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THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF CITY YEAR
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to all the other doctoral students who, despite earning multiple degrees and spending many years in school, feel more comfortable serving coffee or tending bar than they do in academia. I know I cannot possibly be the only one, despite what my imposter syndrome tells me.

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I want to thank my best boy Blue, my brave girl Reba, my special baby Rocky. Finally, I want to thank my husband, who is better than beer.

THE TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF CITY YEAR

PARTICIPANTS

ELIZABETH SEKERAK

ABSTRACT

Every year, over 3,000 City Year corps members volunteer in 325 schools, working with over 200,000 students in 29 cities across the United States. In several quantitative studies individuals reported positive, life-changing experiences as result of their service. However, none of these studies examined what these life changing experiences were, or how or why these experiences occurred.

Using a phenomenological approach, this study examined the essence of the experience when young adults participated in this specific, life-changing program. Semi-structured interviews explored how the City Year experience resulted in transformation. The principal research question for this study was: What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year? The following sub-questions were also investigated: What role did the urban environment play in that transformation and how can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program?

My findings revealed six themes relating to how participants described their transformative learning experience. The six themes are: City Year culture and training, relationships with students, relationships with cohort members, the nature of the program, the difficulty of the program, and time changed their views of the experience. Participants benefited from City Year's culture and training program, both of which encouraged

transformation. The difficulty of the year, and the relationships participants formed with students and other cohort members that were very important to the transformative learning process. Some participants struggled with the short-term nature and the racial implications of the program. Finally, how participants viewed the program has changed over time. This study also looked at the effect that the urban environment had to the transformative learning experience.

Recommendations for further research include: exploring other experiences that are not transformative; looking at the influence that race, background, and class, have on transformation; the effect that City Year has on youth in the schools; the degree to which people are transformed and the relationship between that transformation and the way they experienced elements of the transformative learning framework.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A young girl was walking along a beach upon which thousands of starfish had been washed up during a terrible storm. When she came to each starfish, she would pick it up, and throw it back into the ocean. People watched her with amusement.

She had been doing this for some time when a man approached her and said, “Little girl, why are you doing this? Look at this beach! You can’t save all these starfish. You can’t begin to make a difference!”

The girl seemed crushed, suddenly deflated. But after a few moments, she bent down, picked up another starfish, and hurled it as far as she could into the ocean. Then she looked up at the man and replied, “Well, I made a difference to that one!”

The old man looked at the girl inquisitively and thought about what she had done and said. Inspired, he joined the little girl in throwing starfish back into the sea. Soon others joined, and all the starfish were saved.

— Adapted from 'The Star Thrower' by Loren C. Eiseley

City Year was founded in 1988 by Michael Brown and Alan Khazei, two students at Harvard Law School. Brown and Khazei believed that one person could make a difference in the world and that youth could be a “powerful resource for addressing America’s most pressing issues” (“About City Year,” 2012). City Year’s structure was initially patterned after Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), a national service

program started by President Johnson, in that both programs recruited young adults to engage in service projects for a year in exchange for a small living stipend and an education award at the end of service (Bass, 2013). As City Year grew, the program changed to focus solely on service in schools. Today, City Year members mission is to bridge the gap between what students need and what schools can provide ("Your Corps Experience," 2018). Every year, over 3,000 City Year corps members volunteer in 325 schools, working with over 200,000 students in 28 cities (Krach, 2017). Since 1998, more than 30,000 people have served in City Year, reaching more than two million children ("Our impact - Youth development program," n.d.).

The founders of City Year, believed that a year of service "could serve as a 'civic rite of passage' for all young adults: a transformational experience with the power to usher each volunteer across the threshold of assuming his or her full rights and responsibilities as American citizens" (Klau, 2012, p. 410). City Year was founded not just on the belief that a year of service can not only change the individual serving, but the community as well ("Training," 2018). To reach this goal, the City Year training curriculum is inspired by Joseph Campbell's writings on the hero's journey. In the hero's journey, the hero goes on a journey, experiences a crisis, overcomes the crisis, and returns home transformed by the experience (Jeffrey, 2018).

Problem Statement

There are many strategies urban school districts have implemented in an effort to improve attendance, increase test scores, and reduce behavior referrals. School districts across the United States have invested in programs such as Say Yes to Education, Communities in Schools, and Family Focus. Some school districts have also partnered

with City Year. While other programs may also show measurable improvements in attendance, test scores, student behavior, City Year is unique. While many other programs rely on teachers and staff to deliver programming and interventions, City Year brings in young adults for one-year terms to work with students. In addition to affecting the students in the school, City Year also has the possibility to affect the lives of the corps members that serve in the schools.

Existing literature examining on the effects that City Year has on test scores and student attendance has been well documented (Anderson, Laguarda, & Williams, 2007; Meredith & Anderson, 2015; Sepanik et al., 2015; Sullivan, 2006) but the effect that participation in City Year has on the young adults that commit to a year of service in schools is less understood.

There have been some quantitative studies (Friedman et al., 2016; Frumkin et al., 2009; Jastrzab et al., 2007; Jastrzab & Winship, 2008; Munter, 1997) that looked at the effect that AmeriCorps service had on alumni. These studies examined whether AmeriCorps programs are meeting certain objectives. Studies looked, for example, at whether service improved voting rates, employment rates, and educational attainment. These studies have also shown that alumni reported positive, life-changing experiences, that they changed in an important way, or that they were fundamentally transformed as result of their service. However, none of these studies examined qualitatively what these life changing experiences were, or how or why these experiences occurred. A 2018 survey conducted by City Year found that 94% of alumni agreed that City Year had a significantly positive impact on their lives, 94% agreed that City Year helped them develop relationships and work effectively with people from backgrounds different than

their own, and 82% of alumni said that City Year increased the ways in which they were civically engaged (*2018 City Year alumni survey*, 2018).

Studying City Year is important because every year thousands of young adults are sent to volunteer in urban schools, but we don't really know what happens to them as a result of their year of service. Have they grown and changed in way that they and others can recognize? Do they have different career goals? Did they learn more about themselves and others? Are they prepared to be better leaders? Are they more understanding about issues involving diversity or has this caused them to re-entrench negative beliefs in stereotypes? Current studies have not addressed these questions.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to explore the transformative learning experience resulting from their participation in City Year. This study is bounded by individuals who completed at least one year of City Year and who have experienced transformative learning. Through interviews we can begin to understand how they reexamined their beliefs and attitudes about themselves, developed new ways of seeing the world, and the effects that this experience had on their lives.

The study of the transformative learning experience of participation in City Year can help us understand what happens when young adults participate in this specific, life-changing experience.

This study will use a phenomenological approach to study the transformative learning experience within the context of City Year. Through interviews with participants, we can begin to understand how their educational and career goals may have

changed, but also how their views of themselves and the world around them have changed.

Research Questions

The primary purpose of this study was to examine the transformative learning experience of City Year members due to their participation in City Year. Therefore, the principal research question for this study was: What was the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year? The following sub-question were also investigated:

1. What role did the urban environment play in that transformation?
2. How can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program?

By asking these questions, we can gain a better understanding of the changes experienced by the young adults who participate in City Year and develops ideas on ways to enhance future training programs.

Significance of Study

Transformative learning changes people. Transformative learning results in behavioral changes, as well as cognitive changes (Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock, 2012, p. 184). Ultimately, "they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize" (Clarke, 1993, p. 47). Transformative learning theory has been applied to many different adult education settings including graduate school, teacher education, community service, and outdoor education (Carrington & Selva, 2010; D'Amato & Krasny, 2011; Narushima, 2005; Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock, 2012). These studies generally look at a particular program and then examine the

transformative effect that the experience had on participants lives. Studies conducted on AmeriCorps programs indicate that participation in national service may be a transformative experience as well (Frumkin et al., 2009; Jastrzab et al., 2007; Munter, 1997). However, a search on OhioLink indicates that there is not one peer-reviewed research article applying transformative learning theory specifically to alumni of the City Year program. This study will address the gap in the research about transformative learning and City Year.

Transformative learning is often criticized for being used to describe almost any type of learning (Hoggan, 2016). While transformative learning is one type of adult learning, not all learning is transformative. However, transformative learning does not occur without other kinds of learning occurring (Cranton, 1994). Some transformative learning studies do not adequately demonstrate that transformative learning occurred rather than, for example, informational learning. Transformative learning occurs only when “a person encounters something that does not fit in with his or her expectations of how things should be, based on past experience” (Cranton, 1994, p. 19). True transformative learning only occurs when one critically examines why they think or feel a certain way and then changes those thoughts and behaviors (Cranton, 1994). This study will add to the body of research on transformative learning by taking a rigorous approach to applying transformative learning theory to a lived experience.

The City Year training program was designed to help individuals grow and develop as leaders. The year of service starts off with a one month “boot camp” where new members learn about City Year culture. Corps members learn City Year’s history and vision, as well as organizational values, such as “social justice for all and “service to

a cause greater than self” (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019). Corps members then learn about City Year’s founding stories. The founding stories are a collection of short stories and quotations that highlight the values that guide the organization’s “idealistic culture” (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019, p. 39). The founding stories are inclusive and diverse, using quotes from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Isaac Newton, and Nelson Mandela, as well as African and Swedish folktales and Iroquois and Zulu proverbs. City Year members talk about Putting Idealism to Work (PITW). PITWs are a collection of ideas written and edited by City Year’s co-founder Michael Brown. The 184 PITWs are meant to guide their year of service and serve as a reference to implement the City Year mission during the year of service. Some PITWs are short, like PITW 129, which says “Commit totally to building City Year while you are here: You can make a major difference that has long-term results” (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019, p. 81). Others are much longer, like PITW #53, which states:

Set very high expectations for yourself and others—especially people you are leading: Perhaps the greatest mistake any leader or supervisor can make is to set low standards and expectations for others. People will often respond to exactly the expectation that is being set. Your main function as a supervisor is to develop others so that they can do your job. If you make excuses for others, if you expect less from others than you expect from yourself, if you do not hold people accountable, if your first goal is not to challenge the people you are leading—but to be “liked” by them, then people you are leading will invariably learn to resent you because they know that you do not fundamentally respect them enough to

challenge them and hold them accountable. (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019, p. 72)

City Year also provides training that is useful in the classroom. Corps members learn tutoring techniques, ice breakers, and classroom management tips. They also learn about the signs of child abuse, mandatory reporting, harassment, and confidentiality (*Idealists Handbook*, 2006).

City Year's training has one very unique feature: Physical Training (PT). During PT, the corps members stand in a formation while someone calls out exercises for them to do. City Year members don't do jumping jacks, they do "Fire Jacks" (Czuprynski, 2019). The goal of PT is to get everyone's bodies and minds ready for a day of service (*Idealists Handbook*, 2006).

The City Year training program recognizes that individuals need to develop new skills and knowledge, but also explore "deeper questions" and engage in personal reflection as part of their leadership development journey ("Flame of Idealism," 2018). As this study examines the deeper questions and leadership journey, the results can perhaps be used to shape future training programs for City Year and for other AmeriCorps programs. There are many possible impacts of transformation: career change, school change, increased desire to give back to their communities. These impacts can be beneficial and useful, or they could be traumatic. Better training programs may help City Year members to derive a more positive transformative experience from their year of service.

Definition of Terms

Content Reflection – reflection that requires learner to reflect on their own assumptions and beliefs (Cranton, 2006).

Discourse – talking about an experience with others (Mezirow, 1991).

Disorienting Dilemma - an inner disequilibrium in which the harmony of the self is disturbed yet the problem is neither understood nor specifically named” (Mezirow, 1991).

Frames of Reference - earned sets of fixed assumptions and expectations or ways of knowing that represent cultural paradigms. A meaning perspective. (Kagen, 2000; Mezirow, 2003).

Habits of Mind - sets of assumptions that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience, including political orientation, ethnocentrism, and religious views. A habit of mind is expressed as a point of view (Mezirow, 2000).

Meaning Perspective - a structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions (Mezirow, 2000).

Meaning Schemes - sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments – that tacitly and directly shape a specific interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality (Mezirow, 2000).

Objective reframing -critical reflection on the assumptions of others encountered in a narrative or in task-oriented problem solving, as in ‘action learning’ (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23).

Point of View – The way in which habits of mind are expressed. Made up of meaning schemes (Mezirow, 2000).

Premise Reflection - examines long-held, socially-constructed assumptions, beliefs, and values about the experience or problem (Merriam & Clark, 1993)

Process Reflection - reflection on the problem-solving strategies necessary to deal with an experience (Cranton, 2006).

Subjective reframing - critical self-reflection of one's own assumptions about the following: a narrative (applying a reflective insight from someone else's narrative to one's own experience), a system (cultural, political, economic, etc.), an organization or workplace, feelings and interpersonal relations (as in psychological counseling or psychotherapy), or the way one learns (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23).

Transformative Learning – learning that results in dramatic, fundamental changes in the way that you see ourselves and the world we live in (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007).

Organization of the Dissertation

This research is organized into five Chapters. Chapter One established the foundation for the research and gave a brief overview of City Year and transformative learning. Chapter Two presents the history of national service. This chapter also explores the existing literature related to City Year and Transformative Learning Theory. This literature provides the framework upon which this dissertation is built. The third chapter describes the methodology used to answer the research questions involving the transformative impact of participation in City Year and the effect of the urban

environment. Chapter Four presents the findings from the study, including the thematic data that emerged from the research. The final chapter analyzes the findings, discusses implications for future national service programs, and suggests further research.

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined the structural framework for my dissertation. I provided an overview of the key concepts surrounding City Year and transformative learning theory. I identified a gap in scholarly knowledge applying transformative learning theory to participation in City Year. The research questions were presented. The potential benefits associated with investigating this phenomenon may be of possible interest to future national service programs. My choice in a phenomenological method was introduced and will be discussed further in Chapter Three. Chapter One concludes with a description of how the dissertations organized. This chapter has provided the foundation from which future chapters will explore how City Year corps members experienced Transformative Learning.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction to National Service

The Civilian Conservation Corps. Today's national service programs have their roots in the Civilian Conservation Corps (Munter, 1997). Initially operating under the name "Emergency Conservation Work," the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) ran from 1933 to 1942, and was considered "the first large-scale civic service program in the United States" (Gower, 1967; Perry & Thompson, 2004, p. 10). The CCC was not designed to be a national service program, but was intended to be a temporary economic relief effort "to provide work for some of the unemployed youths in the nation by using them in worthwhile conservation projects" (Gower, 1967, p. 59). The CCC was a joint effort on the part of the Departments of War, Labor, Agriculture, and the Interior (Perry & Thompson, 2004).

CCC enrollees lived in camps and received room, board, and \$30 a month, \$25 of which was sent to the enrollee's family (Bass, 2013; Perry & Thompson, 2004). Over the nine years of the program, nearly three million young men participated, nearly two billion trees were planted, 126,000 miles of minor roads were constructed, and 40 million acres

of farmland were protected from erosion (Bass, 2013; Munter, 1997; Perry & Thompson, 2004). In 1937 alone, CCC enrollees laid more than 9,960 miles of telephone lines and built 1,081,931 check dams (Bass, 2013). Like modern national service programs, the CCC encouraged educational attainment as well as service. While registered, many enrollees furthered their education. By 1939 approximately 75,000 illiterate enrollees learned to read and another 700,000 enrollees furthered their education (Bass, 2013). Almost 92% of the total enrollees were regularly attended organized classes and 94% of illiterate enrollees attended classes to learn how to read. From 1938-1939 approximately 5,150 of enrollees received eighth grade diplomas, about 1,050 finished high school, and 96 received college degrees (Gower, 1967, p. 62).

The CCC was not without controversy. At the time, many people associated “national service” with “military service” (Bass, 2013). Some congressmen were concerned that the CCC would introduce young men to military training (Gower, 1967). The CCC was not intended to be military service, but the Army’s involvement in the program made this distinction unclear to some. However, the Army’s involvement was purely practical, because the Army had the existing infrastructure and leadership capable of handling the logistics of providing large numbers of men with housing, supplies and medical care on short notice (Bass, 2013; Perry & Thompson, 2004). Additionally, there were concerns over socialism and communism’s relationship to national service. Many European countries, including Hitler’s Germany, required young men to serve in national service programs (Bass, 2013). Socialist leader, Norman Thomas, warned that “such work camps fit into the psychology of a fascist, not a Socialist, state” (Gower, 1967, p. 58). Some were also concerned that the CCC was an “attempt to achieve federal control

over the schools in an indirect and deceptive manner” (Gower, 1967, p. 58). Ensuring that the program was voluntary and temporary satisfied many critics of the program (Bass, 2013).

When America entered World War II, the immediate need for work relief, and the supply of unemployed young men, evaporated (Bass, 2013; Perry & Thompson, 2004). The fact that the program was not organized enough to lobby for its own continuation may have also contributed to its end (Bass, 2013). So, despite being a very popular and successful program, the CCC ended in 1942.

Volunteers in Service to America. National service reentered the public consciousness nineteen years later, in 1961, when President John F. Kennedy created the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps gave Americans the opportunity to serve in some of the poorest countries in the world. As the first wave of Peace Corps volunteers began returning home, many Americans began wondering why they couldn't serve America's poor as well. Kennedy wanted to establish a domestic Peace Corps, also referred to as a National Service Corps, program to “provide urgently needed services in urban and rural poverty areas” (“The history of AmeriCorps VISTA,” 2013). Kennedy's National Service Corps had four goals: “to provide full-time volunteers to work with the needy; for volunteers to motivate others to serve; to dramatize human needs; and to draw people into helping professions” (Bass, 2013, location 1970).

Kennedy formed a Presidential Study Group, led by then attorney general Robert Kennedy, to investigate the idea of establishing a civilian-service program. The study group concluded that “the citizen volunteer is a tradition of our democratic society...There is no doubt about the desire of the American to give his brother a hand”

(Bass, 2013, Location 1834). Based on the study group's findings, Kennedy proposed the National Service Corps Bill of 1963 to establish a domestic National Service Corps. Kennedy faced obstacles to the creation of VISTA. Conservatives and Southern Democrats opposed a national service corps, because they saw the Corps as an unnecessary and costly program which duplicated existing volunteer efforts and served as a "foot in the door" to increased federal welfare programs ("National Service Corps," 1964). Senators John Tower and Len Jordan said called the bill "improperly conceived, hastily written, badly constructed and totally unnecessary and undesirable a social, as well as economic point of view" ("National Service Corps," 1964). The bill narrowly passed the Senate, but never reached the floor of the House and Congress tabled the bill likely because the administration feared that the bill would not pass (Bass, 2013, location 1965; "National Service Corps," 1964). President Kennedy died before he could realize his domestic service corps dream.

Two years later, President Lyndon B. Johnson renamed the bill and revived it as part of the Economic Opportunity Act. The bill was ignored in debate, in part because the legislation was one paragraph buried in a much larger bill and because it only required a fraction of the money previously requested. The bill passed in 1964 (Bass, 2013). This bill established Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) and the Foster Grandparent program as part of the War on Poverty (Markovitz, Schneider, Jastrzab, & Frumkin, 2008; Perry & Thompson, 2004). Initially, VISTA was to be patterned after the CCC but was instead modeled after the Peace Corps (Gillette, 2010). VISTA's task was to address poverty "by providing material resources and organizational expertise through the placement of volunteers in government agencies. The overall goal was to enhance the

self-reliance of local communities in combating urban and rural poverty” (Perry & Thompson, 2004, p. 11). Volunteers received a modest stipend and free health care. Upon completion of service, they received a cash payment. All VISTA volunteers attended a six-week training program and were then disbursed to serve in some of the nation’s poorest areas VISTAs delivered “human services to the mentally ill, the elderly, the physically handicapped, migratory workers, residents of urban slums and depressed rural areas, American Indians, and other deprived groups” (Moskos, 1988, p. 53).

President Johnson addressed the first group of twenty VISTA volunteers by saying “Your pay will be low; the conditions of your labor often will be difficult. But you will have the satisfaction of leading a great national effort and you will have the ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man” (“The history of AmeriCorps VISTA,” 2013). By 1966, more than 3,600 VISTA members were serving throughout the country. The first VISTAs were young, upper middle class, liberal arts college graduates. Many were failed Peace Corps applicants (Moskos, 1988). Many of the projects started by the first VISTA are still around today, including some Head Start programs and Job Corps sites (“The history of AmeriCorps VISTA,” 2013). Sargent Shriver, head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the agency that housed VISTA, optimistically believed that VISTA would end poverty in “our lifetime” (Gillette, 2010, p. 115).

VISTA was not without controversy. President Johnson hoped that VISTA would “guide the young...encourage the downtrodden...teach the skills which may lead to a more satisfying and rewarding life” (Bass, 2013, Location 1999). But some “legislators were concerned about the program’s potential to veer off into community-advocacy territory,” fearing that volunteers would provoke, agitate, and “disregard local social

structures” (Bass, 2013, Location 1963). Even Senator Robert Kennedy, who approved of implementing a service corps program two years prior, feared that VISTAs would encourage people to be “dissatisfied with their landlords and politicians – dissatisfied even with this United States Senator” (Bass, 2013, Location 2001). Indeed, there were complaints about the radical actions of VITSA volunteers, alleging that they “were organizing political actions against incumbent mayors, incumbent school board members” (Bass, 2013, Location 2000).

Even though VISTA was a relatively small program, with less than 4,000 volunteers serving every year, President Richard Nixon specifically campaigned against it and against the Office of Economic Opportunity (Bass, 2013). Nixon questioned whether VISTA could serve any purpose. The administration was unable to end VISTA, so instead the program was reoriented toward direct service and moved out of the anti-poverty focused OEO and into a new, community service focused agency, ACTION (Bass, 2013). ACTION oversaw VISTA, the Peace Corps and other national service programs, such as the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and the Foster Grandparent Program (“FG 325 (ACTION),” 2009). VISTA members and alumni opposed the move to ACTION and the redirection to direct service. Under President Johnson, VISTA has been an indirect service program, “which means they help[ed] build the capacity of organizations to deliver valuable direct services to people living in poverty” (*AmeriCorps State versus AmeriCorps VISTA*, n.d.). When performing indirect service, VISTAs could “create new programs, write grants, and recruit volunteers. For example, a VISTA could establish a tutoring program, recruit and train volunteers, and raise money for the program—but would not tutor the children” (*AmeriCorps State*

versus AmeriCorps VISTA, n.d.). Providing direct service meant that VISTAs would now, for example, teach, tutor, or recruit and train volunteers. VISTA supporters did not like this change.

President Gerald Ford was also not fond of national service programs. As a representative, he once called Job Corps, a program to help poor teens and young adults get an education while learning a trade, a “boondoggle” and a “waste of money” on the floor of the house, which so angered Sargent Shriver that he proclaimed “Gerald Ford...can’t fart and chew gum at the same time” (Gillette, 2010, p. 117). As President, Ford proposed a budget which completely cut funding to VISTA (Bass, 2013), but Congress did not eliminate VISTA during his term.

President Jimmy Carter was dissatisfied with President Nixon and Ford’s poor treatment of VISTA. Carter wanted to reinvigorate VISTA and make it “a louder voice for the nation’s poor” (Bass, 2013, Location 2083). Carter appointed Sam Brown and Marjory Tabankin, two well-known former anti-war activists to head ACTION and VISTA (Bass, 2013). VISTA enrollment grew under the Carter administration. Approximately 4,000 volunteers a year served as community organizers, set up women’s crisis centers, and assisted co-ops, among other activities. Some of the more radical VISTA members began organizing tenant strikes and advocating for welfare rights, and there were concerns that VISTA had become a home for “social revolutionaries” who were not looking to help the poor, but rather viewed VISTA as “a vehicle for social and political upheaval” (Bass, 2013, Location 2085). Under the Carter administration, VISTA leaders further upset moderate and conservative members of Congress by making grants to left wing political organizations. In 1978 Congress investigated charges that volunteers

were engaged in “inappropriate, unproductive, and sometimes illegal activities” (Bass, 2013, Location 2085). As Moskos (1988) wrote: “Put in its best light, VISTA during the Carter administration sought to promote democratic participation among poor citizens. Put it another way, VISTA was subsidizing radicalism” (p. 54).

Like other Republican presidents before him, President Ronald Reagan was opposed to VISTA. In his first inaugural address, Reagan stated “In this present crisis, government is not the solution to our problem” (“Ronald Reagan, first inaugural address, January 20, 1981,” 2001). Government was the problem and Reagan did not view VISTA as a solution to poverty. Instead, he found it to be too “inappropriately ideological,” a waste of tax payers’ dollars, and “cruelly unrelated...to the day-to-day needs of the truly poor” (Bass, 2013, Location 8095). Reagan also believed that paid volunteers were not true volunteers. Because they were paid, they were perverting the true meaning of volunteerism. Reagan also believed that these volunteers were arrogant, because they were telling poor people what to do (Moskos, 1988, p. 54).

