. The mock interview environment enabled some alumni mock interviewers to examine their own assumptions. One alumni mock interviewer described realizing that not all people are able to learn from their managers, as he had assumed:

> I think that speaks to my experience that is cultivated in the engineering world where after years and years of experience you can handle anything. Nothing fazes

you anymore. I think that's a subtle trend that I've picked up on. When you need help, you call the most senior person because they've seen it all, they've done it all. I think I carried that with me as a preconceived notion throughout this interview, and then the candidate and I, we had a good little debrief once I take off the interviewer hat, so to say, and I got a little more of his perspective. (Participant 19)

Another alumni mock interviewer described the mock interview process as a chance for

him to examine his assumptions about his own skills in interviewing:

Because you get to interact with the existing students and the rest, so from a learning standpoint, I get this sort of introspective in that way. Because it kind of resets you in terms of your own experience in order and all the rest of it. It's sort of part of doing…aside from sort of the mechanics of interviewing and all the rest of it. So, for me personally, it's sort of an interesting look into myself and self-improvement too. It's sort of one of the things where, you get to analyze yourself when you're sort of reviewing other people. (Participant 24)

The mock interview environment also enabled some alumni mock interviewers to

examine their own beliefs about the interview process.  One alumni mock interviewer

realized her belief on the importance of enthusiasm in the interview process:

That's what employers want to see. They want to see enthusiasm. I guess it's a thing that's come out again and again in my interviews. I think, as an employer, I want to see people who are excited to work for me and who can get excited about something. (Participant 20)

A second alumni mock interviewer reflected that she believes that honesty in an

interview is worth losing a job:

So, anyway, that was something that I took away from that, which was to reaffirm it's never wrong to do the right thing. It's never wrong to say what is. You don't have to say everything, but you do have to give the basic truth. That way, you don't actually go wrong. I guess that's what I'm saying. Telling the truth means maybe you won't get this job, but by telling the truth, maybe you've already discovered that maybe this isn't the right fit for me. Everything isn't going to be the right fit. It's got to be the right fit for the employer and the employee. That's how you get to it. (Participant 13)

A third alumni mock interviewer discovered his belief that the academic and professional

environments require different attitudes to come across in the interviews:

Almost everything that the students are taught and have learned in the previous 16 years, 20 years, however long they've been students. Is exactly backwards for what they're going to find in the real world of work and industry. They have been taught that in order to get to the next stage, whatever the next stage is, the good high school, the good college, the good grad school. You tell all the great things you've done, how smart you are, what great grades you've got. All about me me me, nobody ever tells them that the route to success in the real world is, "What can you do for me?" (Participant 9)

Through the interview process, the alumni mock interviewers learned about their own interview assumptions (including levels of managerial support and personal skill levels) and interview beliefs (including the importance of enthusiasm, honesty, and preparing for the processional world).

**International students**. Many of the alumni mock interviewers described learning about international student populations and their differences from domestic students. Some of the alumni described learning about new cultures and experiences from international students. Participant 22 talked about academic and language differences "I learned from one of the students doing the mock interview more about the differences in undergraduate programs in the US vs. in China." She continued:

So that whole process of interviewing people and coaching people for whom English is a second language and the culture is so different, I absolutely learned a lot. So that's one whole category of what I learned. (Participant 22)

Similarly, another alumni mock interviewer spoke of what he learned about the experience of growing up in the Chinese culture:

So many of them have been kids from China. A high [proportion] of the people I've interviewed over the years have been from China. Getting a chance to understand what their lives have been like as part of the whole Chinese civilization but also in their family and their smaller towns…I like hearing about their parents, their siblings and what direction [their] siblings have taken compared to the direction that these kids are taking. (Participant 27)

One alumni mock interviewer described learning more about international students'

personalities, rather than seeing only stereotypes:

> Another thing, actually, to be quite honest, that I was surprised at…I think the Chinese are so intense…And, most Asian students are this way, but I have had a particular mindset about Chinese students, that it's so drilled into them. They are just so driven and so competitive in terms of academics because that's what their system inoculates, and that is what you have to be in order to get ahead. I mean, just from a sheer numerical standpoint…I mean, you're competing against hundreds of millions of other students, and it's very difficult to shine there. What happily surprised me was to get underneath that kind of…not personality, but presentation, and find the various personalities underneath. Because I don't think, as Westerners, that we see their personalities very easily. They're layered over by this other thing that they have to be, or that they are in job settings, academic settings. They may not be that way at home. I mean, they're themselves at home, I assume. But, since they're in an academic setting, that veneer tends to take over. So, I was very pleasantly surprised to find out the personalities underneath. That was a pleasure for me. (Participant 13)

Other alumni spoke of the challenges international students faced in the Western

culture. One alumni mock interviewer discussed the differences in interview presentation

between cultures, which includes showing emotion in the Western version:

> I tend to be assigned students who are foreign students, but not always. Maybe that's true of who participates in the program. But, one of the things that students often do is they put all their academic credentials…and they talk about the research and all these things that they've done. (Participant 20)

She continued:

> The one thing that students really have difficulty with is presenting. A lot of the students I work with are Asian, and so, it may be cultural. It's presenting things that they feel some emotion around. (Participant 20)

Participant 9 talked about learning about the challenges international students face with

employment visa sponsorship "Well on the immigration front. They are just collateral

damage." He continued describing one particular student case:

> Yeah, she was having trouble with interviews and she knew she [had] terrible command of English and I knew she was going to suffer. What I'm hearing now from students that I never heard before is their visa problems. Everybody I talked

to the past couple of years has been foreign born. Their visa problems are getting in the way of [them] even being considered. (Participant 9)

The alumni mock interviewers learned about international students' experiences with academics, language, and their home environments, as well as learning about the challenges they faced acclimating to Western interview processes and obtaining US work authorization.

**Finding 2**

*All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to contribute to their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing having sample interview questions (84%) and an opportunity to stay in touch with students (76%) as helpful.*

The alumni mock interviewers were asked to describe aspects of the mock interview program that contributed to their learning.  The majority of alumni mock interviewers cited seven aspects of the program to be helpful for their learning: (1) sample questions, (2) student follow-up, (3) student packets, (4) dinner with program, (5) beginning presentation, (6) invested students, and (7) alumni networking.  A complete list of the described aspects that contributed to the learning of the subset sample population can be found in Appendix N.  Table 5 provides a summary of research Finding 2.

Table 5. Outline of Finding 2

| Finding 2 |
| --- |
| All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to contribute to their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing having sample interview questions (84%) and an opportunity to stay in touch with students (76%) as helpful.<br><br>The majority of subset sample participants described the following categories as contributing to their learning:<br>• **Sample Questions**<br>    ○ A list of sample questions to ask students (21 of 25, 84%)<br>• **Student Follow-Up** |

> - o An opportunity to stay in touch with students (19 of 25, 76%)
> - **Student Packets**
>   - o Student packets to review, including their resumes and targeted job descriptions (17 of 25, 68%)
> - **Dinner with Program**
>   - o The mock interview program in the evening with dinner (17 of 25, 68%)
> - **Beginning Presentation**
>   - o A presentation at the beginning of the evening with information for the night (16 of 25, 64%)
> - **Invested Students**
>   - o Students that were invested or prepared for the mock interview (15 of 25, 60%)
> - **Alumni Networking**
>   - o Networking with fellow alumni at the beginning of the evening (15 of 25, 60%)

**Sample questions.** Most of the alumni mock interviewers found having a career center provided list of sample questions to ask students to contribute to their learning. Some alumni identified the list of sample questions as the source of all their mock interview questions for students. Participant 10 learned interview questions from the list of sample questions "I think all of them I drew from the list that the career center gave and I think we had a choice [from] a bunch of questions." Another alumni mock interviewer used the list of sample questions as a jumping off point:

> I took my cues from them. I always started them off with the question, which [the career center] always suggested, which is, "It's great to meet you, thank you for coming, and blah blah,"…take a look at your resume and all that sort of upfront stuff. And then, I would always ask the question, because you always get this in an interview right off the top…"So, tell me a little bit about yourself." (Participant 13)

Many of the alumni mock interviewers declared that the list of sample questions was helpful and beneficial. Participant 15 appreciated having the list of sample questions "So I certainly think the list of recommended questions is definitely good." Participant

16 found the list of sample questions to be not only helpful, but also the source of her

questions "Definitely having a list of questions is helpful. I think basically all of the

questions that I asked were probably the ones that [the career center] recommended."

Similarly, Participant 32 found the list of sample questions to be helpful and to contribute

to some standardization amongst mock interviews "I think the sheet is definitely helpful

in terms of [giving] you basically a pool of questions that you can ask…It's more pretty

standardized." Participant 6 relied on the questions, especially when she didn't have time

to prepare much in advance "But obviously if you're running out of time or you don't

have it very well planned, the handout was really helpful because it was general questions

that you could pull from."

The list of sample questions also contributed to alumni leaning by providing some

comfort and consistency in the mock interview process:

> I think the suggested questions is probably the most important thing, because a
> new interviewer can go off into some weird direction if the person is not
> experienced or can feel a little uncomfortable about how do we start. There's
> always…not always…There tends to be a momentary feeling of discomfort when
> you're first sitting across from someone. You think about, "Do I really want to
> spend 30 minutes with this person?" Or, "Do I know how to spend 30 minutes
> with this person?" So, having something that kick starts you, I think, is really
> helpful. (Participant 27)

Additionally, having the list of sample questions allowed the alumni mock

interviewers to be prepared for the mock interviews, so they could listen to student

responses rather than worry about question creation. Participant 5 detailed this

experience "And the list of questions is excellent because if I didn't have a list of

questions, I really don't know what I would be able to do." She continued:

> Between the questions there. I mean you could really just sit down and ask the
> students these questions. All of these questions, let them practice it, and that
> would be valuable enough. You know what I mean? Without actually having all

of these other things. And you're prepared. You have those questions, and you can really listen to them. (Participant 5)

The list of sample questions to ask students contributed to alumni learning as a consistent source of mock interviewer information, as well as a helpful and beneficial tool to allow alumni to feel comfortable, prepared, and engaged in the mock interview process.

**Student follow-up.** Most of the alumni mock interviewers found that an opportunity to stay in touch with students contributed to their learning from the program. It provided an occasion for the alumni mock interviewers to expand their student relationships beyond the program timeframe. Participant 21 referenced that she intentionally made this connection: "I had offered, to follow-up with them through LinkedIn or through personal email contact. And a lot of them took me up on that offer." Another alumni mock interviewer noted that he too enjoyed extending the time he had with the students:

> We work to try and carry on the conversation and I can't even remember how much time they gave us, but the evenings seemed to kind of fly by, maybe only 30 minutes. If I remember correctly, there was like 20 minutes of the formal thing and then 10 minutes of feedback and so at the end, I was always handing my business card, I was like, "We'll continue the conversation though let's not worry." So, yeah, quite a few got back to me. (Participant 29)

Participant 24 talked about the bond he had with students after connecting again outside of the program "I did have a bunch of follow up conversations with some people that lasted a while. You get sort of vested in them, you know?" and he continued "Because you're kind of rooting for them, so yeah." Other alumni also expressed their appreciation for the student connection and how that contributed to their learning:

> There were multiple students, there were a bunch that I felt like I really connected with and have actually kept in some sort of contact with after the session, which is very exciting and again, kind of adding to my own learning experience and making this valuable, even for the volunteers as well…I think

honestly it was being able to feel like I was giving back to these very high potential students, and in the few instances where we did really feel a connection and got to keep a relationship going outside of the session, it was that…So, having that kind of experience where we could form a meaningful connection afterwards, but I think that's been the greatest value that I personally have gotten from volunteering for the program. (Participant 16)

Beyond the student connection, alumni mock interviewers also expressed that having additional student conversations allowed them to continue to practice their mock interviewer skills and provide additional learning opportunities:

One student not only followed up with a thank you email, but also went a step further to inquire for more tips [for the] interview. The one-hour interview relationship extended into a one-hour phone call and further communications down the road, which gave [important] lessons on how following up after every interview/encounter can provide more opportunities during [the] job hunt and [for] building [a] personal network. (Participant 32)

Another alumni mock interviewer had a similar experience of continuing to provide external mock interviews:

I usually gave them my card, and some of them followed up with me, and they'd call me after their interview. Or, they'd call me before they were going on an interview, and we'd go over stuff. I do think other mock interviewers…I feel pretty certain that many of them did that as well. I think that's very helpful. (Participant 13)

The opportunity to stay in touch with students after the mock interview program ended contributed to the alumni mock interviewer learning experience by expanding their relationships with students, forming deeper connections with individual students, and gaining additional mock interviewer experience and insights.

**Student packets.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers found having student packets to review (including targeted job descriptions and their resumes) contributed to their learning. Having a job description for which the students were interested in

interviewing helped the alumni learn to tailor their interview questions accordingly.  One

alumni mock interviewer described this process thoroughly:

> [They gave] me a job posting that they wanted to pretend they were
> interviewing for and I would weave that in. So, if the job posting was for Bank of
> America, my question would be okay, "So, Why do you want to work at Bank of
> America? What interests you about this role at Bank of America? dah dah dah."
> So, I used to tailor it a bit that way. (Participant 10)

Other alumni mock interviewers cited the helpfulness of having the students'

resumes.  They found that the resumes enabled them to create more tailored questions

based on the students' backgrounds and experiences.  Participant 23 used the resume as a

source of content for opening questions "I'll have reviewed your CV, if there's anything

that really stands out, I'd address that to break the ice."  Similarly, Participant 20 used the

student resumes to create interviewer questions for the mock interview "It's very helpful

to have that time to review the resume and to just put a couple of notes on it, or underline

or circle the things that you wonder about."

Most of the alumni mock interviewers cited both the job description and the

resume as contributing to their mock interview learning experience.  The alumni mock

interviewers found value in tailoring practices with both sources in mind.  One alumni

mock interviewer first described how the job description helped her process:

> I think it's a combination of what I thought was most relevant for the job
> description. So, if it was like analytical, then I would maybe ask like one
> analytical question, but if it was a little bit more broad then more behavioral
> questions. So, I tried to do it based on the job description. (Participant 22)

She then continued by describing how the resume was also helpful for question creation:

> You look at someone's resume and you go, "Huh, really?" And so, you can turn
> it into an interview question. One, because you know that someone who's
> interviewing them is going to have exactly the same response. Like, "Really? You
> were born and raised in China, you ended up in New York, and then you took a

summer off working in a vineyard in Napa Valley? How did that happen?" (Participant 22)

Additionally, having both documents allowed the alumni mock interviewers to better understand each student's interests and backgrounds before the mock interview began.  Participant 15 found having both documents in advance to be helpful "I also tailor it to the type of job they want…Typically, when we walk in, it's in a folder at your seat at the table…and then you review the resumes."

The alumni mock interviewers also reviewed the documents during the mock interviews to see if the students' answers about their backgrounds and interests aligned to the materials they provided:

> It was really about letting them answer the questions, and buying yourself time when you say, "Oh, walk me through your resume," so you can kind of go after the ones that sound the most interesting.  And while they're talking, you're reviewing the job description and saying, "Oh, what is it actually going for?" (Participant 6)

The student packets with job descriptions and resumes contributed to alumni learning in question creation, understanding student background and experiences, and answer evaluation.

**Dinner with program.**  Many of the alumni mock interviewers found it helpful to have the mock interview program in the evening with dinner.  Even though no question referenced the dinner component, it came up frequently when the alumni mock interviewers were talking about the benefits of the mock interview program.  Participant 15 noted "They feed you. I think it's appropriate" and Participant 6 described it as part of the preparation process "It's just like give us food and give us some materials and we're good to go."  Participant 21 also recalled the dinner "I remember that we did have dinner

together. There was a dinner wherever we held the interview. There was a dinner at a career center and we sat in a circle."

Other alumni mock interviewers were even more enthusiastic about the dinner component. Participant 23 mentioned "…having a nice meal like half hour before…was nice." And Participant 29 felt similarly "They always had dinner, which was nice…the dinner was a nice treat for participating." Participant 1 noted it as a strength of the career center "They fed us really well." And Participant 22 also thought of it as an essential part of the mock interview program for the alumni mock interviewers "What [The Career Center] did really well is [they] always made a point of having good food." Participant 16 went so far as calling the dinner "great:" "The dinner was great…Always helpful to know where I was going I was going to be fed."

The alumni mock interviewers were also quick to note if they couldn't enjoy the dinner as they usually had. Participant 3 recalled "But then I'm doing this five day fast. The Thai food is so good. I don't want to go there and just be staring at Thai food that I can't eat." Participant 27 who was worried about his food allergies also didn't want to be tempted by the food "I started showing up later and later, just to be able to get a quick bite." The dinner with the evening mock interview program was a notable contribution to the learning environment for the alumni mock interviewers.

**Beginning presentation.** The mock interviewers found value through the presentation at the beginning of the evening, which included information for the night. Many mock interviewers cited the general helpfulness of the presentation. Participant 19 said "The information provided by the career center, when you sit down at the beginning, was very helpful" and even referenced it again later "…we would do a little pow-wow

PowerPoint in the presentation room, in the conference room, with all the interviewers

beforehand, and that was helpful, too." Participant 23 also found the presentation helpful

"And just the presentations they gave beforehand were pragmatic and useful."

Additionally, he referenced learning from the presentation:

> I learned something new as an alumni volunteer in the [University Name]
> Alumni Mock Interview Program starting from the moment that I attended my
> first orientation led by [Career Center Staff Name] and [Career Center Staff
> Name] who co-organized the event. (Participant 23)

Participant 29 gave the details of learning expectations for the evening through

the presentation "So it was always helpful to have sort of that little 10 or 15 minutes that

they took at the beginning, kind of walked through what the expectations were. That's

always helpful." And another alumni mock interviewer mentioned learning not only the

interviewer expectations, but also insights into the students utilizing the mock interview

program:

> I do remember the first time when I, because they always, I remember [career
> center staff] always spoke or something, that always sticks out in my mind. And
> they did a little intro on what we should be doing and what to expect, so that
> definitely helped the first time around. Again, you just were kind of unfamiliar
> with how you should be doing it, how much time to spend interviewing versus
> giving feedback, how critical I guess you should be. It just helped to have the
> folks at Career Services give us all of the background and tell us that these are
> mostly juniors or they're relatively inexperienced interviewers. That just set the
> tone, so that way we would have the right approach rather than expecting more
> out of somebody who maybe has only had one or two interviews before coming in
> for this. (Participant 1)

Other alumni mock interviewers highlighted additional insights they learned from

the presentation. Participant 26 found the presentation useful as an orientation "I think

the staff was pretty great. For the most part it was getting us oriented" and she continued

about what she had learned about interviewee guidelines:

I mean I knew that your presentation, like your body language and your tone are important but I don't think I realized how much that impacts how the interviewer is perceiving you. (Participant 26)

Participant 6 also learned information about the interview process from the presentation "…the staff was really good, they always did some sort of like one-on-one interviewing steps in the beginning, which is helpful." And Participant 5 learned specific interview techniques "I think what happens beforehand is really good…But also just, well, I learned about the STAR technique through the presentation that was at the beginning." She continued that she would recommend the presentation to any new interviewers "I would probably say, oh, go to the dinner. They're going to give you the information, and listen to their presentation. And you'll be able to do it." The presentation at the beginning of the evening contributed to alumni learning of expectations, student information, and interview processes and techniques.

**Invested students.** The alumni mock interviewers talked about the value that invested and/or prepared students brought to the mock interview program. Many alumni mock interviewers found that working with engaged students led to overall enjoyment and better conversations. Participant 9 said this explicitly "So the ones who want it are the ones who are most enjoyable for me." Participant 24 was appreciative that the students were ready for the experience "I think they were very much engaged and ready to interact." And Participant 13 highlighted the conversational value that engaged students brought to her experience in the mock interview program "That's a two-way street. It takes two to have an authentic conversation, so if I was willing to start that way, they were willing to respond that way. It takes two." Additionally, engaging with prepared students allowed the alumni mock interviewers to focus on the task at hand:

It's like, "Here's my cover letter, here's my resume, here's the job description of what I'm going to be interviewing for. I'm hoping I'm going to interview next week." Because then you really can focus. (Participant 22)

The alumni mock interviewers also learned the qualities of a good interview from the prepared students. Participant 16 stated this clearly "…from the really strong students I learned what to do and what to say." Another alumni mock interviewer recalled conducting a really good interview with a prepared student:

He (the candidate, he was a male) really impressed me with his conversational skills, professionalism, asking the right questions, answering tricky questions in an eloquent and articulate way. (Participant 19)

Witnessing the interview answers of the prepared students was an important part of the alumni learning experience:

But I think just in the way in which they come across, the ability of a lot of them, and again not all, but a substantial majority of them, to be able to talk pretty fluently and articulately about their past, about being able to pull things together across a number of the typical interview questions of: "What are your strengths? What are your weaknesses? et cetera." But asked in ways that they would generally be asked in interviews about what your friends think about you, what your coworkers or your colleagues or your other students would say, et cetera. They come across as very well prepared for those and can really talk with passion about some of their interests. And that doesn't always come across with the sophomores, juniors, et cetera, that I have seen just more generally. (Participant 4)

Invested students contributed positively to the alumni mock interviewer environment, as well as their opportunity to have meaningful conversations, focus on the interview, and experience successful interviews.