The Reagan administration made no secret of the desire to eliminate VISTA. The administration’s initial plan was to drastically cut funding over two years and end the program entirely in 1984. Reagan’s first VISTA director, James Burnley stated that he “work[ed] as hard as [he could] to be the last VISTA director” (Moskos, 1988, p. 54). VISTA Director Burnley created a list of 39 VISTA projects that he claimed were running radical organizations. He determined this because they used the key words “community organizing” in their grant applications. However, some of these organizations were local United Way agencies, which are not typically known for being radical organizations. Using VISTAs to do community organizing was also a preference

of the Carter administration, so it was possible many applications contained these key words in an effort to get approval. The idea that “using the wrong words can land you in trouble with the Reagan administration” was not well received and calling United Way agencies “radical” was not reported on favorably (Bass, 2013, Location 8095). Action attempted to remove “community organizing” as an approved VISTA activity but failed to follow their own rules for amending VISTA duties. Then the Reagan administration attempted to prevent VISTAs from participating in political demonstrations, which was determined by the courts to be a violation of First Amendment rights (Bass, 2013). Finally, the administration decided to prematurely remove VISTA from ACTION’s official letterhead and newsletters. This decision was also not viewed favorably and was seen as “executive branch overreach” (Bass, 2013, Location 2491). Ironically, all of this occurred in 1983, which President Reagan had declared “The Year of Volunteerism.” As Mimi Mager, Director of Friends of VISTA (FOV) put it: “...had the Reagan administration gone about it in a legal and ethical way, the program would have been gone...because they did it illegally, unethically, and politically,...that gave us the hook to get the hill involved, to get the media involved, to expose it” (Bass, 2013, Location 8095).

The Reagan administration inadvertently opened the doors to lobbying efforts to save VISTA. The Friends of VISTA (FOV) formed by Sargent Shriver was comprised of volunteers, academics, politicians, social organizations, and sponsoring agencies (Bass, 2013; Moskos, 1988). FOV mounted an effective grass-roots campaign to keep VISTA alive and was especially effective at mobilizing the civil servants who worked for ACTION. VISTA and ACTION employees had a vested interest in keeping VISTA

running, and were not especially helpful to the Reagan appointees, many of whom came from outside of Washington, who were looking to end the program.

In 1980, Congress agreed to cut VISTA's budget, cutting VISTA membership in half to about 2,000 volunteers a year, eliminating the training program, and forcing VISTA had to stop recruiting on college campuses. In 1983, the VISTA reauthorization bill came before Congress. The administration argued that VISTA was a controversial political advocacy organization and "that volunteers ought to be just that, rather than getting paid about \$7,000 a year as VISTA volunteers were" ("VISTA authorization," 1984). Congressional supporters maintained that the program was cost-effective because each VISTA member generated about \$24,000 in public- and private-sector resources each year ("VISTA authorization," 1984). Congress rejected the administration's request to eliminate VISTA and instead nearly doubled VISTA's budget to \$15 million. The House authorized a \$25 million funding floor, which meant that the first \$25 million spent on anti-poverty programs had to be spent on VISTA before smaller programs could receive funds. Reagan threatened Presidential veto over the funding floor requirement ("VISTA authorization," 1984). In approving of VISTA, the Republican majority in the Senate broke ranks with the administration. In subcommittee hearings, five witnesses spoke in favor of VISTA, only ACTION's director spoke against (Bass, 2013). In 1984, legislation restored funding to VISTA, reinstated pre-service training, required that all VISTA funds be used to fight poverty, and required that at least 20% of VISTAs be over the age of 55 ("Extension of Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) clears despite Reagan's opposition," 1985).

George H.W. Bush was the first President to take office satisfied with VISTA and the first Republican President to not attempt to end the program (Bass, 2013). Bush saw himself as a “kinder, gentler” Republican and he embraced the program. Speaking at the 25th anniversary of VISTA at a White House ceremony in 1990, he said,

You don’t often see [VISTAs] because they’re off helping others in the most unlikely places. You don’t often hear from them because they’re too modest to brag. And you don’t often notice them at work because theirs is a quiet mission – but together, helping move this country forward. So, when I talk of the Thousand Points of Light, please know that no light is more dazzling, brighter, than the VISTA volunteers (Bush, 1990).

In 1989, the first year of his presidency, President George H. W. Bush founded the Points of Light Foundation to promote volunteerism. President Bush “launched the modern volunteer service movement by signing the National and Community Service Act of 1990, the first piece of federal service legislation in almost 20 years” (“George Herbert Walker Bush biography,” 2013). The National and Community Service Act of 1990 created The Commission on National and Community Service, a new, independent federal agency to encourage community service (“AmeriCorps VISTA,” 2013; “Legislation,” 2013). The Commission was a bi-partisan effort (Munter, 1997). The Commission provided training and technical assistance grants and developed a national service plan (Bass, 2013). In 1991, the Commission on National and Community Service granted City Year, a privately funded youth corps a \$7 million federal grant “to expand and develop

over two years as a model for a system of national service” (Goldsmith, 1993, p. 245).

The National Civilian Community Corps. In the early 1990s, a bipartisan group of senators, influenced by the Civilian Conservation Corps, worked with the Bush administration to draft legislation to create The National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). Enacted as part of the 1993 Defense Authorization Act, the purpose of the NCCC was to “explore the possibility of using post-Cold War military resources to work to solve problems at home” (“Legislation,” 2013). AmeriCorps NCCC is a full-time, residential program for men and women ages 18–24. Members are assigned to live on one of five campuses, located in Denver, Colorado; Sacramento, California; Perry Point, Maryland; Vicksburg, Mississippi; and Vinton, Iowa. Members then travel to complete service projects throughout the region. The campuses are typically either former hospitals or military bases. The mission of AmeriCorps NCCC is to “strengthen communities and develop leaders through direct, team-based national and community service. In partnership with non-profits—secular and faith based, local municipalities, state governments, federal government, national or state parks, Indian Tribes and schools members complete service projects throughout the region they are assigned.” (“AmeriCorps NCCC for individuals,” 2013).

AmeriCorps. In his inaugural address, President Bill Clinton called on a new generation of youth to complete a season of service, saying:

I challenge a new generation of young Americans to a season of service: to act on your idealism by helping troubled children, keeping company with those in need, reconnecting our torn communities. There is so much

to be done; enough, indeed, for millions of others who are still young in spirit to give of themselves in service, too. In serving, we recognize a simple but powerful truth: We need each other, and we must care for one another (“William J. Clinton, first Inaugural Address, January 20, 1993,” 2001).

Seven months later, President Clinton signed The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 into law. This Act established a new federal agency, Commission on National and Community Service (CNCS). There was debate over the name “Corporation for National and Community Service.” Some felt that “national” should be removed from the title and preferred to stress the community aspect. Others felt that the word “community” should be omitted and that “national” should be emphasized. Officials within the program shortened the name to “Corporation for National Service” (CNS) (Bass, 2013, Location 3546). At some point, the CNS began abbreviating their name as “CNCS.”

The CNS merged the Commission on National and Community Service and ACTION, to form a new agency (“Our history,” 2005). The Corporation’s mission is “to improve the lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. In particular the focus is directed towards addressing the education, public safety, human, and environmental needs of American communities” (Markovitz et al., 2008). CNS administered three programs: the newly created AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. The Senior Corps was made up of the Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and RSVP (“National service timeline,” 2012). RSVP volunteers help agencies to recruit and manage other volunteers, as well as participate in

environmental projects, mentor and tutor children, respond to natural disasters, and many other activities. Foster Grandparents serve one-on-one as tutors and mentors to young people with special needs. Senior Companions help frail seniors and other adults maintain independence primarily in the clients' own home ("What Is Senior Corps?," 2013). Learn and Serve America promoted service learning in schools (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2011). VISTA joined two other programs under the AmeriCorps umbrella: AmeriCorps State and National and AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) (Markovitz et al., 2008). As part of AmeriCorps, VISTA retained its focus on fighting poverty and its administrative structure; VISTA is still run federally with some assistance from the state office. AmeriCorps State and National provided opportunities for direct service and awarded grants to programs chosen by the CCS or by individual state offices. AmeriCorps State and National differed from VISTA by letting state commissions largely determine their projects (Bass, 2013). Another way that the two AmeriCorps programs differ is the way that stipends are disbursed. AmeriCorps State and National members are paid by their state office while VISTAs are paid by the federal government (*AmeriCorps State versus AmeriCorps VISTA*, n.d.).

A new feature of AmeriCorps was a tuition award. The idea of a tuition award was copied from City Year. Previously VISTA volunteers had received a cash bonus at the end of their service, but now AmeriCorps members could choose to receive a cash award or an education award upon completion of their year of service. The education award could be used to pay off existing loans or pay for future college tuition. In campaign focus groups, neither service nor educational awards generated much excitement, however, tying the two together did. Additionally, the educational award

made AmeriCorps seem less elitist and more accessible to the middle class because it could help pay for college (Bass, 2013, Location 3623). Some, like Representative Dick Armey, questioned whether AmeriCorps was a service program or a student loan program, saying that it was “akin to a welfare program for... aspiring yuppies” (Bass, 2013, Location 3642). To the general public, however, the dual purpose of AmeriCorps was popular. The policy makers in the Office of National Service believed that service was at the heart of the program. While White House political strategists felt that AmeriCorps “tap[ped] into the middle-class anxiety about college costs” (Bass, 2013, Location 3642).

AmeriCorps supporters also had to convince Congress that paid volunteers would not hurt traditional volunteerism. Some felt that paying some volunteers would discourage anyone to volunteer for free, so supporters had to define the difference between volunteerism and service. The difference is that volunteerism is a part-time, occasional activity, while service is a full-time, year-round commitment. When Republicans gained control of the House in 1994, supporters had to demonstrate how AmeriCorps could help organizations improve their volunteer efforts. The President and founder of Habitat for Humanity, Millard Fuller, testified that “AmeriCorps increased the number and efficiency of volunteers” (Bass, 2013, Location 3734). Fortunately, Habitat for Humanity was a favorite charity of House Speaker Newt Gingrich and AmeriCorps did not face any funding cuts. Gingrich, however, wasn’t against using AmeriCorps as a political pawn. Gingrich once said AmeriCorps could become a “useful hostage” because Clinton loved it so much (Bass, 2013, Location 5168). In 1995, House Republicans

debated slashing AmeriCorps' budget by two-thirds solely to "humiliate Clinton" (New York Times Editorial Board, 1995).

Even though the Senate voted to cut AmeriCorps' budget and the House voted for the elimination of AmeriCorps entirely during the Clinton administration, six months later the Senate approved President George W. Bush's AmeriCorps budget (Bass, 2013). Like his father, President George W. Bush was an AmeriCorps supporter. The President called for the expansion of AmeriCorps and other national service programs during his State of the Union address in 2002 (Lenkowsky, 2003). During this speech, President Bush asked all Americans to devote two years or 4,000 hours to community service during their lifetimes ("National service timeline," 2012).

In 2002, the Bush administration drafted the Citizen Service Act. The act asked Congress to expand AmeriCorps by 50% to 75,000 members (Bass, 2013, Location 4308). The act also reformed and reauthorized other national service programs (*Fact Sheet: The Citizen Service Act (H.R. 4854)*, 2002; Spalding, 2003). The reauthorization attracted a lot of negative attention. Conservatives wanted to ensure that volunteers would be banned from serving in family planning clinics. Liberals opposed some of the proposed changes to VISTA. Grantee organizations were dissatisfied with proposed funding changes. The bill was approved in committee with bi-partisan support and was expected to pass without major revision or debate, but the bill was never passed by Congress (Broder, 2002; Spalding, 2003). There was an important reason that the bill did not pass. Republican Dick Armey refused to bring the bill to vote. There were less than 100 days until the midterm election and Dick Armey was trying to protect the minority of hard-core conservatives from having to make "a difficult vote" and "alienate" their base

(Broder, 2002). Armev was never a fan of AmeriCorps, viewing it as Clinton's pet project and calling the program "obnoxious," saying that AmeriCorps members were "engaged in "government-managed, well-paid social activism" (Dionne Jr. & Drogosz, 2003). Dick Armev also referred to AmeriCorps members as "a welfare program for aspiring yuppies"(Dionne Jr. & Drogosz, 2003).

In April 2009, President Barak Obama signed the bipartisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act ("National service timeline," 2012). The Serve America Act expanded programs administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service, for example, support more than tripled with the goal to increase from 75,000 members annually to 250,000 by 2017 (*Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act one year later*, 2010). In May 2009 President Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which provided \$200 million to support AmeriCorps programs.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act created more opportunities for community service. In 2012 the FEMA Corps launched ("National service timeline," 2012). FEMA Corps is a collaboration between the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Corporation for National and Community Service. One thousand six hundred AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) service corps members service is solely devoted to disaster preparedness, response, and recovery ("FEMA Corps -- AmeriCorps in action," 2013). One thousand six hundred Corps members serve in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery ("FEMA Corps -- AmeriCorps in action," 2013). Members are trained in CPR, first aid, disaster response and firefighting ("National service in Ohio," 2012).

Less than two years after signing the bi-partisan Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, and pledging to expand AmeriCorps from 75,000 to 250,000 members per year, the Republican controlled House voted to eliminate funding for AmeriCorps entirely. Sixty of the Republicans who voted to end the program had, two years earlier has voted for the passage of the Serve America Act (Bass, 2011). In a callback to communist allegations about the CCC, Glenn Beck said about Obama and AmeriCorps, “This is what Hitler did with the SS, he had his own people, he had the Brownshirts” (Edwards, 2009, Aug 28). Michelle Bachman referred to AmeriCorps as “re-education campus for young people” (Kleefeld, 2009). More recently in a scathing editorial in USA Today, author James Broward (Bovard, 2014) called AmeriCorps a “wasteful flop,” which is “part political slush fund” and “part window dressing.”

Under the Trump administration, AmeriCorps was threatened with elimination again, when President Trump’s proposed budget eliminated the Corporation for National and Community Service (LaFraniere & Rappeport, 2017). However, AmeriCorps currently has bipartisan support in the House and Senate. On March 23, 2018, President Trump signed the 2018 Federal budget which provided \$1,063,958,000 to the CNCS for 2018. This is a \$33.6 million increase over the previous fiscal year (“Fiscal year 2019 USDA budget summary,” 2018).

National service today. National service programs are generally poorly understood by the general public and the media. Even though a million individuals have participated in AmeriCorps, based on my own personal experience, AmeriCorps keeps a low profile. Most people do not know what AmeriCorps is or does, if they’ve even heard of it at all. AmeriCorps does not advertise. AmeriCorps programs are rarely covered in

the news, outside of the editorial pages. AmeriCorps is not a popular topic among academics either. AmeriCorps is not a common topic in journals or dissertations. As a result, there is an absence of research on National Service in general and City Year specifically. Most studies on National Service have been conducted in conjunction with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administers national service programs including AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Senior Corps.

Politicians occasionally exhibit a poor understanding of AmeriCorps programs. President Gerald Ford called a national service program a “boondoggle” and a “waste of money” (Gillette, 2010, p. 117). President Ronald Reagan also saw national service programs as a waste of money (Bass, 2013). In 1993 then-Representative Dick Armey referred to AmeriCorps as “a welfare program for aspiring yuppies” and claimed that members were engaged in “government-managed, well-paid social activism” (Dionne Jr. & Drogosz, 2003). As Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, declared that national service is “coerced volunteerism. It’s gimmickry” (Molyneaux, 1995). Glenn Beck compared Obama and AmeriCorps to the Nazis, saying, “This is what Hitler did with the SS, he had his own people, he had the Brownshirts” (Edwards, 2009). Michelle Bachman referred to AmeriCorps as “re-education campus for young people,” even though her son was serving in Teach for America, an AmeriCorps sponsored program (Kleefeld, 2009). More recently in a scathing editorial in USA Today, author James Brovard (2014) called AmeriCorps a “wasteful flop,” which is “part political slush fund” and “part window dressing.”

Despite what has been said, AmeriCorps is not well-paid (members receive stipends that hover around the poverty line), Obama’s army, or a re-education camp.

Studies also indicate that AmeriCorps is not a wasteful flop. AmeriCorps gets results. Most studies on National Service have been conducted in conjunction with the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), the federal agency that administers national service programs including AmeriCorps, VISTA, and Senior Corps. These studies are primarily quantitative in nature and focus on the effects that AmeriCorps programs have on nonprofit agencies and the individuals that they serve.

Research on national service. The CNCS's 2007 study surveyed the organizations where members served. Among those organizations, 93% reported that AmeriCorps members helped them serve additional persons in the community; 84% reported that AmeriCorps members helped them recruit and train additional volunteers, build relationships with other organizations and secure additional resources allowing them to expand their reach in the community; 80% reported that members helped their organizations develop additional partnerships with other organizations; and 62% reported that members helped bring in donations of goods or services. The recruitment and training of volunteers is important for non-profit organizations because an estimated four out of every five relies on volunteers. In 2006, AmeriCorps members recruited or managed 1.4 million volunteers (Jastrzab et al., 2007).

Most studies about AmeriCorps examine the impact that AmeriCorps programs have on communities. These studies show AmeriCorps to be beneficial to sponsoring non-profit agencies, schools, and communities. Wasik (1997) studied 16 volunteer reading program, including Reading Recovery, an AmeriCorps tutoring programs. Reading Recovery was a pilot program in three Ohio schools for children who were below grade level but not in the bottom 20% of their class. Children met with an

AmeriCorps tutor two or three times a week for 30 minutes. Members also assist teachers in the Early Learning Literacy Initiative (ELLI), a whole class reading instruction program. Prior to and throughout service members received 150 hours of training and meet with teachers once a week for two hours to discuss students and strategies. A pre-post evaluation showed that some gains have been made. AmeriCorps VISTA members served at Reading Together, an intergenerational tutoring program. VISTA members taught parents to teach their own children to read. VISTA members trained parents in the use of “prop boxes.” Each box contained supplies for literacy training, for example, a book, play objects and blank paper for children to write their own stories. While there was no hard data to support the effectiveness of this program, feedback from parents and the school was positive. Another program studied by Wasik was SLICE/AmeriCorps. Developed in Simpson County Kentucky Schools, the focus of this program was one-on-one tutoring in kindergarten and 1st grade. Children were tutored four times a week for 30 minutes. Informal tests show that students made gains in reading skills.

Allen and Chavkin (2004) examined the effect that AmeriCorps members had on middle school students’ academic achievement. They studied a passage rates in core subjects such as English, reading, math, and science using a within-program control group, comparing students those who received more treatment with those who receive less treatment. The middle school tutoring program, run by 31 AmeriCorps tutors, was part of the larger dropout prevention program Community in Schools located in central Texas. The goal of the tutoring program was to assist students in core subjects (English, math, reading, science) in which they had failed the previous year or were currently in danger of failing. Each participating school received one to four volunteer tutors who

worked either full or part time. Tutors and students developed tutoring plans for each student. Students were either tutored after school, during class, or during an elective class. Students either completed homework or practiced skills such as multiplication and reading comprehension. The average six-week grade before tutoring was a 60%. The average end of year grade was a 73% (the final grade included the previous grade) (p.12). Approximately half of students (120) received between one and 13.5 hours of tutoring, the other half (126) received between 14 and 61 hours of tutoring. Students who received less tutoring were less successful than the students who received more. In the group receiving less than 14 hours of tutoring, 60.8% passed and 39.2% failed, while among students receiving 14 hours or more of tutoring, 80.1% passed and 19.9% failed. Students who received more tutoring were more likely to increase to a passing grade than could be expected by chance.

Moss, Swartz, Obeidallah, Stewart, and Greene (2001) conducted a study of the effects of an AmeriCorps tutoring program on children's reading proficiencies and other classroom behavior. The sample was comprised of 68 programs, 96 sites, and 869 children. The pre-test occurred in late fall 1999/early winter 2000 and the post-test occurred spring 2000. Reading performance was gauged by a comprehension test and a reading skills test (Woodcock Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery-Revised). Teachers also reported their views on students' reading performance and attitudes in the classroom. Teachers used two standardized ratings scales to measure classroom behavior: The Behavioral Academic Self-Esteem (BASE) and the cooperation sub-scale from the Social Skills Rating System (SSRS). All tutored students improved their reading performance from pretest to posttest with gains of more than expected for a typical child at their grade

level. The gains were statistically significant and large enough to indicate meaningful improvement in reading performance. According to the teachers' observations, most students improved their reading skills over the course of the year. Classroom behavior in 1st and 3rd grade boys showed improvement on BASE, while girls made no change. However, all girls had received average to above-average scores in the pre-test, while boys at all grades scored slightly below average on the pre-test. Researchers identified four effective practices were significantly related to gains in students' reading scores: Tutors met with students at least three times a week, the program conducted formal evaluations, tutors were trained prior to and during the duration of the tutoring program and the programs were moderately or fully implemented. Students in programs meeting at least three times a week increased reading scores by 2.1 points more than their peers in programs that met less frequently. Students in programs where tutors received training before and during the year obtained gains of 2.1 points more on the reading test than students in programs where tutors did not have such training. Students in programs that implemented these 4 effective practices showed larger gains in reading skills (5.4 points) than their counterparts in programs that had 3 elements (2.5 points). Students in programs that implemented none of the four practices showed no gains.

Minkus and Duster (1996) evaluated seven AmeriCorps programs in California: Building Up Los Angeles (BULA), Escondido Empowerment Corps (EEC), Linking San Francisco, Building Communities – CCBHC, The Sonoma Project, YMCA PRYDE, and W.A.T.E.R. Shed Project. Linking San Francisco reported a 75% increase in parent participation at the nine schools with AmeriCorps members and that the number of students and teachers participating also increased (p.20). At the Sonoma project,

AmeriCorps members collaborated with the YMCA to provide leadership training for children 13 to 14 years old at YMCA summer camps. Because of AmeriCorps involvement, the YMCA was able to recruit 41 new trainers and serve 600 children a day (p.20). California YMCA PRYDE anticipated a 50% decrease in dropouts, approximately 30% decrease in teen pregnancy, slightly less than 20% decrease in suspensions, and almost 10% decrease in course failures as a result of AmeriCorps after-school program (p.21).

Public safety is another benefit of AmeriCorps involvement. Programs like BULA, EEC, and YMCA PRYDE deliver mentoring programs and serve as a “safe haven.” Safe haven sites provide children a safe place away from community violence and gang affiliations and may have programs that focus on mediation and violence prevention. In some cases, AmeriCorps members functioned as liaisons between the community and police. As a result, BULA reported a 20% drop in targeted crimes in the Yucca Corridor (p.22). At the EEC, AmeriCorps members presented employment workshops to area youth, helping them develop skills needed for work and over 100 youth had been placed in jobs by the end of the summer (p. 22). AmeriCorps members taught conflict resolution skills to 40 students, preventing 50 conflicts.

Additionally, AmeriCorps members acted as facilitators between community members and social service providers. At BULA, members provided teen outreach for the Healthy Start Clinic in Hollywood, making 31 health education presentations to 312 students. Prior to the outreach efforts, the clinic saw two teens a week. After the health education presentations, the clinic saw seven teens a week. That number continued to grow, with the number of students served increasing from 100 to 350 (p.23). Members

also made 734 health and social service referrals to students, community residents, and clients of the Los Angeles Free Clinic (p.23). At Building Communities, CCBHC, members planned 37 Resident Association meetings, with 503 residents participating. Members also organized and planned training sessions in banking, which 111 residents attended and organized a health fair for 250 residents (p.24). AmeriCorps members provided 2,265 youth with recreational activities, drug prevention education, and community-building activities five days a week for two hours a day at California YMCA PRYDE. The program reached three times as many youth as it projected in its first year. When AmeriCorps members collaborated with the W.A.T.E.R. Shed Project, participation in the Adopt-a-Watershed program increased by 100 percent. More than 70% of teachers participating in the Adopt-a-Watershed program added Adopt-a-Watershed to their K-12 curriculum.

Moore-Hart and Karabenick (2009) studied 167 students in Southeastern Michigan attending tutoring sessions run by AmeriCorps members. Students were recommended to the program by their teachers based on performance in reading using each school's assessment system, teacher observations, and their performance on the Stieglitz Informal Reading Inventory. All students were below grade level, and many were 2, 3, or 4 years below grade level. The students attended tutoring either two or four times a week. The tutors attended 30 weekly training sessions for 90 minutes each. 70% of students improved by at least one grade level. Students who attended tutoring four times a week saw a larger improvement than students who attended two times a week. Over 2/3 of teachers reported that they saw improvements in students reading and writing skills, 85% thought that students benefited from the program, and 84% recommended that

students continue in the program. 97% of parents said that their children benefited from the program, many said that their children's self-esteem improved, that they read more, watched TV less, and were less worried about reading.

Neumann, Tamura, Kormedni, and Gardner (1995) applied a cost-benefit analysis to three AmeriCorps programs: AmeriCorps for Math and Literacy, Project First, and the East Bay Conservation Corps. They studied the methods these projects used and estimated the benefits using data from projects similar in approach and implementation. Benefits received by AmeriCorps members were as follows: a stipend payment, fringe benefits (the Segal Education Award, health insurance, and a childcare allowance), a charitable contribution value due to performing public service, and the value of future educational benefits received through education voucher system. Benefits to society from the three programs included the following: increased future earnings of participants, reduced crime and consequent reduced social costs, the general benefits that accompany better informed citizens, increased General Educational Development pass rate, and consumer surplus. The cost-benefit ratio calculated the present value of the aggregate net expected benefits accruing to society, to AmeriCorps members, and to donors relative to the costs in terms of the present value of federal dollars expended. Benefits were measured to be \$1.60 to \$2.60 per dollar of federal outlay.

Introduction to City Year

When City Year was founded in 1988, it was an independent non-profit program funded by a variety of sources including by private funding, corporate sponsors, and government grants. After the establishment of the CNCS in 1993, City Year became an AmeriCorps sponsored program. City Year's mission is to "build democracy through

citizen service, civic leadership and social entrepreneurship” (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019). City Year allows men and women 18-24 years old (called “near peers” because they are not much older than the students they are tutoring) to serve at urban schools throughout the United States for one year. City Year focuses on a student’s attendance, behavior, and math and English Language Arts performance. Throughout the year, corps members provide tutoring, make attendance and positive phone calls home, serve as mentors, and complete service projects. In exchange, City Year members receive a modest stipend monthly and a tuition grant upon completion of the program (“About City Year,” 2012).

When joining City Year, prospective corps members can choose where they want to serve, or they can be placed in the area with the greatest need. Because corps members are not necessarily from the city where they are serving and the stipend is not enough to live on without roommates, City Year members often live together. City Year members are provided with a uniform jacket, bus passes, and a modest stipend of just over \$1,000 a month (“Compensation benefits,” 2017).

Most weeks, City Year members serve at their service site (either an elementary, middle, or high school) Monday through Thursday, while Fridays are typically reserved for training. A couple of times a year, corps members work through the book *The Idealists’ Journey* (also sometimes called *The Idealists’ Handbook*), City Year’s leadership development guide. *The Idealists’ Journey* encourages discussion and reflection in order to help corps members process their experiences (“A Day in the life | City Year,” 2017).

Cops members serve in a school with the same team members for the entire school year. Each team is overseen by an Impact Manager (IM). Each IM oversees one or two teams. Each team also has a Team Leader (TL). Team Leaders are corps members who returned for a second year of service. They provide support for the first year members at their service site (Klau, 2012, p. 419). Team Leaders also lead *Idealist's Journey* groups once a month during training,

City Year recognizes that a “high-impact service experience is the essential element of transformational leadership development” (Klau, 2012, p. 411), so they provide “front-line, grass-roots service” in high needs schools (Klau, 2012, p. 413). In the typical day, a corps member arrives at school before the students do. Corps members gather in the City Year room where they meet for “First Circle.” In First Circle, the corps members stand in a circle and talk about what will happen that day. Then the corps members wait at the front door to greet the students. If corps members are serving in a K-8 school, they may stay in one room all day with the same teacher. If they are in a high school, they typically follow a cohort of students to all their academic classes. In the classroom, a corps member may act as a teacher’s assistant or tutor students one-on-one or in a small group. During lunch, the corps members may offer tutoring and mentoring in the City Year room. They might also eat lunch with the students. In high school, when the students have gym, art, or other electives, corps members have a free period, or they do one-on-one tutoring during those times. At the end of the day, corps members organize after school activities, which may include tutoring, guest speakers, and clubs. At the end of the day, all corps members meet for Final Circle. In Final Circle, corps

members share what happened that day. It is not uncommon for a corps member to work a 12-hour day.

The City Year experience is specifically designed to be transformative in order to “transform idealistic young leaders into effective, engaged, and inspiring civic leaders” (Klau, 2012, p. 409). The organization’s development model, the Flame of Idealism, includes a four-part focus on immersive organizational culture (context), civic identity (“Be”), civic capacity (“Know”), and civic action (“Do”), which helps corps members change the outer world through service while also changing their inner world through leadership development (Klau, 2012). City Year training manual, *The Idealists’ Journey*, is inspired by Joseph Campbell’s 2008 “Hero’s Journey” framework. Campbell studied thousands of myths and stories from many different cultures. He came to the realization that all humans since the beginning of time have been telling the same story over and over again. Campbell called this universal story “The Hero’s Journey.” The story illustrates that there is some “primal, universal inner experience, some transformational rite of passage that every individual must go through if they aspire to achieve heroic greatness” (Klau, 2009c). *The Idealist’s Journey* uses Campbell’s understanding of myths as a guide to inner transformation. *The Idealist’s Journey* asks each corps member to understand their year of service as a journey of personal transformation (Klau, 2012, p. 421). *The Idealist’s Journey* references the journeys of mythic, heroic literary figures, such as Odysseus, pop culture heroes like Luke Skywalker, and real-life civic leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela, and Mother Theresa.

The Idealist’s Journey is divided into three stages: The Departure, The Road of Trials, and the Return. In the first stage, called The Departure, “the idealist leaves behind

a familiar, comfortable home to embark upon a journey into mysterious terrain” (Klau, 2012, p. 421). The second stage is The Road of Trials. In this stage, “the idealist faces trials and challenges that profoundly test his or her character. In ways that the idealist scarcely understands at the time, she or he is powerfully transformed by each challenge along the journey” (Klau, 2012, p. 421). The Road of Trials focuses on recognizing a disorienting event and allows for discourse and reflection. The final stage is The Return, “in which the idealist returns to his or her homeland and is able to share the new strength, knowledge, and wisdom earned through confronting the challenge of the journey” (Klau, 2012, p. 421). This portion of the training program helps the corps member reflect, engage in discourse, and plan for future action.

Studies suggest that City Year’s efforts in schools work. For example, during the 2010-2011 school year at four high-poverty middle schools in Philadelphia, 76% of students who began the year failing math improved by at least one grade level and 65% of students failing English improved by at least one grade level. The schools experienced an increase in attendance among students with under 80% attendance rates and there was a 76% reduction in the number of students identified as off-track in behavior (Balfanz, Andrekopoulos, Hertz, & Kliman, 2012). In the 2017-2018 school year, City Year saw a 51% reduction in the number of students off track in English Language Arts and a 50% reduction in the number of students off track in math. Students improved their attendance by an average of 3.5 additional days in school. (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019)

Anderson & Fabiano (Anderson & Fabiano, 2007) surveyed City Year alumni. Their sample was comprised of 2,189 randomly selected alumni who participated in City

Year sometime between 1988 and 2003. There were two primary reasons. First, nearly all the alumni joined City Year to explore options in deciding what they wanted to do with their lives. Many alumni saw their service as an opportunity to take a year off from school or career and evaluate what they really wanted from life. Another important reason for joining was that many alumni felt they had lost their enthusiasm for schooling or were not doing well in school and were looking for an alternative to continuing formal education.

Sullivan (2006) looked at the results of City Year's Young Heroes Program, a community service program for middle students. All graduates of the program completed at least 80 hours of community service. Eighty percent of those said they planned to continue to do community service (p.44). Students also reported feeling more confident, courageous, outgoing, and grateful after participating the program.

Introduction to Transformative Learning

Mezirow first wrote about transformative learning, also called transformational learning, in the 1970s after conducting a study on adult women entering community colleges after an extended period of absence from school or careers. The study looked at women participating in programs specifically designed to assist them in their return to school or seeking employment. The study of thirty-six women concluded that many of these women had undergone a personal transformation. From this, Mezirow first identified the ten phases of transformative learning (Kitchenham, 2008; Mezirow, 1978).

Transformative learning occurs when there is a transformation in one of our beliefs or attitudes or in our entire perspective (Merriam et al., 2007). Transformational learning is a different kind of learning than informational learning (Kagen, 2000, p. 49).

Informational learning brings new information into existing frames of reference.

Transformative learning shapes and changes people. One is different afterwards in ways that both they and other people can recognize (Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock, 2012). Transformation does not refer to just any kind of change, even if the change is dramatic and consequential (Kagen, 2000, p. 49).

People can learn and change in a variety of way. They can change their perception of themselves, they can gain confidence or improve their self-esteem, or they can learn new information that changes their mind about something. While these could all be considered important kinds of change, they are not transformative if they don't change one's frame of reference (Kagen, 2000, p. 49).

Transformation only occurs when there is a deep shift in a frame of reference (Daloz, 2000). When transformative learning occurs, "problematic frames of reference" are transformed (Mezirow, 2003, p. 58). Frames of reference are reconstructed so that they become more dependable and better justified (Cranton, 1994). Frames of reference are learned sets of fixed assumptions and expectations or ways of knowing that represent cultural paradigms (Kagen, 2000; Mezirow, 2003). Frames of reference result as a way to interpret an experience (Mezirow, 2000). People may or may not be aware of their frames of reference because they are "unintentionally assimilated from the culture" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16).

A frame of reference is a meaning perspective. Mezirow (2000) defines meaning perspective as the set of assumptions and expectations through which we filter our experiences. Transformation in meaning perspectives is started by experiencing a dilemma which cannot be resolved simply by acquiring more information, improving

problem solving skills, or adding to one's capabilities. Resolving these dilemmas and transforming meaning perspectives requires that one become aware of their assumptions and the way that they influence the way in which we see ourselves and others (Mezirow, 1978).

Frames of reference are composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and the resulting points of view. Habits of mind are sets of assumptions that influence how experiences are interpreted (Mezirow, 2000). Habits of mind are the product of family, community, culture, and society. Habits of mind include political orientation, ethnocentricity, fear of change, and religious views (Mezirow, 2000). Habits of mind tend to remain unquestioned until one encounters a situation that does not fit into the habit of mind (Cranton, 1994).

A habit of mind becomes expressed as a point of view. A point of view is made up of meaning schemes (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (2000) describes meaning schemes as “sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgments – that tacitly and directly shape a specific interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality” (p. 18). Examples of meaning schemes include our values, cause and effect relationships, scenarios of events, what others will be like, our idealized self-image, and our sense of self (Mezirow, 2000). Meaning schemes commonly operate outside of our awareness and determine what we see and how we see it (Mezirow, 2000). They suggest what we will do automatically unless brought into critical reflection. The difference between meaning scheme and meaning perspective is that meaning schemes are more specific and less global, they refer to a particular belief,

while meaning perspectives are more global and metaphorical in nature and tend to reflect a more inclusive worldview (Taylor, 2000, p. 239).

Mezirow (2000) listed the ten steps which one might experience in some variation before transformation occurs:

1. Experience a disorienting dilemma
2. Undergo self-examination
3. Conduct a deep assessment of personal assumptions
4. Share and analyze experience with others
5. Explore options for new ways of acting
6. Build competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. Take action - can be small scale (change in thoughts) or large scale (social action)
8. Acquire knowledge or skills for action
9. Try new roles and assess feedback
10. Reintegrate into society with a new perspective

While the ten steps do not necessarily have to occur consecutively, the very nature of the model does imply at least some order. For example, you can only reintegrate at the end, and you can only be disoriented in the beginning (Cranton, 1994). The steps are not necessarily sequential and not dependent upon successful completion of the previous step (Taylor, 2000). Individuals may skip steps, complete some steps out of order, or repeat steps. One study found that only 30% of a sample of seven participants demonstrated all 10 steps. Another study found the entire process to be “recursive, evolving, and spiraling in nature” (Taylor, 2000, p. 290).

Of the ten steps, there are four main components of the transformative learning process: an experience, self-reflection, reflection with others, and action (Merriam et al., 2007). Outlined in the following paragraphs is a short description of some of the features of each of the steps.

A disorienting dilemma. To begin the transformative leaning process, an individual must experience a disorienting dilemma. A disorienting dilemma is defined as “an inner disequilibrium in which the harmony of the self is disturbed yet the problem is neither understood nor specifically named” (Mezirow, 1991). This dilemma does not fit in with and challenges current ways of understandings and frames of reference. After experiencing a disorienting dilemma, one may experience emotional turmoil, disturbing dreams, physical pain, or cognitive dissonance (Mezirow, 1991). A disorienting dilemma cannot be solved by learning more about the problem or learning to cope with the problem. In order to confront the dilemma, one must undergo significant changes by reassessing previously held beliefs (Mezirow, 1978).

Disorientation can be epochal, where it happens suddenly and dramatically. Or this disorienting event can occur incrementally, gradually with a series of progressive changes in points of view that happen over time which ultimately results in a change in a habit of mind (Mezirow, 2000). Not everyone will experience a disorienting event the same, even when a situation is purposely designed to promote transformation (Cranton, 1994). The most important factor in starting the process is that the individual wants to learn. Additionally, the experience must personally affect the learner and be “subjectively valued by the learner” (Merriam & Clark, 1993, p. 129). Cranton (1994) lists several possible alternatives for disorienting events:

- A traumatic event that initiates a careful, reasoned exploration of values and beliefs and leads to a changed perspective.
- A traumatic event that lies dormant for a long period of time and only gradually leads a person to change.
- A deeply felt, positive experience or a series of positive experiences that leads to a questioning of either personal habits of mind or perspectives on the world.
- A sudden, disturbing experience that leads to an immediate and non-rational switch in beliefs.
- A gradual, unnoticed, and perhaps not entirely conscious process of change over time that is only recognized in retrospect.
- A series of small life changes, none of which are dramatic in themselves, but that lead cumulatively to a revision in a habit of mind over time.
- A deliberate, conscious effort over time to change oneself and the way one sees the world.

Critical self-reflection. After experiencing a disorienting event, the learner must critically examine his or her beliefs as they relate to his or her experience. “A mindful transformative learning experience requires that the learner make an informed and reflective decision to act on his or her own reflective insight” (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 23–24). Cranton (1994) developed a framework for asking questions in order to foster the four types of learning: learning something new, elaborating on something known, transforming an assumption or belief, and transforming a broad perspective or worldview (p. 139). Reflection is not the same as introspection. Introspection occurs when one becomes aware of the fact that they are thinking, feelings, or behaving in a certain way

(Mezirow, 1991). Introspection is not reflective, because reflection involves a critique (Mezirow, 1991).

Mezirow differentiates among three forms of critical self-reflection: content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. Content reflection involves thinking about the actual experience itself and asks one to examine their own assumptions and beliefs (Cranton, 2006). Content reflection can also involve how we gain knowledge, moral and ethical perspectives, and philosophical views (Mezirow, 2000). Sample content reflection questions might be, *What knowledge have you gained from your experience in this area? What is happening here? What is the problem? What am I feeling?* (Cranton, 1994). Content reflection can occur at the beginning of the reflection process but cannot lead to transformation itself. Process reflection encourages reflecting on the problem-solving strategies necessary to deal with an experience.

Process reflection question ask participant to determine how an assumption or belief came to be. If a problem is being reflected on, then process questions ask how the issue became a problem. Process reflection questions ask, *How did this come to be? Did I miss something? Am I overlooking something?* If a habit of mind of being reflected on, one might be asked, *How did you come to see yourself this way? Was there ever a time when you did not hold this view? How did the community you grew up in influence that view? How did your previous experiences in school shape what you believe? Has the media had an effect on what you believe? Can you remember when you first encountered this point of view?* (Cranton, 1994). Content and process reflection may lead to the transformation of a specific belief, but premise reflection has the potential to lead people to the transformation of habits of mind.

Premise reflection examines long-held, socially-constructed assumptions, beliefs, and values about the experience or problem (Merriam et al., 2007). Premise reflection gets at the very core of our belief systems. Premise reflection questions encourage examining the “foundations of perspectives” (Cranton, 1994, p. 35). Premise reflection takes place when the problem itself is being questioned. Questions to encourage premise reflection include, *Why is this important in the first place? What should I care about this? Why do I care about this in the first place? What difference does this make? Why is this a problem anyway? What is the basis of this problem?* (Cranton, 1994, p. 35). Premise reflection questions may be very uncomfortable to answer, but they can promote critical self-reflection as long as the learner is ready and willing to engage in reflection (Cranton, 1994).

Self-reflection may also occur through objective or subjective reframing. While objective reframing is the reflection on an assumption, subjective reframing is the reflection on the source of the assumption (Kitchenham, 2008). Objective reframing involves critical reflection on the assumptions of others assumptions or behaviors (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23). Subjected reframing involves critical self-reflection about one’s own assumptions regarding situations. Mezirow (2000) suggested causes of subjective reframing:

- reflecting on how someone else’s narrative applies to one’s own experience
- cultural, political, or economic systems
- an organization or workplace
- feelings and interpersonal relations
- the way one learns

Critical reflection does not have to occur formally, such as in a classroom context. Instead, critical reflection can come through a reading book, talking with others, suffering an unusual or tragic event, a change in employment, or experiencing a sudden insight (Cranton, 1994).

Discourse. Another critical component to transformative learning is talking about the experience with others, also called “discourse.” Discourse can occur in one-on-one relationships, in small groups, or in formal education settings (Merriam et al., 2007). Discourse is central to the process because participants need to be able to talk with others so they can discuss alternative perspectives (Cranton, 1994, p. 36). Discourse allows the learner to develop a clearer understanding of their own beliefs and assumptions by providing them with supporting evidence and arguments of alternative perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). Constructive discourse uses the experience of others to assess the reasons justifying the assumptions, interpretations, and beliefs surrounding the disorienting event. Discourse leads to a clearer understanding of the situation and helps the individual to make a decision about what action to take, based on the resulting insight (Mezirow, 2000). Effective discourse requires participants to be emotionally mature; all participants must feel comfortable, safe, secure, and empathetic (Mezirow, 2000). Participants must be ready and willing to seek understanding among the group to reach an agreeable conclusion. Discourse is not about winning arguments, it is about seeking agreements, welcoming differences, ‘trying on’ other points of view (Mezirow, 2000, pp. 12–13).

Action. The final stage in transformational learning is growth or development. Transformation may result in sudden, dramatic insight; delayed action; an incremental

change involving a progressive series of transformations; or the reaffirmation of an existing action, all of which results in the transformation in habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000). When taking action, learners must be able to make an informed decision on how and they want to act upon their new perspectives and ways of understanding. Taking action may involve overcoming “situational, emotional, and informational constraints” in order to move forward (Mezirow, 2000, p. 24). Action can take many different forms, from influencing interpersonal relationships to taking social action. Social action can include contacting political representatives, donating money to a cause, and voting.

Since the 1970s, more than a dozen books, hundreds of papers, presentations, and doctoral dissertations have been written about transformative learning (Kitchenham, 2008). Studies have shown that transformative learning can occur in a variety of settings. D’Amato and Krasny (2011) looked at the transformative experience of Outdoor Adventure Education camps. Participants experienced personal transformations as the result of spending extended time in nature, being away from the course of normal life (Braun & Clarke, 2013), forming a community among course participants, and completing an intense and challenging course. Carrington and Selva (2010) looked at transformative learning as the result of a pre-service teaching program. Primary and secondary pre-service teachers enrolled in a service-learning program were required to answer a series of reflection questions in reflection logs. The majority of students enrolled in the program were white and middle class. They completed service projects in urban environments where they tutored students in refugee centers, volunteered with terminally ill children and students with disabilities, and worked in adult literacy programs. As a result of their service, the students reported a having an increased respect

for diversity, a stronger sense of morality, and a better understanding of the discrimination and marginalization that people in minority communities experience. Narushima (2005) studied the transformative effects of volunteerism on senior citizens. The study examined seniors volunteering at 12 different non-profit organizations in Canada. The study found that senior citizens experienced transformative benefits from volunteerism, including a greater sense of self-worth, a more active lifestyle, and improved support networks. A study of on doctoral students found that students experienced transformation while completing their graduate studies. Students reported becoming more tolerant, confident, and perceptive. They also reported being more understanding and appreciative of research, better at complex thinking, and able to take multiple perspectives (Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock, 2012). The disorienting dilemmas were brought about by being exposed to new experiences and new perspectives. Dialog and discourse through classroom-based learning, mentoring relationships between faculty and students, and peer learning groups all aided in the transformation process. These studies have many elements in common. The programs were all voluntary and took place over an extended period. Many of the programs involved completing community service and encouraged reflection and discourse.

National service programs have also been transformational for participants. A 2008 study conducted for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) on AmeriCorps VISTA alumni found that members reported positive, life-changing experiences as result of serving as VISTAs. Many believed that VISTA had changed them in an important way. Some alumni said that service fundamentally transformed them (Markovitz et al., 2008). In a 2007 survey of AmeriCorps alumni, 85% agreed that

service made them “reexamine their beliefs and attitudes about themselves” and were exposed to “new ideas and ways of seeing the world” (Jastrzab et al., 2007). A majority of both State and National and National Civilian Community Corps alumni described their AmeriCorps experience as transformational.

Criticism of Transformative Learning.

One criticism of Transformative Learning is that it is sometimes applied to any type of learning, not just to significant, life-changing learning (Hoggan, 2016). Much research about transformative learning looks at an event or phenomenon (outdoor learning, adult volunteerism, women returning to college), asks the participants if they feel different, and then declares them to be transformed. This is, in part, due to each researcher’s notion of what being transformed actually means (Cranton & Hoggan, 2012).

To combat this criticism, Hoggan developed an analytical tool for evaluating of transformative learning experiences. The tool establishes parameters for what should and should not be considered transformational learning by defining what results in “significant and irreversible changes in the way a person experiences, conceptualizes, and interacts with the world” (Hoggan, 2016). The tool examines changes in four broad types of learning outcomes: worldview, epistemology, ontology, and behavior. Each of these categories has subcategories. Hoggan also developed three ways to gauge changes in learning outcomes: depth, breadth, and relative stability.

Worldview refers to changes in “the way the learner understands the world and how it works” (Hoggan, 2016). Worldview changes are reflected as changes in assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations or as a more comprehensive or complex

worldview. Changes in assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and expectations “encompass the way a person thinks the world works, as well as how it should work, and is thus also described as expectations and values” (Hoggan, 2016, p.65). Developing a more comprehensive or complex worldview means that one’s worldview did not just change but matured to become more complex or inclusive.

Epistemological changes refer to the changes in the ways that individuals “construct and evaluate knowledge in their day-to-day living, their ways of knowing, rather than how they explicitly define it” (Hoggan, 2016). Two ways that an individual’s epistemology changes are by becoming more discriminating and more open. Becoming more discriminating means “engaging in critical assessments of knowledge rather than passive acceptance of culturally accepted norms” (Hoggan, 2016). Changes in epistemology may also result in an individual becoming more open about ways of knowing. They may also be open to experiencing transformative learning in the future because they are open to different ways of meaning making. Individuals may also become more reflective about their experiences.

Ontology in this context refers to the mental and emotional dispositions that influence the “way a person exists in the world” (Hoggan, 2016). Ontological changes may result in two changes: becoming more emotionally capable of change and becoming more self-directed. When a learner is more self-directed are more independent and take control over their own learning. A self-directed learner may take a class, find a mentor, go back to school, among other things (Merriam & Clark, 1993).

Finally, behaviors change when in individual’s actions become consistent with new perspectives. Hoggan developed a way of assessing this change: depth, breadth, and

relative stability. Depth refers to the degree to which an outcome (worldview, self, etc.) has changed. Breadth refers to number of contexts in one's life that are affected by the transformation. If change is restricted to only one aspect of a person's life, then it should not be considered transformative. Finally, relative stability indicated that a permanent change has occurred. Temporary changes, where a learner changes their behavior for a period of time and then changes back, are not considered transformative. In order to call a learning experience "transformative" a researcher must be able to describe the degree to which change occurred, the aspects of one's life that were changed, and whether the change was permanent or not.

Transformative Learning and City Year

This section of the paper focuses on the ways in which City Year has integrated transformative learning principals into the training curriculum. The City Year training program uses a training manual called *The Idealist's Handbook*. The handbook incorporates the four key elements of transformative learning: the disorienting dilemma, opportunities for reflection, opportunities for discourse, and a plan for future action.

A disorienting dilemma. While there is no guarantee that a corps member will experience a disorienting event, City Year members are placed into new situations and environments that may lead to one. The disorienting dilemma may come about as the result of service in the schools, where corps members serve as teacher's assistants, tutors, and mentors for students in middle school and high school. Disorienting events may come about from the corps members living situations. Because corps members are not necessarily from the city where they are serving, and the stipend is typically not enough to live on without roommates, City Year members often live together. Corps members

may face difficulty living with strangers. Corp members may also be living away from home or on their own for the first time.

Any of these life events may cause a dilemma. Additionally, “exposure to social norms other than those to which we ascribe can also be a disorienting event” (Cranton, 2000, p. 62). Often, we are not even aware of social norms and expectations that we may hold. City Year members may be living in and working in communities with social norms other than those to which they are accustomed. Ethnocentrism or “the predisposition to regard others outside of one’s own group as inferior” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 6) is a habit of mind that may be challenged during the City Year experience. This could subconsciously cause discomfort to corps members.