**Alumni networking.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers found that networking with fellow alumni at the beginning of the evening contributed to their learning. Some alumni mock interviewers simply cited their appreciation for the opportunity to network with their peers:

It's like you had a chance to meet other interviewers before you did the interviews during dinner and stuff. So, I mean that was a good opportunity to have and network with other alums. (Participant 1)

The alumni mock interviewers valued the chance to get to know other alumni mock interviewers and more about their current careers:

I always enjoy meeting fellow alumni, so I think just the casual banter over dinner. Like, "What year were you? What do you do now?" I think that was just really a light networking opportunity. (Participant 2)

Additionally, the mock interview program allowed the alumni mock interviewers to connect to alumni they may have not met otherwise:

So, I think coming up with ways to stay more connected to the college and to colleagues and especially with these interviews, it's a really nice way to meet people from other classes. So just working on ways to network. (Participant 21)

Some alumni mock interviewers valued the chance to network with their peers to share interview techniques: Participant 13 mentioned that interview techniques were central to their conversations "I did recognize some of them because some of us had been doing it for a couple of years and had come back. And, we did discuss [amongst] ourselves techniques." Participant 13 continued that she both learned new techniques and shared her own experience "I felt free to offer my technique, and other people's." Other alumni mock interviewers mentioned learning about interview approaches:

Sometimes just talking to the other people, talking about how they interviewed and how they like to approach the students, and how they like to approach the interview was really good. (Participant 5)

Participant 29 confirmed that sharing ideas with other alumni mock interviewers was helpful to his experience "It was a nice opportunity to kind of gather and just share ideas." He continued with more detail about using the shared techniques in his professional work:

And so that ideas exchange that happened over dinner, even though they weren't formal interviews for anything in particular, what you were looking for was very valuable and the techniques you used and the challenge questions you posed and that kind of thing. I always found [it] pretty insightful and actually helpful for me going back to my actual formal recruiting and interviewing in a hiring capacity at [Employer Name]…[I] got a lot of cool takeaways. (Participant 29)

Not only were general interview techniques learned through alumni mock interviewer networking, but also interview techniques specific to certain industries. Participant 26 found these industry interview techniques to be beneficial "I think the conversations with my fellow alumni before the mock interviews were actually pretty helpful." She continued in more detail about what industry specific interview techniques she learned:

I think a few of the alumni would chip in with some insights or some feedback, or I remember asking something about computer science one time and somebody from the tech industry was able to answer. Then somebody had a question about thank you notes. It was like, "Are they archaic? Are they not necessary in the tech world? Are emails better?" So, we had a little conversation about that. (Participant 26)

Another alumni mock interviewer confirmed that networking conversations provided exposure to new approaches based on industries:

The way I, when you chatted with people while eating dinner, I was the anomaly. Most of those people did have [a] more technical background. And so, the way that they tackled looking at a resume was very different from how I tackled a resume. (Participant 22)

Other alumni found that networking with their fellow alumni mock interviewers contributed to their learning through a sense of community. Participant 6 found comfort in seeing the unity of the group "So I think it was nice just to have solidarity and see that there are so many people coming from different places. Yeah. And see that we're all

volunteering for [University Name]." Another alumni mock interviewer referred to this created unity as a community environment:

> What I got away from the pre-session was actually more being able to connect with what I didn't know. It was just very cool to see people from all different industries, all different class years who are interested in coming back to [University Name] and helping with the undergrad students' interviewing skills. I think the sense of community that I got out of it was almost more than the actual training for the process. (Participant 16)

Networking with fellow alumni mock interviewers at the beginning of the evening contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning through the opportunity to meet new alumni and learn about their experiences, share interview techniques and approaches (some of which were specific to industries), and additionally form a sense of community.

**Finding 3**

> *All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to inhibit their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni mock interviewers (84%) and lack of industry knowledge of specific fields (72%) as hindering.*

The alumni mock interviewers were asked to describe aspects of the mock interview program that inhibited their learning. The majority of alumni mock interviewers cited seven aspects of the program that were hindering for their learning: (1) no alumni connections, (2) no industry knowledge, (3) no experience feedback, (4) no interviewer goals, (5) late program, (6) unprepared students, and (7) learning resistance. A complete list of the described aspects that inhibited the learning of the subset sample population can be found in Appendix N. Table 6 provides a summary of research Finding 3.

Table 6. Outline of Finding 3

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**Finding 3**
All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to inhibit their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni mock interviewers (84%) and lack of industry knowledge of specific fields (72%) as hindering.

The majority of subset sample participants described the following categories as inhibiting their learning:

- **No Alumni Connections**
  - A lack of opportunity to meet and connect with fellow alumni (21 of 25, 84%)
- **No Industry Knowledge**
  - A lack of industry knowledge of specific fields (18 of 25, 72%)
- **No Experience Feedback**
  - Little or no opportunity to share or discuss my experience and give feedback (16 of 25, 64%)
- **No Interviewer Goals**
  - Little or no guidance on interviewer expectations, approaches, and goals (16 of 25, 64%)
- **Late Program**
  - The mock interview program ending late in the evening (16 of 25, 64%)
- **Unprepared Students**
  - Students that were unappreciative or unprepared for the mock interview (15 of 25, 60%)
- **Learning Resistance**
  - A lack of willingness to learn new content and instead relying on prior experience (14 of 25, 56%)

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**No alumni connections.** Most alumni mock interviewers found that a lack of opportunity to meet and connect with fellow alumni inhibited their learning. Many of the alumni mock interviewers spoke of having no time to form connections with fellow alumni. Participant 20 wasn't able to speak to other alumni due to the time constraints "But, I don't usually talk a lot to the other people because we're only there for half an hour before we start interviewing. And so, there isn't a lot of time." Participant 22 felt similarly that time was an issue "So there really wasn't time for that sort of dialogue and

exchanges." Participant 26 also noted her disappointment over the lack of time to connect with fellow alumni "So unfortunately we don't have a ton of time to just chit chat, but yeah, I think that's one thing I wish I would have had more time to do, is connect with some of these alumni." She further expressed that additional time would have allowed for her and her peers to foster beneficial relationships "Allowing alumni to mingle and create their own relationships with each other." Participant 29 also expressed his desire for more time interacting with his peers "I would certainly be one that would have taken advantage of it, if it had been longer."

Other alumni mock interviewers cited the lack of facilitation as inhibiting their ability to learn from their fellow alumni. Participant 15 noted that alumni were sometimes too shy to strike up conversations "Some people do strike up conversation at their table to introduce each other, but then…I mean, just by nature of nerves, sometimes we're anti-social and we don't." Participant 24 described the unfacilitated nature of forming connections as uncomfortable "I guess it was a little awkward, because if you didn't know some of these people and [that] kind of thing. There probably wasn't much time for interaction." He also continued by expressing his interest in connecting with fellow alumni mock interviewers:

> But more of that would be good. Especially different age groups, different degrees. I mean, that's sort of a nice look at the university in terms of different perspective and the rest. Yeah, it'll be fun. (Participant 24)

Another alumni mock interviewer expressed his desire for facilitated alumni connections at every mock interview program:

> There's been one or two times when we were asked to go around the table and introduce ourselves. That's really useful. I think other times that was not done, or maybe it was before I got there, if I came in late. I'm not sure that happened. But I think it should absolutely be done every time. (Participant 27)

Other alumni mock interviewers expressed that the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni inhibited their ability to form a community. One alumni mock interviewer explained how forming community would help him feel connected:

> The chance to meet a couple of other alumni…I think that would be great too. You get this chance to meet other people within the [University Name] community and you feel more connected to the community there. (Participant 10)

Another alumni mock interviewer felt that forming connections with fellow alumni would create camaraderie and provide an ideal learning opportunity:

> I think that if there's a way that the school could foster a direction amongst the interviewers, that would be really nice. Because I do want to learn from my peers. I mean I think it's a learning opportunity for all of the interviewers to do a better job of selecting talent for our own corporations. So, I think that camaraderie would be really nice. (Participant 21)

Alumni mock interviewers also cited the lack of alumni connections as inhibiting their opportunities to learn new approaches to the interview process. Participant 15 described wishing to know more about other approaches from fellow alumni "…to be honest, I would love to know how other mock interviewers approach the event." Participant 35 expressed that she learned best from talking to her peers "I think you glean the most information by talking to someone because you can get stuff, the more nuanced information comes from talking to another person." She continued that many valuable interview techniques could be learned from fellow alumni if given the opportunity to connect:

> I think I'd find value in that, especially because I think when I went into these interviews cold, I was like, "I hope I'm asking the right things. I hope I'm actually providing value." So, it would be great to participate in the pre-session to get ideas from other interviewers…It's like the mentorship circle. If someone's better at interviewing, you can get advice and tips from them. If it's your first time, you can go in feeling more prepared. (Participant 35)

Another alumni mock interviewer also described the desire for an opportunity to learn

interview tips from fellow alumni:

> I like the chance to chat with fellow interviewers, being fellow alumni, and we've all branched out in different fields and whatnot. I think that socializing time was, unfortunately, very limited. Even if all goes according to schedule and everyone's on time, which is a very big ask in [City Name] on a week night coming from work with [transportation] being what it is and blah, blah, blah…Even if everyone got there perfectly and we started on time, after the presentation people are trying to have a bite to eat and drink and go to the bathroom and get ready. There's really not a lot of time for socializing. And I don't just mean pure socializing. I mean…sharing stories, anecdotes, tips, guidance. Yeah, I think that would be really helpful coming from that perspective, from a fellow alumni mock interviewer. (Participant 19)

An additional alumni mock interviewer also detailed the potential learning benefits of

more interactions with her alumni peers:

> I think if I can have a brief meeting with the alumni that have experience in this industry and experience doing mock interviews before, and I think that will be a learning experience for me to know how to conduct [an] interview in this industry and what would be the most important things that the interviewers are looking for in this pool of job applicants in data science [or] for example, finance. So, I think if there is a segment that's included having just more learning, more meeting opportunity [with] more senior or experienced alumni. So, I think that will be more helpful for me to learn. (Participant 32)

Time constraints and no group facilitation led to a lack of opportunity for alumni mock

interviewers to meet their peers, which inhibited their learning.  The lack of connections

amongst the alumni mock interviewers further inhibited their opportunity to form a

community and learn additional interview approaches and techniques.

**No industry knowledge.**  Most of the alumni mock interviewers found that a lack

of industry knowledge of specific fields inhibited their ability to learn from the mock

interview program.  Without having specific industry knowledge, the alumni mock

interviewers were unsure of what questions to ask or what feedback to provide students.

Participant 26 felt unprepared without industry knowledge "I think the time I felt the

weakest or the least prepared was just when it was a field I was completely unfamiliar

with." She continued that she was unsure of what to ask:

> If I didn't know the industry, it got a little bit harder, just because I work in politics and nonprofit. So, if I was interviewing somebody for you know, [a] computer science, software engineer job, obviously I'm a little limited into what I can ask. (Participant 26)

Another alumni mock interviewer had a similar experience given her lack of opportunity

to learn more about the interview process within specific industries:

> Well, if I approach it as the behavioral part of any interview, then…everything was comfortable. But if they want to get industry-specific…For finance, I wouldn't even know what it would be, but if they want to get more technical in some way, maybe a bit of a quiz, "Okay, there is this economic trend. What are the implications for the U.S. market and how is it different from the U.K. market?" I wouldn't even know how to ask that question or how to check if the answer is correct. In that way, it might be to the detriment of the student. (Participant 15)

Some alumni mock interviewers believed that their lack of industry knowledge

resulted in providing a mock interview with no value. Participant 35 expressed concern

that her interviews were of little worth "But I think I didn't feel like I was giving as much

value as I could because I didn't know about the various different industries that I was

mock interviewing for." She continued that with training, she would have learned more

about the mock interview process in different industries "So, I think if I'd gotten more

training [on] the feedback portion I'd feel more comfortable mock interviewing for other

industries as well." Another alumni mock interviewer also expressed concern that her

mock interviews were of little value due to her lack of industry knowledge:

> There were one or two occasions where I said to somebody, "You know what? I hope I haven't failed you during this half hour, but feel completely free to come back and try it with someone else because they may be able to give you what you need, that maybe I wasn't able to give you." (Participant 13)

Other alumni mock interviewers felt unqualified and untrained to give mock interviews in

certain industries. Participant 32 expressed feeling unsure based on her industry

background "So I think I was a little bit nervous that I wasn't able to give good feedback

in the beginning just based on my background." She continued that she didn't have the

knowledge she needed to evaluate mock interviews in other fields from her own:

> A lot of people that I interview [for work] are basically looking for the same
> jobs or positions that I have, because I work in research mostly in bench doing
> experiments, but a lot of the people that I [mock] interview [are] either data
> science or finance related…that's [who] the interviewee populations are, so
> sometimes I feel like I'm not quite either qualified or experienced to give them
> feedback in terms of interviews in their industries. (Participant 32)

Some alumni mock interviewers even resorted to making up interview questions for

industries in which they had no knowledge:

> I would just want to get the gist of the context and when I could, in the case of
> like engineering, when I could ask questions that I felt I was comfortable coming
> up with, that were a little bit more industry specific and I would, and then if not, I
> would just make things up. (Participant 2)

Another alumni mock interviewer also pretended to know about industries for which she

had no knowledge, although she also expressed a desire to learn more about the interview

practices of other industries:

> I've done some mock interviews in industries I don't know anything about. I
> just pretend I do, but I think it would be helpful [to know more about other
> industries]. I think it's also a learning opportunity for someone that doesn't know
> anything about tech to go in and be like, "Okay, this is how they would ask you a
> question if you're going into software engineering," or something like that.
> (Participant 6)

The lack of industry knowledge of specific fields inhibited alumni learning, as the alumni

were unsure of what questions to ask or feedback to give students. Additionally, some of

the alumni mock interviewers believed that this lack of understanding created mock

interviews with no value, a lack of quality responses, and potentially fabricated experiences.

**No experience feedback.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers felt their learning was inhibited by having little or no opportunity to share or discuss their experience and give feedback. One alumni mock interviewer expressed his desire to learn more about other alumni mock interviewers' processes:

> It'd be useful for people to almost sit in the room in a professional situation after the interviews are done and hear what people have to say about candidates and the questions [the interviewers] asked and the responses they got and what [their] reactions were. Because I think I had done that prior to doing the mock interviews and as I was just starting to become an interviewer myself and I learned a lot from that experience because I looked around and said, "Oh, this is what people are looking for." (Participant 10)

Other alumni mock interviewers expressed that their learning was inhibited by not having the opportunity to discuss feedback on the program. Participant 35 wanted to give her feedback to the career center "I think it would be interesting for the interviewers to actually have an opportunity to give feedback to [the] career center directly." Participant 32 agreed that providing feedback was important to the program "Yeah. I think the feedback can be collected during the debriefing session after just meeting with the other alumni, just like the last gathering before we leave." She continued that discussing feedback with her alumni peers would be the most valuable:

> I feel like maybe if we can have more time after the interview, that the alumni agree to stay or just chat with the staff. Just maybe not the formalized group meeting but just to chat about their initial thoughts or some intuitive impressions on the group of students. (Participant 32)

Another alumni mock interviewer also wished to discuss program feedback and learning with her alumni peers:

Yeah actually, I always kind of wish that there was some time to connect with them after the interviews. Just as a "Hey, how did it go for you guys? What did you do? Did you learn anything?" (Participant 26)

She continued that the career center should also participate in the feedback discussion:

I think it would be great to share with [Career Center Name] as well. So that [Career Center Name] would also know what's going through our heads and if there was any concerns, or if there's anything that we keep hearing about. I think that would be helpful for everyone. (Participant 26)

Many of the alumni mock interviewers also found that the lack of time to discuss themes and trends from their experience inhibited their learning.  Participant 22 recalled that the experience provided her with the opportunity to see trends "And you do start to see trends. So, if you do enough of it, you see the trends."  She continued that she would have preferred to discuss these trends with her alumni peers:

Saying, "What did you observe? Were there any patterns? Were there any trends? Were there any things that you want to highlight to us that you think we should be aware of as it relates to essentially being the main career people for this population?" (Participant 22)

A second alumni mock interviewer also expressed a desire to have a debrief discussion with his alumni peers on discovered trends:

The other part that they had been missing from the equation was kind of post-interview debrief with other alums. Sometimes you'd run into somebody on the way out and you might talk to them about the interviews and one time my wife and I did it together so that was kind of neat because we got to kind of compare notes about the people we interviewed, how it went.  So maybe even a debrief session, like 15 minutes at the end for all the interviewers to get together, have a debrief and maybe talk about common themes, common feedback they provided to their interviewees. (Participant 1)

A third alumni mock interviewer wanted to discuss his experience with fellow alumni to establish consistency and discover trends in student needs:

…even a group follow-up afterwards. Kind of treating the group as sort of…the panel kind of discussion or sort of seeing how people think with this class, and if there's any consistency overall. Or let's say some systematic things that come up

in terms of the students. I think over the recent years…we get a lot of international students, and language skills and things like that. It'd be nice to have a wrap up session I guess. (Participant 24)

A fourth alumni mock interviewer felt a post-program discussion would provide an

opportunity for all the alumni mock interviewers to share their learning:

Whether you could get all of them together at the end so that everyone can share their own experiences too. Because I think that probably was lacking, right? When everyone talked about what they learned from it. Because I'm sure everyone learned something new but maybe we didn't look at it from that perspective because we didn't hear someone else's point of view. So definitely I think just having like a debrief at the end would be good. (Participant 41)

The lack of opportunity for the alumni mock interviewers to discuss their experience in

the program inhibited their learning about their peers' interview process, event feedback,

and student themes and trends.

**No interviewer goals.**  Many of the alumni mock interviewers found that having

little or no guidance on interviewer expectations, approaches, and goals inhibited their

learning.  Some of the alumni mock interviewers wanted to know more about how to

approach the mock interviews.  Participant 4 expressed the desire for more training on the

right questions to use "…getting better training actually with why certain types of

questions need to be asked and what you're trying to glean from those questions."  He

continued that an explanation of student benefits for those questions would also be

helpful:

I think going into more detail with people of what the benefits are for the student, what they're really getting out of it, why your types of questions, and what types of questions are helpful... (Participant 4)

Another alumni mock interviewer felt that additional information on what responses were

ideal was necessary:

[A handout] could just say…It could have a few buzzwords or key phrases in quotes, and it'll say, "If the candidate says this, this is a sign that you should do 'XYZ'." At least, to me, I think as simple as just additional written materials or just a few anecdotes shared in the prep session, I think would be helpful. (Participant 19)

Some alumni mock interviewers felt that expectations of their role within the program were not clearly defined. Participant 29 wanted to know more about student expectations "…you would probably want to like say, 'Hey, here's sort of the general expectations for what candidates generally get in these interviews.'" Participant 21 also felt that training would be helpful "the environment didn't encourage any kind of training for the interviewers." She continued that the training should detail what the career center wanted to accomplish:

I think that the school could do a better job of setting some parameters or training interviewers. I am not sure that they did. And I think to understand what the school would like to see accomplished would be helpful. (Participant 21)

Another alumni mock interviewer felt similarly that additional guidance on expectations of the alumni was necessary:

I think if we have more information about the format of the interview, like basically how many people that I will interview?…How long the interview will last? And then also I think as sort of the expectation either from the students or from the staff and then if I have more information on that, I think I'll be more prepared about like what I'm actually going into. (Participant 32)

One alumni mock interviewer also wanted expectation parameters established, so he wasn't caught off guard by the students he encountered:

I think just really reiterating the lower boundary of what you might encounter. Again, not a value judgment, but really making it clear to first time interviewers like myself that are doing it for the first time. Say, "Hey, just so you know, it might be rare, but you may encounter someone who's literally never done any sort of sit-down interview before, so be prepared to…" I don't know what the best guidance is in that case, but maybe…Just give a little prep and maybe what to focus on if that happens. (Participant 19)

Even the goals of the alumni mock interview program were not clear to all the alumni mock interviewers. Participant 22 expressed direct interest in wanting to understand the goals "It would have been helpful to have some sort of, 'Here's what your goal is.'" She expressed a further desire to know more about what the career center expected the alumni mock interviewers to accomplish:

> And I would imagine that you could look at the population of students who signed up for the interview prep, and you could have said, "Here's the five things that I bet most of them are going to really need your help with." (Participant 22)

Without guidance on the expectations, approaches, and goals of the mock interview program many of the alumni mock interviewers felt that their learning and understanding of their experience was inhibited.

**Late program.** Many alumni found that the mock interview program ending late in the evening was inhibiting to their learning. The long, late evening left the interviewers feeling exhausted, so they were disinclined to spend additional time learning. Participant 20 felt that she gave all she had to the evening program already "I'm ready to go home at eight forty-five. Well, it usually ends up being a few minutes later, but by nine, I'm done." Participant 22 felt similarly that she was ready to go home as soon as the interviews were complete "It's late. It's late, people want to go home. And it's a schlep." Participant 6 also commented that the evening was long "I think that because the day was so long, because you were doing four sessions, there's this need to just be like, okay, it's nine o'clock. You need to go home, be home at 10." Participant 29 additionally mentioned that he came from work, which left him even more exhausted "I think it's like a very long night. And I remember being like, 'Wow…I'm ready to go home and I came here straight from work' and the whole thing." One alumni mock

interviewer specifically addressed that they were tired from a long day at work and the

mock interview program:

> There were a couple of times where either I was tired, you know I had just come from a long day of work and commuted out to campus from downtown, all the way from [City Name]. So, I'd be a little tired sometimes. (Participant 23)

Another alumni mock interviewer pointed out that even though additional things could be

helpful in the program, they were too tired after the evening to add anything else on:

> Yeah, I'm pretty washed out by nine o'clock, after a full work day. I've got a ways to go to get home…It could be a late evening. By the time I get home, it'll be close to 10 o'clock. I don't think I really want to add anything to it, at that point. (Participant 27)

Participant 21 pointed out that because the program was in the evening, it often

felt rushed, which inhibited learning. She hoped the program could start earlier "I think it

should start a little bit earlier" and continued by stating that an earlier start would provide

more time "So it doesn't feel so rushed."

Some of the alumni mock interviewers addressed that the late evening left little

time to debrief, which inhibited their learning. One alumni mock interviewer spoke of

how there was no opportunity for a debrief due to the late timing:

> Because I felt at the end it's like you're done at nine o'clock or whatever time and then everyone just went their own way without any real, I guess, debrief or follow-up on how things went. (Participant 1)

A second alumni mock interviewer was able to do a quick debriefing with the career

center staff, but noted that there was no time to speak with his alumni peers:

> I remember debriefing a little bit with the staff. I think it was difficult with the other interviewers because not everyone finished at the same time. The schedule says we should all end at nine or whatever, but some interviews are a few minutes long, some are short. By the third interview, everyone might not be wrapping up at the exact same time. You want to make sure the interviewees leave before [the alumni] start [to talk] about them. (Participant 19)

The program ending late in the evening inhibited the alumni mock interviewer learning experience, as the interviewers were exhausted, felt rushed, and didn't have time for a debrief session.