Some exercises in *The Idealist’s Handbook* focus on struggles that members may experience. For example, one exercise asks participants to think about time when conflicts have occurred.

Critical self-reflection. In order for participants to engage in critical self-reflection, the learner must feel empowered or at least be working in a context that is empowering and supportive (Cranton, 1994). Reflection is a key component of City Year. *The Idealist’s Handbook* gives corps members the opportunity to reflect as individuals and in small groups (Klau, 2012, p. 413).

In order to foster critical thinking, imaginative problem solving, and effective discourse, educational programs must be “learner-centered, participatory, and interactive” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). Educational programs should encourage small group discussion, where participants can assess evidence, examine problems, and arrive at solutions. City

Year's curriculum is learner centered and participatory. Members take turns leading the group in discussions. Participants use their real-life experiences as well as metaphors related to the hero's journey to aid in reflection and solving their problems.

For experiential learning programs, such as City Year, "the experience may, in itself, stimulate reflection; there are things that the educator can do to help this process along" (Cranton, 1994). Some strategies that may foster transformative learning from experiential activities include setting aside time during and after the experience for discussion, having participants write about their experiences in a journal, and providing opportunities for participants to share and compare their experience. Participants should also be encouraged to develop plans for changes in their personal life (Cranton, 1994). Experiential learning programs provide opportunities for committed action, that is, "the opportunity to act on one's evolving commitments, to test and ground one's growing convictions" (Daloz, 2000, p. 117).

City Year incorporates many of these strategies. Every *Idealist's Journey* session includes time for discussion. Participants are encouraged to write, draw, or develop some other process that allows them to answer reflection questions. Towards the end of their service year, as City Year begins preparing corps members for life after City Year corps member are encouraged to reflect deeply on "who they are and how they are being" (Klau, 2012, p. 420). *The Idealist's Journey* is designed to present a "series of carefully sequenced, guided reflection questions that provides corps members with the opportunity to pay close attention to their inner life over the course of their year" (Klau, 2012, p. 412). For example, during The Departure exercise, corps members are asked to craft a "personal leadership mission statement that articulates their highest aspirations for the

type of leader they want to be during their City Year” (Klau, 2012, p. 412). Later, during The Road of Trials exercise, corps members revisit their mission statements and reflect on the degree to which they are living up to reaching their goals. Near the end of the year, during The Return exercise they are given a final opportunity to reflect on how well they lived their mission over the course of their City Year (Klau, 2012, p. 412). *The Idealist’s Journey* has over 20 different reflection exercises throughout the year. The training sessions allow corps members to take their focus off changing the outer world and focus on their inner world.

Discourse. Corps members meet once a month for training sessions. At least an hour is spent using *The Idealist’s Handbook*. The first ten minutes of each session are spent on individual reflection using *The Idealist’s Handbook*. The next ten minutes are spent having a small-group discussion about that particular exercise. After the small group discussion, thirty minutes are spent on a reflection exercise called “Leadership Learning Session.” In these sessions, a corps member presents a leadership-related challenge or question to the group, then the group discusses how to best address or complete the challenge (Klau, 2012). The goal of these exercises is to create a environment in which the group members feel comfortable sharing their personal struggles and questions with the group (Klau, 2012, p. 422).

Mezirow (1991, p. 198) listed the ideal conditions for participants to participate in discourse. Participants must

- have complete and accurate information
- be free from coercion
- be able to weigh evidence and evaluate arguments

- have the ability to be critically reflective
- be open to alternative perspectives
- be willing to participate and contribute to the group

Participants must also feel mentally and physically safe. Even if participants are provided a safe space to share personal details, some people may be unwilling or unable to share their experiences. Cranton (1994) listed strategies for encouraging equal participation in discourse. First, she recommends developing group discourse procedures. Group members should alternate taking leadership roles within the group to control the direction of the discourse, ensure equal participation, and watch out for coercion and persuasion. Cranton also recommends using readings, structured group activities, and “controversial statements” to stimulate discussion. Finally, she recommends encouraging quiet reflection time.

Sometimes discourse brought about by the experiences of young adults working in urban environments can become very heated. Discussions about race and class are not easy conversations to have and tempers may flare. To ease this tension, members of a group need to see each other as “valuable learning partners,” and develop group norms where participants feel comfortable sharing their struggles and challenges, instead of trying to work through problems on their own (Klau, 2012, p. 422). In order to encourage a supportive, effective group Cranton (2000, pp. 165–166) provides guidelines for encouraging group cohesiveness and support. Group members should be encouraged to share resources and knowledge with each other, learn how to solve group conflicts together, and make “the process of group development open and explicit.”

Effective groups must be supportive and cohesive. Characteristics of a supportive group include a commitment to the group's goals, willingness to follow group norms, loyalty to the group, acceptance of responsibility within the group, good communication among group members, willingness to be influenced by group members, acceptance of others' opinions, and willingness to endure frustration on behalf of the group (Cranton, 2000). These guidelines can apply an entire group or class as a whole and to smaller sub-groups that are used for small group discussions.

Cranton (Cranton, 1994) recommends encouraging participants to form learner networks. Learner networks are "sustained relationships among a group of people within a formal or informal learning context or a relationship that extends beyond the boundaries of the learning group." Learner networks are important because reflection with others can often be valuable for some people (Cranton, 1994). Cranton (1994) offers guidance on how to encourage the development of networks within a group by using small group activities and discussions so participants can get to know each other, placing members in teams to work tougher on long-term projects, and encouraging group members to work together when they have questions, concerns, or problems. Learner networks may also develop naturally. City Year members may find themselves a member in several learner networks. For example, corps members work as a group within a school, but they work with a different group of people at training. They may also form informal groups with housemates, members of their carpool, or someone originally from the same geographic location. Members of these informal groups may feel more comfortable talking about problems and working through answers together.

Training is designed to be “challenging by choice;” no one is forced to share any information that they wish to keep private. Each participant has a workbook that no one else will ever need to see. When participating in group reflection sessions, corps members do not need to divulge anything they are uncomfortable sharing. Some people, particularly those who are introverted, may find discourse hard (Mezirow, 1991, p. 96). Therefore, City Year finds it valuable to talk about concepts like mission statements or “dragons to slay” without forcing individuals to share their actual missions or dragons. For example, one lesson states

Looking to how we can develop and act as leaders beyond City Year, there are probably a few dragons we may have to slay to undergo the inner change necessary to spark social change in the outer world. Our dragons maybe to be more prompt, have better communication, or to take on more leadership roles, or they may be even bigger: owning our own biases, recognizing the level of expectations we hold for our students, or identifying how we contribute to team conflict. Our dragons are ours to slay and if we can metaphorically slay them, we will emerge from our road of trials stronger people more capable of enacting transformational social change. (Klau, 2009b, p. 1).

This activity requires corps members to fill out a cartoon strip about slaying their “dragon.” By letting members choose as much or as little as they want, City Year creates a safe space in which corps members can reflect on their challenges while maintaining their own boundaries about how much of their own personal experiences they want to share (Klau, 2012).

These Leadership Learning Sessions are important for transformation. First, the presenter has to reflect on a disorienting dilemma by presenting a personally meaningful struggle or question. Then the presenter receives valuable support and insight from their peers (Klau, 2012, p. 422). Over time, this activity helps corps members learn to work together and to learn from each other. Another exercise that members complete is the Personal Learning Edge Challenge (called the “P.L. Edge”). The P.L. Edge allows members to develop a meaningful service-related initiative, and to set clear goals as to how they plan on enacting that challenge (Klau, 2012). Each corps member then has the opportunity to implement this challenge before the end of the year.

During reflection and discourse, the presence of others is very important because “without diversity, evolution could not occur” (Daloz, 2000, p. 112). Diversity does not necessarily have to be based in class or ethnicity, the only requirement is that participants encounter a boundary between “us” and “them” and are able to overcome difference in order to construct a “we” (Daloz, 2000). City Year recognizes that diversity is important for effective discourse, so attempts are made to have a diverse corps. Based on end-of-year data from 2017-2018, 53% of corps members were people of color; 25% were African American or Black, 16% were Hispanic or Latino, 7% were Asian, and 5% identified as “other” (2018 *City Year alumni survey*, 2018). A 2007 study found that 46% of alumni were male and 54% female (Anderson et al., 2007). Members have varying degrees of education. Eight percent of City Year alumni had not obtained at least a GED before joining the corps, 49% had a GED or high school diploma, 26% had some college, 17% held a bachelor’s degree, and less than 1% had a master’s degree or higher

(Anderson & Fabiano). Having a diverse corps allows for a variety of opinions and points of view when members are trying to resolve dilemmas.

City Year seeks to “transform a diverse group of strangers into a cohesive, effective, and inspiring service corps” (Klau, 2012, pp. 413–414). City Year intentionally creates an organizational culture so that corps members will “quickly embrace their shared identity as idealists” (Klau, 2012, pp. 413–414). City Year does this by holding a three- to four-week training period at the beginning the year. An additional week of training occurs in the middle of the year. Throughout the year, Fridays are reserved for training, community building, and service planning time (Klau, 2012). Corps members work closely with their Team Leaders. City Year leadership plays a significant role in helping guide each corps member and team through their difficult year of service (Klau, 2012). Members of the leadership team are trained in a variety of coaching theories to help guide corps members through their year of service developing relationships that provide an “optimal balance of challenge and support” (Klau, 2012, p. 419). Having a strong mentoring community is important for transformative learning because these “significant others” can help nurture critical thought, dispense advice, challenge and offer support (Daloz, 2000).

In addition to formal reflection at *Idealist’s Journey* trainings, City Year corps members are encouraged to reflect informally with their peers every day. Each morning all the corps members at each school gather together for First Circle. During First Circle, all corps members stand in a circle and talk about what will happen that day. At the end of the day, all corps members meet for Final Circle. In Final Circle, corps members have the opportunity to share what happened during the course of the day.

Action. Finally, City Year’s training curriculum encourages the last step of transformative learning, taking action. During the one of the final Idealist’s Journey session, members are asked “To what extent is our own inner transformation connected to our ability to create sustainable social change in the world? (Klau, 2009a, p. 2). They are also asked “What can you do to ensure that your flame continues to burn brightly in the months and years ahead?”(Klau, 2009c). Another reflection question used to prepare corps members for action is “What did you learn about self-transformation from this experiment? And how will you take those lessons with you into your Leadership After City Year” (Klau, 2009c). During the year, the corps members are encouraged to take action while completing their Personal Learning Edge Challenge. It is important to remember that there is nothing an educator can do to ensure that transformative learning takes place, because every learner must decide to undergo the process themselves. Although there are things facilitators can do to encourage the process, the facilitator must allow participants to decide how to if, when, and how they want to act (Mezirow, 1991). One way to facilitate transformative learning, is to help participants become critically aware of their own and others’ assumptions (Mezirow, 1997). This can be done by acknowledging and address power imbalances, empowering students, anticipating and addressing potential difficulties, encouraging group discourse, creating conditions for discourse, assisting in creating supportive groups, and assisting in planning for action.

Although transformation is not guaranteed, educators can attempt to create ideal conditions for discourse to encourage the transformation process. Mezirow (1991) lists the ideal conditions for participation in discourse. For discourse to be effective, participants must:

- have accurate and complete information.
- be free from coercion and self-deception.
- be able to weigh evidence and evaluate arguments.
- be critically reflective.
- be open to alternative perspectives.
- have equality of opportunity to participate.
- accept an informed, objective, and rational consensus

To encourage participants to make plans for future action, they need to feel empowered to make decisions for themselves. Decision making may be encouraged by allowing participants to plan some of the discussion topics, encouraging group members to lead discussions, encouraging students to engage in self-evaluation, and asking participants to share their feelings about the process (Cranton, 1994).

Instructors may need to provide participants with some level of support for planning for action. This is especially important because the action often takes place after the experience or program has ended (Cranton, 1994). Some ways to help students prepare for future for future action include encouraging participants to set a goal; think about the future, tomorrow and next year; to consider boundaries and resources; to imagine alternatives, options, and consequences; and, when possible, implement change (Cranton, 1994).

Participation in City Year may have a lasting impact on behavior. A study conducted by Anderson and Fabiano (Anderson, Fabiano, et al., 2007) found that, compared to their peers, City Year alumni are 45% more likely to vote. Nearly 70% of

alumni reported volunteering at least ten hours a month. More than 90% felt that they were better able to work as a team and work with people from diverse backgrounds. More than 75% of City Year alumni belonged to a community group or civic organization, compared to 29% of their peers. Finally, 81% of City Year alumni went back to school after finishing their year or service.

Supporting the transformative learning process. When working with students (or, in this case, corps members), the educator (or leadership) needs to anticipate overwhelming difficulties that a learner may face during the transformative process (Mezirow, 1991). While the participant is sorting out the source of their disorientation, they will need support from their instructor. The educator can act as a mentor to help the participant deal with the transformative learning process, even if the source of the disorienting dilemma has not been clearly identified yet (Mezirow, 1991).

During the transformation process, participants may experience a decline in self-esteem or self-confidence or an increase in anxiety. Cranton (1994) provides ways support to personal adjustment with transformative experiences. For example, leaders should demonstrate empathy, listen carefully, provide structure when needed, share things about themselves, help participants differentiate between realistic problems and exaggerated fears, have positive expectations, and ask reflective or open-ended questions. While participants should be encouraged to share thoughts and feeling with the group, they should never be forced to share anything that they are not comfortable with. When a problem is larger or more serious than can easily be handled in a workshop or classroom, educators need to be prepared to make referrals to support groups, counseling, or student services agencies as needed and applicable (Cranton, 1994).

Learner empowerment needs to be a goal of a transformative learning program. In order to empower the learners, the instructor needs to be conscious of potential power imbalances. Cranton (2000) does not recommend educators completely giving up their power, instead educators can take steps to avoid overexerting their authority. Cranton (Cranton, 1994) provides tips for educators or leaders to exercise their power responsibly. First, she suggests reducing the trappings of formal authority by avoiding standing in the front of the group or using a formal title. She also suggests avoiding providing all of the answers, having the right answers, making all the decisions, and controlling everything that the learners do. Participants should learn how to find out answers and make decisions by themselves or by working together. Educators should acknowledge that their position lends them credibility and trust on the part of the participants. Educators should also develop open and authentic relationship with their students in which the instructor treats the participants with respect and loyalty.

City Year supports participants' transformations in many ways. Three times a year, each corps members meets with a supervisor for an extended period of time to talk about their development and to support their growth. City Year provides members with leadership opportunities throughout the year. Members can be involved in recruitment activities, write a blog post, plan a community service activity, or present during training.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

City Year corps members have been serving in schools and communities since 1988, when it was founded on the belief that “one person could make a difference in the world and that youth could be a “powerful resource for addressing America’s most pressing issues” (“About City Year: Focus and mission, history and inspiration, national service through leadership,” 2012). City Year is a unique program that partners with school districts to place young adults in middle and high schools in an effort to improve attendance, test scores, student behavior. While the effects City Year has on test scores and student attendance are measured and tracked, the effect that City Year has on its alumni is less understood.

This study seeks to examine the phenomenon of young adults who experienced a transformative learning experience as a result of their participation in City Year. Therefore, this dissertation uses a transcendental phenomenological approach as the

methodology. In this chapter, I will discuss the research methodology for this study including the participant selection, sampling, data collection, data analysis, the theoretical framework, and limitations of this study.

The Research Phenomenon and Questions

The primary purpose of this research was to explore the phenomenon of the transformative learning experiences that City Year members encounter as a result of completing a year of service. This study also examined how serving in an urban environment influenced their transformative experience. This study used unstructured and semi-structured interview questions to explore the transformative learning experiences of City Year alumni. Interview questions explored how participants experienced the steps of the transformative learning process as well as what specific changes resulted from their experience, including personal growth, changes to career goals, and expanded worldviews. The interviews showed how City Year participants described their experiences, to what extent that experience was transformative, and what role the urban environment played in that transformation.

The data collected from participants was used to look at the phenomenon of a transformative learning experience. Therefore, the principal research question for this study was: What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year? The following sub-questions were also investigated: What role did the urban environment play in that transformation? How can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program? By asking these questions, we better understanding of the phenomenon of the transformative learning experience of young adults participating in City Year.

Rationale for Qualitative Research

Most existing research on City Year is quantitative in design. Studies on national service alumni typically focus on quantifiable outcomes such as voting rates, employment, educational attainment, opinions on diversity, and participation in community service (Frumkin et al., 2009; Jastrzab et al., 2007; Munter, 1997). Some studies have also looked at whether participation in national service is a life changing experience. A 2008 study conducted for the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) on AmeriCorps VISTA alumni found that members reported positive, life-changing experiences as result of serving as VISTAs. Many believed that VISTA had either changed them in an important way or helped reinforce existing values and beliefs, and some members said that service fundamentally transformed them (Markovitz et al., 2008). In a 2007 survey, Jastrzab, et. al. sent questionnaires to 2,000 alumni of AmeriCorps State and National programs and the National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC). The survey contained questions with a four-point Likert scale regarding their AmeriCorps experience. Among those surveyed 85% agreed that service made them “reexamine their beliefs and attitudes about themselves” and were exposed to “new ideas and ways of seeing the world” (p. 30). A majority of both State and National and NCCC alumni described their AmeriCorps experience as transformational.

It is fine to know that these changes occurred, but qualitative research can give greater insight into how and why it happened. This study examined the phenomenon of City Year alumni who have reexamined their beliefs and attitudes about themselves and developed new ways of seeing the world as a result of their service.

Research Paradigm

Four philosophical assumptions (ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological) influence the researchers' paradigm and research design. Together, the four philosophical assumptions form the researcher's paradigm or interpretive framework (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013). Research paradigms are the lenses through which researchers view their world.

There are many different interpretive frameworks that a researcher can use to shape their research. Ontological assumptions are the basic beliefs which examine the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell, 2013, p. 20; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2013). When conducting qualitative research, researchers examine and report the different realities of the individuals being studied. Researchers grounded in a positivist framework believe that there is one single reality. In a postmodern framework reality is created through participation between the community being studied and the researcher. Researchers guided by a constructivist paradigm acknowledge that there are multiple realities and they should present multiple forms of evidence by using the actual words of the individuals and by presenting different perspectives, this aligns with the relativist ontology (Creswell, 2013). When operating under a constructivist paradigm, the researcher must collaborate with the subject of the research to ensure that the results of the study are "reflective of their reality" (Lincoln et al., 2013, p. 210).

Epistemological assumptions examine how reality is known. In a subjective epistemology "evidence is assembled based on individual views" and "knowledge is known through the subjective experiences of people" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). Under postpositivism, reality is constructed through research and statistics, with minimal interaction between the researcher

and the subjects. In postmodernism reality is co-created with multiple ways of knowing. In constructivism, reality is co-constructed through the researcher and the participants and is shaped by individual experiences (Creswell, 2013).

Axiological assumptions examine the role of the researcher's values in the research process. In qualitative studies the researcher must acknowledge that "research is value-laden and that biases are present" (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). In Postpositivism, the researcher's biases are controlled and must be left out of the study. In a postmodernist study, values need to be challenged and investigated. In a constructivist study, the values of the researcher and participants are important (Hays & Singh, 2012). The researcher should openly discuss the values that shape their interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2013, p. 20).

My beliefs most closely align with the constructivist paradigm, which assumes a relativist ontology, a subjectivist epistemology and a naturalistic set of methodological procedures (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 26; Lincoln et al., 2013, p. 204). Therefore, this study used a constructivist paradigm to examine how City Year contributed to a transformative learning experience. The constructivist paradigm acknowledges that "multiple realities are constructed through lived experiences and shared realities" and reality is co-constructed through the interview and shaped by individual experiences (Creswell, 2013, p. 36). There are no universal truths because "there are multiple contextual perspectives and subjective voices" (Hays & Singh, 2012, p. 41). In a constructivist epistemology, the researcher cannot separate themselves from what they know and "the investigator and the object of the investigation are linked such that who we are and how we understand the world is a central part of how we understand ourselves, others, and the world" (Guba and Lincoln as cited in Lincoln et al., 2013, p. 212).

Finally, constructivism is the appropriate paradigm for this study. Transformative learning is based on a constructivist world view because people interpret the meaning of their experiences (Cranton, 2000). The program's impact is constructed from the meaning that participants make of their experiences (D'Amato & Krasny, 2011). In this study, the meaning of participants' experiences was co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee through unstructured interviews.

Research Methodology

There are several different types of research methodologies. For example, narrative research is concerned with telling the stories of one or more individuals. Narrative research is best used for studies which tell the stories of individual experiences (Creswell, 2013). Case studies describe and analyze a case, or multiple cases, in order to provide an in-depth understanding of an event, program, or activity (Creswell, 2013). Researchers need to identify the best methodology for their study based on their focus, unit of analysis, data collection method, and desired way to report results. For the purposes of this study, phenomenology most closely aligned with my focus, as I was interested in investigating the essence of the experience.

Phenomenology is a research method with roots in psychology and philosophy that seeks to understand the essence of the experience (Merriam, 2002). In phenomenological studies, there is an assumption that there is one shared, common experience for all participants in the study. Phenomenologies study only the individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon. Data are collected primarily through interviews. The final product is a written passage that describes the essence of the experience.

Phenomenology. Phenomenology was chosen for this study because the framework allows for an understanding of the essence of the transformative experience.

Phenomenological research “focuses on the subjective research of the individual” and in order to understand the “essence or structure of a phenomenon” from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Merriam, 2002, p. 93). Phenomenologies develop a description of the universal essence of the experience. Data is collected from people who have experienced the phenomenon. That data is then analyzed for significant statements, which are used to develop textural and structural descriptions. These descriptions are used to write a “composite description of the essence of the experience for all individuals” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76).

There are several approaches of phenomenological research, including hermeneutic, existential, and transcendental phenomenology. All three approaches include the same four steps of description, reduction, imaginative variation, and developing the essence of the experience, but differ in their philosophical assumptions (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015).

Transcendental Phenomenology. Husserl is considered to be the father of transcendental phenomenology, a research method in which all phenomenological approaches are based (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 253). Transcendental phenomenology focuses on the description of the experiences of the participants. The end result of transcendental phenomenology is a textural description of what participants experienced and a structural description of how it was experienced. Together the “textural and structural descriptions convey an overall essence of the experience” (Creswell, 2013, p. 80)

Hermeneutic Phenomenology. Hermeneutic phenomenology is based on transcendental phenomenology. The hermeneutical approach assumes that it is impossible for the researcher to bracket out their beliefs and experiences. Instead, the researcher needs to be

immersed within the phenomenon in order to understand the essence of the experience. Hermeneutical research is not just concerned with the participants “descriptions of the phenomenon,” the research also looks at their interpretation of the experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 253).

Existential Phenomenology. Existential phenomenology is also built on transcendental phenomenology. One key difference is that the existential researcher believes that “consciousness and the self” cannot be separated. Therefore, researchers cannot bracket out their experience (Eddles-Hirsch, 2015, p. 253).

Transcendental phenomenology was chosen because it most closely aligns with my philosophical assumptions. I believe that the researcher can remove themselves from the research through careful reflection. In transcendental phenomenology, prior beliefs and assumptions held by the researcher about the phenomenon are bracketed out, to remove any potential biases that might influence how the researcher view the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998). Bracketing, also called epoche, is necessary to obtain a fresh perspective on the phenomenon being studied. Also, transcendental phenomenology is less concerned with the interpretation of the research and more focused on the description of the experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Choosing the sample. This study required all participants to have experienced the same phenomenon, therefore, criterion sampling was used. Criterion sampling works for phenomenology because it ensures that all participants have experienced the phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2013). All participants involved in this study needed to meet the same criteria: they had to be over 18 years old, they needed to have completed at least one year of City Year, and they had to have experienced a transformation learning experience as

the result of their participation in City Year. Interested parties were informed of the eligibility requirements when they viewed the pre-interview questionnaire. I continued recruiting participants until I reached saturation.

All participants in this study were white and middle class. This was not done intentionally. It is unknown if the homogeneity of the sample was due to the demographics of Facebooks groups used to recruit participants or if the criteria (must have experienced transformative learning) only applied to white, middle class individuals.

Data collection methods. This study primarily used two forms of data collection: the pre-interview questionnaire and the interview. The phenomenological interview is the primary source of data collection in phenomenology (Merriam, 2002). The interview includes both structured and semi-structured questions. The phenomenological interview is in depth and can run long, so in order to respect participants' time, this study used a pre-interview questionnaire to collect preliminary data. The pre-interview questionnaire included basic demographic questions as well as some structured interview questions.

Pre-interview questionnaire. Prior to the interviews, interested participants were contacted via email or text. The message directed participants to the online questionnaire. The online questionnaire provided additional information, about the study, allowed participants to provide informed consent, and to act as a screening tool. During the pre-interview, transformative learning theory was briefly explained. The prospective participants were asked if they felt they had experienced this phenomenon. If they answered no, they received a message thanking them for their time and gave them my contact information if they had further questions. If prospective participants answer yes, they were directed to the review and sign the informed consent form before continuing with the questionnaire.

This questionnaire (Appendix B) asked basic demographic questions, such as gender, and questions that determined the context of their City Year experience, such as how their service site differed from their own school experience. At the end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to bring some pictures to the interview that represent key moments of their City Year experience, if they had any.

Interviews. Interviews, often multiple interviews with the same person, are the primary source of data for phenomenological studies, although some studies also use observations and documents (Creswell, 2013). Phenomenological interviewing is a specific type of in-depth interviewing that describes phenomenon that several individuals experienced (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Phenomenological interviews are based on “the assumption that there is a structure and essence to shared experiences that can be narrated” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 148). These interviews examine the lived experiences of the participants and the ways that they made meaning of those experiences.

There are three types of interviews in qualitative research: highly structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. In highly structured interviews, which may also be called standardized interviews, “questions and the order in which they are asked are determined ahead of time” (Merriam, 1998, p. 74). Highly structured interviews are beneficial when the goal of the interview is to gather common demographic data from participants, such as age, income, or employment status (Merriam, 1998). Highly structured interviews are also useful when all participants in a study need to respond to the same questions, respond to a particular statement, or define a particular concept or term (Merriam, 1998). The biggest drawback to using highly structured interviews is that they do not always “allow you to access

participants' perspectives and understandings of the world. Instead you get the investigator's preconceived notions of the world" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

Semi-structured interviews are a less structured alternative to highly structured interviews. In a semi-structured interview, the questions are more open-ended. Semi-structured interviews assume that everyone defines the world in different ways (Merriam, 1998). In semi-structured interviews the questions may be "flexibly worded" or the interview is a mix of structured and unstructured questions (Merriam, 1998, p.74). For example, if specific information is required from all participants, then there may be a highly structured component to the interview. However, the largest part of the semi-structured interview is a list of questions or issues to be explored. The exact wording and the order of the questions is not decided in advance (Merriam, 1998). The semi-structured format gives the researcher the freedom to respond to the participant, ask new questions as necessary, and develop any new ideas or theories as needed.

Unstructured interviews consist solely of open-ended questions. There are no pre-determined questions in this type of interview. Unstructured interviews are best used to gather information when the researcher does not know enough about the subject. Unstructured interviews may be used to aid in designing structured questions for future interviews.

Often the three styles of interviews can be combined in one interview. In one interview, some standardized questions are asked to obtain basic demographic information, "some of the same open-ended questions are asked of all participants, and some time is spent in an unstructured mode so that fresh insights and new information can emerge" (Merriam, 1998, p. 74).

The interviews followed a semi-structured format. While the exact wording of each question remained flexible, everyone was asked many of the same questions (Appendix C) in the same order. However, some answers required unplanned follow up questions. Memos-to-self were written immediately following each interview and supplemented participants' interview data.

Interview questions were derived from a variety of sources. Some interview questions were adapted from D'Amato and Krasney (2011). Other interview questions were derived from Hoggan's analytical framework. Hoggan reviewed literature on transformative learning to document the variety of learning outcomes that had been published. Hoggan identified eight transformative learning outcomes (Appendix A). These outcomes were used to develop interview questions, such as questions about changes in worldview and the lasting nature of the transformation. Other questions were adapted from Seidman's phenomenological interview technique. Sample questions adapted from Seidman (2006) include: "given what you have said about your life before starting City Year and what you are doing now, how do you understand the effect that City Year had on your life?" and "given what we've talked about so far, where do you see yourself going in the future?" Many interview questions were field tested with two City Year alumni in a pilot study.

Data Gathering

Pre-interview steps. Before I could start my research, I had to meet several institutional requirements. First, I had to present and pass my prospectus hearing. Then I had to submit my IRB application. After some minor revisions, I received permission from the IRB to conduct my research.

Finding participants. Participants in this study were recruited two ways: through social media and through snowball sampling. Seven participants that were recruited online responded to a post made in various Facebook Groups. The online post briefly introduced me and the purpose of the research. Interested individuals were encouraged to visit my Typeform.com webpage. This page explained the research further and asked them to complete an online pre-interview questionnaire. The questionnaire was used as a screening tool, provided me with basic demographic information, contact information, and information on the background of each participant. Other participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

One participant, Desi, was recruited by a friend of a friend. My friend shared the link to my Typeform.com webpage with her friend, and her friend passed it on to their girlfriend. Steven's email address was shared with me by someone who knew him from his graduate school program. I sent him an introductory email and he completed the pre-interview questionnaire.

Interview location. The researcher met with the selected participants once. Interviews with Steven, Paul, and Karen, all individuals living in the Cleveland area, were conducted face-to-face in coffee shops, which were selected by the participants. All other interviews were conducted online through Google Hangouts or Facebook Video Chat, free, online video conferencing services.

Interview process. Before the interview, participants had to complete the pre-interview questionnaire online. This provided me with background information, such as their year(s) they served, the city and state they served in, how their school experience differed from their service site, their career plans before City Year, and whether they had any

experience working with children before. The pre-interview questionnaire provided an opportunity to obtain informed consent online. This saved time during the in-person interviews process and made it easier to do interviews online.

The interviews used an abbreviated variation of Seidman's (2003) phenomenological interviewing technique. Seidman's phenomenological interview technique requires each participant to take part in a series of three interviews, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Each interview has a specific purpose. The first interview establishes the context in which the experience occurred. The second interview reconstructs the details of their participants experiences within context. The third interview encourages reflection on the meaning of the experience (Seidman, 2006). The sequence of the interviews is important because each portion of the interview builds on the next interview (Seidman, 2006).

Asking individuals to commit to three interviews, each potentially lasting an hour and a half each, may have discouraged participation. Instead, participants completed a brief questionnaire and took part in one interview. The questionnaire established the context for the participants City Year experience. The in-person interview combined elements of Seidman's interview technique, in which participants reconstructed the details of their experiences and reflected on the meaning their experience holds for them. As interview were conducted, additional questions were added, and existing questions were clarified.

Questions asked in the interviews can be broken down into three categories which were aligned with this study's research questions: What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year, what role did the urban environment play in that transformation, and how can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program.

The in-person interview had three parts: life before City Year, life during City Year, and life after City Year. The first part of the interview focused on what brought them to City Year, what their expectations were, and how their school experience was different than their service city. Questions in this part were informed by their responses on the pre-interview questionnaire.

The middle of the interview focused on the day-to-day life of City Year and the trainings. This portion of the interview also examined the steps of the transformative learning process. Participants were asked to reconstruct a day in City Year, from the moment they wake up until the moment they fall asleep, and to share stories about their experience in City Year “as a way of eliciting details” (Seidman, 2006, p. 18). Participants were encouraged to elaborate on specific experiences that may have been transformative. The 10 stages of transformative learning developed by Mezirow (2000) were addressed, primarily focusing on the four key steps: a disorienting event, self-reflection, reflection with others, and action. *The Idealist’s Journey*, the City Year training manual, was also discussed.

The last third of the interview delved into the effects that City Year had on the participants’ lives. This portion of the interview also examined the depth, breadth, and relative stability of one’s transformation in four broad types of learning outcomes: worldview, epistemology, ontology, and behavior. Finally, this interview asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their transformative learning experience.

Looking at the context of participation in City Year is important because “people’s behavior becomes meaningful and understandable when placed in the context of their lives and the lives of those around them” (Seidman, 2006, pp. 16–17). Without that context, it’s hard to explore the meaning of the experience (Seidman, 2006). Participants were asked to

reconstruct the experiences that led them to joining City Year. It was not important to ask “why” they joined City Year, but instead to arrive at “how.” Determining how allows participants to “reconstruct and narrate a range of constitutive events in past family, school, and work experiences that place their participation” in City Year within the context of their lives (Seidman, 2006).

Immediately after each interview I wrote a summary memo of each interview. After each interview has been transcribed, I read it over several times to obtain an overall feeling for the interview (Creswell, 2013). As I read and reread the interview, I made additional notes on the interview memo. I also wrote memos to myself to note “themes, hunches, ideas, and things to pursue that are derived” from each interview (Merriam, 1998, Chapter 161). After each interview, I revised the interview protocol slightly, either clarifying questions, reordering questions, or adding new questions to ask in the next interview.

Data Organization and Management

Transcribing. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Each interview was transcribed almost immediately after it ended. In-person interviews were recorded using an application on my cell phone. Audio recordings of the interviews were uploaded to the Temi.com application on my phone and were transcribed almost instantly. Interviews conducted online were recorded through my computer’s speaker output using a handheld recorder. After the interview, recordings of the interview were uploaded to the website Temi.com, where they were transcribed by a computer. Due to the way online interviews were recorded, these interviews are missing all of my audio.

Transcription was not perfect. Each interview had to be played and replayed while I corrected the transcripts. During the transcription process, potentially identifying details,

such as names and locations were removed. As I transcribed, I returned to my post-interview memos to make notes or add details. After each interview was transcribed, a copy of the transcript was emailed to the participant.

Each interview participant was given a pseudonym. Pseudonyms were used in all written documents and as file names. The transcripts were stored on OneDrive, the Microsoft cloud storage system with password protected data file storage subscribed to by Cleveland State University that all students and faculty have access to.

Coding and data management. After each transcription had been reviewed, it needed to be coded. Coding provides a way to sort data into groups so that material related to one topic can be easily separated from the rest (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Some codes came to me while I was conducting and transcribing interviews. Those codes were written down in post-interview memos. Other codes emerged during the coding process.

Interviews were coded almost immediately after they were transcribed. Each transcript underwent two forms of coding over multiple waves. Initial codes are theory-generated codes. Theory-generated codes are derived from the literature review (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Significant statements that related to each research question were coded and then grouped into categories. For example, there were codes for the steps of the transformative learning process.

The next step was “reduction,” which is necessary to conduct a phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). During reduction, significant statements were coded in vivo. In vivo coding creates code labels that are made up of the exact words or phrases used by the participant (Saldana, 2013). Significant statements are anything that was interesting,

important or potentially relevant (Merriam, 1998). After each interview, this process was repeated until each transcript was coded.

Coding is a fluid process. As more interviews were conducted, further cycles of coding were done. During subsequent coding cycles, codes were eliminated for being unimportant, unnecessary, or redundant. Additional coding cycles helped manage, filter, highlight, and focus the salient features for generating categories, themes, concepts, meaning, and theory (Saldana, 2013).

Memos were written constantly throughout the data collection and coding process. A memo was written after each interview to summarize each interview. Other memos were written during the transcription and coding process as suggested by Merriam (1998). While coding I wrote notes on thoughts, musings, speculations, and hunches in a memo.

Data analysis was done concurrently with data collection using the constant comparative method. After the second interview was completed, the first dataset was compared to the second. Each successive comparison informed the next interview and analysis. Following this process ensured that “the final product is shaped by the data that are collected and the analysis that accompanies the entire process” (Merriam, 1998, Chapter 162).

Data Analysis and Writing

There are four steps unique to phenomenological analysis: phenomenological reduction, horizontalization, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions.

Phenomenological reduction is the first step in the process. Significant statements which provide the “textural description of the meanings and the essences of the

phenomenon” are identified (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Moustakas (1994) recommended asking two questions when conducting reduction: does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?” and “Is it possible to abstract and label it?” (p121). The end result is a list of verbatim examples.

The next step is horizontalization. Each previously identified significant statement is treated as having equal weight. Repetitive statements are removed (Creswell, 2013). The remaining significant statements are then grouped together into “meaning units.”

Previously identified significant statements are used to write a textural description, which explains “what” the phenomenon was (Creswell, 2013). Next, a structural description is written. Structural descriptions explain the “how” the participants experienced the phenomenon. When writing a structural description, it is important to look at the phenomenon from several different perspectives (Merriam, 1988).

A phenomenological study concludes with a composite description of the essence of the experience. This description integrates the textural and structural description to develop a synthesis of the meanings and essence of the phenomenon of experienced (Moustakas, 1994). The final result may be displayed in a table, figures, or through narration, but is typically a long passage that describes what the participants experienced and the context in which they experienced it (Creswell, 2013, p. 191; Moustakas, 1994).

The role of the researcher in data collection. In qualitative studies, the researcher is the key instrument; my presence in this study and my interactions with the study’s participants are a central part of the methodology (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). While more traditional qualitative research approaches view the researcher as neutral, more modern approaches recognizes that researchers are not neutral and (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Researchers cannot simply “give voice” to their participants, because even giving voice involves “carving out unacknowledged pieces of narrative evidence that we select, edit, and deploy to border our arguments” (Fine, 2002 as cited in Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80).

Bracketing out the researcher’s personal experiences is a key feature on phenomenology. Prior to conducting my research, I wrote about my own experiences with national service and transformational learning experiences. This helped me look at the participants’ experiences with fresh eyes.

Using Hoggan’s Typology of Transformative Learning Outcomes (Hoggan, 2016) as a framework to develop interview questions helped me to keep my personal experiences out of the interview process. Hoggan’s framework gave me ideas on questions to ask that I would not have thought of if only using my personal experiences.

Particular Ethical Considerations

To protect the welfare of the participants, I followed legal and ethical guidelines regarding research. The study was designed under the supervision of Cleveland State University professors. The research proposal was reviewed and approved by the Cleveland State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to recruiting participants.

To ensure the welfare of participants, I followed Lichtman’s (2012) ethical guidelines for research; to be ethical, researchers must address harm or risk, anonymity and privacy, confidentiality, and informed consent.

First, it is important to do no harm. The risks of participation in this study were not any greater than those generally associated with daily living. Individuals participating in research were informed of the nature of the study at the beginning of the pre-interview questionnaire. This allowed them to decide whether or not they wanted to participate

(Lichtman, 2012). The informed consent form outlined the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. Upon starting the pre-interview questionnaire, participants were required to read the informed the consent form and confirm that they read and understood the consent form before they could continue with the questionnaire. Participants were informed on the consent form that they could refuse to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable answering and that there was no penalty to refusing to answer any questions in the interview. The consent form also stated that the interview participants could end the interview at any point. If the study had resulted in any emotional distress, participants would have been referred to the counseling center.

Another ethical concern is privacy and anonymity. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed in this study. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms in the transcription, final names, and final report. Personally identifying information, such as names of participants, colleagues, students, schools, and employers were redacted from all written materials.

All interviews (both the recorded versions and the typed transcripts) were stored on password protected devices. Interviews were recorded on a handheld recorder and were deleted after being uploaded to a computer. Interviews were transcribed using Temi.com, a secure service.

Trustworthiness. Trustworthiness and privacy concerns are very important for qualitative researchers to address. Research needs to be conducted in an ethical manner. The data must be interpreted correctly, the data must be coded correctly, and the participants need to feel comfortable and safe sharing their stories. There are a variety of ways to ensure

reliability, credibility, transferability, and confirmability. Ethical issues must be carefully and thoroughly addressed.

Credibility/internal validity. Internal validity asks how closely the findings align with the reality of what has happened. (Merriam, 1998). To ensure credibility or the validity of research, transcripts were provided to the participants to ensure the accuracy of their accounts by verifying their transcripts, an activity called “member checking” (Creswell, 2013). The participants had the opportunity to identify any sections of the interviews that they wished to be removed (Chase, 1996). Triangulation is another way to address internal validity. Even though every participant’s story was different, there were elements of their stories that appeared in multiple interviews that confirmed the findings.

Consistency/reliability. Reliability (also called dependability) refers to the extent to which the research findings can be replicated (Merriam, 1998). Reliability is difficult to address in qualitative studies because these studies are highly contextual. Because we cannot expect someone to replicate the results of a qualitative study, one way to address reliability is to leave an audit trail. An audit trail details how the data was collected and analyzed, so that an observer can understand what decisions were made and how conclusions were reached (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). Another way to address reliability is to ensure that the interviews are transcribed accurately (Creswell, 2013). This was done by playing and replaying the audio as the data is transcribed and then by replaying the audio again after it has been transcribed to correct any mistakes. The audio files have been saved, in case there is any question as to the accuracy of the transcription.

Transferability/external validity. External validity deals with the generalizability that can be made about a study. If a study is generalizable, the results can be applied to other

research studies (Merriam, 1998, p. 207). For a study to demonstrate transferability, the author must provide sufficient information in order for the reader to determine if their situation is similar to the situation being addressed (Creswell, 2013). There are some limitations to the transferability of this study, which will be discussed in the next section.

Limitations. This study had many limitations. The sample size was small, making it hard to generalize the findings to a larger population. The sample was comprised solely of white people from middle class and upper middle-class backgrounds. People of color and people of different socio-economic status may experience this phenomenon differently or not experience it at all.

Another limitation on this study is research bias. Clarifying biases in advance is an important confirmability strategy. Phenomenology requires a bracketing out of biases on the part of the researcher. Past experiences, prejudices, and orientations that might shape the interpretation and approach to the study need to be set aside (Creswell, 2013). Reflexivity during this study is vital because I have biases and past experiences that may not only color my interpretation of the data, but also influence the way I conduct interviews. The idea of “researcher as instrument” means that researchers can influence their own research. This is especially evident in semi-structured interviews where the interviewer “may prompt the participant, rephrase questions, and make changes according to the interview situation” (Galletta, 2012, The role of reciprocity and reflexivity, para 1). It is very important to provide for reciprocity in an interview. Carrying out interviews requires listening closely for points of clarification and further meaning making. Interviews also require the interviewer to remember areas of the interview where further elaboration or reflection is needed (Galletta, 2012). Reciprocity allows the participants to take part in the meaning making of the study.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY FINDINGS

Introduction

This study sought to gain a better understanding of the transformative learning experience as a result of participation in City Year. Very little research has been done on the effects City Year has on the young adults who commit a year of their life to this community service program. A qualitative framework was used to design this study. Methods common to phenomenological research guided data collection and analysis. The results are the culmination of the alumni's voices and reflect a deep perspective into their lived experiences. To study how City Year members experienced and understood their transformative learning experiences, the research framework was based on the following questions:

- (1) What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year?
- (2) What role did the urban environment play in that transformation?
- (3) How can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program?

This phenomenological study presents the transformative learning experience of corps members as the result of serving in City Year. Phenomenology provides an opportunity for individuals to share their life experiences in order to illuminate the previously misunderstood or unknown (Bogdan & Biklen, 1993). A variety of experiences are provided to help the reader understand the essence of the experience of the research participants. Quotations allow the participants to speak for themselves, providing multiple perspectives on the phenomenon.

This chapter presents the key findings obtained from interviews with nine individuals. All participants completed at least one year of City Year and felt that they had experienced a transformation. The interview questions allowed for rich description of how City Year alumni experienced and understood their transformative learning experience. After reading and coding each transcription multiple times, I conducted a phenomenological reduction by delineating units of meaning. This involved coding significant statements *in vivo*. These statements were grouped into clusters, such as “self-reflection” and “formal conversations with others.” After all statements were grouped into clusters, some clusters were combined or eliminated. Ultimately, twenty-four clusters were identified. These clusters were grouped into six themes: City Year culture and training, relationships with students, relationships with corps members, the nature of the program, the difficulty of the program, and how time changed views of the program.

Summary of Participants

This study was comprised of nine white, middle class City Year alumni who all experienced the same phenomenon, a transformative learning experience. The results of my phenomenological study were developed through data collected from interviews with

these individuals. Table 1 shows the demographic information of the nine participants. The seven females and two males ranged in age from 24 to 43 provided a range of perspectives and experiences. One participant completed her year of service during the 1997-1998 school year; two participants completed their years of service in May 2018. Participants were primarily recruited online through criterion sampling and three participants were found through snowball sampling. The demographic of participants in this study is not necessarily representative of the City Year corps membership. According to the most recently available statistics, 41% of City Year members are white (“Diversity,” 2019).

Table 1
Summary of Participants’ Demographic Data

Participant	Age Now	Year(s) of Service	Service Site
Sarah	43	1997-1998	Columbus, OH
Rachel	27	2010-2011	Chicago IL
Paul	31	2011-2012	Cleveland Ohio
Steven	30	2011-2012, 2012-2013	Cleveland, Ohio
Georgia	30	2012-2013	Manchester, NH
Tara	26	2015-2016	East San Jose, CA
Phoebe	25	2016-2017	Cleveland, Ohio
Karen	26	2016-2017, 2017-2018	Cleveland, OH
Desi	24	2017-2018	Philadelphia, PA

The major findings will be discussed in this chapter and analyzed in chapter five.

Participant Narratives

The interviews gave me the opportunity to engage with participants as I investigated the phenomenon surrounding their transformative learning experience. The individual textural descriptions were reconstructed from the participants' individual transcripts. The individual narrative descriptions were then used to form a composite textural description.

Desi. Desi was one of the most recent alumni in the study, having served during the 2017-2018 school year. A Film major in college, she realized near graduation that she wanted to teach English. So, she took a couple of education classes and minored in English. Desi decided to do City Year so that she could get some experience before applying for graduate programs in English Education.

Desi did not find the City Year training to be particularly helpful. A lot of the first month was just sitting and listening to lectures. "Like we talked about kids and people would like talk about what they were going to do when they were in a classroom with kids without ever having actually been in a classroom with kids." During the school year, she often felt that their time would have been better spent in the classroom, rather than just listening to speakers talk. She thought that the best thing about training was that corps members serving at schools all over the city were able to get together and talk. However, her Impact Manager closely monitored their conversations, so she didn't feel like they could speak freely. She did not feel like there was any room for criticism and City Year leadership didn't take corps members concerns into consideration. Also, the

City Year culture was hard to adjust to. She called it “very culty” and then said, “I’m sure a lot of people said that.”

Desi’s relationships with students and other corps members were very important to her during her year. Relationships between corps members was very important because outsiders didn’t really understand what was happening.

Like I think it was definitely me and my roommates would kind of get like lost talking about it and anyone else with us would have no idea what we were talking about. And it is kind of a weird thing to explain to someone that you're like wearing the uniform and doing, we do weird dances in the morning. Um, so that's like something that was really hard to communicate to people. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Friends and family did not understand the environment she was working in. She tried to talk to them often because she knew they were so apprehensive about her moving to Philadelphia. However, talking about what was happening to her was difficult because they made a lot of assumptions about the school and the students.

I felt like with other people I’d start talking about like, oh this fight broke out, it's really bad and whatever. And then my like whatever, like when my parents would be like, “oh, they’re awful kids.” And I was like, “no, no, the kids are great but they're so fun.” But, and like it just was hard to explain both of those things at once to a lot of people. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Relationships with students were also very important. The last day of school was “very emotional and sad.” She took photos with the kids and she got a big binder of

letters from all the students. Desi learned a lot while working with a student that constantly caused classroom disruptions.

He was like so wonderful and just getting to know him and be close with him.

And that way like really changed how I think about like the bad kids. So I always tell people like when you have that bad kid in your class, like they're probably a really great kid. Aside from that, they're probably just having an issue. (Desi, interview, August 2019).

The urban environment of her service site played a role in her transformation. Prior to her service, friends and family told Desi how dangerous and terrible Philadelphia would be. She was almost scared the first day of school, but to her surprise “our first conversations with students were like, just so pleasant and funny and like not what we'd expected at all.” It made her reassess question a her previously held assumptions about her students and her school.

It was totally different from everything I was expecting and everything I had been told. Um, and just like sitting in a classroom and having little kids doing little kid stuff and realizing that it was so different from what I had thought made me realize like my thinking had been wrong. My family's been all wrong. A lot of people that had like trusted and looked up to had been like wrong. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Desi also found the urban school to be different than her own educational experience. The education that the students were receiving was far below what she was doing at that age. “They were in the same room and they had like 4 classes a day. When I

was in eighth grade. I had like seven or eight classes a day.” She was also shocked at the dynamic between the teachers and the students, “A lot of the teachers were really horrible towards the kids, which was another thing that was hard to, didn't sit well with me, was like how the kids were treated by teachers.” After students took their state tests in April, the teachers basically stopped teaching. She said that the students watched a lot of YouTube videos and fights broke out because the kids were bored.

Working in an urban environment also gave Desi a better understanding of issues like poverty and homelessness. She finds that she is more critical of her friends from college that talk a lot about what needs to be done “but don't necessarily take action to do that or don't ever talk to anyone who's not like them.”

Desi found that City Year has made her a better leader and student. Desi started graduate school because doing City Year confirmed that she wants to be a teacher. “And I think [I'm] a lot more competent in my classes and just kind of taking all of that on it just feels a lot better than I think it would have right after college.” Desi also feels like a better leader, “I took on like a lot of leadership positions at my school and on my team that I would never have thought of doing in college or when I was younger. So I definitely realize I can handle a lot more than I thought.” Finishing City Year gave her a sense of accomplishment.