**Unprepared students.** Many alumni mock interviewers felt that students who were unappreciative or unprepared for the mock interview inhibited their learning. Some of the alumni mock interviewers found that students were disengaged. Participant 15 felt she couldn't learn anything from the students who weren't interested in the program "There are some who are…whatever level they are, junior or senior or whatever, but they're just phoning it in, so they're wasting my time, in a way." Another alumni mock interviewer also expressed surprise that some students didn't seem to want to participate in the mock interview process:

> There was one student who felt as though he had almost never interviewed before, and he's the one that I'm talking about, not great posture, didn't really make eye contact. Literally seemed unhappy to be there, even though this is a voluntary experience on his end. That was just surprising because in a low stakes environment, like a mock interview, I just would have expected someone to be a little more engaged and into the experience. That was a little surprising to me. (Participant 16)

Other alumni mock interviewers found that they learned less from the program when students weren't prepared and they had to spend too much time on interviewing basics. Participant 29 found some students to be too unprepared to interview "Because I do think there were definitely candidates that I met with that were not even prepared to have an interview." Additionally, one alumni mock interviewer wasn't even sure how to proceed with the mock interview if a student was unprepared:

> I think the only areas that caught me a little off guard would be maybe in my first few where, admittedly, someone was, not to be harsh, but so woefully unprepared that I was almost at a loss because I didn't even know what to do. (Participant 19)

A second alumni mock interviewer had a hard time being effective when the students

didn't provide any materials or direction for their mock interview goals:

> The ones who sort of showed up with either nothing, no job posting, no cover letter, or sort of saying, "Hi, I'm hoping I can interview somewhere, someday," it's just harder, it's more difficult to be effective. (Participant 22)

A third alumni mock interviewer found the mock interview to be a less valuable

experience if the students didn't come with a clear objective:

> I think what [mattered] more wasn't the level of experience, but how…oriented they were on what they want to change out of the mock interviews and if they had more specific either jobs or concerns or things that they wanted, rather than just [coming] in and [saying] "okay well, it's an interview" because then with the limited amount of time that we have, I don't know if it is really helpful for either side when there is no guidance, there is no clear objective for the person that they're interviewing and the person that interviews you [who] knows even less than you. It's harder to help. (Participant 18)

A fourth alumni mock interviewer found that if he had to spend too much time on

interview basics, then he wasn't able to have a good dialogue with the students about

structuring their responses:

> When you're really interviewing them, you're not really spending time necessarily on kind of the basics, but your feedback can be more pointed towards "Maybe this is a better way of answering a question" or "You should present yourself this way," rather than kind of like "Here's the basics of interviewing one-on-one. You have to greet the person, firm handshake, send a thank you email." Sometimes it felt like some of the time I spent on the basics when it could have been a little more focused I guess. (Participant 1)

Students who were disengaged, came unprepared, or needed basic interview knowledge

inhibited the learning of the alumni mock interviewers, as the alumni weren't able to

have engaging dialogue with those students.

**Learning resistance.**  Many alumni mock interviewers were inhibited by a lack

of willingness to learn new content and instead relied on prior experience.  Some of the

alumni mock interviewers believed that they already had enough experience and knowledge, so they had no interest in learning more. Participant 13 explained her view on the mock interview process as a passing on of knowledge "I have to say that the process of doing mock interviews, I always viewed as trying to pass along what I had learned to them." And she continued that she already had enough experience "…maybe that's a reflection of the fact that by the time people get to be a certain age in life, they've had enough experience." Participant 20 didn't think any facilitated learning would be impactful, as she would rather utilize her previous experience "I might not readily use it because I have a lot of experience doing this." Participant 6 didn't plan on taking in any additional information either "I don't think sending the materials out would have been more helpful because we're all so busy and we're coming straight from work. It's not like I'm going to review it." Another alumni mock interviewer expressed that he didn't need to even review student materials, since they all were the same anyways:

> To me, I have seen enough throughout the years. They all look the same. Regardless of the resume, I ask the same set up question because all [companies face] the same similar kind of issues. In the world, I've seen enough companies. All companies face the same issues. All [resumes] at that level, at the graduate student and undergraduate student level, all look the same. (Participant 30)

Other alumni mock interviewers expressed that they solely use their professional experience as a basis for their role as a mock interviewer and may even devise their role off of their other experience. Participant 27 used his external experience to guide his mock interview practices "The main thing I use is my life experience and my more specific experience in the world of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, where I have run groups." Participant 29 also described devising his mock interview practices from his professional experience "For me, I feel like I could probably go and wing it pretty well

just because I feel like [Employer Name] gives me a lot of that material." Another

alumni mock interviewer similarly expressed inventing her mock interview practices

from her professional experience:

> However, now with a year out, I've changed companies, and I've done campus recruiting at other [University Division]. I also do a lot of in-office recruiting for senior levels. So, from that, I would probably just wing it, in a way, just because I've had more exposure and more experience from work. (Participant 15)

Alumni mock interviewers were inhibited in their own learning by viewing their

knowledge and experience as complete or relying solely on external experiences to

inform their interview practices.

## Finding 4

*All subset sample participants described recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster alumni learning, with a large majority recommending matching students with alumni based on industry and background (76%), providing an opportunity to hear about alumni experiences (76%), and offering training to students before participating in the mock interview program (72%).*

The alumni mock interviewers were asked to describe recommendations for the

mock interview program design that would foster alumni learning. The majority of

alumni mock interviewers provided seven program design recommendations to foster

alumni learning: (1) background match, (2) alumni advice, (3) student training, (4)

concise, advance preparation, (5) preparation mediums, (6) more time, and (7) student

outcomes follow-up. A complete list of the described recommendations of the subset

sample population can be found in Appendix N. Table 7 provides a summary of research

Finding 4.

Table 7. Outline of Finding 4

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**Finding 4**

All subset sample participants described recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster alumni learning, with a large majority recommending matching students with alumni based on industry and background (76%), providing an opportunity to hear about alumni experiences (76%), and offering training to students before participating in the mock interview program (72%).

The majority of subset sample participants made recommendations in the following categories to foster alumni learning:

- **Background Match**
  - Match students and alumni based on industry and background (19 of 25, 76%)
- **Alumni Advice**
  - Provide an opportunity for students to hear about alumni careers, experiences, and advice (19 of 25, 76%)
- **Student Training**
  - Provide basic interviewing and networking guidance to students before the program (18 of 25, 72%)
- **Concise, Advance Preparation**
  - Provide concise interviewer preparation in advance of the evening (17 of 25, 68%)
- **Preparation Mediums**
  - Provide interviewer preparation in a variety of mediums (written, video, hands-on, discussion) (17 of 25, 68%)
- **More Time**
  - Provide additional time for the interviews (15 of 25, 60%)
- **Student Outcomes Follow-Up**
  - Follow-up with interviewers on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes (13 of 25, 52%)

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**Background match.** Most of the alumni mock interviewers recommended matching students and alumni based on industry and background to facilitate their learning. Some of the alumni mock interviewers wanted to meet with students interested in their careers. Participant 19 thought a match based on professional background would be good "Perfect world, it would be candidates a little more aligned to my experience and professional background." He continued:

If the candidates could be more suited to my area of study and area of work, that would certainly make it more enjoyable. I don't remember a lot of chemical engineers coming across my table nor people going into a chemical industry job. I did that for a few years, and now I'm more so in an energy project management thing. Again, in a perfect world, that would be really nice. (Participant 19)

Similarly, Participant 2 wanted a student and alumni match by background and industry "…my only thing is whenever applicable to just match students with alumni with similar backgrounds." She continued that the match created a beneficial experience "I do think some of my favorite experiences were students who either were studying science or had an interest in it or were just really interested in my career in what I do."

Many alumni felt that matching students to alumni mock interviewers' industry experience would add a lot of value. Participant 4 talked about the value an industry match could make "I feel like I was adding that much more value because I would know the norm in that industry." And he continued "I think you do add a little extra value when you're in the same industry." Participant 16 also believed an industry match was important "For me, if anything, it could just be a value add for the student to get advice from alums who know what they want to do." Participant 23 mentioned that in specific disciplines, an industry match was essential "I could understand why some students maybe like the super hard sciences, might benefit more from someone with a similar professional background training." One alumni mock interviewer found that an industry match meant more knowledge could be exchanged:

I think for me I would ideally like to be paired with people who are in my field, or who are looking [at] going into my field. Just because I have more knowledge that I can give about the industry as a whole. (Participant 26)

A second alumni mock interviewer noted that being in the same industry allowed for a match of interview styles and expectations:

I try to give them an idea of…that industry, the interview style or the intensity of the interview for that particular industry that they are applying for. Right? Because I'm fairly familiar with that industry. (Participant 30)

A third alumni mock interviewer found that industry match between the alumni and student allowed for more in-depth interview questions:

There's one girl…she was looking at sort of a job in credit in underwriting. And so, I brought up some of the issues in that, because I have a background, mostly strategy…I kind of highlighted a tough question for her, just so…she knows what a tough question is. And we had a good relationship because we sort of grew up in the same area and…It was after [that] fact that we established some rapport. (Participant 24)

A fifth alumni mock interviewer noted that industries had important interview practice variations, which should be considered:

I definitely think the connection to the industry if it's at all possible. I mean, if people are interested in marketing, or if they're interested in a broad kind of thing, for me that's great. But people who maybe are in science and finance, it's really important for them to be matched with somebody. I just think it would be much more helpful than an interview with me, who's not in those areas. It is really key. (Participant 5)

A sixth alumni mock interviewer felt that alumni and student industry match led to better feedback and interview style similarities:

Because what I felt is the most helpful thing about this alumni interview program is that, if possible and then if permitted, that we have an alumni that's also working in the same industry [or] similar position [where] you're applying [for] jobs…then that will give you the most accurate feedback of how to behave. (Participant 32)

And she continued:

Because research is more casual…so our interview standard in biological research…It's like whether you can know your research well and also sustain a nice and good conversation. So that's basically really the required criteria that I had in terms of conducting the interview during that time. (Participant 32)

Some alumni mock interviewers also talked about the importance of matching alumni and students based on other background characteristics.  An alumni mock

interviewer felt that her greatest impact could be made with a student from a similar

economic background:

> I think that I could make the biggest impact. Some of the junior maybe more disadvantaged students. I was a scholarship student, so I really think that I would like to make a difference for some of the students who don't have as many connections as maybe other [University Name] students have. (Participant 21)

The alumni mock interviewers recommended matching students and alumni based on

industry and background so that they could learn through relevant connections, industry

discussions, and shared experiences.

**Alumni advice.** Most alumni mock interviewers recommended providing an

opportunity for students to hear more about their careers, experiences, and advice in order

to foster alumni learning. The alumni mock interviewers found that students were

interested in their careers and spoke about them often. Participant 3 talked about the

students wanting to know more about his career "They wanted to know more about what

I did." And he continued "It becomes about life experience. How did you get that? How

did you go there? You just sort of get in." Participant 27 also found that his career

created a conversation point "I think what made them come back was less the specifics of

the interview and more an interest in what it is I do because that sometimes comes out."

Participant 21 noted that many alumni and students wanted to share the experience of

working in their industry "Because I think that students would benefit from meeting

professionals but also hearing kind of day to day stories from professionals." Participant

2 enjoyed talking about her professional experiences with students "Some of my favorite

experiences were students who either were studying science or had an interest in it or

were just really interested in my career in what I do." And she continued "So, just talking

about like what a day in my life is like." She also expressed that she was asked to explain

how she got to her current role in her career:

> So, probably just talking about my career trajectory and what I studied at [University Name] and how that experience and that knowledge kind of set me up for what I do today. (Participant 2)

Another alumni mock interviewer talked about learning from the opportunity to explain

her professional background:

> I really like the networking piece. I always get something out of it. It's also good practice for me because, honestly, that's how I got both of…the jobs I've ever had, was through networking. I like when students take the initiative to ask me about what I do and why I do it. Also, it helps me to hone the skill of how to describe what I do, so when I'm trying to network and trying to get something from someone more senior, it'll go…honed in some way. (Participant 15)

> Some alumni mock interviewers also recommended giving general career advice.

Participant 32 was asked to speak to students about conducting a job search "…but also

[they asked] for more either feedback on the interviews or tips on how to conduct a job

search." Another alumni mock interviewer was similarly asked for job search advice:

> I one time I had somebody was applying for a policy job to I think Planned Parenthood or ACLU or something. One of those…and I was able to give her some background and also talk to her offline about why are you interested in the field or you know…also just giving her some general broader career advice, of like "Here, you might also want to consider this, or this is also another route that people who are interested in policy consider." I think I enjoyed that interview a little bit more than I have enjoyed others. (Participant 26)

An alumni mock interviewer also shared advice on feeling embarrassed:

> I would assume this goes on, that when somebody's interviewing a student, that they feel that part of the learning experience is to maybe talk about some of the things…I mean, I remember sharing things that were embarrassing because I said, "Everybody has these stories…everybody. Just remember that. People put their pants on one leg at a time. I don't care how lofty they are." (Participant 13)

The alumni mock interviewers recommended providing a learning opportunity for alumni

by speaking with students about their professional knowledge and general career advice.

**Student training.**  Most alumni mock interviewers recommend providing basic

interviewing and networking guidance to students before the program to help facilitate

the learning of alumni.  Some of the alumni found that spending time on interview basics,

such as questions and etiquette, detracted from having the opportunity for deeper

connections with students.  Participant 23 recommended reminding students to prepare

questions to ask the alumni mock interviewers "'Hey, we encourage you to have a few

questions.' That would be the only thing."  Another alumni mock interviewer suggested

giving the students the interview questions in advance, so that they could better prepare:

> Some of the questions that were given to us, maybe also circulate it with the
> kids beforehand so they can just like practice it out. And they have their pitch
> ready. Because the whole purpose of this is to just like practice that right? So, if
> they come in and [they] probably know the questions, but they don't really know
> it. It's like an open book exam. So, I think that would help them much more than
> not being prepared and just sitting there and hearing feedback from someone.
> (Participant 41)

Similarly, an alumni mock interviewer thought that providing students with preparation

materials in advance would allow them to focus on a better connection with their alumni

mock interviewer:

> This doesn't have to be a requirement, but if they do like a half hour or one-hour
> webinar or in-person session on basic interviewing tips and tricks and technique.
> I'm sure that will be helpful for them before they walk into a room with an
> alumnus. (Participant 10)

Another alumni mock interviewer suggested providing etiquette tips in advance so the

students and alumni could establish a good connection:

> Some of them are kind of even unaware of kind of basic interview etiquette of
> greeting the person and…so, I think that's probably the biggest challenge with the
> students. It'd be like, I think maybe some of them should have maybe a basic
> Interviewing 101 class or something or session or online tips or something before
> they walk into their first interview. (Participant 1)

Some of the alumni mock interviewers recommend letting the students know the program expectations, so the alumni didn't need to spend time reviewing them or calming their nerves. One alumni mock interviewer suggested that a quick video could provide this guidance:

> It's awesome not just for the interviewers but also just for the interviewees, a brief, whatever, five, 10-minute video [on] interviewing, just so again, they kind of know what to expect going in rather than being nervous or intimidated. (Participant 1)

A second alumni mock interviewer agreed that a video explaining expectations would be useful to help students feel calm and focused:

> Yeah, I would certainly think there could be some good additional prep materials, resources for them. Maybe a video of what a generic interview looks like, literally looks like, because I think just seeing…Even if it's a cartoon or two people, even if they're discussing completely fluffy nonsense, but just the idea of sitting down, almost always face-to-face, business casual or maybe business formal, there's one or two pieces of paper on the desk, and it is a question and response back and forth. I think seeing a video of that could be helpful, just to prepare students for what they're physically going to be going through. (Participant 19)

> One alumni mock interviewer also recommended that students need help

understanding the long-term value of the program to take advantage of the alumni

networking component:

> Then also again explaining it to them as an opportunity to build rapport with alumni and not just an exercise. I think that could help them see the benefit of doing this. Maybe a couple of years down the road when those relationships mature [and] are more fruitful. (Participant 26)

The alumni mock interviewers recommended providing pre-program student training, on interview questions, etiquette, expectations, and networking, in order for the alumni to spend more time on learning through deeper conversations and relationship development.

**Concise, advance preparation.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers recommended having concise preparation materials in advance of the program evening to best facilitate their learning. Participant 26 mentioned advance preparation materials explicitly "I think again just if I could have the materials emailed to me a day or two before I think that would have been helpful."

Some of the alumni mock interviewers requested a one-pager in advance. Participant 1 said that more time to review a one pager would be ideal "…maybe giving us a little bit more time…in terms of getting us prepared and ready for it." And he continued "I mean it's something that's relatively [simple], like a one-pager probably…that would be ideal, nothing too, too expansive." Another alumni mock interviewer felt similarly that a one-pager in advance would be best:

> I would send out a one page, nobody has pages anymore, I would send out a brief email beforehand saying, "Here's some things to consider if you haven't done this before. Here's some things to think about. Here's some questions that we know work well." (Participant 9)

Participant 16 recommended a training or a video "I think maybe an optional video or an optional, very short training." But she was also open to the idea of a one-pager as well:

> …like a one sheeter, a five-minute video information session type of thing, could be helpful, just so people know like what they're allowed to ask versus not. But anything else might be a little cumbersome. (Participant 16)

Some of the alumni mock interviewers wanted bulleted content within the one-pager. Participant 29 felt strongly that bulleted information was best "If someone's going to tell me how to do something, I'd much rather it be in a one-page bulleted thing." Another alumni mock interviewer agreed that bullets with the necessary interview techniques and knowledge would be ideal:

But I would say to be explicit…bullet points of, "This is what the students need, and this is what they need to learn." Be explicit with a few bullets about what their role is. (Participant 22)

And she continued:

So, but you can't make it overly complicated. But I think if you just sort of said, "Here's the role, here's what we need you to do," but also defer to them and say, "Here's the type of questions that you could ask, and here are some examples." (Participant 22)

One alumni mock interviewer, Participant 21, felt online content was best "I think it would be beneficial to have some materials available online just to read through them quickly." She also emphasized that having the resumes in advance was important "But I think for the students to get the best experience, to make all of us better interviewers, [it would help] if we had resumes ahead of time." A second alumni mock interviewer believed similarly that having the resumes in advance was essential to his preparation:

I mean maybe if they could get us the people that we were working with earlier. Or if they could email their resumes. Then I could at least, I can read them and maybe be a little bit more prepared. (Participant 3)

Participant 35 also wanted the resumes in advance, even if only a day before was possible "I'm a last-minute person. So, even a day before would be great." And she continued "But as soon as you've been matched with a student it would be great to get both their resumes to look on ahead of time and the resource materials." Participant 32 agreed that having the resumes for review, even on day early, would work best "I think night before would be enough." And she continued "I sort of questioned a lot of [things], on the resumes of the applicants. So, if I can have more information before the interview, I think the experience will be less rushed I think." The alumni mock interviewers recommended providing advanced materials in a concise format to facilitate their learning, such as a one-pager, training, or video, as well as bulleted text or online content. They especially

were interested in receiving the student resumes prior to the program, so they could best prepare in advance to learn more at the program.

**Preparation mediums.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers recommended providing interviewer preparation in a variety of mediums to foster learning (written, video, hands-on, discussion). Some alumni mock interviewers felt they learned best with written materials. Participant 24 expressed reading as his preferred method to take in new information "I think it's good to read it." Participant 19 also found written materials to be the most helpful "I would say the written materials provided were the most helpful. I always like having written instructions." Participant 22 agreed that reading was her preferred medium to learn "So I like to take in information…probably less videos and more reading."

Other alumni mock interviewers found that videos were their ideal medium to learn new information. Participant 16 recommended a short video tutorial for the program "…a five-minute video information session type of thing, could be helpful, just so people know like what they're allowed to ask versus not." Participant 26 also preferred viewing training information "probably watching something on it." Another alumni mock interviewer recommended a short video or short written materials:

> …right before the interviews start, again, spending a little bit of time on handing out a list of questions and showing a video or something. Something brief but not too long on the training. That way, everyone's there, you have everyone's attention and it will be kind of fresh in their minds, right before they start interviewing. (Participant 1)

One alumni mock interviewer also wanted an initial video medium for the information, as well as something written, which he could search through later:

> I think a video with a transcript, perhaps manual, could really be the best way that I find myself learning in that combination, something that can be pulled back,

because I remember hearing some key phrase or something like that, I can just quickly search and find it. (Participant 18)

Some of the alumni mock interviewers preferred the medium of hands-on learning to best understand new information.  Participant 21 felt that being with the training facilitators was an important part of the process "I think the training should be in-person."  A second alumni mock interviewer also recommended in-person instruction and potentially viewing a roleplay mock interview:

I'm kind of a hands-on person. So, like seeing things happen or having some kind of a…I guess like watching mock interview or being a part of one is probably the best way to get that. (Participant 2)

A third alumni mock interviewer also preferred hands-on learning and liked the idea of repeating the information through multiple mediums:

I do think I'm [a] little bit more hands on as a person…like diving into things and being like a self-starter. But I also think I like to learn through multiple mediums. So, if I'm going to listen to something else, I also want to see it. Repetition helps. (Participant 6)

A fourth alumni mock interviewer, Participant 29, also liked hands-on learning, but was most interested in a coaching style of approach  "…person to person coaching where it's specific to me is probably the most valuable way for me to at least benefit from it."

Other alumni mock interviewers highlighted the importance of discussion as a preferred medium to learn new content. Participant 35 found that she learned most new information through speaking with others "I think also just talking to other people. I think most of what I learn, or new things, or even the news that I realize is important is because people are talking about it to me." Another alumni mock interviewer agreed that while reading and hands-on learning were helpful, discussion was his preferred medium to learn:

…definitely reading, then definitely learning by doing. And…I think just conversation. The opportunity to get your questions answered, to get an informed, experienced person [to] guide you through whatever outstanding questions you might have. (Participant 10)

The alumni mock interviewers recommended providing interviewer preparation in a variety of mediums to foster learning. The suggested mediums and approaches included written, video, hands-on, and discussion.

**More time.** The alumni mock interviewers recommended providing additional time for the mock interviews, which were scheduled for 30 minutes, for better learning to take place. Many of the alumni mock interviewers felt that the mock interviews were too short. Participant 3 sometimes ran over the 30 allotted minutes "I would run over once in a while, which I'm sure people do." Participant 26 felt she was always short on time "Yeah I think I always felt like I was teeny bit short on time." Participant 24 also felt that the timing was too short overall "Well the other thing is, the amount of time that we have is very short." Participant 29 wished for more time "I always kind of wish it was longer." And continued that "the evenings seemed to kind of fly by…"

Other alumni mock interviewers felt that the interviews were rushed, which led them to being exhausted and not making the most out of the experience. One alumni mock interviewer talked about how extending the interview time would help him feel less rushed and more engaged:

I mean 30 minutes was a little, you felt like it was a little rushed at times, so maybe instead of doing four a night, maybe do three and maybe 40 minutes per student. Just because I always [felt] bad at that last interview, which is kind of mentally starting to get tired. So, I always felt bad for that last student that everyone's kind of, sometimes you're running a little behind schedule or, everyone's kind of in a rush to wrap up. So, spending a little bit more time with each student would be nice. (Participant 1)

Another alumni mock interviewer felt that adding time in between the interviews would

allow her to have more energy during the mock interview sessions:

> I think having more time in between each interview. So, you feel like you're
> giving everyone the highest amount of energy. I know this is like long and you
> want to make sure that they have time, they ask questions and whatever, but I
> think having an equal amount of time to walk them through the feedback.
> (Participant 6)

Some alumni mock interviewers believed that increasing the interview time would

provide more opportunity to get value from the feedback portion.  Participant 13

recommended making the sessions longer "I would make the session longer."  She felt

that the additional time would allow for an appropriate amount of space for thorough

feedback:

> I don't know how anybody gets through it all because the students are not fully
> formed. They're struggling to find the answer. Even if you're able to move
> through it quickly, they're not necessarily able to move through it quickly. And
> then, you don't have enough time to give them feedback. (Participant 13)

Another alumni mock interviewer also expressed needing enough time for the feedback:

> …the challenge which is doing it in that relatively short amount of time. I think
> that was the biggest challenge…you want to be able to get through enough
> questions to have a practice, but again, you want to leave enough time at the end
> for them, to provide them feedback and if they had questions to ask of you, I think
> that was just the biggest challenge was trying to do it within that 30 minutes of
> trying to stay on schedule. (Participant 1)

Alumni mock interviewers also felt that additional time for the interviews allowed

for the students to feel more comfortable and provided a better overall experience.