It definitely feels like when you're done with it, you feel like you did accomplish something difficult and it feels like at least that boosts your confidence cause you feel like you can take on other challenging opportunities and you feel like, oh, I did this. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Throughout the year, Desi thought that City Year was very hard. After starting an alternative teacher preparation program, which was much harder than City Year, Desi is not sure if City Year was really as hard as she thought it was “for most people it’s their first full-time job. So, it's like, it's not that hard or is it just hard because we're coming right out of college where we took two classes a week and hung out.”

Georgia. Georgia started City Year after earning her degree in Education. She grew up in a white, middle class area in New Hampshire. Georgia’s goal after City Year was to go back and teach in the school district where she grew up in. She decided to do City Year as a resume builder; she thought that City Year would help her get her foot in the door in her in a competitive job market. Georgia started her year of service eight years ago.

Since Georgia already had an education degree, much of the first month of training was repetitive to her. However, not all the training was teaching strategies and lesson planning. In addition to covering topics related to education, City Year’s training program worked on building a “strong community culture.” These team building activities made City Year seem “like kind of cultish it is and the sense of like, it's just very much like you're all doing the same thing. You all have the same beliefs, you're all here for the same reason.” Georgia learned a lot about privilege during the first month of City Year training when they participated in a privilege walk. In this exercise, all the corps members lined up and held hands. Everyone had to remain silent. The leaders called out statements that indicated a degree of privilege, such as “who went to camp” or “who played organized sports.” Participants had to step forward if a statement applied to

them. While Georgia knew that she was privileged, she was surprised to see how privileged she was, even among her fellow corps members.

So, leaving behind the people that didn't have those experiences and then, then at the end it was like, look who's super far ahead. Look who's super far behind...the people that were in front, like myself, they were like, "turn yourself around, see how far, like see how far apart you are from a lot of these other people." Um, which was really interesting to be able to look at that. And see, you know, I knew that I was very privileged. I've always known that I was very privileged growing up, but it was definitely an additional privilege. Like it was additionally interesting to see, you know, how many of my colleagues who are doing City Year were not nearly as privileged as I was. Um, and it was, it was very impactful just to see. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Forming relationships with students was an important part of Georgia's City Year experience. Georgia lived with three other corps members. These women were from the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and the American South. She made lifelong friendships. Seven years later, she still talks to members of the corps. She is attending the wedding of one of her old roommates this fall.

Like all of us were so different and brought such different perspectives that it was really fun to see. And that was eye opening. Like to see the differences between the cultures. Um, the food, the behaviors, the way people acted, the way that my Haitian roommate responded to people was very different than the way that my Dominican roommate responded, or very different than the way I responded to

people. So, I learned a lot about culture, and I learned a lot about race that I didn't know. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Georgia also formed relationships with students. There were a couple of students that “really wormed their way into my heart, um, that like some of which were really challenging kids.” She talked about a student whose mother worked a lot and whose father was not around. The student and his siblings were often on their own.

He was this little love bug. He was so behind, but he was so sweet and all he wanted was to be loved. And so every morning he would hug me. And then he'd be like, I miss you. And I'd be like, I missed you too. Like that would be like, I didn't see you for 12 hours and now I'm seeing you again. Like, but for him, like a lot of it was like school was consistent, school was safe. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Another student started at her school during the school year. The student was behind grade level and could be very disruptive in the classroom. By the end of the year, the student was ahead of grade level.

And so I was really proud of her for that and she works super hard and that was really exciting to be able to share that information with her and see her face just like light up and be super pumped that like she was on top of it and she was prepared going into fifth grade that she was above grade level like she was. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

After her year of service ended, Georgia returned to see the 5th grade graduation. Even though she did not work in a 5th grade classroom, she had really “grown to love

them.” It was “really cool to have that experience with them to be like, like they're super excited to see us and they're having so much fun and seeing them at 5th graduation was really neat.”

The school district that Georgia served in was diverse and very different than where she had gone to school. She had to work with students of many different cultures, something she had never done before.

We had a lot of immigrants and refugees, which was incredible. And it was so interesting to have those experiences with those kids to see their, the differences between, you know, the white parents versus the refugee parents versus the immigrant parents versus the, uh, whatever other parents that you have. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

She also learned to love the city she was living in. She was very resistant to move to the city. She thought she'd stay there for a year, hate it, and then leave. But it turned out that she loved it and stayed when her year of service was done. Since then, she has moved multiple times but has continued to work in urban areas. “City Year helped me learn that like these kids that are coming from very impoverished areas are struggling with so many things but have such incredible talent and ability to learn and drive too with some of them.”

Georgia found City Year to be challenging in a number of ways, “they pushed people, they don't pay very well. So, you're working a lot of hours for not a lot of money. You're really overworked, you're stressed.” But she acknowledges that if it was easy then it wouldn't have been as impactful.

You know, not everybody gets to do it. You don't all, like those who do it are doing it for a lot of different reasons, but mostly for the kids to help and to make a difference, Where I guess if it were easier it would be like, let's just, move forward and everybody does it and then it's like not as important. (Georgia, interview, August 2019).

Georgia learned a lot about herself during the year. At first, she was very concerned with being the best at what she did. She wanted to be the best teacher and the best corps member. At some point during the year, Georgia noticed that some of her peers, who were younger than her and had no teaching experience, worked hard, were very good with the students, were willing to learn and not be “super like self-conscious about it.” She learned that she did not always have to be the best and that she could learn from others.

I think was a lot of why I was pushing back on colleagues was I wanted to be known as the person that just was really good at her job and feeling like I didn't want, I didn't want to be vulnerable and like let people think that I can learn something when I can learn something from anybody... a lot of what happened for me is like I changed my outlook of like needing to know everything to being really open to from my colleagues, not just my leaders. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

She also learned how to accept feedback. “During the year I learned a lot of like shut up, sit down, listen and take in what others have to say.” Now she craves feedback. Her current school principal tried to give her feedback recently, and he started by telling

her positive aspects of her performance. “And I was like, I don't care. Just tell me what I need... So I'm very much that person that's like, I want to get better and I know that I can get better.”

Ultimately, City Year changed her career goals. Initially she wanted to teach in the school district where she grew up. City Year made her realize that she wanted to teach in diverse area. It also inspired her to take classes to learn how to teach English Language Learners for her master's degree, something she had never thought about before.

So it was kind of like that where I found out like, oh, okay, I really want to work with a diverse group of students who have a lot of different cultural backgrounds versus plain old white kids like myself. So that was kind of my realization throughout the year that I, that I wanted to do that instead of work in just in New Hampshire with just white kids and just in the same town that I grew up in.

(Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Karen. Karen is also one of the most recent alumni, having graduated from City Year in 2018. Karen served two years in AmeriCorps, one as a corps member and one as a Team Leader. Karen graduated with her degree in Political Science and International Studies prior to starting City Year. She decided to do City Year because she wanted to join the Peace Corps and thought it would be a good resume builder. Karen also loves working with kids and wanted to do service. Karen was also using City Year to see if she wanted to become a teacher.

Karen had two different training managers during her two years of service, so she experienced two different training philosophies. The first year, they focused on learning how to write lesson plans and work with students. The second year the focus was on professional development. Once a month during training, she met with her Idealist Journey group, but they did not spend a lot of time working through the book's exercises. "You're supposed to do these things that are in the book, but a lot for my group, a lot of time it was just like, let's talk about what's going on. And is your experience different? Is it the same? Like what can we learn from each other?"

Karen often talked with her roommate about her experience. Karen's roommate was also a City Year member, serving at another school, so they would talk about their experiences when they got home. Talking was important to Karen because she needed to talk about her experience to someone, "I personally thrive when I can like talk about my day and like process verbally."

These discussions with other corps members also were important because Karen had a hard time talking to her family about her experience, "I come from a very conservative background, so I kind of watch what I say around my family because I feel like it just gets into politics and it's like never fun."

Forming relationships with students was important to Karen too. During her second year there was an incident that almost made Karen quit. But she didn't leave because of their bond. "I love these kids. People come in and out of their lives already. I didn't want to be another person who would just leave."

One of the first things Karen noticed at her service site was that the quality of education had she received was very different from the education that her students were receiving. For example, when she was in school, she took numerous electives, such as art and music.

I remember my first year in, like the first semester, just realizing like these kids, they get to go to art once a week, you know, if that. Sometimes art teachers aren't even there. They're supposed to have PE [Physical Education] but they don't even really do that. And so, I guess that kind of a defining moment in terms of like, like wow, it really is like different, you know? (Karen, interview, August 2019)

In Karen's 5th grade classroom, almost all the students were reading far behind grade level, despite the school district having a guarantee that all students would be reading at grade level by the 3rd grade. "So, there were kids that passed the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, but they couldn't actually read to comprehend, you know?" Collectively, her students were reading at a second grade reading level.

The teachers in her classroom were both Teach for America teachers with no experience teaching. On Karen's first day of school, the children were jumping from desk to desk. "It was a very small white woman and a very timid white man with all these little black kids around just, around giving them like just shit." One of the teachers did not last through the year.

She also found that the books in the classroom were not suitable for her students.

So, you're trying to teach fifth grade material to kids who for the most part can't read and then a lot of the material is tailored to white kids. So there's nothing about basketball, so that the thing that they like. It's about water polo and these kids don't even know what water polo is. Or horseback riding. Have these kids ever seen a horse? Have they ever been to a farm? Probably not. So that's like, that was something else that was really interesting. Just the idea that like they're not even learning things that are, that they can relate to. (Karen, interview, August 2019)

Karen found City Year to be emotionally and mentally taxing but does not think it would be as effective if it was easier.

And if you weren't working from sunup to sundown, if you weren't making no money, because like that really humbles you. I was working two other jobs. I was working like 80 hours a week because I needed to pay my rent, you know. But I feel like, you know, now I'm making a little more and, but it's like I know how to survive of that now, you know, so I don't know that it would be as effective if it wasn't as hard. (Karen, interview, August 2019)

Karen only finished City Year a year ago and is still figuring out what she wants to do as a career. When she started City Year, she wanted to join the Peace Corps. After her experience with City Year, she has started to have feel uncomfortable about the practice of temporarily putting white, idealistic, suburban young people in an underserved, minority area and asking them to fix things.

I guess I kind of have a little bit of feelings about, not all City Year people are white or suburban, but a majority of them are. Um, and so taking white suburban people and putting them in a black school district, there was a little bit of, you know, is this right? And I feel like the Peace Corps is same exact thing. Taking Americans and putting them in another country and saying, “fix it.” (Karen, interview, August 2019)

As for her career plans, she knows that she doesn't want to be a teacher and she knows that she does not want to work in the suburbs. She wants to work in urban education in some way, probably for a nonprofit. “I don't want to be like a teacher as we know it in America. I want to work with in some way in terms of like transformative experiences for them that's like really important to me. Giving opportunities.” Karen believes that she got her current job because of City Year.

It was between me and another girl who went to Ohio state and she studied these things. But it's different theory versus practice, you know, like, okay, so you can study about urban environments, but have you been in one? Have you? (Karen, interview, August 2019)

Her experience made her a lot more cynical. She's cynical after looking at the disparities in education and opportunities. She's more cynical about the educational system. “You can't fail a kid. So they're just getting pushed through and all that stuff. I don't know, I feel like I've just become way more cynical of like the system.” She is also more aware of other people's life experiences while becoming critical of other's prejudices towards poverty and race.

In terms of, especially in terms of my family, like what they'll say, things that are, I don't think they need to be outwardly racist, but they're being prejudice, you know? And so I think I've become very much more aware of like, you know, everybody pull yourself up by the bootstraps thing. It's like that's hard when there's cyclical poverty and somebody has like, you know, we're not teaching sex education, so somebody has a kid at 16 and then they have to drop out of school and work three jobs at three different fast food restaurants and they can't even support their family. Like what do you expect? So I think it shows me becoming more aware. (Karen, interview, August 2019)

Paul. Paul started his year of service eight years ago. Paul graduated with a degree in political science and with the career goal of work in legislative analysis. He graduated college in 2010 at the height of the recession and was having a hard time finding a stable job. He has always been interested in community service and the thought of a steady (albeit small) paycheck and regular hours was appealing, so he applied to several AmeriCorps positions. He was recruited by City Year. He had never considered working with youth before.

Paul was one of the only people interviewed who enthusiastically completed the exercises in *The Idealist's Journey* handbook. He took a lot away from his City Year trainings. "You will get out of this program what you put into it. So if you do the exercises in the book and you think about it and you work through them, you will benefit." Paul also noted that he had a group leader who bought into the *Idealist's Journey* activities. He felt that corps members do not benefit as much from the program if

they do not have a leader who encourages them to do the exercises or engage in structured discussions.

Relationships with other corps members were important during his year. He carpooled to his service site with other team members, so they could decompress on the car ride home together. Paul believes that the City Year experience lends itself to forming long lasting relationships.

One of the ways you form relationships is by doing, um, like intense experiences in short bursts. And that's definitely kind of what City Year's like. It's like basic training, right? Like you have your, your battle buddies... Like it's been seven years since we did City Year and we still see each other and hang out and have close relationships. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

Paul also formed meaningful relationships with his students. He thought that it was rewarding to see their personal growth throughout the year.

As you got to April and the beginning of May when you had students who were like, "you're not going to be with me next year?" like who you had formed those relationships with and you could beyond just like grades, you could see a tangible change in, in them from you having worked with them. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

The urban environment played a role in Paul's experience. During an assembly at school, students participated in an exercise called "cross the line." It was like the privilege walk that Georgia experienced, in that the students were lined up next to each other and had to step forward if a statement applied to them. Only instead of calling out

hallmarks of privilege, students were asked to step forward if they had, for example, lost someone to gun violence or knew someone in prison. Paul was shocked at how many of his students stepped forward for these prompts; more than half the students had lost a family member to gun violence. This moment he realized that the life experiences he previously thought to be universal, were not universal. These students' worlds are wholly different than his own, despite growing up maybe 12 miles apart. This was a very "visual tangible demonstration of what the students are dealing with every day." This really opened his eyes to what his students' lives are really like. Up until now everything had been theoretical, something he had learned in school or saw online.

So it really changes the way you think... I think for a lot of people, if you haven't been in that environment and work closely with that school and the students... people sometimes think they're bad kids and it's like you don't even know one, right? The life experiences that they've lived. And I saw so many kids who were so smart or so talented, but they had been failed by the education system that they were in, by their principal, by their teachers, by the school system. And it's like there is the light switch for me was like, there's this, um, there's this enormous pool of human capacity that's not being served. And then we just say, oh, it's just the neighborhood. Or if you're racist, you say, oh, it's because of these people's race. Right? But it's not, it's because, we have, we have set people up to fail. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

City Year's biggest effect in Paul's life was that it changed the trajectory of his career. He had never imagined that he would want to work with young adults. Currently he is working in workforce development with young adults. He is also more passionate

about educational policy and wants to start his own nonprofit, a career choice that was not on his radar prior to City Year. Paul had previously wanted a career working in public policy, but City Year has given him a different perspective on how public policy should be conducted. “I saw the ways in which my students were being failed by people who had never come to their neighborhood and was like, this is the solution. Um, and I'm like, I don't want to be part of that problem anymore.” Instead of making policy from the top, policy makers need to listen to people.

Phoebe. Phoebe grew up in a rural area outside of a major metropolitan area and served in Cleveland. Phoebe graduated with a degree in Political Science from a Catholic university. She decided to do City Year because she loved working with kids and was interested in the idea of doing a year of service. Phoebe started her year of service three years ago. There were problems with the recording of Phoebe's interview and much of the audio was unusable. Much of Phoebe's story is recreated from the extensive memo that I wrote immediately after our interview.

There was a month of training at the beginning of the year before they started in the schools. This training was all about the culture of City Year. There was a lot of team building and corps building. There was a strong social justice focus. For example, they had conversations about white privilege. She said that they encouraged personal vulnerability. Some people left within the first couple of weeks because it was not their thing. She compared the training to almost like a religion. Once City Year boot camp was over, they had weekly trainings every Friday. Later in the year, they meet less frequently. Overall, Phoebe found the training to be helpful.

During a typical day, corps members came in early for First Circle in the City Year room. They would do little call and response cheers together and they would stand by the entrance and greet the kids as they came in. She stayed in one classroom all day, working with her caseload of students. Phoebe worked with students that were close to passing, they just needed a small boost to move them to the next level.

One of the biggest things that Phoebe noticed about the urban school system is how burned out and rude the teachers were. There was one young man that her supervising teacher would antagonize just so she could kick him out the room for the day. The same teacher was once very rude to Phoebe and the young man noticed. He asked Phoebe why she responded to conformation by backing down. Phoebe explained that you must take consequences into consideration. Phoebe explained that if she had a confrontation with her supervisor, she could lose her job. This may have been the first time this child had seen an adult model this behavior. She felt that too many students at the school did not understand that it is ok to walk away and that not every perceived or actual slight is worth fighting over.

Phoebe found the year to be very hard and she struggled a lot. It was the first time in her life that she really struggled. Initially, she really struggled with the students. She had worked with kids before and could not understand why she had such a hard time working with these kids. She started out the year being idealistic about how great things were going to be. When things were harder than expected, Phoebe blamed herself. Phoebe became embarrassed with how much she struggled and didn't want to talk about it with anyone. Phoebe lived with two other City Year members. She had a hard time talking to them about her problems because she thought her roommates were at much

harder schools than her. As the year went on, her relationships with the students improved, but her relationship with her supervising teacher did not.

The support City Year provided did not feel helpful because she felt like a failure. During the year, City Year does frequent observations and “check-ins” with team leads and higher ups within the organization. But the check-ins didn’t feel comforting to Phoebe. They were supposed to be helpful, but they felt more like a punishment to her. They made her feel worse about herself. She expressed in the interview that even though she’s never been depressed before, this was a lot like being depressed.

Phoebe was tired all the time. In addition to working at her service site, Phoebe had two other jobs. At times she thought about quitting City Year and just working at her other jobs instead. When City Year ended, she was exhausted and burnt out. She didn’t want anything to do with City Year or working with kids. She ended up with a job at a day care and quit after two months because she couldn’t handle it. Eventually she got a job running an after-school program, which she liked better.

City Year helped Phoebe help Phoebe think differently about her own experiences and recognize her own childhood trauma.

What I went through that one time as a kid... wasn't just crappy, that was like downright like bad, like that was a traumatic, or like that was trauma. Cause like I don't really know what trauma was before I did this. And then I did it and I was like, ooh, like was that a traumatic experience? And I'm like, oh yeah, that makes sense. Like, um, I don't think it like forced me to think about myself differently

and like things that I had encountered differently. (Phoebe, interview, August 2019)

City Year had lasting impact is on her worldview. The effects of poverty are not just something she had learned about; they are something that has seen and understands, “I think that's kind of giving me stronger convictions because it's like, you know, I haven't just arrived these things online. Like I've seen them, and I've like known people who have gone through that.” Serving in an urban environment was eye opening for her. She saw that while some families were able to provide and adequately care for their children, some children came to school without bathing or having clean clothes. She now has a better understanding of why that disparity exists. “It's one thing to be like... they don't care about their kids. And it's like they have so many extenuating circumstances in their lives.”

She feels that she has better understanding of the struggles of families that live in the neighborhood. She knows there are parents that work multiple jobs and aunts and uncles raising their nieces and nephews because she has met them.

It's given me like a ton of humility and it's like, made me understand that, you know, like there's people behind these issues... we think of like, oh this is just like a welfare mom or something like that. It's like, no, because she is like, she is a mother, she is a daughter, you know, she is a survivor of this, you know, like she has struggled. She has like this illness, you know, I think it's hit me a lot of like, just, you know, looking at like the layers of people. (Phoebe, interview, August 2019)

Rachel. Rachel grew up in a “very white” middle class suburb in Ohio. She was an 18-year-old high school graduate when served in Chicago. Despite being a very recent high school graduate, Rachel ended up serving at a high school. She joined City Year because she was interested taking a gap year before starting college.

Overall, Rachel found the City Year trainings to be helpful. They had guest speakers and professional development trainings. Many of the trainings were generally about team building and teaching you about City Year culture. The training also “makes you excited about education, and like equity and education.” Because she was so young, Rachel fully bought into City Year culture.

I'm really glad I did because at 18. I was pretty naive to a lot of things... it was really the first time that I had to have conversations in work with people that have differing opinions and having to navigate those relationships to have a common shared goal was really the first time I'd ever done that before. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Rachel formed meaningful relationships with students and corps members. She grew close with the other young corps members, because they bonded over living away from home for the first time. Even today she periodically tries to find out information about her former students online and through social media. Sarah teared up during the interview talking about how much she cared for her students and how proud she was of one of her former students, who is currently serving in the military and has a young family.

Talking to other corps members was important because friends and family had a hard time understanding the experience because it was so far removed from their own life.

It was tough trying to talk to your aunts or your friends' parents about like a world that they genuinely could, not even a little bit imagine. Like, *The Wire* was out at the time but like *The Wire* is a TV show. But it was like kinda the closest you could get to being like there is a world where people don't shop at Coach and don't wear name brand clothes. Like this world exists. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Rachel also found that people only wanted to hear uplifting stories. They wanted to hear stories where she was the hero who saved someone, but that was not the day-to-day reality of her experience.

I feel like a lot of the stories that they would want to hear were stories where like you were some savior who like really made a difference and had like, a *Mona Lisa Smile* or whatever moment. Um, so that was frustrating cause everybody wanted to hear the stories where like things were great and like made it or something and that just, that's like not the case and it wasn't reality. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Rachel had attended private schools, so serving in an urban, public school was eye-opening. The school that she served in was very old and underused. Due to declining enrollment, only half the building was used, and the hallways often seemed empty. The lockers lining the halls were mostly broken and the school lacked the technology (Smart

Boards, science labs) that she was used to. The neighborhood that she served in was so dangerous that she was not comfortable with her father visiting her there. She had not told her parents the specifics of where her school was. While her parents had probably heard that Chicago had a high crime rate, they had only ever visited the nicer, touristy parts. The first thing he said when he arrived at her school was, “um, we are never telling your mother about this. She, she will not know the specifics about this.”

Because um, you know, in my neighborhood it was, you know, you had a ton of abandoned houses and like very overgrown, vacant lots, but you also had a lot of um, very specific corners where you had sort of makeshift memorials. So you had, um, maybe a cross and several bottles of liquor on multiple corners. Um, and then you have people watching over this corner. It was not the place where you want to be walking around. Um, if you're not familiar with anything. And I do think like our City Year jackets were like a little bit of a, like a red shield in that way because people did recognize City Year. Um, but his comment of "we are never telling, your mother" um, really kind of hit home for me on that one. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Rachel's year of service was very hard, because in addition to the pressure of City Year, she had to learn how to be an adult. She had to learn how to do laundry and cook meals on her own for the first time.

I definitely say I'm thinking in very rosy terms because I definitely broke down several times during my City Year experience over you know just general exhaustion or concerns that I wasn't making a difference and now I'm like, yeah, everything was great and I, I definitely forget what it was like to be that poor,

truly beyond paycheck to paycheck, like trying to figure out how to live within any sort of reasonable means. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Rachel started college the fall after her year of service ended. City Year changed her outlook and goals when she decided to become an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) before starting college. She knew because of her experiences, that she would not be happy being a “typical” college student.

So one of the guys that I served with in City Year, he worked at another high school, but he was a volunteer EMT throughout college and we got into a conversation one night about how, you know, when I go off to college, I will never be the kind of stereotypical sorority girl that bake cookies for a bake sale for philanthropy that like she maybe doesn't actually really understand. And he was like, you're going to need to do, like, you're going to want to do more than that. You're never going to be able to like kind of let this, um, this feeling or this like need to serve, go away. So, I, without like any medical background, or interest really in medicine. I kind of took him to heart and became a volunteer EMT throughout college. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Rachel was also changed by City Year in other ways. She is interested in “creating diverse friendships and hearing from people who don't believe the same thing that you do in the same way that you did.” She also learned that she does not have to be perfect.

When I was in high school, not only did I need an A on a test, I needed a 90% or better on a test. I had to be perfect. Perfection was the only thing that I allowed.

Um, and I think City Year was very great, but truly slap in the face that they world is not perfect, and you have, you have to work for things to be good and better. They won't be perfect. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Like many City Year alumni, Rachel is very civically engaged. She is involved in women's health care. "It was not enough for me to just give money and donate. Like I have to be boots on the ground and I think that's probably something that's gonna stick with me forever." She also serves on the board of directors for her college's Volunteer EMT program.

Sarah. After a year of studying abroad, Sarah went to college to major in Journalism and French, with the goal of becoming an international journalist. After a disastrous year of college Sarah took a break and decided to do City Year while she figured her life out. Sarah started City Year 22 years ago, when the program was slightly different. She served part-time in a school and part-time at the public health department.

She found the trainings to be helpful. During trainings they talked a lot about inclusion and social entrepreneurship. They did a lot of team building activities and leadership training. They also had "hard and awkward" intense conversations. At the time, the Ohio Supreme Court ruled public school funding was unconstitutional, and the corps members had "like really intense conversations as like 21-year-olds about how we were going to help combat that." City Year also helped Sarah learn more about herself.