Participant 5 thought more time would help the students relax "I might make them,

maybe instead of 30 minutes, 40 minutes. Slightly longer just so the student can relax a

little bit more. Just maybe a little more time for it, a little bit."  Participant 18 felt that

extending the time would be beneficial "I don't know what the right time [is that] makes

sense, but I think extending it a little bit would be great." He continued that more time would make the students more comfortable:

> Like [a] 45-minute session might be better just because you do need to get them more comfortable, you do need to get to know them a little bit at least somehow to be able to make the most out of it. (Participant 18)

Some alumni mock interviewers also felt more time would create more opportunity for a connection and dialogue with the students. Participant 20 noted that there wasn't much time "Well, there isn't a lot of time." And she felt additional time could be allocated to conversation and feedback "…[it] winds up in more time having conversation and giving feedback." Another alumni mock interviewer found that more time enabled better conversations and points for connection during the feedback portion:

> I almost always found myself just running over because with a lot of the students I just got into a really good groove with them, and we had a conversation about my career and then we started talking about other things, so if anything, I think more time for the debrief would have been nice. (Participant 16)

The alumni mock interviewers recommended providing additional time for the mock interviews so that more alumni learning could be fostered through increased energy, longer feedback sessions, more comfortable students, and more opportunity for student connections and conversations.

**Student outcomes follow-up.** Many of the alumni mock interviewers recommended fostering additional learning by following-up with student utilization, feedback, and outcomes. Some alumni mock interviewers were interested to learn more about student utilization of the mock interview program. Participant 6 was interested in knowing how many students used the program "I think like soft and hard numbers, like hard numbers would be how many people use the services." A second alumni mock interviewer wanted to have statistics on the program in written format:

So maybe there's a way to put together a little pamphlet or a booklet afterwards saying, "Here are some statistics. Here are some examples of success stories" and that's something nice to have. (Participant 21)

A third alumni mock interviewer was interested in utilization by specific student populations:

Once, I specifically asked during our training that happens before the interviews if [University Name] collected data on how many low-income and students of color participated in the mock interview program, and if they could share with us. (Participant 26)

She continued that knowing those numbers over time would also be beneficial:

I think having those numbers would be great and it would be great to chart progress too. Over time are more students from that population accessing the service? Are they benefiting from it? (Participant 26)

Additionally, some alumni mock interviewers were interested in learning from event feedback provided by students. Participant 20 wanted to know what the students wanted more of and what was helpful "…what the students need and the type of feedback they find the most helpful." Participant 32 was interested in knowing if the students believed the program was helpful "Just sort of measure. Like whether this mock interview [has] any impact on them or whether it helped them." Participant 10 similarly was interested in the helpfulness of the program, but also wanted to know what parts specifically added value to students "Maybe not just stats of the percentage of students [that] found it helpful, but what do they find helpful or what they think could be better? I think that would be useful." Participant 6 was interested in hearing feedback from the students she worked with directly "Just in terms of if your student had any feedback or had anything to say." She thought the feedback would additionally be a nice reminder of her experience:

And then soft things like this person had really nice things to say. I think it would be a nice way to wrap up the work and remind you when you open up that email like, oh yeah, I do remember doing that. Oh yeah, that was really sweet. Maybe I should reach back out to that girl. You know? Just a nice reminder. (Participant 6)

One alumni mock interviewer was specifically interested in feedback on her role as an interviewer:

I really would love feedback. I think that would be great. I'm very open to that. Oh. But some students did when they followed up, they would tell me if they did receive a job offer. So that's always really nice. But I would love a mechanism to get feedback. (Participant 21)

Some of the alumni mock interviewers were also interested in learning the student outcomes from the program. Participant 23 expressed a desire to know what happened to the students professionally "It would be nice to know how things turned out for the students." A second alumni mock interviewer was also curious to know where students ended up:

I would say just purely out of curiosity and purely out of the...yeah, curiosity for what happens coming out of these sessions. I would certainly be interested in knowing where these students interviewed, if they got offers, where they got offers, and how they feel the experience paid off for them. (Participant 16)

A third alumni mock interviewer also expressed interest in knowing where his interviewees found employment after the program:

I always kind of wonder what happened to a lot of these students that I've done interviews with, so just, being able to sit and talk to them even if it's just an email update of what they ended up doing or where they ended up working. (Participant 1)

He continued:

I don't think I actually kept in touch with any of my interviewees after the dates. I'm just curious, what happened to them? Where [did] they end up? What job did they take? I have no idea actually. But that would have been good to know. (Participant 1)

A fourth alumni mock interviewer felt that knowing statistics on the outcomes of students would help her appreciate the impact of her mock interviewer role:

> …even results from like one [semester] being like, "Oh great, so you guys interviewed X amount of people and…50% of them got the job that they wanted." Something like that…just to make it feel like you had some sort of impact. I know you did feel the impact personally, but seeing follow-up afterwards in terms of numbers and anonymized feedback would have made it a little bit more, like made the impact feel like it went on for longer versus just that night. (Participant 6)

The alumni mock interviewers recommended following-up with information on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes to best foster additional alumni learning from the program.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a comprehensive overview of the study findings. The study findings were collected through the three methods of data collection described in Chapter III: questionnaire ratings, critical incident written responses, and interviews. The findings were presented in three sections: the demographic summary, the questionnaire ratings summary, and the four major findings. The major findings were organized and presented according to the research questions. Therefore, the findings revealed insights into alumni mock interviewers' learning experiences within the mock interview program, including: descriptions of their learning, aspects that contributed to their learning, aspects that inhibited their learning, and recommendations they made to foster additional alumni learning.

The first finding of this study was that the alumni mock interviewers learned through participating in the mock interview program. An overwhelming majority learned

the importance of creating a comfortable environment for students, delivering student feedback in a helpful format, providing the program for students' preparation, and understanding current students' experiences.

The second finding of this study was that the alumni mock interviewers found aspects of the mock interview program to contribute to their learning. A strong majority described having career center provided sample interview questions and an opportunity to stay in touch with students as helpful to their learning experience.

The third finding of this study was that the alumni mock interviewers found aspects of the mock interview program to inhibit their learning. A strong majority described the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni mock interviewers and the lack of industry knowledge of specific fields as hindering to their learning experience.

The fourth finding of this study was that the alumni mock interviewers described recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster alumni learning. A large majority recommended matching students with alumni based on industry knowledge and backgrounds, providing an opportunity for students to hear about alumni experiences, and offering training to students before participating in the mock interview program.

Based on the participants' descriptions of their learning experiences, the findings aim to provide data that can help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning. The next chapter will involve the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of the findings reported in this chapter. Chapter V will further detail the analytic categories of the study, which will enable the researcher to extract higher-level meanings from the findings.

Chapter V

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, AND SYNTHESIS

**Introduction and Overview**

The purpose of this case study is to explore with a group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program. The descriptions of their experiences will help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning. To carry out this purpose, the following research questions guided this study and its exploration into alumni mock interviewer learning:

1. How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program?

2. What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program?

3. What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?

The alumni mock interviewers' learning experiences were examined through 43 questionnaire responses from the sample participants, as well as 25 critical incident written responses and in-depth interviews with the subset sample participants. From these data collection methods, the following four major findings were uncovered as responses to the study research questions:

1. All subset sample participants described what they learned through participating in the mock interview program (100%), with an overwhelming majority learning the importance of creating a comfortable environment (96%), delivering feedback (92%), offering the program for students' preparation (88%), and understanding current students' experiences (84%).

2. All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to contribute to their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing having sample interview questions (84%) and an opportunity to stay in touch with students (76%) as helpful.

3. All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to inhibit their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni mock interviewers (84%) and lack of industry knowledge of specific fields (72%) as hindering.

4. All subset sample participants described recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster alumni learning (100%), with a large majority recommending matching students with alumni based on industry and background (76%), providing an opportunity to hear about alumni experiences (76%), and offering training to students before participating in the mock interview program (72%).

The findings of the study presented both particular instances and collective cases of the learning experience of alumni mock interviewers (Neumann & Pallas, 2015, p. 168).  This chapter seeks to analyze and interpret the findings through "reducing their complexity and searching for credible and meaningful patterns" (Neumann & Pallas,

2015, p. 156). Additionally, the analysis seeks to establish "deeper meaning" by examining the findings across groups to reveal trends (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, pp. 127-129). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) believe that "in order to convey a holistic understanding of the case, the level of interpretation may also extend to the presentation of categories, themes, models or theories" (p. 233). Since the purpose of this research is to help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in a broad context, the analysis will use categorizing strategies of the findings to establish analytic categories (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 269). The proposed analytic categories represent themes that materialized from the data, as well as classifications generated from the theories and frameworks utilized in the conceptual framework (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 268). The analytic categories both provide practical implications and inform theoretical models. The following analytic categories emerged from the analysis of the findings:

1. Alumni mock interviewers perceive their learning to come from interactions with four sources of knowledge: the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves.

2. Alumni mock interviewers' perceptions of their learning can be understood through the four components found in adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.

The analytic categories examined in this chapter will provide a lens for the researcher to analyze, interpret, and synthesize the major study findings to discover patterns, derive higher level meaning, and provide an informative understanding of the

case. The sections of the analysis that will follow include: the analytic categories developed from emergent patterns in the findings, the interpretations of the analytic categories, the synthesis of the analytic categories with the assumptions of the study, and the resulting contributions to literature.

## Analysis

### Analytic Category 1

*Alumni mock interviewers perceive their learning to come from interactions with four sources of knowledge: the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves.*

The first analytic category shows the sources alumni appear to utilize to develop their knowledge within mock interview programs. This category presents major study findings mapped to the themes of sources of knowledge identified by the alumni mock interviewers. The sources of alumni mock interviewer knowledge were the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves. First, the alumni mock interviewers began with foundational conditions and basic information supplied by the career service center. Second, the alumni mock interviewers sought out expertise and understanding from their alumni peers. Third, they added in new insights and perspectives from current students. And fourth, they increased their overall understanding by applying their learning to themselves. Table 8 shows the relationship between the major study findings and the perceived sources of knowledge. Following the table, the aspects from the findings of these categorizations will be detailed.

Table 8. Evidence Table for Perceived Sources of Knowledge

| | | Major Study Findings | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Description of Learning | Aspects that Contributed to Learning | Aspects that Inhibited Learning | Recommendations to Foster Learning |
| Sources of Knowledge | Career Service Center | • Interview Process | • Sample Questions • Dinner with Program • Beginning Presentation • Student Packets | • No Industry Knowledge • No Interviewer Goals • Late Program • No Experience Feedback | • Student Training • Concise, Advance Preparation • Preparation Mediums • More Time • Student Outcomes Follow-Up |
| | Fellow Alumni | N/A | • Alumni Networking | • No Alumni Connections • No Experience Feedback | N/A |
| | Current Students | • Comfortable Environment • Feedback Delivery • Program Necessity • Current Students • International Students | • Student Follow-Up • Student Packets • Invested Students | • Unprepared Students | • Background Match • Student Training • Student Outcomes Follow-Up |
| | Themselves | • Better Interviewer • Interview Assumptions | N/A | • Learning Resistance | • Background Match • Alumni Advice |

**The career service center.** The career service center was a source of knowledge that spanned aspects of all four major study findings: providing direct learning, contributing to learning, inhibiting learning, and also fostering additional learning through the alumni mock interviewers' recommendations. Overall, the career service center appeared to provide foundational conditions and basic information.

Alumni mock interviewers learned directly from the career service center about the interview process including ideal questions and answers. This further aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned more about how to answer interview questions," which had an affirmative result of 70% of the sample and 72% of the subset sample. It is likely that alumni mock interviewers directly attribute interview information they learned to the career service center, as the staff provided them with foundational materials and a fundamental training presentation.

The career service center contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning through the facilitation of the mock interview program in three ways. First, the career service center provided a list of sample questions to ask students. This further aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from the materials provided by the career center staff," which had an affirmative result of 56% of the sample and 60% of the subset sample. The alumni mock interviewers likely viewed the sample questions from the career service center as contributing to their learning by offering them foundational information, which freed up their time and enabled deeper learning through participation in conversations and discussions. Second, the career service center hosted the mock interview program in the evening with dinner. This likely aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from informal conversations I have had with career center staff," which had an affirmative result of 54% of the sample and 64% of the subset sample. While the career service center provided dinner may not have initially appeared as a direct contributor to learning, the questionnaire response showed it was likely the place for increased conversations and dialogue with staff, as it was the primary opportunity for staff and alumni to interact informally. It is possible that these

discussions afforded time for questions and additional insights into the interview process and experiences of current students.  Third, the career service center gave a presentation at the beginning of the evening with dinner.  This aligned to questionnaire responses: "I have learned from the training provided by the career center staff," which had an affirmative result of 56% of the sample and 64% of the subset sample, as well as "I have learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions," which had an affirmative result of 40% of the sample and 48% of the subset sample.  It is probable that the career service center presentation at the beginning of the evening contributed to alumni mock interviewers' learning through the opportunity for formal interview knowledge and individual interview queries.

Additionally, the career service center provided the alumni mock interviewers with student packets to review including their resumes and targeted job descriptions.  The students were required to submit the packets; however, they were attributed to the career service center as they served as the contact between the students and the alumni.  This is likely aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from the materials provided by the career center staff," which had an affirmative result of 56% of the sample and 60% of the subset sample.  It is probable that the student packets distributed by the career service center contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning by allowing for increased conversations and in-depth dialogue with students.  This knowledge is attributed to both the career service center and current students.

The career service center inhibited alumni mock interviewer learning through the facilitation of the mock interview program in three ways.  First, the career service center did not prepare alumni mock interviewers with industry knowledge of specific fields.  It

is possible that without this information from the career service center, the alumni mock interviewers felt that their interviews and conversations could not be in-depth, thus resulted in less learning. Second, the career service center provided little or no guidance on interviewer expectations, approaches, and goals. The alumni mock interviewers probably felt that their learning was stunted without these key pieces of information. To maximize their learning opportunity, the alumni mock interviewers seemed to prefer having clear up-front guidance in these areas. Third, the career service center hosted a mock interview program that ended late in the evening. The career service center may have appeared to constrict alumni mock interviewer learning through the late timing of the program. It is probable that the evening duration led to less time for alumni mock interviewer conversations, discussions, and reflection. Fourth, some alumni mock interviewers expressed that their learning was inhibited by having little or no opportunity to share their experience with and give feedback to career service center staff. It is likely that they wanted an opportunity to engage the career service center staff to actively develop the program to be more tailored to their learning needs. Some alumni mock interviewers also wanted to share their experience and discuss feedback with their alumni peers, which will be outlined later.

Alumni mock interviewers recommend that career service centers improve the mock interview in five ways to foster additional alumni learning. First, the alumni mock interviewers recommended that the career service center administer basic interviewing and networking guidance to the students before the program, which would also make the current students a better source of knowledge. It is probable that the alumni mock interviewers believed that if basic information were already covered, then more

meaningful discussions could take place at the event, providing more opportunity for

alumni mock interviewer learning. Second, the alumni mock interviewers recommended

that the career service center arrange concise interviewer preparation in advance of the

evening. It is likely that advanced preparation for the alumni mock interviewers would

serve the same purpose as for the students, to better prepare for the event, which would

allow for additional time and more in-depth conversations. It is also appears that concise

information is important as the alumni mock interviewers are working professionals, who

don't have limitless time to learn in advance of the program. Third, the alumni mock

interviewers recommended that the career service center facilitate interviewer preparation

in a variety of mediums (written, video, hands-on, and discussion). This is likely aligned

to three questionnaire responses: "I would enjoy reading relevant articles and written

materials" (affirmative in 58% of the sample and 68% of the subset sample); "I would

enjoy viewing an interview role play/simulation" (affirmative in 60% of both the sample

and the subset sample); and "I would enjoy participating in an interview role

play/simulation" (affirmative in 63% of the sample and 60% of the subset sample). In

order for the alumni mock interviewers to maximize their learning experience, they

seemed to want to learn across a variety of mediums to fully integrate their new

knowledge. Fourth, the alumni mock interviewers recommended that the career service

center add additional time for the interviews. It is probable that the alumni mock

interviewers viewed this similarly to the late timing of the program, believing that

additional time would provide opportunity for increased learning through deeper

conversations and dialogue with students. Fifth, the alumni mock interviewers

recommended that the career service center follow-up with interviewers on student

utilization, feedback, and outcomes, which would require the students to report feedback and outcomes.  It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers wanted to continue their learning experience after the program ended through additional reflections on their contributions and the graduated student experience.

**Fellow alumni.**  Fellow alumni were a source of knowledge that was detailed in aspects of two of the major study findings: contributing to and inhibiting learning.  In addition, fellow alumni were a source of knowledge that appeared in the questionnaire responses related to recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster learning.  Overall, fellow alumni appeared to provide expertise and understanding.

Fellow alumni contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning via networking at the beginning of the evening.  This is aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers," which had an affirmative result of 39% of the sample and 48% of the subset sample.  The alumni mock interviewers appeared to learn from discussion about various industries, interview techniques, and fellow alumni experiences.  This discussion likely happened during the training presentation or dinner at the beginning of the mock interview program.

Fellow alumni inhibited alumni mock interviewer learning through the lack of opportunity to meet and connect.  This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned more about my alumni peers," which had a negative result of 44% of the sample and 48% of the subset sample.  Although this statement seems to contradict the previous one, it is likely that alumni mock interviewers either wished for additional time to connect with their peers or they weren't able to do so if they missed the opportunity at beginning of the evening.  Alumni mock interviewers also felt their learning was

inhibited because there was little or no opportunity to discuss their shared experience with each other and provide collective feedback. It is probable that the alumni mock interviewers wanted to compare their experiences to add to their learning through theme and pattern identification. It is likely the alumni mock interviewers also wanted to collectively share their feedback in order to consider various options, as well as voice their opinions about their future learning experiences.

While adding an opportunity for alumni networking was not directly mentioned as an aspect in the major study findings for recommendations to foster alumni learning, it did present as a recommendation in two of the questionnaire responses. The first "I would enjoy a discussion with my alumni peers," which had an affirmative result of 76% of the sample and 80% of the subset sample. And the second "I would enjoy creating a sense of community with my alumni peers," which had an affirmative result of 82% of the sample and 80% of the subset sample. This demonstrates the value of utilizing multiple methods for data collection, as well as points to possible improvements to the interview protocol composition. It seems consistent that the alumni mock interviewers would indeed recommend that networking be added to the program design in order to foster their learning, as they viewed it as contributing when present and inhibiting when missing. It is likely that networking with their alumni peers would help facilitate learning by providing alumni mock interviewers the chance to learn about additional experiences, techniques, and commonalities.

**Current students.** Current students were a source of knowledge that spanned aspects of all four major study findings: providing direct learning, contributing to learning, inhibiting learning, and also fostering additional learning through the alumni

mock interviewers' recommendations.  Overall, current students appeared to provide new insights and perspectives.

The alumni mock interviewers learned from the current students with respect to five new areas of knowledge.  First, they learned from students the importance of creating a positive and comfortable environment in an interview.  It is likely that current students expanded alumni mock interviewers' knowledge in this area through their behavior and responses to the interview questions based on their comfort levels.  Second, alumni mock interviewers learned from students the importance of feedback delivery to the learning process.  Current students presumably gave this knowledge to the alumni mock interviewers through their receptiveness and appreciation of the feedback.  Third, the alumni mock interviewers learned from students the necessity of the mock interview program for students' preparation.  It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers learned the value of their contributions to student learning through the students' expressions of understanding.  Fourth, the alumni mock interviewers learned from current students about their experiences, skills, and challenges.  This aligned to the questionnaire responses: "I have learned more about current college students," which had an affirmative result of 91% of the sample and 88% of the subset sample, as well as "I have learned from conversations I have had with the student interviewees," which had an affirmative result of 88% of the sample and 92% of the subset sample.  It seemed that the alumni mock interviewers gained new knowledge of the student experience from connecting with present-day students.  Fifth, the alumni mock interviewers learned from current students about international student populations and their differences from domestic students.

Similarly, it is likely that this knowledge came from the opportunity to engage directly with current international students.

Current students contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning in three ways. First, current students provided the opportunity to stay in touch with the alumni mock interviewers. It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers were able to extend their learning through the extension of their connections with current students outside of the program. Second, current students supplied packets for alumni mock interviewer review, including their resumes and target job descriptions. Similar to this aspect being attributed to the role of the career service center, it is probable that the student packets contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning by allowing for increased conversations and in-depth dialogue with students. Third, current students contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning by being invested and prepared for the mock interview. It is probable that invested and prepared students led to more thorough and meaningful conversations with current students and thus increased chances for alumni mock interviewer learning.

Conversely, current students inhibited alumni mock interviewer learning through being unappreciative and unprepared for their mock interviews. Similarly, it is probable that unappreciative and unprepared students led to more rudimentary conversations and thus decreased chances for alumni mock interviewer learning.

Alumni mock interviewers recommended that current students improve mock interviewer learning through three mechanisms. First, students should provide their industry and background information in advance of the program to facilitate better student and alumni matches. This is aligned to the questionnaire response: "I would

enjoy being matched with students in my discipline," which had an affirmative result of 79% of the sample and 84% of the subset sample. Alumni mock interviewers likely believed that by having a background match with students, they could gain additional insights through tailored and connected conversations. Second, students should accept basic interviewing and networking guidance before the program. Similar to this aspect being attributed to the role of the career service center, it is probable that the alumni mock interviewers believed if basic information were already covered, then thorough and meaningful discussions could take place at the event, providing more opportunity for learning. Third, students should follow-up with their feedback and outcomes after the program. Similar to this aspect being attributed to the career service center, it is likely that the alumni mock interviewers wanted to continue their learning after the program ended through additional reflections on their contributions and the graduated student experience.

**Themselves.** The alumni mock interviewers themselves were a source of knowledge that spanned aspects of three major study findings: providing direct learning, inhibiting learning, and also fostering additional learning through the alumni mock interviewers' recommendations. Overall, the alumni mock interviewers appeared to create additional learning for themselves.

The alumni mock interviewers learned from the experience how to become better interviewers themselves. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned more about how to conduct an interview," which had an affirmative result of 70% of the sample and 72% of the subset sample. It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers realized this new knowledge when they subsequently interviewed candidates after

participating in the mock interview program and reflected on their new knowledge. The alumni mock interviewers also learned by recognizing their own assumptions and beliefs about the interview process. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I would enjoy reflecting on my experience," which had an affirmative result of 86% of the sample and 100% of the subset sample. The alumni mock interviewers likely learned from recognizing the differences in their perceptions of professional interviews and the realities they saw in the mock interviews. They appeared to appreciate this learning and desired the opportunity to do more of this type of knowledge acquisition.

The alumni mock interviewers inhibited their own learning through a lack of willingness to learn new content and instead relying on prior experiences. Some of the alumni mock interviewers seemed disinclined to state their learning as mock interviewers, instead demonstrating it through examples only. As all of the alumni mock interviewers were able to describe what they learned, it is likely that these mock interviewers felt that they were supposed to be experts and did not want to be seen as deficient in their current knowledge.

Alumni mock interviewers recommended that further learning could be fostered in two ways. First, by providing their industry and background information in advance of the program to facilitate better student and alumni matches. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I would enjoy being matched with students in my discipline," which had an affirmative result of 79% of the sample and 84% of the subset sample. Similar to this aspect being attributed to the role of current students, alumni mock interviewers likely believe that by having a background match with students, they can gain additional insights through the sharing of their related careers, experiences, and

advice with students.  Second, the alumni mock interviewers recommended having an opportunity for students to hear about their careers, experiences, and advice.  It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers felt that sharing relevant experiences with the students provided additional opportunities for connections and thus increased learning.

**Analytic Category 2**

*Alumni mock interviewers' perceptions of their learning can be understood through the four components found in adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.*

The second analytic category shows the ways alumni appear to learn by engaging in experiences.  This category presents the major study findings mapped to classifications of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks, specifically the research of Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017).  As discussed in Chapter II and presented in the conceptual framework (See Figure 1), the theories are comprised of four components: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.  They provide a powerful lens to view alumni mock interviewer learning, learning practices, and potential learning recommendations for mock interview programs to foster learning.  Table 9 shows the relationship between the major study findings and adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks. Following the table, the aspects from the findings of these categorizations will be detailed.

Table 9. Evidence Table for Adult Learning Theory and Learning from Experience

Frameworks

| | | Major Study Findings | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Description of Learning | Aspects that Contributed to Learning | Aspects that Inhibited Learning | Recommendations to Foster Learning |
| Adult Learning Theory and Learning from Experience Frameworks | Safe Learning Environments | N/A | • Sample Questions<br>• Student Packets<br>• Dinner with Program | • No Industry Knowledge<br>• Late Program | • Background Match<br>• More Time |
| | Facilitator Designed Learning | • Interview Process | • Beginning Presentation | • No Interviewer Goals | • Student Training<br>• Concise, Advance Preparation<br>• Preparation Mediums<br>• Student Outcomes Follow-Up |
| | Reflective Practice | • Program Necessity<br>• Better Interviewer<br>• Interview Assumptions | N/A | • Learning Resistance | N/A |
| | Discussion Based Learning | • Comfortable Environment<br>• Feedback Delivery<br>• Current Students<br>• International Students | • Student Follow-Up<br>• Invested Students<br>• Alumni Networking | • No Alumni Connections<br>• No Experience Feedback<br>• Unprepared Students | • Alumni Advice |

**Safe learning environments.** In adult learning theory and learning from

experience literature, Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), and Brookfield (2005,

2017) speak about the importance of safe learning environments and its direct impact on

learning. The alumni mock interviewers appeared to also value having a safe learning

environment. This was presented through their need to be secure with the physical space, as well as comfortable with the timing of the program and the provided materials.

The importance of the physical space of the program showed in factors that the alumni mock interviewers viewed as contributing to their learning. They articulated that having the mock interview program in the evening with dinner was essential. Knowles's model of assumptions noted that every aspect of program design is important and adult education is essentially an "art form" (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 85; Sork, 2010, p. 164). It is probable that the alumni mock interviewers viewed dinner as a fundamental aspect of the program environment to prepare them to engage in deeper learning. The importance of program timing for the alumni mock interviewers was seen in both the factors that hindered their learning and their recommendations for fostering learning through the program design. They noted that the program ending late in the evening was detrimental to their learning. The alumni mock interviewers also expressed that the length of the mock interviews needed to be expanded to better foster their learning. Brookfield believes that adult education experiences should be constructed through purposeful learning and critical thinking about both physical and psychological spaces (Archer & Garrison, 2010, p. 324). It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers felt that adequate learning, especially critical reflection, could not take place if the environment constrained the timing allotted for this learning to take place.

The other component valued by the alumni mock interviewers as important for a safe learning environment was a degree of comfort with the provided materials. The relevance of the provided materials came up as factors that contributed to their learning, including a list of sample questions to ask students and student packets to review,

comprised of student resumes and targeted job descriptions. This also aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from the materials provided by the career center staff," which had an affirmative result of 56% of the sample and 60% of the subset sample. Knowles believed that special attention should be paid to all details in the design including the color and texture of materials (Sork, 2010, p. 164). Having robust materials likely created an environment of foundational expertise, which allowed the alumni mock interviewers to be prepared to engage in additional learning. Additionally, concerns from the alumni mock interviewers about not feeling adequately prepared in the environment appeared in the factors that hindered their learning and their recommendations for fostering learning through the program design. The alumni mock interviewers felt hindered in their learning by a lack of knowledge in specific fields. The alumni mock interviewers also recommended matching students and alumni based on industry and background to foster their learning. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I would enjoy being matched with students in my discipline," which had an affirmative result of 79% of the sample and 84% of the subset sample. Kegan views the environment not as just one's surroundings, but also as a "holding environment" or "internal psychological" space where increasingly complex development takes place (Kegan, 1982, pp. 115-116, 142). A strong holding environment should exist at every stage to encourage bridging to the next stage of constructing truth (Kegan, 1982, pp. 115-116, 186; Kegan, 1994, p. 43). It seems that the alumni mock interviewers felt most comfortable in a learning holding environment where their industry knowledge was secure. In order to develop additional learning, they appeared to want either pre-program materials on industry information

(similar to sample questions and student packets) or to speak only with students with similar experiences as themselves.

While captured in the findings section, some of the aspects depicted in this analytic category omitted an obvious connection to learning, especially through the chosen language of the alumni mock interviewers. However, as it appears in the safe learning component of the theoretical lenses of the study, the applicability of these potentially tangential references to learning are pertinent and relevant to the alumni mock interviewer learning experience.

**Facilitator designed learning.** In adult learning theory and learning from experience literature, Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) communicate the importance of facilitators and their direct impact on learning. The alumni mock interviewers appeared to value being part of facilitator designed learning. This was presented through their interest in knowledge development in advance of the program, training at the beginning of the program, and informational follow-up after the program.

In advance of the mock interview program, it seemed that the alumni were interested in knowledge development, which was presented in the findings as recommendations to foster additional alumni learning. They wanted to absorb additional information through concise, advance preparation. Kolb (1984) found that an important role of education is to "stimulate inquiry and skill in the process of knowledge getting" (p. 27). It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers wanted information in advance to begin the learning process, however not too much information as they were working professionals with other demands. The alumni mock interviewers also wanted

preparation through a variety of mediums, including written, video, hands-on, and discussion. This further aligned to three questionnaire responses: "I would enjoy reading relevant articles and written materials" (affirmative in 58% of the sample and 68% of the subset sample); "I would enjoy viewing an interview role play/simulation" (affirmative in 60% of both the sample and the subset sample); and "I would enjoy participating in an interview role play/simulation" (affirmative in 63% of the sample and 60% of the subset sample). Kolb (1984) suggests that experiential simulation or role playing can help provide a conceptual bridge to process concepts into practices (Huss et al., 2016, p. 50). The alumni mock interviewers seemed to prefer to read and view additional information in advance of the program to get a sense of the concepts and consider how to use them in practice. It is likely that they expected the hands-on and discussion based learning to take place at the event itself. Additionally, they felt that students should also receive facilitated guidance on interviewing and networking before the program. Knowles believes that each individual adult's purpose in learning should be facilitated (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419). The alumni mock interviewers appeared to feel that their opportunity for learning was most valuable when the student interviewees already understood the basic principles of the interviewing and networking, which they expected the career service center to ensure. It is probable that having prepared students allowed for more stimulating conversations and discussions, which the alumni mock interviewers viewed as important learning mediums.

At the beginning of the program, alumni seemed to value additional training. This was seen in the findings that described learning, as well as both aspects that contributed to and inhibited learning. They felt the beginning presentation with

information for the night contributed to their learning.  This aligned to questionnaire

responses: "I have learned from the training presentation provided by the career center

staff" (affirmative in 56% of the sample and 64% of the subset sample) and "I have

learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions" (affirmative in

40% of the sample and 48% of the subset sample).   It is likely that the beginning

presentation gave them the opportunity to expand upon the written and viewed

preparation materials and engage with the hands-on and discussion based mediums.  Here

they could practice and discuss role-play, rather than view a simulation video.  The

alumni mock interviewers also learned about the interview process, including ideal

questions and answers from the day-of training.  Brookfield believes that education

experiences should be constructed through purposeful learning (Archer & Garrison, 2010,

p. 324).  Schon (1987) suggests the utilization of apprenticeships or a practicum setting;

he also suggests a coaching process (p. 38).  Kegan believes that "sympathetic coaching"

should be empathic and should entail the coach joining the learner, not just in their

development, but also in their made meaning (Kegan, 1982, p. 277; Kegan, 1994, p. 43).

The alumni seemed to learn from the training provided by the career service center staff

where purposeful interviewer techniques were presented and coached.  The alumni mock

interviewers expressed their desire to expand their understanding through facilitated

practices to learning about interviewer expectations, approaches, and goals.  This aligned

to the questionnaire response: "I would enjoy receiving coaching or feedback on my

interview techniques," which had an affirmative result of 88% of the sample and 96% of

the subset sample.  Knowles believes that for adults to engage in learning, the learning

must be related to their developmental tasks in their social role, of a problem solving

nature, relevant to internal learner motivations, and well-defined as to why the understanding is necessary (Merriam et al., 2007, p. 84). The alumni mock interviewers appeared to feel inhibited in their learning without understanding the goals and techniques of their roles. Further clarity on expectations and approaches would have likely fostered better learning opportunities and motivation.

After the program, the alumni mock interviewers seemed to value additional facilitated learning through follow-up information on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes. Brookfield (2017) suggests that facilitators should also model and encourage participation by asking follow-up questions, rephrasing statements, and connecting contributions to one another (p. 10). Alumni mock interviewers likely made this recommendation to further their learning and engagement with the program. Understanding the connections of their contributions seemed to add value to the alumni mock interviewer learning experience.

As noted in Chapter II, all the theories and frameworks examined as the lenses for this study have an assumption of a facilitator. The alumni mock interviewers' probable preference for the facilitator designing learning component is in direct alignment with the foundational qualities of adult learning theory and the learning from experience frameworks.

**Reflective practice.** In learning from experience literature, Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) address the importance of reflective practice in adult learning. The alumni mock interviewers appeared to engage in reflective practice in their descriptions of their learning. Specifically, they mentioned that reflection allowed them to understand the necessity of the program, to become better

interviewers, and to evaluate their own assumptions of the interview process. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I would enjoy reflecting on my experience," which had an affirmative result of 86% of the sample and 100% of the subset sample. However, alumni mock interviewer learning was also inhibited by the resistance to engage in learning through reflection.

The alumni mock interviewers first demonstrated reflective practices through their realization about the necessity of the mock interview program for students' preparation. Schon (1987) felt that reflection-in-action enables learners to devise new methods of reasoning, as well as construct and test "new categories of understanding, strategies of action, and ways of framing problems" (p. 39). Additionally, Brookfield believes critical reflection is not only informed actions, but also actions that promote the ideals of fairness and social justice (Merriam, 2010, p. 407; Merriam et al., 2007, p. 147). Alumni mock interviewers seem to have identified through reflection that the students with whom they met utilized the program to prepare for upcoming interviews or more broadly for entering the world of work. It is likely that seeing multiple students develop essential understanding of the interview process within their sessions helped alumni to reflect on the program's necessity to prepare all students for successful careers.

The alumni mock interviewers then utilized reflective practices to come to the realization that the mock interview program helped them learn how to become better interviewers. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned more about how to conduct an interview," which had an affirmative result of 70% of the sample and 72% of the subset sample. Schon (1987) views the multiple levels and kinds of reflection as having a learning impact on the "acquisition of artistry" or development of in-depth skills

(p. 31). It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers reflected on their newly developed skills as interviewers when serving as interviewers in their professional roles or when returning as interviewers to the mock interview program. It is possible that after their program experience, interviewing became easier or more comfortable than it had been previously.

Reflective practices also provided the opportunity for the alumni mock interviewers to better understand their own assumptions and beliefs about the interview process. Kolb (1984) believes that the reflective observation mode of his Learning Cycle provides the opportunity for one to examine their assumptions, beliefs, and experiences (p. 28). Transformation in the reflective observation mode occurs through intention, which is grasping a figurative representation of experience through internal reflection (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). This transformation of experience is the process through which Kolb believes that knowledge is created (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers reflected on their reactions to the students' interviews to realize their own assumptions about the interview process. It is possible that the feedback portion of the interview required the alumni mock interviewers to articulate their opinions and critiques in new ways, which required in-depth consideration of their underlying beliefs.

However, some alumni mock interviewers were unwilling to openly reflect on their experiences to determine new learning; instead they only exhibited this learning through their descriptions of their experiences. Boud and Walker (1993) believe that for reflection to be effective it must be introduced to the process from the beginning and included during and after (p. 76). It is possible that while reflective practices were being

used by these alumni mock interviewers, they did not identify reflecting explicitly or expect a mock interview program to be an environment for personal learning.

The mock interview program may need to provide a space for alumni mock interviewers to engage in overt reflection. It is likely that reflection would be a welcome practice for the alumni mock interviewers as 86% of the sample and 100% of the subset sample said they would enjoy reflection. Additionally, the qualitative interviews of this study functioned in this capacity and all of the alumni mock interviewers in the subset sample enthusiastically participated in the facilitated reflective process of data collection.

**Discussion based learning.** In adult learning theory and learning from experience literature, Knowles (1980, 1984), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) assert the importance of discussion based learning. The alumni mock interviewers appeared to appreciate discussion based learning. They identified discussion based learning taking place in the mock interview program, as well as additional discussion based opportunities for learning with various program constituents: students, alumni, and the career service center staff.

The alumni mock interviewers identified learning from discussions with students in four aspects: (1) the importance of creating a comfortable environment in an interview and (2) delivering feedback to the learning process, as well as (3) the experiences of current students and (4) the experiences international students. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from conversations I have had with student interviewees," which had an affirmative result of 88% of the sample and 92% of the subset sample. Brookfield and Preskill (2005) view discussion as necessary to reveal diversity of opinions, explore unsettled questions, and develop an appreciation of the

human experience (p. 3). It is likely that the discussion based aspects of the mock interviews allowed the alumni to better appreciate the students' perspectives and thus strive to create an environment where students would feel comfortable and receptive to feedback. By humanizing the experience through their conversations, the alumni mock interviewers appeared to better empathize with students' growth through the mock interview program. To Brookfield and Preskill (2005), discussion is part of the democratic process since it promotes human growth and fosters mutual understanding (pp. 3-4). Brookfield believes that discussion also exposes new points of view, which can renew one's motivation to continue learning (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 4). The alumni mock interviewers seemed to appreciate discussing current students' and international students' experiences, to not only better understand present day academic culture, but also to reinvigorate their own interest in acquiring knowledge.

Furthermore, the alumni mock interviewers found that having conversations with students both contributed to and inhibited their learning and they additionally provided recommendations on how discussion based learning could be used to foster additional alumni mock interviewer learning. The opportunities to speak with students that were invested or prepared for the mock interviews and to stay in touch with students after the program contributed to alumni mock interviewer learning through discussions. It is probable that the alumni mock interviewers had more in-depth discussions with students that were invested in the program. Discussion at this higher level likely led to a better learning experience and a desire to continue the learning from the conversations after the evening was over. Similarly, students that were unappreciative or unprepared inhibited alumni mock interviewer learning from discussions. It is probable that the alumni mock

interviewers had more rudimentary discussions with unprepared students and were thus less likely to learn through these discussions. The alumni mock interviewers also recommended that providing an opportunity for students have conversations about alumni careers, experiences, and advice would foster additional alumni mock interviewer learning. Knowles (1980, 1984) finds that learning from experience is best utilized through the sharing of experience. Knowles believes that discussion encourages sharing of experiences, thus validating learners' previous knowledge while simultaneously encouraging them to consider the knowledge of the others (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419; Merriam et al., 2007, p. 144). It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers were interested in engaging in discussion to validate their previous learning, while also seeking the opportunity to share and connect with students interested in similar career trajectories. It is probable that such discussions would result in the alumni mock interviewers learning how to articulate the value of their previous experience through insightful advice.

The alumni mock interviewers identified learning from networking discussions with fellow alumni (at the beginning of the evening) as contributing to their learning. This aligned to the questionnaire response: "I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers," which had an affirmative result of 39% of the sample and 48% of the subset sample. The alumni mock interviewers likely enjoyed sharing experiences and knowledge with their peers through discussion and networking opportunities. These discussions could increase their understanding of each other, careers, and the interview process. The alumni mock interviewers also identified two aspects where their learning was inhibited by the lack of discussion based opportunities with fellow alumni. First, some alumni mock interviewers cited a lack of opportunity to

meet and connect with fellow alumni. Second, the alumni mock interviewers mentioned

having little or no opportunity to discuss their experience with fellow alumni. Both of

these inhibiting aspects to discussion based learning aligned to the questionnaire

response: "I would enjoy a discussion with my alumni peers," which had an affirmative

result of 76% of the sample and 80% of the subset sample. Boud and Walker's Model for

Promoting Learning from Experience (1993) also promotes the benefits of discussion

based learning. The model promotes examining independent assumptions and learning in

a collective way to critically reflect at a community level (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 76).

The alumni mock interviewers appeared to value the opportunity to connect and discuss

their experiences in order to learn from their peers. It is likely that these community level

discussions would allow the alumni to better understand the collective experience that

fellow alumni both brought to the program and experienced within the program.

The alumni mock interviewers also mentioned that having little opportunity to

discuss their experiences and give feedback to the career service center staff inhibited

their learning. Their preference for this learning aligned to the questionnaire response: "I

have learned from informal conversations I have had with the career center staff," which

had an affirmative result of 54% of the sample and 64% of the subset sample. Brookfield

found that group discussions aim to uncover themes, solve problems, and make

connections amongst the group's individual experiences (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, pp.

33-35). It is likely that the alumni mock interviewers wanted to discuss their experiences

with the career service center staff to gain additional insights into trends and challenges

observed in the mock interview program over time. This discussion would further

provide the opportunity to make connections amongst the individual observations of the

mock interviewers, which would have the potential to solve program design challenges and identify new student hiring developments.

**Summary of Analysis**

The process of analysis was completed to find deeper meaning in the findings and reveal underlying trends. Two analytic categories emerged that explained the alumni mock interviewers learning through sources of knowledge and in relation to components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks. The first analytic category showed that the alumni mock interviewers learned from four sources of knowledge: the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves. The second analytic category showed that alumni mock interviewers learned through the four components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning. The analytic categories provide insights that have practical implications and inform theoretical models. Additionally, the findings viewed through the analytic categories demonstrates the value of qualitative research to uncover new insights in the field. The analytic categories will next be interpreted to allow for additional understanding and meaning derived from the perspectives of the alumni mock interviewers.

**Interpretation**

The interpretation provides an opportunity to describe plausible explanations revealed from the analysis of the study findings (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 133). It

captures the overall meaning and shows how the evidence adds to the larger picture (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 285). Additionally, this process allows for the researcher's assumptions to be compared with the emerged trends and themes (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 132). Interpretation will occur through revisiting each analytical category to add a new dimension of understanding by attaching significance to what was discovered (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 284).

**Analytic Category 1**

*Alumni mock interviewers perceive their learning to come from interactions with four sources of knowledge: the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves.*

Alumni mock interviewers developed crucial learning from all four sources of knowledge within the mock interview program. They benefited from the four sources of knowledge through materials, trainings, conversations, questions, and revisiting their previous understandings. Each source of knowledge provided unique learning opportunities that could not be replicated by the other sources. Therefore, attention must be given to ensuring that the mock interview program design provides alumni mock interviewers ample access and time to learn from the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves.

The career service center supplied the alumni mock interviewers with foundational conditions and basic information. The alumni mock interviewers enjoyed learning about the interview process from the career service center through trainings, materials, and conversations. This learning was so impactful that the alumni mock interviewers wanted to learn more from the career service center about industries,

expectations, approaches, goals, and student outcomes. Additionally, they were open to learning through a variety of mediums, even in advance of the program. In order to create the opportunity for more learning from the career service center, the alumni mock interviewers recommended allotting more time for the interviews, starting at an earlier time of day, and providing training for the students in advance. The alumni mock interviewers viewed the career service center as the source of preparation knowledge for the program. They would value and learn from increased guidance in foundational mock interview concepts.

Fellow alumni mock interviewers provided expertise and additional understanding. The alumni mock interviewers valued their time learning and networking with their alumni peers. They desired more opportunities to learn from their peers through allocating more time to connect, discussing their experiences, sharing their feedback, and creating a sense of community. The alumni mock interviewers perceived their fellow alumni as the source of professional guidance and interviewer knowledge in their industries. They would support and learn from increased opportunity to formally engage with their peers.

Current students offered the alumni mock interviewers new insights and perspectives. First, the current students gave the alumni mock interviewers insights into the program itself, including its necessity in their preparation, as well as the importance of creating a comfortable environment (to ensure students were able to make the most of the experience and the feedback). These insights were gained through dialogue and conversations with the students. Second, the current students provided the alumni mock interviewers with new perspectives about themselves and the experience of international

students.  These perspectives were communicated through discussions, materials, and follow-up conversations with the current students.  The alumni mock interviewers wanted to learn more from the students and felt that background matching, additional student preparation, and information on student outcomes would help enable this.  The alumni mock interviewers regarded current students as the source of the present-day student experience.  They would encourage and learn from increased opportunity to speak with students about their contemplations on careers.

Alumni mock interviewers also learned from themselves by increasing their overall understanding through application of their learning.  They learned to better understand their assumptions and develop their interviewer skills.  While not all alumni explicitly used the term "learning," they felt that having similar backgrounds to the students and the opportunity to share more about their careers would increase their self-learning.  The alumni mock interviewers viewed themselves as having an important role in their learning process.  They would appreciate and learn from additional structured opportunities to consider, develop, and refine their own skills and beliefs.