For me that's where I really began to like be able to like understand my place in the world and like what I bring to a team, but also like what my weaknesses are

and like what I need to like sit down and be quiet and learn about like that kind of thing. (Sarah, interview, August 2019)

Sarah formed relationships with her fellow corps members. Her apartment was centrally located, so it became the City Year hangout. Even though she served in the 1990s, she is still friends with people that she served with. Relationships with corps members were important because her friends did not understand the experience. “Um, I mean my friends outside of City Year described us as being a little bit cult like. Well, I just don't think they realize like that intensity of experience you are going through.”

Sarah formed relationships with her students too. On her last day, all the students gave her cards and she took pictures with them using her disposable camera. Saying goodbye was an emotional time “I was like crying tears and like will I see these kids again?”

The disparity in Columbus public schools and her own suburban Columbus high school experience was jarring.

I think I thought all Columbus schools were the schools the same... And then I went to a school that was so economically different than what I was used to and was just in shock. Like I didn't have a room [for tutoring]. Like I was either in a closet with actual brooms and stuff or sitting in a hallway. (Sarah, interview, August 2019)

Sarah was surprised by the attitudes of some teachers. Her supervising teacher “didn't want to be there. Like she, all she would do is like eat snacks the whole time.” While there were some good teachers, “there were bad teachers and the bad teachers were

there because they felt they'd gotten stuck there. And that was another thing where I had never encountered like a professional like that behaving like that in a room.”

Just before her year of service, she had inadvertently said something offensive to her Asian-American roommate. It was a completely unintentional, she did not even realize that she had said something hurtful, but it made her afraid that she might unintentionally say something offensive to the African American students at her service site. She was so concerned that at the start of the year she was uncharacteristically quiet and tried to follow the lead of a corps members who was black. “White privilege” was not a phrase used in the late 90s, but that experience made Sarah aware of her race and privilege.

All of a sudden you become very aware of your, like at that point I didn't know what white privilege was...but that's probably what I was feeling was my white privilege and thinking that I was like, you know, like knew what was going on in the world and realized that I was unprepared. (Sarah, interview, August 2019)

Sarah found the experience to be hard, but is now, 20 years out, she is not sure if it was actually hard or “did I just have to learn how to be a grown up?”

When Sarah was done with City Year, she went back to school and changed her major because she no longer wanted to be a journalist. While still in school, Sarah got a job with the Ohio Commission on Community Service, where she continued to work after graduating college. Since then she has had many jobs working in non-profits. Before City Year, she toyed with the idea of doing Peace Corps. Because she spoke French, she

thinks she would have been sent to Africa. She decided against the Peace Corps because “I didn't want to be like a white westernizer going over to bring my white person ways.”

Steven. Steven served two terms in City Year. His first year, he served in a first-year corps members role. His second year he served in a role supporting all the City Year schools in his district. Steven graduated with a bachelor's degree in Business prior to starting City Year. He decided to do City Year because he was interested in a year of service.

Steven did not like a lot of the trainings. During the first month of training, they had to do physical exercises in the middle of downtown Cleveland, which he hated. He found some of the culture building to be cult like. “I didn't buy it at all. I was really suspect of like the culture, a lot of like seemed like very disingenuous.” He found that the training on tutoring methods was not as effective as actually being in the classroom, but he thinks that City Year did the best they could. His group decided that *The Idealist's Journey* was too corny, and they did not do it. He did like that the trainings provided the ability to reflect and the session on education reform.

Steven formed relationships with students and enjoyed watching them grow. He is concerned the short-term nature of the program is not a sustainable way to see progress in the school.

I kind of felt bad too with the fact that like, you're only there for a year and then you leave and it's like you want to do good and you can't really do much in a year. And that's really what made me think about the idea there. And like all these

efforts in the schools aren't going to be impactful if they're not consistent. (Steven, interview, August 2019)

The urban environment influenced Steven's experience. It was hard for him to see so many students that did not see the value of an education. He left the experience with a better understanding of inequalities in education. He worked with teachers that came "unprepared every day and literally like that was every day, the whole year."

And you know, growing up, you hear like everyone has like an equal chance and everyone has a chance to get education. And when I went to City Year and worked and... I realize that's not the case. And people are really set up to fail like based on how they prepared or what type of education they have. (Steven, interview, August 2019)

Steven found the year to be hard and full of conflict. There was daily conflict between the teachers and the student and conflicts within the school, with teachers and with other corps members.

So the whole year, every corps member, not everyone but a lot of them, are complaining about how poorly run CY is and how like terrible or the schools are, how it's so hard and you wish it could be better and maybe it would be better if things are better run. (Steven, interview, August 2019)

However, Steven says "I'm glad it was so tough cause I think that really like grounded and exposing the situation, but it made me like a stronger person."

When he was done, the last thing he wanted to do was work with kids again. He looked into community development jobs but ended up working for a bank. While he was

working at a bank, one of his former students was shot and killed. This tragedy had a huge effect on him. He later realized that he hated his job. Steven did not have a lot of time to reflect while he was doing City Year. He was too exhausted. But while he was working at the bank, he had time to reflect on his experience and realized that he wanted to become a teacher.

I kind of had an idea that even when I got the job, like it was like, do I do work at this cube for the rest of my life or like somewhere that's just all I deal with is money and like [name of bank] is important, like banks are important, right? They like to downplay those jobs but it's like, am I really just going deal with dollars and cents all day when there's like other things that other jobs you could do that are more impactful? (Steven, interview, August 2019)

Today he teaches in an urban school district in the Cleveland area. He thinks that being a teacher is the best way to help students and strengthen communities. He loves teaching but is interested in pursuing a career in educational policy at some point in the future. He attributes his career ambitions directly to his City Year experience.

Tara. Tara started City Year after she graduated with a Psychology Degree. Because Tara had a lot of experience working with youth, she ended up serving in a leadership position, rather than serving in a normal first-year corps members position.

Tara believes that they used the *Idealist's Journey* as much as was required, but they probably could have done more with it, and she doesn't remember much about it. The most helpful part of trainings was when they came together for group reflection.

[We'd] sit down like a team full of people from different schools and experiencing different grade levels and ages and having kind of the same experience regardless of where you were at in San Jose. It's very telling to say that like no matter what school you're at, what block you're in, what neighborhood you're a part of, what age group you're with, you're dealing with the same systemic issues. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Tara formed close relationships with students at her school. She hand wrote cards for every single student at the end of the year. She formed “heartfelt connections with them” and still cares about all of them. But she expressed reservations about the nature of the program.

I loved being a part of those kids' lives and watching them change and grow up and mature...And I think having those kids open up on such a deep level to people who are only in their lives for a year is kind of like heartbreaking and like awesome...I'm glad that we're able to build that connection, but it's so heartbreaking that we can only be there for a year of their lives that were not able to be consistent. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

The urban environment opened her eyes to the economic disparity in the area.

And there's just, there's so many systemic inequities that prevent people from, we don't all start out on the same playing field. And I think that was made very clear to me throughout college and even more throughout City Year. Like it's just not fair. Life is not put on a fair playing field and people are dished out disadvantages from the start. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Tara found the year to be hard and it took an emotional toll on her. But looking back, she wonders if it was really as hard as it felt. She understands that it needs to be hard to be effective.

If something's going to change you, it has to challenge you and push you outside of your comfort zone. Uh, if you are going to experience profound growth, you have to experience profound pressure. I mean diamond only changes from coal to a diamond because of intense pressure. I guess it's like a really cliché thing to say but it's, it's like I would not have been as, I would not have become the person I am had it not been for the pressure I experienced and I, I wholeheartedly think that and if you're not like strong enough to experience it, well like I guess City Year for you. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Tara suffered from imposter syndrome her whole year. She felt unqualified to be in a supervisory position. Tara had a very difficult year and there were many times when she did not think she'd be able to finish it.

I didn't think I could do it before I did it. I mean it was, I think the longest, most difficult, most rewarding year of my life. Little sleep, I mean lots of stress, a huge emotional toll. I mean there were definitely days, three quarters of the way through the year that I was not sure that I could continue to make it..[I was] struggling with like the emotional load of my students and not feeling like I could do it and feeling the imposter syndrome. So, it definitely was tough. I didn't, I definitely did not think that I had it in me to finish out that year. And I was really impressed with myself when I got to the end of it and said like, this is it. I did it. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Finishing the year gave Tara a ton of confidence that has stayed with her today. After City Year, Tara got a job working at a nonprofit organization. When Tara realized that she needed to quit her job, she realized that she was a much stronger person. Something she attributes to the impact City Year had on her life.

Like the me before City Year would have put up with this. I would have been pretty meek about it...I wouldn't have felt that I have like the power to make this change in my life. Like I would not, I would not have been okay with the uncertainty of like joblessness for a whole month. Like that was terrifying. But I knew like I could get through City Year, I can get through a month without a paycheck. Like I lived on food stamps, I lived on the stipend, I did it. I can do that. I can absolutely do anything. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Emerging Themes

Six descriptive themes emerged as participants discussed their transformative learning experience. The six themes are: City Year culture and training, relationships with students, relationships with cohort members, the nature of the program, the difficulty of the program, and time changed their views of the experience. These themes describe how the phenomenon occurred.

Theme one: City Year culture and training. As described in Chapter 1, training occurred for one month at the beginning of the year, and then once a week or so for the rest of the school year. Trainings prepared corps members to work with students and introduced corps members to City Year culture.

Everyone had different options about the trainings. Some people, like Paul and

Rachel, found the trainings to be very helpful. Others, like Karen and Georgia, liked certain aspects more than others. Phoebe initially liked the trainings, but by the end of the year she was dissatisfied with the trainings. Only Desi had an overall negative opinion of the trainings, but some of this may have been related to her dissatisfaction with her Team Leader.

The least popular part of training was PT. Sarah and Steven both talked about how much they did not like having to do their physical exercises in very public spaces. During Sarah's year of service, all corps members met every morning to do calisthenics on the State House before heading to their service site. Later, when working as a staff member, Sarah had to lead PT, "and I was just like, I hate this so much. Now I kinda miss it. Cause I mean it does get your blood flowing and get you like pumped up to begin your day." Georgia described PT as "odd" and "different." Desi talked about doing "weird dances" in the morning. While he hated doing PT, Steven understood the reason behind it.

And it was just at the end of the day I get it cause trying to create like commonality...But I did not like it at all, and I felt like just like a waste of time from what the real mission was. (Steven, interview, August 2019)

Everyone agreed that the best part of the training was the time provided for reflection and discussion. Tara said "[We'd] sit down like a team full of people from different schools and experiencing different grade levels and ages and having kind of the same experience regardless of where you were at..." Karen said "a lot of time it was just like, let's talk about what's going on. And is your experience different? Is it the same? Like what can we learn from each other?" However, Desi felt censored during their

reflection time.

Here was like a certain narrative you were supposed to be talking about and you said kind of deviated from that or deviated from like “City Year is amazing,” it was kind of like monitored or seen like, oh, you're sharing, I don't know if you're sharing too much. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Karen talked about City Year training corps members to talk to funders and donors by self-censoring the stories of their experiences.

I mean, that's the name of the game. You have to have money in order to do these things. And so I could talk to rich people all day long about my experience, but I also, you know, you don't want to tell them that the first day you walked into the classroom. and saw students jumping from desk to desk, you know, you give them like the lovey-dovey story, you know. (Karen, interview, August 2019)

One useful aspect of training that both Rachel and Georgia talked about was learning to give and receive feedback. Rachel talked about City Year's intense peer review process. Everyone had advanced notice and time to prepare for the review process. Then corps members sat down face-to-face and gave each other honest feedback about their performance.

You had to sit down and you had to talk to people about this kind of stuff cause we had to get the job done...it was like “I didn't like when you did this. I think you should've done a better job with this,” that sort of stuff...but I think as an 18-year-old I really needed someone to tell me when I was being impatient or like wasn't having a good tone and like it hits hard, right, with the people that you spend all your time. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Even though the process was very difficult at the time, Rachel now appreciates that she learned how to give and receive feedback, which is not something many people know how to do well.

Another very important aspect of City Year's training program was the induction into City Year culture. At least four participants described City Year culture as cult-like. Phoebe compared it to religion. It was also compared to the military. During training, corps members learn PT routines and call and response chants. Everyone is dressed alike, wearing matching khaki pants, uniform shirts, and red or yellow jackets (City Year members in San Jose wear yellow jackets because the color red is associated with gangs). Even though the program is non-partisan, the training program has a liberal focus. Corps members discuss privilege, race, and other topics that they might not be comfortable with. Phoebe said that two people quit during the first couple of weeks because it was "not their thing." Tara also talked about someone who quit early on. "He really couldn't handle what we were asking of him. And for him to really look introspectively at himself and have that growth, he'd could not do it. And so he left after a month and a half." She feels that you have to be liberal "social justice warrior" to fit in. "If they're not a pretty liberal democratic thinking, like I mean common sense thinking, person. You're probably not along with most of the folks who you're working with alongside."

Steven did not buy into the culture "a lot of like seemed like very disingenuous, um, energy. I don't know. It was unreal."

During training, most participants did not use *The Idealist's Journey*, or they used it minimally. Rachel enthusiastically participated and got a lot out of the experience. Paul found the activities in the handbook to be helpful. But believes that you needed a

good leader who buys into the culture in order to help you work through it in order to get the most out of it. Paul said, “You will get out of this program what you put into it.”

During her first year, Karen’s group started off the year using it but abandoned it in favor of just talking instead, “my first year, our IJ leader wanted to do all of that stuff. And our team was just like, like, no, it doesn't matter.” When it was Karen’s turn to lead a team during her second year, she gave them the choice of doing the activities or just talking. “They wanted to talk about what's going on. So we spent the whole hour bitching and telling funny stories and just whatever, we needed to do to decompress.”

Almost all participants wished that City Year leadership had listened more to corps members concerns, Desi did not feel like there was any room for criticism and City Year leadership didn’t take corps members concerns into consideration. Rachel also felt like her concerns were dismissed.

I do remember a couple times where I felt like I wasn't being heard or if I had criticism, I couldn't share it because you know, they were bigger, smarter, more important people who are making decisions. (Rachel, interview, August 2019).

Theme two: Relationships with students. Corps members formed close bonds with their students. All participants talked about the relationships that they formed with students. Karen said, “I loved the kids. I really loved my, my experience in the classroom.” City Year members work closely with a small cohort of students. City Year and their partner schools identify students that can benefit the most of City Year interventions, based on early warning indicators, such as low attendance, failure in math, or failure in English Language Arts. Corps members spend a lot of time with their

assigned students, but they interact with all the other students in the school too, in the classroom, lunchroom, or during after-school programs.

While I did not specifically ask for stories about students, everyone had a story involving meaningful interactions with students. Desi and Phoebe both has stories about working very closely with a disruptive student. At one point during the year, his grades improved, and the teacher asked him to read out loud to the class an essay that they'd worked on together. Georgia told two stories about students. One story was about a girl who improved academically. The other story was about a boy with a rough homelife who she comforted while he cried under a table one day at school. Rachel still thinks about her students and periodically looks them up on social media. She teared up talking about how proud she was of one young man for being able to get out of his neighborhood, join the military, and start a family. Paul talked about trying to reason with a student to keep her from wanting to get in a fight. Steven was clearly affected by a former student dying after his service year was over.

Building trust and forming relationships with students was another common theme. When Steven first started, some students would talk back or not listen. But after developing relationships with some students they say "You can't talk to Mr. [X] that way" when other students were being disrespectful. "Trust is not something that develops in the first day it like takes a lot of time. So, something that I remember is like how important building that trust was."

The last day of school was very emotional for many of the participants. There were tears and hugs. Many took pictures with their students. Sarah wrote handmade cards for each of her students at the end of the year. Everyone agreed that they enjoyed seeing

the personal growth change that their student's experienced throughout the year. Paul said, "you had formed those relationships with and you could, beyond just like grades, you could see a tangible change in, in them from you having worked with them."

Theme three: Relationships with corps members. Corps members formed close bonds with their fellow corps members and with their students. Close relationships are vital to the transformative learning process, because "trust, friendship, and support" are key components to effective discourse and reflection (Taylor, 2000).

City Year gives participants the opportunity to work with individuals from all over the country. Paul found it "beneficial" to be on a team with people from different parts of the country and different ages

Forming close relationships with corps members is very important because friends and family often did not quite understand the experience. Sarah found that people back home only wanted to hear "stories where like you were some savior who like really made a difference and had like, a *Mona Lisa Smile* or whatever moment." Desi tried to talk to her family about her experience, but struggled with explaining that just because bad things, like fights, happened, it the kids were still good kids, "it just was hard to explain both of those things at once to a lot of people." Sarah found that her friends did not understand her experience "Um, I mean my friends outside of City Year described us as being a little bit cult like, well, I just don't think they realized like that intensity of experience you are going through." Desi also found it hard to explain the experience to peers "And it is kind of a weird thing to explain to someone that you're like wearing the uniform and doing we do weird dances in the morning." Several participants still maintain these friendships years later.

Most participants lived with other City Year members during their year of service. For many, these roommates were total strangers. The roommates were able to provide an opportunity for reflection and conversation with each other. Georgia found a support network among her three roommates.

It was important to have those conversations and being able to have support from these people that I was working with and the people that were also part of the City Year, but in a different school, we all had that common experience where we all knew kind of what the other people were going through and how hard it was so we could support each other in that way where lots of other people, like my friends at home, my parents, nobody else could really understand how intense it was. Um, so it was great to have those people to be able to have those conversations and share what was happening for each one of us. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Building relationships with others was also important because corps members had to work together to get things done. For Rachel, it was the first time the first time that she had to work with people with different opinions, “and having to navigate those relationships to have a common shared goal was really the first time I'd ever done that before.” Working together as a team did not always go well. After working 10 to 11 hours a day together every day, and then doing activities together outside of school, Georgia grew sick of her members of her team.

There were times that I was like, okay, I'd really like to not be with this person for a little while and I wasn't really allowed to do that. Um, just because they were

part of our team... the team is the team and you had to work with the team.
(Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Theme four: The nature of the program. While they enjoyed the program, many expressed reservations with the short-term nature of the program and struggled with the ethics of putting white, middle class people into poor minority neighborhoods in order to fix things. Karen and Sarah both expressed concerns over the practice of putting white middle class people in urban areas and expecting them to fix things. Tara also had concerns over the short-term nature of the program. Tara said:

I loved being a part of those kids' lives and watching them change and grow up and mature... And I think having those kids open up on such a deep level to people who are only in their lives for a year is kind of like heartbreaking and like awesome... Like it's, it's such a nice idea and in the end, it just sort of breaks my heart with the fact that we can't be these consistent forces in these kids' lives for good, positive change. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Steven expressed reservations with the short-term nature of the program. "You're only there for a year and then you leave and it's like you want to do good and you can't really do much in a year."

Theme five: The difficulty of the program. All nine participants described their year of service as hard. To emphasize how hard the year was, the word "hard" and its synonyms came up 135 times during interviews. The experience was physically so emotionally exhausting that "tired" and its synonyms were mentioned 37 times in interviews.

City Year is physically and emotionally taxing. City Year corps members typically work 10-12-hour days. They are the first people at school in the morning and the last people to leave. In the morning, they meet for “First Circle,” a time to get together for announcements, uniform check, review expectations, etc. Then corps members stand at the entrance and greet all the students as they walked in. Corps members that work with younger students cheer and dance as the students walk in. Corps members in high schools greet students by giving kids high-fives. How they spent their day varied from school to school. Some corps members followed around a cohort of students from class to class while others stayed in one room and worked with one teacher. Corps members worked as teacher assistants and tutors throughout the day. They ate lunch either in the cafeteria or in the City Year room. They often ate with students. After school, City Year runs after school programs for the students. Depending on the school, they offered homework help, had after school clubs, or put on and planned special events. In addition to the long day, many of them had long commutes. Rachel’s commute took over an hour, “it was a bus to a train to another train, to walk and then I walked, I think it was like 20 minutes from the train.”

City Year is also hard because corps members are poor. They make so little that they qualified for food stamps. Karen worked a second job and Phoebe worked two jobs during their year of service. Rachel described it as being her financial situation as “truly beyond paycheck to paycheck.” Karen said, “I mean, I know it's supposed to be a volunteer year, but pay people a livable wage because working all those hours was really hard for me.”

The experience was hard enough that nearly everyone considered quitting at least once. Rachel looks back in “rosy terms” now, but during the year she did not know if she could finish, “I definitely broke down several times over...just general exhaustion or concerns that I wasn't making a difference and now I'm like, yeah, everything was great.”

Tara described her year:

I mean it was I think the longest, most difficult, most rewarding year of my life. Little sleep, I mean lots of stress, a huge emotional toll. I mean there were definitely days, three quarters of the way through the year that I was not sure that I could continue to make it. (Tara, interview, August 2019)

Steven said that “I think part of the reason why it is so hard is that city's mission is like tackling one of the toughest issues right now in our country.”

They acknowledge now that the fact that it was hard was necessary. Looking back Steven says, “I'm glad it was so tough cause I think that really like grounded and exposing the situation, but it made me like a stronger person.” Karen said:

“If you weren't working from sunup to sundown, if you weren't making no money because like that really humbles you. I was working two other jobs. I was working like 80 hours a week because I needed to pay my rent, you know.”

(Karen, interview, August 2019)

Desi, Tara and Sarah found the experience to be hard, but is now, wonder if it was actually hard or if they just had to learn how to be an adult. For Rachel, who was a recent high school graduate, City Year was the first time she ever had to do something demanding.

I was exhausted. I was so tired. I felt like I aged so much over that year just because of like, um, you know, I was in high school before, so I was out of class by three o'clock and like maybe played a sport but like things weren't demanding in my life before City Year. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Theme six: Time changed feelings on the experience. Everyone's view of their experience has changed over time. Sarah, Karen, and Georgia all left with very positive opinions of City Year that have changed over time. Sarah felt very positive after her year of service. She worked as a recruiter and spent a lot of time talking about how great the program was. Later, she became very critical of the experience. Now she realizes that while the program wasn't perfect, there were a lot of positive aspects to the experience.

But then I realized now you know, now I'm in my forties, I'm like that program helped me like probably way more than anything I ever did. You know? Like it helped get my act together and learn how to be like a functioning like person in society and how to contribute to my community. (Sarah, interview, August 2019)

When Karen finished, she also had very strong, positive feelings about the experience. Now, she still thinks that it's a great program, but that it could be some things could have been handled better. A few years after her experience, Georgia loved City Year, "I thought it was the best thing in the world." Now, she still thinks it is a great program, but it's not the best thing and that some issues could have been handled better.

Others left the program with a more negative opinion that has since evolved. When Tara's year ended, she was "frustrated and disillusioned with everything." While she still believes that City Year leadership could have handled some situations better, she is now grateful for the experience and recognizes that it was one the most valuable years

of her life. It took Steven two years to realize the impact of his year of service. When he finished City Year, he was exhausted and never wanted to work with students again, but now he is a high school teacher in an urban district. He said it took other life experiences to realize what he had learned from the experience. During and immediately after the program, Desi had a negative opinion of the program. During the year she “mostly focused on the negative and kind of like saw it as like, I don't like this, and I don't like the way we did that, and I don't think this is like a good program.” After City Year, she started a different program, which she did not like, and gained an appreciation for City Year.

I realized like things that were done well. Um, and I also realize how much like I had become a better like worker and like better at like taking leadership in situations and dealing with stressful situations than I had been before. So, it took me like doing another program to really get the full extent of what I got out of the year. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Karen has not been out of the program long enough to have perspective on her experiences. She's still working out how she feels about the experience. “I'm still torn on how my experience with City Year was as a building, but like my experience with the kids in the classroom wouldn't change at all.”

Connection to Research Questions

What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year? Everyone was transformed by their experience. They all experienced their transformation in different ways. There are ten steps to the

transformative learning process. The following breaks down how closely everyone's experience aligns with the transformative learning framework.

Step one: Experience a disorienting dilemma. All nine participants experienced a disorienting dilemma. Six were able to describe one specific, pivotal moment during their year of service. One participant, Desi, was able to identify two disorienting events. She experienced one disorienting dilemma on her first day when she realized that everything was completely different than what she expected, and she had to reassess everything she thought she knew.

Desi had a second disorienting dilemma one day when her school was on lockdown. Shortly after the Parkland shooting, her school was put on lockdown because of a suspected shooting. Everyone was scared and panicking. "I was like, for the first time, I was like the one of the adults in the room that like kids were like going to for answers and comfort." It was the first time that she realized that she wasn't a kid anymore.

And it was like to totally reversal of like, I don't know everything in my head. From that point before it was like, I'm the kid in this situation, other people will handle it. And then all of a sudden like I was the one being called upon to, like, protect these kids or take care of them. And that like very much changed, I feel like, the way my brain works. It was definitely very different than the way I used to think. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Unlike most participants, Steven's disorienting dilemma did not involve interaction with students. Steven described his entire first year or service as

“disorienting.” The experience that Steven identified as disorienting was when a student of his was murdered. This event happened after he finished his year of service, but before he decided to go back to school to become a teacher. “And just really, it made me questions like what type of society are you have where that just happens.”