**Analytic Category 2**

*Alumni mock interviewers' perceptions of their learning can be understood through the four components found in adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.*

Learning through all four components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks is essential to the learning experience of alumni mock interviewers.  The research of Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984),

Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017) aligns with the findings of the study on the importance of the four components to adult learning. Each component of learning from the theoretical frameworks provided a specialized learning context that could not be created from other components. Therefore, attention must be given to ensuring that alumni mock interviewers have ample opportunity within the mock interview program design to learn from safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.

The safe learning environments component was described through the theoretical frameworks of Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), and Brookfield (2005, 2017). The alumni mock interviewers desired safe learning environments with respect to the physical space, timing of the program, and provided materials. Additionally, it was determined that the alumni mock interviewers were often dependent on an underlying connection with their student interviewees (either through background or industry) in order to learn within a safe environment. The alumni mock interviewers explicitly learned through adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks, which require a safe learning environment. Therefore, it is crucial that the learning environment is thoughtfully considered in mock interview program design.

The facilitator designed learning component was described through the theoretical frameworks of Knowles (1980, 1984), Kegan (1982, 1994), Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), and Brookfield (2005, 2017). The alumni mock interviewers relied on facilitator designed learning in all phases of the program: advance, day-of, and after. In advance of the program, they wanted concise preparation in a variety of mediums including written and video. At the beginning of the program (on the day-of), they utilized hands-on

training and coaching in the mock interview process and expressed interest in learning more about the expectations, approaches, and goals of the mock interview program. After the program, they were interested in information on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes. The alumni mock interviewers explicitly learned through adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks, which included their preference for facilitator designed learning. Therefore, facilitator designed learning should be incorporated in all aspects of the mock interview program design.

The reflective practices component was described through the theoretical frameworks of Kolb (1984), Schon (1987), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017). Reflective practices were indispensable to the alumni mock interviewers to better understand the student experience, their own interviewer experience, and their underlying assumptions and beliefs. Additionally, it was exposed that reflection as a tool for learning may not be well understood by the alumni mock interviewers. The alumni mock interviewers explicitly learned through adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks, which included their necessity for reflective practices. Therefore, opportunities for learning from reflective practices should be included in the mock interview program design.

The discussion based learning component was described through the theoretical frameworks of Knowles (1980, 1984), Boud and Walker (1993), and Brookfield (2005, 2017). Discussion based learning was necessary for the alumni mock interviewers to learn from the program constituents: the career service center staff, alumni, and students. Additionally, it was discovered that more opportunities for discussion at the program with their fellow alumni and career service center staff were desired by the alumni mock

interviewers. And more opportunities for discussion after the program with current students were desired by the alumni mock interviewers. The alumni mock interviewers explicitly learned through adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks, which included their desire for discussion based learning. Therefore, discussion based learning between the career service center staff, alumni, and students should be included within the mock interview program design.

**Summary of Interpretation**

In the first part of the interpretation the researcher sought to provide details on the relevance and implications of the four sources of knowledge: the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves. The alumni mock interviewers viewed the career service center as the source of preparation knowledge and would learn from increased guidance in foundational mock interview concepts. They perceived their fellow alumni as the source of professional expert guidance and would learn from increased opportunity to formally engage with their peers. They regarded current students as the source of the present-day student experience and would learn from increased opportunity to speak with students about their contemplations on careers. Finally, the alumni mock interviewers viewed themselves as having an important role in their learning process and would learn from additional opportunities to consider, develop, and refine their own skills and beliefs.

In the second part of the interpretation the researcher sought to apply meaning and extrapolate the needs of the alumni mock interviewers from the four components of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning. The

alumni mock interviewers require a safe learning environment, which needs to be thoughtfully considered in mock interview program design. They have a preference for facilitator designed learning, which should be incorporated in all aspects of the mock interview program design. They have a necessity for reflective practices, which should be included throughout the mock interview program. Finally, the alumni mock interviewers have a desire for discussion based learning with the career service center staff, alumni, and students, which should therefore be part of the mock interview program design.

## Summary of Analysis, Interpretation, and Synthesis

The researcher has sought to explain alumni volunteers' perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program. The intent of such an analysis is to help higher education career service professionals understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning. Two analytic categories emerged from this analysis: (1) Alumni mock interviewers perceive their learning to come from interactions with four sources of knowledge: the career service center, fellow alumni, current students, and themselves, and (2) Alumni mock interviewers' perceptions of their learning can be understood through the four components found in adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning. Interpretation of these analytic categories demonstrated the importance of considering all sources of knowledge and each component of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks when designing mock

interview programs to foster alumni learning. The researcher will next revisit her assumptions, now that a determination has been established from the synthesis of alumni mock interviewer learning, practices that contribute to and/or inhibit learning, as well as recommendations for program design to foster additional learning.

## Assumptions Revisited

As detailed in Chapter I, the researcher held three assumptions relevant to the scope of study: (1) alumni mock interviewers are learning, (2) alumni mock interviewers remember and can account for such learning, and (3) career services centers care about this learning and would factor it into program design if known. Below, each assumption will be revisited in consideration of the findings presented in Chapter IV and the analysis, interpretation, and synthesis offered in this chapter.

The first assumption of the study was that the alumni mock interviewers are indeed learning. The researcher did preliminary corroboration of this assumption through her pilot study conducted in Spring 2019. The findings of this study further corroborate this assumption, as it was discovered that the alumni mock interviewers articulated 12 unique learning categories, eight of which were represented in over 50% of the subset sample participants' critical incident written responses and in-depth interviews. Additionally, in the questionnaire ratings, 11 of the 12 learning based statements were answered affirmatively by the alumni mock interviewers.

The second assumption of the study was that alumni remember their learning and can identify, write, and vocalize their account of such learning. The researcher also did preliminary corroboration of this assumption through her pilot study and found that the

parent mock interviewer was able to verbally account for his learning through an interview. The findings of this study further corroborate this assumption, as the alumni mock interviewers were able to account for 12 learning categories (eight represented in over 50% of the subset sample), 10 factors that contributed to their learning (seven represented in over 50% of the subset sample), 10 factors that inhibited their learning (seven represented in over 50% of the subset sample), and 12 recommendations to foster additional alumni learning (seven represented in over 50% of the subset sample). Additionally, the alumni mock interviewers were able to complete the questionnaire, made up of 20 rating questions about their previous learning and recommendations for future learning.

The third assumption is that career service centers care about alumni learning and would factor this knowledge into program design if it were known. The researcher remains certain that career service centers do indeed care about alumni learning based on career service center professional guidelines (NACE, 2016, p. 23; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 115). Additionally, the researcher's own experience working in career service centers for over a decade corroborates the professional guidelines. Furthermore, the realizations from the findings and analysis of this study enable career service professionals to understand how to design programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning, thus this knowledge can now be actualized.

## Contributions to Literature

The researcher has identified three contributions to the literature derived from the study data, findings, and analysis. The first contribution to the literature is that the

undocumented learning of alumni mock interviewers is now known information.  Prior to the study, research was only able to suggest that mock interviewers may be learning through mutually beneficial programs, program evaluations of interviewer performance, or interviewers' evaluations of the event.  This study employed three data collection methods to illuminate four major study findings and two analytic categories that provided an understanding of the alumni mock interviewer learning experience.  Not only was learning established, but also trends and themes emerged from what was learned, from whom it was learned, and from how it was learned.

The second contribution to the literature is that the application of adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks has been expanded into higher education career service center contexts, specifically with regard to alumni volunteers.  Experiential learning theory has been widely used in program development and implementation in many educational settings (Kolb et al., 2014, p. 205).  This study has expanded this understanding to show a definitive connection between alumni mock interviewer learning and the four components found in the theoretical frameworks: safe learning environments, facilitator designed learning, reflective practice, and discussion based learning.

The third contribution to the literature is the practical mock interview program design implications to foster learning for designated clients, alumni volunteers.  This study was able to provide four major findings and two analytic categories to aid in program development or transformation.  Alumni learning has the potential to enhance the knowledge of both the alumni and the students receiving their guidance (NACE, 2016, p. 5; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 117).  Therefore, the new understanding of

the alumni mock interviewers' learning experiences and recommendations to foster

additional learning promotes effective changes in mock interview program design to

enhance multiple facets of learning within the program.

Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction and Overview**

The purpose of this case study was to explore with a group of alumni volunteers their perceptions of their learning experience as interviewers within a mock interview program.  To accomplish this purpose three research questions were addressed: (1) How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? (2) What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? (3) What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?  From the descriptions of the alumni mock interviewers' learning experiences, and the subsequent analysis and interpretations, the researcher was able to gain insights and uncover themes into alumni volunteer learning.  Further exploration of these understandings led to the determination of conclusions and recommendations that will help higher education career service professionals understand how to design mock interview programs in ways that engage alumni in lifelong learning.

**Conclusions**

By exploring the findings of this qualitative case study, the researcher has drawn four conclusions aligned to the study research questions.  The first conclusion relates to

research question 1 and establishes that learning is achievable for all alumni volunteers through the mock interview program. The second conclusion relates to the contributing practices and approaches of research question 2 and provides insight that learning is obtainable through intentional preparation and partnerships. The third conclusion relates to the inhibiting practices and approaches of research question 2 and identifies that learning is impeded through an absence of connections and direction. The fourth conclusion relates to research question 3 and determines that fostering alumni volunteer learning through program design is possible through consideration of all occasions and contributors. The conclusions are next discussed in greater detail.

**Conclusion 1**

*Learning through the mock interview program is achievable for all alumni volunteers, specifically with regard to interview practices, program purposes, and current student experiences.*

This conclusion is attributed to Finding 1: All subset sample participants described what they learned through participating in the mock interview program (100%), with an overwhelming majority learning the importance of creating a comfortable environment (96%), delivering feedback (92%), offering the program for students' preparation (88%), and understanding current students' experiences (84%). Some mock interview programs examined in the Chapter II literature review did consider the learning opportunity for the interviewers, making sure to provide "parallel purposes" that were "mutually beneficial" (Huss et al., 2016, p. 53; Liu et al., 2015, p. 20). However, it is now apparent that alumni mock interview programs are a place for dual learning for students and alumni volunteers. The alumni mock interviewers learned about interview

best practices (with regard to the environment, feedback, processes, and interviewer role), program purposes (with regard to the necessity and their personal assumptions), and current student experiences (with regard to challenges, skills, and backgrounds). It is evident from the study that alumni learning is an integral part of the alumni experience within mock interview programs and presents a unique opportunity for simultaneously serving the career needs of both students and alumni.

**Conclusion 2**

*Learning through the mock interview program is obtainable for alumni volunteers through intentional preparation and partnerships.*

This conclusion is attributed to Finding 2: All subset sample participants found aspects of the mock interview program to contribute to their learning (100%), with a strong majority describing having sample interview questions (84%) and an opportunity to stay in touch with students (76%) as helpful. Some adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks examined in the Chapter II literature review emphasized the direct impact on learning of the environment and facilitation (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419; Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 10; Kegan, 1982, p. 115, 142; Kolb, 1984, pp. 27-28; Sork, 2010, p. 164). However, it is now apparent that the utilization of these components are pivotal contributions to alumni learning. Alumni mock interviewer learning was obtained through intentional preparation (with regard to the sample questions, student packets, a training presentation, and invested students) and partnerships (with regard to connections with students, over dinner discussions, and networking with fellow alumni). It is explicit from the study that alumni learning can be enhanced by career service center professionals through a planned curriculum and purposeful facilitation.

**Conclusion 3**

*Learning through the mock interview program is impeded for alumni volunteers*

*through absence of connections and direction.*

This conclusion is attributed to Finding 3: All subset sample participants found

aspects of the mock interview program to inhibit their learning (100%), with a strong

majority describing the lack of opportunity to connect with fellow alumni mock

interviewers (84%) and lack of industry knowledge of specific fields (72%) as hindering.

Some adult learning theory and learning from experience frameworks examined in the

Chapter II literature review emphasized the direct impact on learning of discussion and

facilitation (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419; Boud & Walker, 1993, pp. 78-79; Brookfield

& Preskill, 2005, pp. 3-4, 10; Kolb, 1984, pp. 27-28).  However, it is now apparent that

without the application of these components alumni learning is severely inhibited.

Alumni mock interviewer learning was impeded through absence of connections (with

regard to the lack of opportunity to meet alumni, discuss experiences with alumni and

career service center staff, and find time to connect with alumni and students) and

direction (with regard to lack of industry knowledge, interviewer expectations, student

preparation, and understanding of how to create new knowledge).  It is clear from this

study that alumni learning can be improved by career service professionals through

guided discussions and facilitated knowledge development.

**Conclusion 4**

*Fostering alumni volunteer learning through the mock interview program design*

*is possible through consideration of all occasions and contributors.*

This conclusion is attributed to Finding 4: All subset sample participants described recommendations for the mock interview program design to foster alumni learning (100%), with a large majority recommending matching students with alumni based on industry and background (76%), providing an opportunity to hear about alumni experiences (76%), and offering training to students before participating in the mock interview program (72%). Some mock interview programs examined in the Chapter II literature review also found alignment between interviewer and interviewee industries and background to provide for a better learning environment, as interviewers could more readily share experiences and interviewees were incentivized to better prepare (Kilpatrick & Wilburn, 2010, p. 78; Lowes et al., 2016, p. 4; Powell et al., 2015, p. 686; Valentino & Freeman, 2010, p. 32). However, it is now apparent that holistic consideration of the experience surrounding the program for all members can foster additional learning opportunities. Fostering alumni mock interviewer learning through program design is possible through considerations of all occasions for learning (with regard to student training, advanced alumni preparation, variety in preparation mediums, and outcomes follow-up) and contributors to learning (with regard to student and alumni alignment, alumni advice giving, and more time with students). It is evident from this study that alumni learning can be fostered by career service professionals through program design by creating purposeful learning opportunities in all phases and for all clients.

## Recommendations

Yin (2009) found that "the description and analysis of a single case often suggests implications about a more general phenomenon" (p. 168). Additionally, Creswell (2013)

supports the creation of "naturalistic generalizations," which can be learned from the case "to apply to a population of cases" (p. 200). It is possible that the findings regarding the phenomenon of the study are not only supported by the data of this particular case, but also generalizable beyond the case studied to "the larger population, a portion of it, or beyond it" (Neumann & Pallas, 2015, p. 168). Additionally, "the findings of any one study serve as a stepping-off point for where, substantively and conceptually, a new study in another site can begin" (Neumann & Pallas, 2015, p. 168). It is important to not only report what is learned, but also "how that bears on a community's collective understandings of the phenomenon under study" (Neumann & Pallas, 2015, p. 156). While drawn from the study findings, the recommendations section will therefore suggest broader applications of the study conclusions. The specific recommendations are next discussed in greater detail.

**Recommendations for Mock Interview Program Design**

The researcher is hopeful that conclusions from this study are "instrumentally useful in decision making and program redesign" (Rossman & Rallis, 2012, p. 340). Mock interview programs are not simply a transmission of knowledge from experts to learners, but a dual learning environment. The following recommendations serve to empower and inspire career service center professionals to design holistic mock interview programs that engage both alumni volunteers and students in lifelong learning.

Career service centers can take actionable steps to design mock interview programs to provide alumni learning opportunities. In advance of the program, staff should prepare resources and materials in a variety of mediums. The resources should include: sample interview questions, industry specific information, insights into the

interview process, and details on the students with whom the alumni will meet. The staff should also communicate important information about the program itself: why is it necessary for students? what are the expectations, approaches, and goals alumni should strive to meet? And what does the career service center hope the alumni volunteers will learn from the program? Additionally, the career service center should make sure the students participating in the mock interview program are equally prepared with basic interview knowledge and networking understanding, so that the learning experience is maximized for all members.

The program itself should be timed and structured to further foster alumni learning. There should be a pre-session for the alumni volunteers comprised of two parts. The first part of the pre-session would be a formal training that provides the alumni with the opportunity to expand upon the information shared in advance and to explore their personal assumptions about the interview process. The second part of the pre-session would be a casual networking opportunity, ideally with food, where alumni should be encouraged to meet and connect with their peers and the career service center staff. During the mock interviews, alumni should be matched with students who share similar backgrounds and provided with ample time for interviewing, delivering feedback, and sharing additional career insights. At the end of the program alumni should be encouraged to come back together to discuss their experiences with fellow alumni and to give program feedback to the career service center staff.

After the program, the opportunity for additional learning should continue. The career service center staff should facilitate connections with student and alumni. They should also follow-up with the alumni on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes. By

following these design recommendations for career service center professionals,

additional opportunities for alumni volunteer learning will arise and more insights into

interview practices, current students, and personal performance will become apparent.

**Recommendations for Theoretical Framework Learning**

The researcher is hopeful that the conclusions from this study also serve to

legitimize the application of adult learning theory and the learning from experience

frameworks as guiding tools within the context of career service center programming.

Alumni mock interviewers don't necessarily identify learning explicitly or expect a mock

interview program to be an environment for personal learning, so application of the

theoretical frameworks needs to be intentionally constructed and purposefully delivered.

The following recommendations serve to enable career service center professionals to

design mock interview programs that utilize the components of adult learning theory and

learning from experience frameworks.

In order to provide alumni mock interviewers with a safe learning environment,

attention should be paid to the preparation materials (detailed sample questions, student

information, and industry information), the timing and atmosphere of the program (in

consideration of work and eating schedules), and the interview climate (intentional

matching with student backgrounds and extended duration to form connections).  These

actions will provide a holding environment where learning and development can be

fostered through a stable psychological and physical space (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005,

pp. 9, 52-59; Kegan, 1982, pp. 115-116; Sork, 2010, p. 164).

In order to provide alumni mock interviewers with facilitator designed learning,

planned opportunities for knowledge gathering should be created through preparation

materials (available in advance and through a variety of mediums), trainings (for both students and alumni to understand basic interview information and the program expectations, approaches, and goals), and descriptive follow-up (including student utilization, feedback, and outcomes). These coaching actions will communicate why learning is relevant, what supports are in place, and how to bring concepts into practice (Huss et al., 2016, p. 50; Kegan, 1982, p. 277; Merriam et al., 2007, p. 84; Schon, 1987, p. 38).

In order to provide alumni mock interviewers with reflective practice, the career service center staff need to create opportunities for the alumni to reflect on the program necessity, the skills they may need to develop as interviewers, the assumptions they hold about the interview process, and the additional learning they hope to gain from the program. Creating space for reflection throughout the program is crucial as it encourages the alumni mock interviewers to cultivate understanding, create knowledge, develop skills, and take informed actions (Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 82; Kolb, 1984, p. 41; Merriam, 2010, p. 407; Schon, 1987, p. 31).

In order to provide alumni mock interviewers with discussion based learning, the career service center staff need to deliberately allocate time for discourse in five instances: (1) for student preparation (so alumni can connect with students that are invested and prepared for dialogue); (2) for pre-event networking (so alumni can interact and learn from their peers); (3) for the interviews (where alumni can connect with students to understand their experiences, deliver feedback, and share advice), (4) for a post-event debrief (so alumni can discuss their experience with their alumni peers and provide feedback to the career service center staff); and (5) for connecting with students

after the program (so alumni can continue to learn from the student interactions). These discussion opportunities are essential as they embolden the alumni mock interviewers to renew their motivation to learn, consider the knowledge of others, critically reflect at a community level, and uncover new themes and solutions (Bennett & Bell, 2010, p. 419; Boud & Walker, 1993, p. 76; Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, pp. 4, 33-35).

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This case study examines alumni volunteer learning by providing an in-depth understanding of a single-case mock interview program, however it is likely that the findings, conclusions, and recommendations are applicable to alumni learning across mock interview programs and potentially other programs where alumni volunteers are utilized in community based career development. Additional insights could be achieved by expanding the study into a multi-case study with either additional mock interview program settings or other alumni volunteer based programs at career service centers. As expectations increase for career service centers to meet the lifetime professional needs of their students and alumni through convening stakeholders, these broader understandings could prove invaluable (NACE, 2016, p. 23; Vinson et al., 2014, p. 203; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 115).

Additionally, future research into the alumni learning experience in programs with specific interviewee components could provide more nuanced information to inform program design. For example, it would be beneficial to understand how the alumni mock interviewer learning experience changed based on the student interviewees' degree level (undergraduate or graduate) or their professional interests (industry aligned or non-industry aligned with the interviewers). While this information was not easily recalled by

the alumni participants in this case study, it could be possible to determine in a new setting with narrowed interviewee components. Alternatively, if these interviewee components were recorded by the career service center staff at the existing program setting, it would also provide additional data. This data would enable the generation of important insights on learning for alumni mock interview program designers whose programs utilize a specific student degree level or professional industry.

Another area for further exploration would be comparing the population demographics with alumni volunteers' perceptions of their learning experiences. Although no clear themes were evident from the 25 subset sample participants in this study, it is highly possible that with increased participants, trends based on the professional and volunteer tenure of the alumni mock interviewers contributed to their views on program learning. Recent alumni appeared to eagerly seek out career advancement skills, whereas experienced alumni seemed to develop deeper understandings, which they brought back to their professional roles. Greater insights into the learning motivations of alumni volunteers may show distinct learning categories and provide more tailored recommendations for programs designed to foster leaning. These distinctions could be instrumental for career service centers in creating effective programs intended to invoke alumni learning.

Exploration into the incidental learning experience of alumni mock interviewers could also provide value to program designers considering both the formal and informal learning of their alumni (Marsick & Watkins, 2018, p. 10). Incidental learning is always taking place and is the byproduct of an activity, even if the learner is not conscious of its acquisition (Marsick & Watkins, 1990, p. 12). This learning is often triggered by a need,

gap, challenge, or opportunity and is realized through interaction with others and facilitated reflection (Watkins, Marsick, Wofford, & Ellinger, 2018, p. 32). While incidental learning is traditionally oriented towards workplace and professional contexts, it has been applied to volunteer learning in museum environments (Grenier, 2009, p. 149; Marsick & Watkins, 2018, p. 9). Thus, it could certainly have applications in alumni volunteer learning in higher education settings. Understanding the differentiation in the alumni mock interviewer experience between formal learning and incidental learning could provide key insights into future program design to best facilitate lifelong learning.

Further examination of the alumni mock interviewers' experiences through the lens of volunteers (rather than the lens of learners), could contribute to the field through cultivating richer and more satisfying experiences for the alumni volunteers. Within this study, alumni volunteered for the program for a variety of reasons, which they chose to share unprompted. The range of reasons included the desire to give back, learn interview skills, meet current students, connect with the campus community, return help they received as students, and ensure student career success. Having fulfilled alumni volunteers is essential to career service centers, as it fosters alumni engagement and alumni play a critical role in enhancing career development of students and fellow alumni (Ashline, 2007, p. 600; Wells & Henry-Darwish, 2019, p. 116). Additionally, as career service centers continue to evolve from placement offices to education and development centers their reliance on alumni volunteers will continue to increase, thus insights into alumni volunteer engagement are vital (Dey & Cruzvergara, 2014, p. 12).

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Appendix A

Matrix of Mock Interview Program Studies

Table 10. Matrix of Mock Interview Program Studies

| Authors | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Secondary Findings | Implications for Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Barrick et al. (2012) | Students participated in a 30-45 minute interview | 135 undergraduate students in an elective class on career placement skills (mean age of 20.8 years) | Interviewers completed five Likert scale questions through an applicant suitability measure after building rapport, but before conducting the interview; they then rated nine job-related interview answers on a four-point scale | Mock interview experience creates interviewees who are more effective at interviewing | Self-presentation in the rapport stage of a mock interview influences the perception of the mock interviewer | Interviewers were business professionals that provided student evaluations, however the interviewer experience was not examined in this study |
| Huss, Johnson, & Butler (2016) | Students participated in three, one-hour mock interview sessions where they served as the interviewee and then twice as observation recorders who provided written feedback to the interviewees | 142 degree-seeking preservice teachers and administrators working towards professional certification by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (between 2013 and 2015) | Paper surveys were completed after the hiring simulation, made up of Likert scale questions and open responses; data was then aggregated and analyzed | Mock interviews improved interviewee and interviewer skills in students | Mock interviews helped to diffuse fears and build confidence amongst the students | Students served as interviewees and observation recorders; they found that participating overall helped them gain skills, but roles were not assessed separately; study also found that a feedback mechanism should be in place to allow interviewees to provide evaluations for their interviewers |

| Authors | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Secondary Findings | Implications for Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kilpatrick & Wilburn (2010) | Students participated in two, 40-minute mock interview sessions, within each session the student served as the interviewee and then as the interviewer | 149 accounting students (over a four year period) at a major Southwest university, who participated in a department organized career day in partnership with the Accounting Advisory Council (AAC) | A survey (made up of three Likert scale questions and space for comments) was distributed to all students that participated in career day | Mock interviews were a valued and informative activity that enhanced interview skills | Mock interviews also increased comfort with the interview process for students | Students served in the role of interviewers, as well as interviewees; they assessed the event overall and did not individually assess learning from the interviewer role |
| Liu, McNeice-Stallard, & Stallard (2015) | Mentees and mentors were assigned employment preparation tasks including reviewing curriculum vitae and conducting mock interviews | Seven mentees and six mentors in the Cross-College Mentoring Program, among six community colleges in California | Qualitative case study made up of 90-minute telephone interviews with all participants | Mock interviews were valued as a form of career development by mentees | Mock interviews would be more valuable if followed by a group debriefing session | The interviewers were senior managers in community colleges holding the roles of president, vice president, or dean; of the six participants, all were asked about their individual experiences and expressed a desire for more structure and guidance by coordinators |

| Authors | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Secondary Findings | Implications for Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lowes et al. (2016) | Students participated in two individual simulation interviews, held two weeks apart | 10 second-year Master of Social Work graduate students, completing their final practicum at a large teaching hospital in Toronto, Ontario, Canada | Students were asked to reflect on their experiences through an action research model applied to the debrief sessions that took place after the final interview; additionally, students were asked for their satisfaction through verbal feedback | Mock interviews are an effective tool in preparing for *real life* interviews | Mock interviews build interviewee confidence by gaining insight into the interview process, perspective on their responses and behaviors, and experience in handling challenging situations | The interviewers were made up of social workers and senior level health professionals; they were asked only to evaluate the students and no insights into their experience were collected |
| McDow & Zabrucky (2015) | Students completed mock interviews through a simulated interview software program called Optimal Interview, which they repeated near the end of the course | 40 juniors and 76 senior undergraduate business students in a required career development course at a large Southeastern university | The interviews were coded by two graduate assistants with the first coding 100% and the second coding 20% | Mock interview quality increased between first and second interview | Mock interviews also helped increase confidence in career plans for students | Interviewers were not a part of the program as a recorded software program was used instead, so no additional learning outside of student learning took place |

| Authors | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Secondary Findings | Implications for Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Norman-Burgdolf & Vanderford (2016) | Students complete mock interviews through the career development portion of the course | 35 students including undergraduate, graduate, and postdocs in the Preparing Future Professionals two-credit, elective course at the University of Kentucky | Feedback was given verbally and anecdotally from participants and also through researcher reflections and notes | Mock interviews help to develop the skills required to transition into a career outside of academia | Mock interviews also help students to gain an appreciation of transferable skills from academia to other career paths | The faculty member serving as the course director was the interviewer for all students; the researcher did not collect any data from the course director, so their experience was relatively unknown |
| Perez-Sabater, Montero-Fleta, & Perez-Sabater (2014) | Students participated in an Interview Project made up of preparation, an activity, a mock interview (in both the role of interviewee and interviewer), and a writing assignment | 30 United States university students participating in an English course (average age of 21.6 years old) | The mock interviews were analyzed in class by the researchers, who examined the structure of the interview, the language used, and the incorporation of linguistic markers; they also ran statistics on the linguistic markers | Mock interviews made the students more employable | Mock interviews also increased communication skills and critical language awareness | Students served in the role of interviewers, as well as interviewees; the researchers found that they were not persuasive interviewers; the student overall experience was successful, however the learning from the interviewer role was not assessed separately |

| Authors | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Secondary Findings | Implications for Study |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Powell et al. (2015) | Students participated in three, 25-minute mock interviews and curriculum vitae sessions | 33 student members of the Arizona Pharmacy Association annual convention who voluntarily signed up | 20-question surveys were completed by students before and after mock interviews | Mock interviews showed the importance of preparation for interviews in successful placement | Mock interviews increased confidence in ability to interview for students | 41 pharmacist members of the Arizona Pharmacy Association served as the mock interviewers; no information on their experience was collected |
| Reddan (2008) | Students participated in mock interviews, including constructing interview questions and serving in both the interviewee role and on a panel of student interviewers | 33 third-year university students in an optional career-related course as part of their Bachelor of Exercise Science at Griffith University, Australia | The students were measured using the Measure of Guidance Impact instrument (before and after guidance) and they also completed a questionnaire | Mock interviews were effective in preparing the students for the workforce | Mock interviews also increased confidence and thus interview performance for students | Students served in the role of interviewees, as well as on a panel of interviewers. The experience was only assessed overall and no data on the interviewer learning was collected |

| Authors | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Secondary Findings | Implications for Study |
|---------|--------|--------|---------|--------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Valentino & Freeman (2010) | Mock interview program was a one-night event held by the biology department and the university career center, each student completed one mock interview lasting 30-minutes | 4 years (2005-2009) of undergraduate junior biology students in a required one-credit course at St. John Fischer College; 20-56 students per year | After the event, both students and interviewers completed event evaluations made up of rating questions and a comments section | Mock interview programs: provide a safe learning environment to receive feedback on preparation, have a realistic interview experience, and create an opportunity to meet local professionals | The mock interview program expanded usage of the career center to students within the biology field | Interviewers were biology alumni (5-15 years out of school) from St. John Fisher College and other local biology professionals; interviewers completed an event evaluation regarding program improvements; interviewers reported a *positive learning environment* |

Appendix B

Matrix of Adult Learning Theory/Learning from Experience Literature

Table 11. Matrix of Adult Learning Theory/Learning from Experience Literature

| Literature | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Components of ALT & LFE | Implications for this Topic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Knowles (1980, 1984) | Developed the concept of andragogy under the assumption that self-directed learning is a process not a goal or characteristic | Influenced by theorists Alexander Kapp and Eugene Rosenstock-Hussey | Believed andragogy to be made up of a conceptual framework, which he also referred to as a Model of Assumptions or System of Concepts | Six assumptions make up andragogy, adults: move from dependent to self-directed personalities, accumulate a wealth of experience, have readiness related to their developmental tasks in their social role, change application of learning from future oriented to problem solving, possess internal motivations, and need to understand why learning is necessary | Safe Learning Environments

Facilitator Designed Learning

Discussion Based Learning | Learning is an art form so all details in learning experience are important

Facilitator must promote the purpose in learning in each individual adult

Discussion encourages learning through the sharing of experiences and consideration of the knowledge of others |
| Kegan (1982, 1994) | Followed constructive developmental philosophy | Primarily influenced by Jean Piaget, Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson, and Lawrence Kohlberg | Created Stages of Development, also referred to as Orders of Consciousness, or Forms of Mind Model | Five orders of mind: Impulsive Mind (early childhood), Imperial or Instrumental Mind (adolescence), Socializing Mind (58% of adult population), Self-Authoring Mind (35% of adult population), Self-Transforming Mind (1% of adult population) | Safe Learning Environments

Facilitator Designed Learning | Learning requires a holding environment that confirms and supports

Adults need sympathetic coaching to acknowledge their current stage and bridge building to encourage learning |

| Literature | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Components of ALT & LFE | Implications for this Topic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Kolb (1984) | Followed progressive philosophy in development of Kolb Learning Cycle and Learning Styles Inventory | Influenced by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget | Believed learning created four forms of knowledge: divergent knowledge, assimilative knowledge, convergent knowledge, and accommodative knowledge | Six characteristics of learning from experience, learning is: best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes; a continuous process grounded in experience; a process that requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world; a holistic process of adaptation to the world; transactions between the person and the environment; and a process of creating knowledge | Facilitator Designed Learning<br><br>Reflective Practice | Facilitators bring out and examine the beliefs and theories of their learners and aid in role playing<br><br>Reflective observation is a necessary adaptive learning ability |
| Schon (1987) | Developed the concept that observation and reflection upon our actions could be communicated to others as knowledge | Influenced by John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and David Kolb | Created the concept of reflection-in-action, which is the process of reflection while an action is taking place | Knowing-in-action is where one can skillfully perform without being able to verbalize how it is done; reflection-on-action is thinking back to how our knowledge-in-action contributed to an outcome; reflection-in-action is the process of reflecting during the action, which happens through: the situation of the action, the responses to a surprise, the reflection on the surprise, and the ensuing on-the-spot experiment | Facilitator Designed Learning<br><br>Reflective Practice | Coaching process or utilization of apprenticeships/practicum setting is recommended<br><br>Reflection on the *surprise* in reflection-in-action is a key aspect to learning |

| Literature | Design | Sample | Methods | Key Findings | Components of ALT & LFE | Implications for this Topic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Boud & Walker (1993) | Employed the progressive philosophy to develop the Model for Promoting Learning from Experience | Influenced by John Dewey and David Kolb | Created the model through their own steps of collaboration and explained how their perspective was adopted from their own experiences | The model is made up of seven steps: return to experience, attend to feelings, re-evaluation, association, integration, validation, and appropriation; expanded to include three potential areas where barriers could have an effect: preparation, experience, and reflective practice; as well as four steps to work with potential barriers: acknowledging their existence, naming them, identifying how they operate through their origins, and working with them | Reflective Practice<br><br>Discussion Based Learning | Reflection must be introduced to the learning process from the beginning and included during and after<br><br>Collective discussion provides an opportunity to critically reflect and learn at a community level |
| Brookfield (2005, 2017) | Followed critical theory and believes adult education experiences are made up of integrating reflection and discourse | Influenced by Paulo Freire, Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, Ian Baptise, and Michel Foucault | Found four lenses of critical reflection, which serve to illuminate different parts of teaching or instruction<br><br>Found four purposes of discussion, which broadly serve to uncover themes, solve problems, and make connections amongst individual experiences | Four lenses of critical reflection: students' eyes (the view going on inside the heads of students), colleagues' perceptions (the view from a trusted group of colleagues made up of critical friends), personal experience (the view that accounts for individuals' unique experiences), and theory (the view from educational literature)<br><br>Four purposes of discussion, to: reach critically informed understanding, enhance self-awareness, foster appreciation of diverse viewpoints, and act as a catalyst of informed action | Safe Learning Environments<br><br>Facilitator Designed Learning<br><br>Reflective Practice<br><br>Discussion Based Learning | Learning environment should be an effective physical and psychological space<br><br>Facilitators should promote learning through critical discussion prompts, suggestions, observations, questions, and advice<br><br>Critical reflection is learning necessary for *the pursuit of pedagogic, political, and emotional clarity*<br><br>Discussion aids learning through exposure to new points of view, promotion of human growth, and fostering of mutual understanding |

Appendix C

Questionnaire Informed Consent

# INFORMED CONSENT

**Protocol Title**: The Learning Experience for Alumni Mock Interviewers (Part 1)
**Subtitle**: Questionnaire
**Principal Researcher**: Kate Rockey-Harris, Graduate Student, Teachers College
607-280-1250, kar2156@tc.columbia.edu

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## INTRODUCTION

You are invited to participate in this research study called "The Learning Experience for Alumni Mock Interviewers." You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are a [University Name] alum who has participated in the [Career Center Name] Alumni Mock Interview Program within the past 5 years. Approximately eighty-two people will participate in this study and it will take 20 minutes of your time to complete this part of the study.

## WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?

This study is being done to determine the learning experience of alumni volunteers in mock interview programs. The study aims to determine current and future effective learning practices.

## WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

- This study includes a questionnaire. If you decide to participate, the primary researcher will email you a questionnaire in Qualtrics, a platform for taking surveys. As the questionnaire will be sent over email, you will be able to complete it on an electronic device of your choice. You will have 10 days to complete the questionnaire and may do so at the time of your convenience. The questionnaire is comprised of 10 questions about your demographic information and 20 questions about your learning experience as an alumni mock interviewer. All questions related to your demographics are in multiple choice format.

- At the end of the questionnaire, you'll be asked to provide your email address if you would like to participate in a follow-up writing prompt task and interview. You are not required to participate in the follow-up sessions and you can choose to complete only the questionnaire. Your email will not be associated with your questionnaire, writing prompt, or interview responses, so your information will remain confidential.

**WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You may feel disinclined to rate your alumni volunteer experience at your alma mater. You might also feel concerned that things you say might get back to your alma mater. You do not have to answer any questions. You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The primary researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a unique code instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

**WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?**
There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the fields of higher education and adult learning through better understanding of the best practices for involving alumni volunteers.

**WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?**
You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

**WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?**
The study is over when you have completed the questionnaire unless you agree to participate in the second part of the study. If you agree to participate in the second part of the study, then you will be asked to complete a writing prompt and have an interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you have not finished.

**PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY**
The primary researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office. Any electronic or digital information will be stored on a computer that is password protected. Regulations require that data with adults be kept for three years.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

**HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?**
The results of this study will be published in journals and potentially be presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information

about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

**WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?**
**If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Kate Rockey-Harris, at 607-280-1250 or at kar2156@tc.columbia.edu.**

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

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**PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS**
- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion. Withdrawal would be based on missed questionnaire deadlines and responses.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

Click accept if you agree to be in this study and confirm that you are 18 years or older.

Appendix D

Writing Prompt and Interview Informed Consent

**INFORMED CONSENT**

**Protocol Title**: The Learning Experience for Alumni Mock Interviewers (Part 2)
**Subtitle**: Writing Prompt and Interview
**Principal Researcher**: Kate Rockey-Harris, Teachers College
607-280-1250, kar2156@tc.columbia.edu

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**INTRODUCTION**
You are invited to participate in this research study called "The Learning Experience for Alumni Mock Interviewers." You may qualify to take part in this research study because you are a [University Name] alum who has participated in the [Career Center Name] Alumni Mock Interview Program within the past 5 years and you completed the first part of this study and agreed to a follow-up writing prompt task and interview. Approximately twenty people will participate in this part of the study and it will take 1 hour and 15 minutes of your time to complete.

Part of this study includes audio recording. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate.

**WHY IS THIS STUDY BEING DONE?**
This study is being done to determine the learning experience of alumni volunteers in mock interview programs. The study aims to determine current and future effective learning practices.

**WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO IF I AGREE TO TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?**

- First, if you decide to still participate, I will collect demographic information. The demographic questionnaire is comprised of 10 multiple choice questions. On the questionnaire you will be asked to indicate your preferred date and time of your interview session, but no identifying information will be collected to ensure your confidentiality.
- Next, during your scheduled one-hour session you will be given a writing prompt. The prompt will ask you to briefly reflect and write an answer to a question regarding your experience as an alumni mock interviewer. The writing prompt will take approximately 10 minutes.
- Then, after the writing prompt is submitted, the researcher will individually interview you about your experiences as an alumni mock interviewer. This interview will be audio-recorded. After the audio recording is written down

(transcribed) the audio recording will be deleted. The researcher will notify you when the audio-recorder is started and stopped. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, you will not be able to participate. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. You will be given a pseudonym to keep your identity confidential.

## WHAT POSSIBLE RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

This is a minimal risk study, which means the harms or discomforts that you may experience are not greater than you would ordinarily encounter in daily life while taking routine physical or psychological examinations or tests. However, there are some risks to consider. You may feel disinclined to discuss your alumni volunteer experience at your alma mater. You might also feel concerned that things you say might get back to your alma mater. You do not have to answer any questions or share anything you do not want to talk about.  You can stop participating in the study at any time without penalty.

The primary researcher is taking precautions to keep your information confidential and prevent anyone from discovering or guessing your identity, such as using a pseudonym instead of your name and keeping all information on a password protected computer and locked in a file drawer.

## WHAT POSSIBLE BENEFITS CAN I EXPECT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

There is no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Participation may benefit the fields of higher education and adult learning through better understanding of the best practices for involving alumni volunteers.

## WILL I BE PAID FOR BEING IN THIS STUDY?

You will not be paid to participate. There are no costs to you for taking part in this study.

## WHEN IS THE STUDY OVER? CAN I LEAVE THE STUDY BEFORE IT ENDS?

The study is over when you have completed the writing prompt and the individual interview. However, you can leave the study at any time even if you have not finished.

## PROTECTION OF YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY

The primary researcher will keep all written materials locked in a desk drawer in a locked office.  Your information submitted through Qualtrics will be kept confidential.  Any electronic or digital information (including audio recordings) will be stored on a computer that is password protected. What is on the audio recording will be written down and the audio recording will then be destroyed. There will be no record matching your real name with your pseudonym.  Regulations require that data with adults be kept for three years.

The primary researcher will be using Rev transcription services. Rev utilizes a non-discourser and confidentiality agreements, encrypted file transfers, and secure servers and

portals.  Full details of Rev's security protocol can be found at:
https://www.rev.com/blog/transcription-security-practices.

For quality assurance, the study team, the study sponsor (grant agency), and/or members of the Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) may review the data collected from you as part of this study. Otherwise, all information obtained from your participation in this study will be held strictly confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by U.S. or State law.

## HOW WILL THE RESULTS BE USED?
The results of this study will be published in journals and potentially be presented at academic conferences. Your identity will be removed from any data you provide before publication or use for educational purposes. Your name or any identifying information about you will not be published. This study is being conducted as part of the dissertation of the primary researcher.

## CONSENT FOR AUDIO RECORDING
Audio recording is part of this research study. You can choose whether to give permission to be recorded. If you decide that you don't wish to be recorded, **you will not be able to participate** in this research study.

_____I give my consent to be recorded

_____
                                                                                      Signature

_____I **do not** consent to be recorded

_____
                                                                                      Signature

## WHO MAY VIEW MY PARTICIPATION IN THIS STUDY

___I consent to allow written and audio-recorded materials viewed at an educational setting or at a conference outside of Teachers College, Columbia University

_____
Signature

___I **do not** consent to allow written and audio-recorded materials viewed outside of Teachers College, Columbia University

_____
Signature

## CONSENT FOR FUTURE CONTACT

The primary researcher may wish to contact you in the future. Please initial below to indicate whether you give permission for future contact.

The researcher may contact me in the future for information relating to this current study:

Yes _____     No_____
           Initial                        Initial

## WHO CAN ANSWER MY QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS STUDY?
**If you have any questions about taking part in this research study, you should contact the primary researcher, Kate Rockey-Harris, at 607-280-1250 or at kar2156@tc.columbia.edu.**

If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you should contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (the human research ethics committee) at 212-678-4105 or email IRB@tc.edu or you can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY 10027, Box 151. The IRB is the committee that oversees human research protection for Teachers College, Columbia University.

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## PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS
- I have read the Informed Consent Form and have been offered the opportunity to discuss the form with the researcher.
- I have had ample opportunity to ask questions about the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits regarding this research study.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw participation at any time without penalty.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at the researcher's professional discretion. Withdrawal would be based on missed documentation or session dates.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue my participation, the researcher will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research study that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- Your data will not be used in further research studies.
- I should receive a copy of the Informed Consent Form document.

**My signature means that I agree to participate in this study:**

**Print name**: _____ **Date**: _____

**Signature:** _____

Appendix E

Questionnaire Participant Invitation Email

Dear [Name],

I hope you are well! Thank you for participating as an alumni mock interviewer for the [University Name], [Career Center Name] Alumni Mock Interview Program.  Since you have participated as an interviewer in the last 5 years and you are an alum of [University Name], you qualify to be a research participant in my dissertation study.  The study is examining the alumni learning experience in alumni mock interview programs to provide insights into effective learning practices through program design.  The study will be conducted in two parts and your participation will be confidential.

The first part will take approximately 20 minutes and is a questionnaire that is comprised of:
- An Informed Consent Form
- 10 Demographic Questions
- 20 Rating Scale Questions

**If you are interested in participating in the questionnaire part of the study, please access the Qualtrics Questionnaire here: [web address link].**

At the end of the questionnaire, you have the options to sign-up for the second part of the study.  The second part will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and includes a writing prompt and an interview.  Participation in the first part of the study does not mean that you need to participate in the second part of the study.

If you have any questions, please let me know.  Thank you for your support of my research!

All the best,
Kate

Kate Rockey-Harris
EdD Candidate, Adult Learning & Leadership
Teachers College, Columbia University
Email: kar2156@tc.columbia.edu
Phone: 607-280-1250
IRB Protocol: 20-153

Appendix F

Writing Prompt/Interview Participant Invitation Email

Dear [Name],

Thank you for participating in the first part of my dissertation study!  As a friendly reminder, the study is examining the alumni learning experience in alumni mock interview programs to provide insights into effective learning practices through program design.  Your participation in the second part of the study will also be confidential.

The second part will take approximately 1 hour and 15 minutes and includes:
- An Informed Consent Form
- 10 Demographic Questions
- A Writing Prompt Question (10 minutes)
- An Interview (45 minutes)

**If you are interested in participating in the second part of the study, please email me your availability to meet in-person or over the phone for approximately 1 hour.**

If you have any questions, please let me know.  Thank you for your support of my research!

All the best,
Kate

Kate Rockey-Harris
EdD Candidate, Adult Learning & Leadership
Teachers College, Columbia University
Email: kar2156@tc.columbia.edu
Phone: 607-280-1250
IRB Protocol: 20-153

Appendix G

Writing Prompt/Interview Follow-Up Opting In Email

Dear [Name],

Thank you for the time and consideration you put into completing the questionnaire on your experiences in the alumni mock interview program!  I will be wrapping up the interview portion of the study soon and wanted to follow-up with you to see if you were presently available to participate in the interview portion of the study.

If you are interested in further sharing your insights into the program, and have 1 hour and 15 minutes available for a writing prompt and an interview before Friday, March 6th, please do let me know.  It would be wonderful to hear about your unique alumni experience.

Thank you for your support of my research!

All the best,
Kate

Kate Rockey-Harris
EdD Candidate, Adult Learning & Leadership
Teachers College, Columbia University
Email: kar2156@tc.columbia.edu
Phone: 607-280-1250
IRB Protocol: 20-153

Appendix H

Demographic Inventory

Thank you for participating in this study about the alumni experience in the [University Name] Mock Interview Program. The information collected is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study. The next 10 questions are meant to establish your demographic information. Please choose the answer that best represents your background.

1. What is your age range?
   a. 21-25
   b. 26-30
   c. 31-35
   d. 36-40
   e. 41-45
   f. 46-50
   g. 51-55
   h. 56-60
   i. 61-65
   j. 66 or older

2. What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

3. What is your race/ethnicity?
   a. Arabic
   b. Asian/Pacific Islander
   c. Black
   d. Caucasian/White
   e. Hispanic
   f. Indigenous/Aboriginal
   g. Latino
   h. Multiracial
   i. Other

4. What is your highest level of education?
   a. Bachelor's Degree (BA or BS)
   b. Master's Degree (MA or MS)

    c. Professional Master's Degree or Other Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.)

    d. Doctoral Degree (EdD, MD, PhD, PsyD, etc.)

5. What is your primary industry of professional experience?
    a. Architecture/Landscaping/Design
    b. Arts/Entertainment/Media
    c. Communications/Journalism/Publishing
    d. Computer Science/Technology/Telecommunications
    e. Consulting
    f. Education/Teaching
    g. Engineering/Energy
    h. Fashion/Retail/Consumer Products
    i. Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance
    j. Food Service/Food Production
    k. Government/Military
    l. Health Care/Pharmaceutical/Biotechnology
    m. Hospitality/Tourism/Sports/Recreation
    n. Law
    o. Marketing/Advertising/Public Relations
    p. Non-Profit/Social Services
    q. Real Estate/Materials/Construction
    r. Science/Research
    s. Transportation/Automotive Manufacturing
    t. Other

6. How many years of professional experience do you have?
    a. 0-4
    b. 5-9
    c. 10-14
    d. 15-19
    e. 20-24
    f. 25-29
    g. 30-34
    h. 35-39
    i. 40-44
    j. 45 or more

7. What is you level of professional experience?
    a. Entry Level
    b. Intermediate/Experienced Level

  c. Management, First Level

  d. Management, Middle Level

  e. Management, Senior/Executive Level

8. How many professional positions have you held?

  a. 0-4

  b. 5-9

  c. 10-14

  d. 15-19

  e. 20 or more

9. How many mock interview nights have you participated in as an interviewer?

  a. 1

  b. 2

  c. 3

  d. 4

  e. 5 or more

10. Are you involved as a volunteer in other career focused capacities?

  a. Yes

  b. No

Appendix I

Questionnaire Protocol

The following 20 questions will examine your experience as an alumni mock interviewer in the [University Name] Alumni Mock Interview Program. Please answer all questions using the Likert scale ratings shown below. If you do not agree or disagree with the statement, please select "Neutral."

<u>Likert Scale</u>
1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neutral
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

*<u>Section 1</u>*
*(Based on Research Question 1: How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program?)*

From the mock interview program,
1. I have learned more about how to conduct an interview.
2. I have learned more about how to answer interview questions.
3. I have learned more about current employment trends.
4. I have learned more about higher education career services.
5. I have learned more about current college students.
6. I have learned more about my alumni peers.

*<u>Section 2</u>*
*(Based on Research Question 2: What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program?)*

Within the mock interview program,
7. I have learned from the training presentation provided by the career center staff.
8. I have learned from the materials provided by the career center staff.
9. I have learned from the opportunity to formally ask career center staff questions.
10. I have learned from informal conversations I have had with the career center staff.
11. I have learned from conversations I have had with the student interviewees.
12. I have learned from conversations I have had with other alumni interviewers.

*<u>Section 3</u>*
*(Based on Research Question 3: What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning?)*

To learn more from the mock interview program,
13. I would enjoy reading relevant articles and written materials.
14. I would enjoy viewing an interview role play/simulation.
15. I would enjoy participating in an interview role play/simulation.
16. I would enjoy receiving coaching or feedback on my interviewing techniques.
17. I would enjoy being matched with students in my discipline.
18. I would enjoy reflecting on my experience.
19. I would enjoy a discussion with my alumni peers.
20. I would enjoy creating a sense of community with my alumni peers.

*Section 4*

If you would like to be contacted to participate in a writing prompt task and a follow-up interview, please list your email address below. The follow-up session is voluntary. Your survey responses will be kept separate from your contact information. You do not have to participate in the follow-up session. If you would like to participate in the follow-up session, the primary researcher will contact you via email.

Appendix J

Critical Incident Written Response Protocol

*Thank you for participating in this study about the alumni experience in the [University Name] Alumni Mock Interview Program. The information collected in the writing prompt is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study. In a moment I will read through the prompt on your screen. Please then respond to the prompt in the space provided on the form. Once you have finished, please click the submit button at the bottom of the form. I will now read the prompt...*

Please describe in writing a moment when you learned something new as an alumni volunteer in the [University Name] Alumni Mock Interview Program. Be as specific as possible about the elements of your experience. Please describe the situation, including what you learned and from whom.

*You may begin to write when you are ready.*

Appendix K

Interview Protocol

*Thank you for completing the writing prompt. We are now going to move into the interview portion of the study. As a reminder, all the information collected in the interview is completely confidential and will only be used for the purposes of this research study. This interview will be audio-recorded; I will notify you when the audio-recorder is started and stopped. With your permission I will now begin recording. [wait for permission and then start recording]. Thank you for agreeing to have your interview audio-recorded.*

| First question to begin discussion | Could you talk about a time you learned something new in the mock interview program? | N/A |
|---|---|---|
| Research Questions | Associated Interview Questions | Probing Questions |
| How do the alumni describe what they learn through participating in the mock interview program? | When did you feel the most engaged in the mock interview program?<br><br>Could you talk about what you have learned through participating in the mock interview program that has helped you in your career?<br><br>What is something you learned in one mock interview that you incorporated into your interview practices (techniques/approaches)?<br><br>What was a moment that surprised you? | Can you elaborate more on…?<br><br>How did you learn this?<br><br>How so?<br><br>Could you tell me more about...? |
| What practices and approaches contribute to and/or inhibit alumni learning within a mock interview program? | What part (if any) of the mock interview program did you rely upon to guide your understanding of interview practices (techniques/approaches)?<br><br>Can you share any challenges you have faced when trying to better understand interview practices (techniques/approaches) at a mock interview night?<br><br>How do the career service center staff contribute to or inhibit your learning in the mock interview program?<br><br>How do your fellow alumni mock interviewers contribute to or inhibit your learning? | Can you elaborate more on…?<br><br>Is it correct that…?<br><br>Can you tell me more about…? |

| What recommendations could be made for a mock interview program designed to foster alumni learning? | Thinking back to when you first volunteered for the mock interview program, what do you wish you had known about interviewing practices (techniques/approaches)?<br><br>What types of information or resources would have made you feel more prepared as an interviewer at mock interview night?<br><br>How do you like to learn information?<br><br>If you had no constraints, how would you change the design of the mock interview program to most support your understanding of interview practices? | Can you elaborate more on…?<br><br>I know we touched on this earlier, but… |
| | | |
| Final question(s) to end discussion | Is there anything else you would like me to know about your experience as an alumni mock interviewer as we conclude this interview? | What have I not asked about your experience that you hoped I would ask?<br><br>Is there anything you would like to add that you think is important for me to consider? |

Appendix L

Participant Demographic Information

Table 12. Participant Demographic Information

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/ Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 1 | Yes | 41-45 | Male | Asian/ Pacific Islander | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance | 20-24 | Management, First Level | 5-9 | 3 | Yes |
| Participant 2 | Yes | 31-35 | Female | Black | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Science/ Research | 10-14 | Intermediate/ Experienced Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 3 | Yes | 41-45 | Male | Caucasian/ White | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance | 20-24 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | No |
| Participant 4 | Yes | 46-50 | Male | Caucasian/ White | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Law | 25-29 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 5 | Yes | 61-65 | Female | Caucasian/White | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Marketing/Advertising/Public Relations | 20-24 | Management, Middle Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 6 | Yes | 21-25 | Female | Asian/Pacific Islander | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 0-4 | Intermediate/Experienced Level | 0-4 | 4 | No |
| Participant 7 | No | 26-30 | Male | Asian/Pacific Islander | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Computer Science/Technology | 5-9 | Intermediate/Experienced Level | 0-4 | 3 | No |
| Participant 8 | No | 26-30 | Male | Asian/Pacific Islander | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Fashion/Retail/Consumer Products | 5-9 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 0-4 | 1 | Yes |
| Participant 9 | Yes | 66 or older | Male | Caucasian/White | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Consulting | 45 or more | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 3 | Yes |
| Participant 10 | Yes | 26-30 | Male | Asian/Pacific Islander | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Consulting | 5-9 | Management, First Level | 0-4 | 2 | Yes |
| Participant 11 | No | 31-35 | Male | Caucasian/White | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 10-14 | Management, Middle Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | No |

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 12 | No | 26-30 | Female | Other | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Education/Teaching | 5-9 | Management, Middle Level | 5-9 | 1 | Yes |
| Participant 13 | Yes | 66 or older | Female | Caucasian/White | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Fashion/Retail/Consumer Products | 40-44 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | No |
| Participant 14 | No | 41-45 | Male | Caucasian/White | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 15-19 | Management, First Level | 10-14 | 2 | Yes |
| Participant 15 | Yes | 31-35 | Female | Asian/Pacific Islander | Doctoral Degree (EdD, MD, PhD, PsyD, etc.) | Health Care/Pharma/Biotech | 5-9 | Management, Middle Level | 0-4 | 3 | Yes |
| Participant 16 | Yes | 26-30 | Female | Asian/Pacific Islander | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Marketing/Advertising/Public Relations | 0-4 | Intermediate/Experienced Level | 0-4 | 2 | Yes |
| Participant 17 | No | 26-30 | Male | Multiracial | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 5-9 | Intermediate/Experienced Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 18 | Yes | 31-35 | Male | Caucasian/White | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Computer Science/Technology | 5-9 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 0-4 | 3 | No |

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 19 | Yes | 26-30 | Male | Caucasian/White | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Engineering/Energy | 5-9 | Intermediate/Experienced Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 20 | Yes | 61-65 | Female | Asian/Pacific Islander | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Transport/Automotive | 40-44 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 21 | Yes | 41-45 | Female | Caucasian/White | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 20-24 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 2 | Yes |
| Participant 22 | Yes | 66 or older | Female | Caucasian/White | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Other | 35-39 | Management, Middle Level | 10-14 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 23 | Yes | 46-50 | Male | Latino | Doctoral Degree (EdD, MD, PhD, PsyD, etc.) | Education/Teaching | 15-19 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | No |
| Participant 24 | Yes | 61-65 | Male | Asian/Pacific Islander | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 35-39 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 15-19 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 25 | No | 56-60 | Male | Asian/Pacific Islander | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 30-34 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/ Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 26 | Yes | 31-35 | Female | Latino | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Government /Military | 10-14 | Management, Middle Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | No |
| Participant 27 | Yes | 66 or older | Male | Caucasian/ White | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Consulting | 45 or more | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 28 | No | 26-30 | Female | Black | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Law | 0-4 | Entry Level | 0-4 | 1 | No |
| Participant 29 | Yes | 26-30 | Male | Multiracial | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance | 5-9 | Management, First Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 30 | Yes | 51-55 | Male | Asian/ Pacific Islander | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance | 30-34 | Management, Middle Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 31 | No | 41-45 | Female | Multiracial | Doctoral Degree (EdD, MD, PhD, PsyD, etc.) | Non-Profit/ Social Services | 20-24 | Management, Middle Level | 10-14 | 4 | No |
| Participant 32 | Yes | 26-30 | Female | Asian/ Pacific Islander | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Science/ Research | 0-4 | Entry Level | 0-4 | 1 | No |

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 33 | No | 31-35 | Male | Asian/Pacific Islander | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 10-14 | Management, First Level | 0-4 | 1 | No |
| Participant 34 | No | 36-40 | Male | Other | Doctoral Degree (EdD, MD, PhD, PsyD, etc.) | Non-Profit/Social Services | 15-19 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 10-14 | 4 | Yes |
| Participant 35 | Yes | 26-30 | Female | Other | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Architect/Landscaping/Design | 5-9 | Management, First Level | 5-9 | 2 | No |
| Participant 36 | No | 26-30 | Male | Caucasian/White | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 5-9 | Management, First Level | 0-4 | 2 | Yes |
| Participant 37 | No | 41-45 | Male | Caucasian/White | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 15-19 | Management, Middle Level | 0-4 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 38 | No | 31-35 | Male | Other | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Other | 5-9 | Management, Senior/Exec. Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 39 | No | 36-40 | Male | Caucasian/White | Professional Degree (JD, MBA, etc.) | Financial Services/Banking/Accounting/Insurance | 15-19 | Management, Middle Level | 5-9 | 3 | No |

| Participant Identifier (n = 43) | Participant in Written Response/ Interview | Age range | Gender | Race/ ethnicity | Highest level of education | Primary industry of professional experience | Years of professional experience | Level of professional experience | Number of professional positions | Number of mock interview nights as an interviewer | Volunteer in other career focused capacities |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Participant 40 | No | 31-35 | Male | Black | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance | 10-14 | Management, Middle Level | 5-9 | 3 | No |
| Participant 41 | Yes | 26-30 | Female | Asian/ Pacific Islander | Master Degree (MA or MS) | Consulting | 5-9 | Management, First Level | 0-4 | 1 | No |
| Participant 42 | No | 31-35 | Male | Asian/ Pacific Islander | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Marketing/ Advertising/ Public Relations | 10-14 | Management, Middle Level | 5-9 | 5 or more | Yes |
| Participant 43 | No | 31-35 | Female | Hispanic | Bachelor Degree (BA or BS) | Financial Services/ Banking/ Accounting/ Insurance | 10-14 | Management, Middle Level | 0-4 | 2 | Yes |

Appendix M

Final Coding Scheme

**Describe Learning** (I learned about…)
1. My own assumptions and beliefs about the interview process
2. The interview process, including ideal questions and answers
3. How to become a better interviewer
4. How to become a better interviewee
5. The current students and their experiences, skills, and challenges
6. International student populations and their differences from domestic students
7. The necessity of the mock interview program for students' preparation
8. The importance of creating a positive and comfortable environment in an interview
9. The importance of feedback delivery to the learning process
10. The alumni interviewers and their experiences and skills
11. New industries, organizations, careers, and career paths
12. Higher education, student affairs, and career services

**Contributed to Learning** (It helped my learning by having…)
13. Students that were invested or prepared for the mock interview
14. The mock interview program in the evening with dinner
15. A presentation at the beginning of the evening with information for the night
16. A list of sample questions to ask students
17. Student packets to review, including their resumes and targeted job descriptions
18. Networking with fellow alumni at the beginning of the evening
19. An opportunity to stay in touch with students
20. An opportunity to discuss the event at the end of the evening
21. Time to reflect on previous interviews and consider future changes
22. The opportunity to repeat and refine my interviewer skills over multiple interviews

**Inhibited Learning** (It hindered my learning by having…)
23. Students that were unappreciative or unprepared for the mock interview
24. The mock interview program ending late in the evening
25. Little or no guidance on interviewer expectations, approaches, and goals
26. A lack of opportunity to learn new content on interview tips, trends, and techniques
27. A lack of opportunity to learn how to give feedback to student interviewees
28. A lack of industry knowledge of specific fields
29. A lack of opportunity to meet and connect with fellow alumni
30. Little or no opportunity to share or discuss my experience and give feedback
31. No opportunity for feedback on my performance as an interviewer
32. A lack of willingness to learn new content and instead relying on prior experiences

**Recommendations for Program Design** (The career center should…)
33. Match students and alumni based on industry and background
34. Tailor alumni outreach for the program to be clear and appreciative
35. Provide basic interviewing and networking guidance to students before the program

36. Provide concise interviewer preparation in advance of the evening
37. Provide interviewer preparation in a variety of levels (novice to experienced)
38. Provide interviewer preparation in a variety of mediums (written, video, hands-on, discussion)
39. Provide interviewer preparation through an example mock interview
40. Provide additional time for the interviews
41. Provide opportunity for students to hear about alumni careers, experiences, and advice
42. Provide opportunity for students to meet with more than one alumni interviewer
43. Follow-up with interviewers on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes
44. Consider video mock interviewing

**Additional Codes**
45. Critical incident written response text
46. Alumni views on learning in general
47. Alumni views on fellow alumni
48. Why alumni participate in the mock interview program

Appendix N

Coding Findings Summary

Table 13. Coding Findings Summary

| Title | Code Description from Scheme | Number of Subset Sample Participants | Frequency of Mention |
|---|---|---|---|
| Describe Learning | | | |
| Comfortable Environment | 8. The importance of creating a positive and comfortable environment in an interview | **24 (96%)** | 65 |
| Feedback Delivery | 9. The importance of feedback delivery to the learning process | **23 (92%)** | 68 |
| Program Necessity | 7. The necessity of the mock interview program for students' preparation | **22 (88%)** | 48 |
| Current Students | 5. The current students and their experiences, skills, and challenges | **21 (84%)** | 69 |
| Better Interviewer | 3. How to become a better interviewer | **17 (68%)** | 26 |
| Interview Process | 2. The interview process, including ideal questions and answers | **16 (64%)** | 29 |
| Interview Assumptions | 1. My own assumptions and beliefs about the interview process | **13 (52%)** | 16 |
| International Students | 6. International student populations and their differences from domestic students | **13 (52%)** | 31 |
| New Careers | 11. New industries, organizations, careers, and career paths | 12 (48%) | 24 |
| Better Interviewee | 4. How to become a better interviewee | 11 (44%) | 27 |
| Higher Education | 12. Higher education, student affairs, and career services | 10 (40%) | 16 |
| Alumni Interviewers | 10. The alumni interviewers and their experiences and skills | 6 (24%) | 8 |
| Contributed to Learning | | | |
| Sample Questions | 16. A list of sample questions to ask students | **21 (84%)** | 31 |
| Student Follow-Up | 19. An opportunity to stay in touch with students | **19 (76%)** | 45 |
| Student Packets | 17. Student packets to review, including their resumes and targeted job descriptions | **17 (68%)** | 27 |
| Dinner with Program | 14. The mock interview program in the evening with dinner | **17 (68%)** | 22 |
| Beginning Presentation | 15. A presentation at the beginning of the evening with information for the night | **16 (64%)** | 29 |
| Invested Students | 13. Students that were invested or prepared for the mock interview | **15 (60%)** | 31 |

| Title | Code Description from Scheme | Number of Subset Sample Participants | Frequency of Mention |
|---|---|---|---|
| Alumni Networking | 18. Networking with fellow alumni at the beginning of the evening | **15 (60%)** | 29 |
| Multiple Interviews | 22. The opportunity to repeat and refine my interviewer skills over multiple interviews | 10 (40%) | 13 |
| Reflection Time | 21. Time to reflect on previous interviews and consider future changes | 7 (28%) | 8 |
| Evening Discussion | 20. An opportunity to discuss the event at the end of the evening | 6 (24%) | 11 |
| Inhibited Learning | | | |
| No Alumni Connections | 29. A lack of opportunity to meet and connect with fellow alumni | **21 (84%)** | 51 |
| No Industry Knowledge | 28. A lack of industry knowledge of specific fields | **18 (72%)** | 43 |
| No Experience Feedback | 30. Little or no opportunity to share or discuss my experience and give feedback | **16 (64%)** | 29 |
| No Interviewer Goals | 25. Little or no guidance on interviewer expectations, approaches, and goals | **16 (64%)** | 33 |
| Late Program | 24. The mock interview program ending late in the evening | **16 (64%)** | 23 |
| Unprepared Students | 23. Students that were unappreciative or unprepared for the mock interview | **15 (60%)** | 26 |
| Learning Resistance | 32. A lack of willingness to learn new content and instead relying on prior experiences | **14 (56%)** | 24 |
| No Interviewer Feedback | 31. No opportunity for feedback on my performance as an interviewer | 12 (48%) | 18 |
| No New Content | 26. A lack of opportunity to learn new content on interview tips, trends, and techniques | 11 (44%) | 18 |
| No Feedback Training | 27. A lack of opportunity to learn how to give feedback to student interviewees | 9 (36%) | 18 |
| Recommendations for Program Design | | | |
| Background Match | 33. Match students and alumni based on industry and background | **19 (76%)** | 53 |
| Alumni Advice | 41. Provide opportunity for students to hear about alumni careers, experiences, and advice | **19 (76%)** | 47 |
| Student Training | 35. Provide basic interviewing and networking guidance to students before the program | **18 (72%)** | 40 |
| Concise, Advance Preparation | 36. Provide concise interviewer preparation in advance of the evening | **17 (68%)** | 37 |
| Preparation Mediums | 38. Provide interviewer preparation in a variety of mediums (written, video, hands-on, discussion) | **17 (68%)** | 26 |

| Title | Code Description from Scheme | Number of Subset Sample Participants | Frequency of Mention |
|---|---|---|---|
| More Time | 40. Provide additional time for the interviews | **15 (60%)** | 33 |
| Student Outcomes Follow-Up | 43. Follow-up with interviewers on student utilization, feedback, and outcomes | **13 (52%)** | 27 |
| Multiple Interviewers | 42. Provide opportunity for students to meet with more than one alumni interviewer | 12 (48%) | 22 |
| Preparation in Levels | 37. Provide interviewer preparation in a variety of levels (novice to experienced) | 11 (44%) | 14 |
| Preparation Mock Interview | 39. Provide interviewer preparation through an example mock interview | 8 (32%) | 14 |
| Appreciative Outreach | 34. Tailor alumni outreach for the program to be clear and appreciative | 7 (28%) | 15 |
| Video Mock Interviewing | 44. Consider video mock interviewing | 6 (24%) | 7 |
| Additional Codes | | | |
| Written Response | 45. Critical incident written response text | 25 (100%) | 25 |
| Alumni Participation | 48. Why alumni participate in the mock interview program | 22 (88%) | 45 |
| Alumni Views | 47. Alumni views on fellow alumni | 7 (28%) | 8 |
| Alumni Learning | 46. Alumni views on learning in general | 6 (24%) | 7 |