Phoebe had a hard time pinpointing one specific incident that lead to their transformation. Phoebe experienced a series of small life changes, none of which were particularly dramatic on their own. Phoebe experienced a series demoralizing setbacks during her year of service. Phoebe found it hard to relate to her students, the teachers, her roommates, and City Year leadership. Phoebe struggled with her City Year obligations plus working two part-time jobs. The whole year was very difficult for her.

Step two: Undergo self-reflection. The second step is to undergo self-examination. City Year’s training curriculum, *The Idealist’s Handbook*, provides opportunities for self-reflection, although not everyone used the training manual or got a lot out of it. Only a couple of people remembered writing some reflections in their *Idealist’s Handbook*.

Almost every time I asked interview questions about self-reflection, they answered the question by talking about conversations they had with roommates who were also in City Year. For example, when asked about doing self-reflection, Karen said “I’m already a very self-reflective person, but I also lived with someone who did City Year. So, he was at another school, but it was like go home and just like talk about our day.” Rachel said that writing in a journal every day that year was very helpful.

Self-reflection was an important part of the process for everyone. Steven said, “If you don't reflect, you're not gonna take much from the situation.” Although, in general participants were too tired to engage in deep reflection during the year.

[You] just like jump in headfirst and there's so much going on. the year goes so quick and you're waking up at like five in the morning, you're at the school until like it closes, which is five and like on weekends all you'll do is kinda just drink. You fall asleep and you don't really have that time to reflect. (Steven, interview, August 2019)

Steven described self-reflection as an “unfolding process” where he reflected back over time after City Year ended. During the year, he did not do any reflection (outside of City Year training) because he was just do tired.

Georgia did a lot of self-reflection during her year of service. She reflected often on her own performance, “How do I help these kids that are really struggling? ... What am I doing right? What am I doing wrong? Like how do I move them forward?” She also reflected on her career plans and her decision to do City Year.

Like is this like 12-hour days something that I'm really interested in or am I just interested in kind of having the basic like go to school, teach, go home, not worry about any of the kids. Like not think about the fact that are over Thanksgiving break, are they eating, do they have a warm place to stay? (Georgia, interview, August 2019).

Step three: Undergo deep assessment. This step, for many, occurred out of order. Overall, almost everyone said that they were too tired to do any serious reflection during

the year, so while they may have done some superficial personal reflection during the year, deeper reflection occurred months or years later.

Every day you're dealing with so much conflict. It's like a lot of conflict with the students, and your school, and teachers, with your own corps members. Um, and then really like processing that takes a year or so after that. (Steven, interview, August 2019)

Desi started Teach for America three days after City Year ended, so she feels like her reflection time was cut short. It took having a bad experience with Teach for America to be able to reflect on her City Year experience.

Um, but I guess when I started this other program, which I really did dislike, I realized that kind of allowed me to start realizing the things that I did like about City Year and like the good things about it versus while I was in City Year I mostly focused on the negative...But then doing another program I realized like things that were done well. Um, and I also realize how much like I had become a better like worker and like better at like taking leadership in situations and dealing with stressful situations than I had been before. (Desi, interview, August 2019).

Steven worked a bank for two years after his City Year experience ended. While he was working at the bank one of his former students was murdered. Steven describes the incident, which caused some deep reflection.

That was really hard for me just cause she was like a great kid, really quiet...she was on track to graduate. She wanted to be a nurse. So that was hard to see just because you see your kid with like a lot of promise and one of the few kids who's

like really motivated and like understands education's importance. (Steven, interview, 2019)

While he says that wasn't a turning point, because education had always been in the back of his mind, it clearly was an important moment. Ultimately, looking back and reflecting deeply on the experience is what made Steven change careers. "After a few years I really appreciated What City Year did and the experience I had. So, I think it was that reflection made me like realize what I wanted to do."

Sarah got a job working as a recruiter for the Ohio Commission on Service and Volunteerism, so her job was to reflect on her experience every single day. She continues to reflect on it years later, "I've been reflecting on my City Year experience since the minute I did it because my whole career ended up like that, like jump-started my whole career and like what I wanted to do with my life."

Step four: Share and analyze experience with others. The next step is to talk about your experience with others. A significant portion of the first month of City Year training is spent cultivating an atmosphere that encourages effective discourse among the corps members. This is important because for discourse to be effective, all participants must be emotionally mature, and feel trust, solidarity, and security (Mezirow, 2000).

Corps members meet once a month on Fridays with their *Idealist's Journey* group. Approximately one hour is supposed to be spent using *The Idealist's Journey*. Exercises in *The Idealist's Journey* give everyone time to working through a self-reflection activity and then provide time to discuss their reflections. Paul's group stuck closely to the curriculum and he took a lot away from the experience. Georgia completed the written activities, but purposely avoided having to share out loud. Other groups found

the activities to be “corny” and they did not do them. Most of the participants spent most of their time just talking and sharing experiences. It appears that they found this about as valuable as the groups that reported working through the workbooks. Desi’s IJ group was given *The Idealist’s Journey*, but they were never told to use it in training. Instead, they just talked as a group, but their Impact Manager would get upset with them if they shared too much.

Most participants lived with other City Year members, so they often found themselves talking things over with their roommates. Because she felt constrained in training, Desi talked a lot with her roommates, “me and my roommates would kind of get like lost talking about it and anyone else with us would have no idea what we were talking about. Talking about things with other corps members was easier than talking to family and friends because outsiders could not understand the intensity of the experience. Desi said, “something that was really hard to communicate to people...like how poor the education was that how great like the students were.” Friends and family back home often only wanted to hear positive, uplifting stories. Other outsiders found City Year’s culture to be a bit cult-like and didn’t understand what the individual was going through.

We all had that common experience where we all knew kind of what the other people were going through and how hard it was so we could support each other in that way where lots of other people, like my friends at home, my parents, nobody else could really understand how intense it was. Um, so it was great to have those people to be able to have those conversations and share what was happening for each one of us. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Steps five and six: Explore options for new ways of acting and build confidence and competence in these new roles. The next two steps involve exploring new ways of acting and then building confidence in these roles. This took two forms: trying to educate friends and family about the experience and taking on leadership roles within the corps or at school.

Desi and Rachel both discussed how frustrating it was to talk to their friends and family about City Year. Desi tried to talk to her family and friends because they had such strong, negative opinions about the program before she started.

And then I also talked a lot to my family, especially cause I knew they were so like apprehensive about me doing this thing, kind of like, were even mad that I had even considered doing this. So, I definitely tried to talk to them to try to like kinda change their minds and be like, here's what's actually happening versus what you thought was going to happen. (Desi, interview, August 2019).

Tara tried to talk to friends and family about how different the world her students lived in was. “Like there is a world where people don't shop at Coach and don't wear name brand clothes. Like this world exists. That got pretty frustrating.”

Others took on leadership positions in school or with City Year. Desi also found herself taking on leadership roles that she would not have done before. “I feel like I was, took on like a lot of leadership positions at my school and on my team that I would never have thought of doing in college or when I was younger.”

Step seven and eight: Take action and acquire knowledge or skills for action.

For many participants in this study, taking action and acquiring knowledge for action were the same, in that five of the seven participants went back to school, which is an action and helps them acquire knowledge for future action. Desi, Georgia, Rachel, Sarah, and all went to school after completing City Year. City Year confirmed for Desi that wanted to be a teacher, so she applied for graduate school. Georgia started a graduate school program so that she could learn more about teaching English Language Learners. Steven eventually went back to school to become a teacher, although when the year was over, becoming a teacher was the last thing on his mind. “I actually was like, this was the craziest year of my life. Like I didn't want to teach honestly cause I was like why would you want to do this?”

Not everyone went back to school to become a teacher. Rachel completed an EMT certification program before starting her Freshman year of college, “Absolutely without City Year I would not have become an EMT.” Sarah went back to school with a new major and a new career focus. Steven went back to school to become a teacher. Something that he had never thought he would do. While Paul didn't do formal schooling, he completed a leadership program at a local nonprofit.

Step nine: Try new roles. Several participants tried out different jobs after City Year. Desi started Teach for America but quit after a couple of months. Phoebe got a job working with children but quit shortly when she realized that she was not ready to work with students yet. Steven quit his job to go back to school. Paul quit his post-City Year job because “I felt like the work wasn't impactful...I want to do work that I'm connected to and matters and benefits the community.”

Steven and Karen both returned to City Year for a second year. Karen served as a Team Lead, supervising a group of first year corps members. Steven took a position planning special events for different schools for City Year.

Step ten: Reintegrate into society with a new perspective. Obviously, at some point City Year ends and everyone must reintegrate into society. Everyone grew and changed during their year of service. City Year pushed and challenged everyone in ways they never expected. For everyone this was their first full-time job, so everyone had to learn how to be a functioning adult. Desi, Steve, Phoebe, and Tara reported being much stronger people. All participants reported becoming better leaders and taking on leadership position. Desi “took on like a lot of leadership positions at my school and on my team that I would never have thought of doing in college or when I was younger.”

Many people landed places that they never planned. Steven never planned on becoming a teacher, but now he teaches high school, “if it wasn't for City Year, I don't think I'd be teaching.” Georgia never planned on teaching English language learners living in diverse communities, but that is what she has done her entire teaching career. Paul never planned on working with students or working at a non-profit.

Sarah was no longer interested in her dreams of becoming an international journalist. Instead, she has spent her career working in nonprofits, including running her own nonprofit. Despite never wanting to work with children, Paul now works with young adults doing workforce development at a non-profit. Paul explains how City Year changed his career goals.

So, it really like changed the trajectory of, of my career. Um, but it also, it challenged a lot of when you come out of an academic environment, right, you believe a lot of things and then they get challenged in the real world. So, like one of those things is, as a government student, um [you believe] the laws are just. But they're not right. When you meet people in these communities and you talk to them, it's like, no, they're not right. There's, there's no justice in, in laws. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

Having only finished City Year a year ago, Karen and Desi are still in the process of reintegrating. City Year confirmed for Karen that she does not want to teach. She just completed a one-year fellowship at a non-profit. Her career goal is to work in schools is some way, just not as a teacher, or to work for a non-profit. She is also considering teaching internationally. Desi is still in school to become a teacher.

Many participants felt that City Year made them more civically minded. Because of their year of service Paul, Sarah, and Rachel all mentioned the importance of volunteering, Rachel volunteers her time because “it was not enough for me to just give money and donate. Like I have to be boots on the ground.” Steven found that many of his fellow corps members became more civically minded because “think creates or like ignites this like fire of idealism in some people

Tara reported becoming more involved in political causes, “I definitely take a bigger interest in all of that and am more involved in understanding that my vote does when it comes to education.” Three participants, Paul, Steven, and Tara are all interested in working in educational policy in the future.

Everyone talked about gaining better understanding of poverty in their communities and a greater understanding of how the world works. Many of them felt like they understood the problems their communities faced, but it took seeing it in person to gain a better understanding of the issues. Paul said “I was like poverty is a problem, drug abuse is a problem. But it's like until you are in that neighborhood with people with those problems, you know, but you don't know. Yeah, you are aware, but you don't know.” The experience also helped to humanize the people in these neighborhoods. Phoebe said:

And it's like there have so many extenuating circumstances in our lives. And like, I've met that person, I've met that mom, I've met that single mom, like I met, you know, that grandma who takes care of all her grandkids or something or, or you know, that dad or that uncle who like, you know...like there's people behind these issues, you know, and like there's people behind, um, you know the stereotype we think of like, of oh this is just like a welfare mom or something like that. (Phoebe, interview, August 2019)

Karen, Tara, Steven, Phoebe, and Sarah all felt more cynical as a result of their experience. Steven is cynical because “I recognize inequality every day and it's like, and I can't escape that just because I'm so aware of it.” Sarah wonders if they are more cynical, or if they just have a more realistic worldview. “It's hard for me to say like what's cynical versus like what did they just really learn more about the way that the world actually is and they're seeing that for the first time.” Tara’s idealism was toned down a little, “I entered City Year in a much more idealistic person, like thinking that I could maybe change the world. [Now] I don't think I can change the world.” Karen feels more cynical and a little hopeless about her students’ futures, “I'm like worried about the kids, you

know, like are they, are any of them going to be able to get out and there'll be lawyers and doctors that they want to be or are they stuck here?"

Another common theme was the inability to tolerate intolerance in others. Desi finds that she is more critical of her college friends, many of whom talk about what needs to be changed, but don't take action or make any effort to get outside of their own communities. Karen is more aware that while her family doesn't mean to be outwardly racist, they are prejudiced. Phoebe is more critical of herself and others, "It's like, no, you can't say that. You shouldn't say that. And like that, that belief that you hold is like an absolute like deal breaker."

Everyone had to learn how to work well with others. Georgia and Rachel both said learned that they can sit down, shut up, and learn from others. Sarah learned that she does not have to be perfect all the time. Everyone found that they are more openminded and less judgmental.

Karen, Paul, Phoebe, and Sara all described the experience as humbling. Paul explained "it's really humbling to like learn to listen to other people and not be, not have like white savior complex."

What role did the urban environment play in that transformation? Serving in an urban environment played a large role in everybody's transformation. First it opened their eyes to the economic disparity in a way that one cannot understand until they've been exposed to that environment. They also learned about the disparity between their service site and the schools they had attended. Their City Year experience showed participants what their student's lives were really like.

Quality of the education. The quality of education that the students received was below what the participants received at their own schools. Desi and Karen noticed that their students had little to no electives. At Karen's service site only one student in her room was reading at grade level; many of the students were far below grade level. She felt that many teachers were just teaching to the test. The students can read well enough to pass the reading test, but they cannot read to understand. She said "Do I really think that those kids learned anything that year? No, not really." Steven found that many of his students did not see the value of an education. Having never been to public school, Rachel was struck by the disparity.

It was mind blowing to me because I didn't go to any sort of public school, so I didn't know that that's how things were. But you know, something that should be as equitable as public schooling, I think in America should be not based on your zip code, not based on the color of your skin, not based on what your parents do for a living. It's public school! That just absolutely blew my mind that you can have such disparity between like nice neighborhoods that I lived in in Chicago and, you know, where my students went to school every day. (Rachel, interview, August 2019)

Steven also compared his own education to the education his students received. "All the schools I went to were like great institutions... Like an amazing education and then like going to [school] I saw like the education that a lot of students had was terrible. Um, and not because they're bad teachers, just, they have a lot of challenges."

Many participants found the teachers to be ineffective and burned out. Phoebe mentioned how burned out and rude many of the teachers were. Karen's supervising teachers were both new, inexperienced Teach for America corps members. One of the teachers did not even last through the year. Steven noted that two of the three teachers that he worked with came to school unprepared every day. Desi noticed that many of the teachers "were really horrible towards the kids." Sarah's said about her supervising teacher "my teacher... was a teacher that didn't want to be there. Like she, all she would do is like eat snacks the whole time." She noticed "that was another thing where I had never encountered, like a professional like that behaving like that in a room." Desi said that after state testing in April, the teachers basically stopped teaching and the students watched YouTube all day. Steven found the classroom sizes to be large, the teachers faced a lot of challenges, and the classrooms were poorly run.

In addition to the bad teachers, the facilities were lacking. Georgia said, "there's so many kids in Providence that are just so underserved and it's ridiculous." Georgia's school only had one social worker for 800 students. Sarah "thought all Columbus schools were the schools the same" but rather than working in a room, she found herself providing tutoring "in a closet with actual brooms and stuff or sitting in a hallway." Rachel talked about how old looking her service site was. "So they would repaint the lockers and repaint the classrooms and try to give it a fresh look. But you could tell everything was old underneath. The paint it doesn't actually make a huge difference at the end of the day, right?" Rachel also noticed how all the lockers in the hallways had been broken and how the school lacked a lot of technology. Karen observed that the reading materials provided were not relatable to the students. Instead of books the student might

be interested in, like stories about basketball, the books were about topics students could not relate to, like water polo and horse riding.

Set up for failure. One common theme was that students have been set up to fail. Tara said, “There's so many systemic inequities that prevent people from, we don't all start out on the same playing field.” Steven also found that people are set up to fail.

And you know, growing up, you hear like everyone has like an equal chance and everyone has a chance to get education...I realize that's not the case. And people are really set up to fail like based on how they prepared or what type of education they have.”

Paul described his experience this way, “We have, we have set people up to fail and then when they fail, we go, of course they fail. They're dumb. But it's not that they're dumb. We've set them up to fail.”

Conversations about race. Working in urban environments led to interesting conversations about race. Karen’s year of service was during the 2016 Presidential election. City Year is a non-partisan organization, so corps members are not supposed to talk about politics or who they voted for.

I was on a field trip with second and third graders and one of them was like, “Oh, white people voted for Donald Trump.” And I was like, “um, I'm white. I didn't vote for Donald Trump” and the little girl, she was like, “you're white?!” And I was like, “what do you mean like look at me?” She was like, “I just thought you were really light skinned.” And she like sat up on the bus. And she was like, “everyone, Ms. [X] is white”...So for me that is a moment of like, they really

don't even know, you know, I'm just someone who's there and I'm caring for them and I love them. And so, they just assumed I was black because they think that white people are bad. That was a, it was funny. But then like when you think about it, it's also rough. (Karen, August 2019)

Sarah also had a discussion with students about race when a Kindergarten boy sat in her lap while she was reading a book.

And this kid [boy's name] ran and sat down on my lap one day and this other little girl, was like, she just looked at him and was like, "get off her lap white boy." And I was just like, whoa! I was like, "Miss Sarah is white. You don't call people by our skin color." And she looked at me like right in the eye and she goes, "Miss Sarah, you ain't white. You pink." And we all laughed. Like everybody laughed. And then I was, "Well actually Miss Sarah is white like [boy's name]. And you wouldn't like it if I called you black." (Sarah, August 2019)

This conversation was very important to Sarah because she had been so afraid of offending anyone at the beginning of her service year. Now she felt confident to talk with her students about race.

How cool was it that at 21 years old I'm like, I'm like tearing up right now because it was so cool. Like talking to them about, you know, like our skin color and like why Miss Sarah is here and like how we all could love each other. (Sarah, interview, August 2019)

Sarah had an upsetting incident on the bus that led to a discussion about race with her Team Leader. She was riding the bus to her service site. When a bunch of high school girls started making fun of her, “calling me white girl and like honky and stuff like that.” She was very upset and mad because she felt like they should have recognized the City Year uniform and instantly known that she was on “their side.”

And how dare they, you know what I mean? I just had never had that experience of representing, you know, the people like the like white privilege, you know what I mean? That's all I was to them. It just crushed me. It took me a couple of days to like come up out of that. But then like I told, like my Team Leader... He is African American and like I like remember talking to him about it. He was just like, “You are making it about yourself... They shouldn't have done that but you have to realize what it's like for black people.” And it was like one of those conversations where I needed, I probably wasn't ready to have that conversation at the beginning, but at that point I was. (Sarah, interview, August 2019)

Looking back at her incident on the bus, Sarah now realizes “that experience and allowed me to know why you don't say all lives matter and like why black lives matter is an important, you know what I mean?”

Greater understanding of poverty. Working in an urban environment also gave participants a better understanding of issues surrounding poverty. Sarah said “Like you can just ignore the fact that there are poor people in this city. And since I had been in the suburbs for so long, I didn't realize until I got into City Year that my city had a lot of problems.” Desi now has a better understanding of issues like homelessness.

I feel like it for real specifically I think it made me a lot more sympathetic and understanding to like, there's a lot of poverty in Philadelphia and a lot of like homeless people. Um, and there's like a lot of negative attitudes towards those people that I think being in that community and working there, I kind of understand more where you're like more understanding of that situation. Um, I fell I still don't know what that's like, that I feel more that I have more of an idea of what that's like or the challenges that they face. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Karen talked about how learning about poverty firsthand was more beneficial than just learning about it in school.

But you're like, hyper aware because you were like, it's, it's one thing to me it's like an academic level. You'd be like, oh they were poor people and they were like systemic reasons for that. And then there's another thing where it's like, well every day I went into this neighborhood and this school building and working with these children that don't have clean clothing and, but also, I met their parents and I understand why they're like this. So yeah, it grounds the activism. (Karen, interview August 2019)

City Year helped Paul to humanize people living in poor neighborhoods.

Um, there's this stereotype and segmentation of certain neighborhoods and it's like this is a failing school system and this is, you know, this poor neighborhood or bad. And it's like there are people, there are people who live and work and breathe there. Right? You have to, again, it's like you have to reject this idea that it's like

this abstract blob. It's people, it's individuals who are trying to make it through the day. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

Participants also gained a better understanding of their own privilege. Karen participated in a privilege walk during City Year training. She was surprised to see her own level of privilege even among other corps members. Paul observed his students participating in a privilege walk.

For a lot of people who are like from outside...you know, grew up in a mostly white upper middle-class bedroom community. Um, you have no idea of, um, it's kind of became a couple buzzword to say privilege, but like you have a neighborhood that you feel safe walking in, you have a home that you can go to that you're not worried about getting robbed or the lights being off. You don't have to take care of a sibling because your parent is working two or three jobs, um, and you, you and internalize what is normal and then you come into this environment and your student's normal is soooo different from yours and you. So, it really changes the way you think. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

The urban environment provided some hope. Georgia said, "City Year helped me learn that like these kids that are coming from very impoverished areas are struggling with so many things but have such incredible talent and ability to learn and drive too with some of them." Desi found a lot of happiness in her community "there was still like joys in that. And I think often when we talk about poverty, we don't humanize that. We make it like, oh, this is just this horrible existence." Paul found some hope as well.

So, but to me, right, the takeaway from City Year is that like, the problem is not intractable. It's not unsolvable. It's not like you just got these people are poor and they're going to be poor forever. Right. Which I think is the attitude that a lot of politicians adopt. Um, but it's to say, okay, well we'll go to the neighborhood and talk to the people in the neighborhood and find out what they need and then do it. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

How can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program?

This study presented the transformative learning experience of white, middle class City Year corps members serving at City Year sites throughout the United States over the last 20 years. Their stories developed a foundation of knowledge surrounding how City Year corps members experienced the phenomenon of transformation. The phenomenon was examined through the participant's experiences and expressed through their voices. Connecting back to my research questions, I proposed that this study would have implications for City Year's training program. The essence of their experience now serves as the basis for these recommendations.

Common complaints about City Year. As stated earlier, part of what made City Year successful at achieving transformation for was that the year was very difficult. Everyone complained about the pay and the long hours. Two people interviewed worked multiple jobs to pay their bills. Corps members did not just put in long hours at school during the week, sometimes they had to work Saturdays. Karen's issues with City Year were not related to the school day or the students, she had problems with all the other duties.

It was always like, it was the "and." And also, you have to come in on Saturdays and work with the city to get to earn your train pass. And like you also have to come in to plan for the spring break training and like it was the other things and like those Friday sessions, you're like my kids could have really used me today. Um, but instead I'm here. (Karen, interview, August 2019)

There's nothing wrong with requiring long hours and weekends. Many people work long hours and weekends for low pay. The struggle helps corps members empathize with the lives of the people they are serving. Everyone complained about the long hours, but it is only a year of their lives and teaches them a work ethic.

Another common complaint was about City Year leadership. Complaints regarding City Year leadership varied from person to person, as everyone had a different experience, depending the year and where they served. Desi felt like "there was not a lot of room for criticism or um, like any feedback on what we were doing." Rachel felt that there was not any room for criticism and said, "from like an organizational structure maybe a little more up and down flow could have been helpful."

It is hard to know how legitimate complaints about leadership really are. I do not know how many employers actual take employee complaints and suggestions seriously. But participants clearly felt invested in the experience and wanted their voices to be heard. Leadership could do more to allow corps members to feel valued and heard.

There were other problems with leadership. During Karen's second year of service, she called the Social Services after a student said that was being abused at home. In a shocking breach of protocol, the school told the parent that Karen called social

services and then held a parent-teacher conference so that the parent could berate Karen. Karen felt like City Year did not support her. City Year leadership would intervene on her behalf because they wanted to preserve the relationship with the school, “and it was like, okay, that's kind of fucked up because you're just letting a woman yell at me.”

During Georgia’s year, someone was kicked out of the corps. City Year leadership was not transparent about the situation, which upset the corps members. She felt like they could have been more open and honest about the process. She also thought that City Year could have screened potential corps members better, both to ensure that the candidate is there for the right reasons and that the corps member is being accepted for the right reasons.

[Be] more thoughtful about, you know, who you're accepting and why you're accepting them or are you accepting them because of their race, you accepting them because they look good for you, like what is the purpose or are you accepting them because you think that they're going to do a really good job with the kids? (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

There were many complaints about training. City Year’s training program changes from regularly and the quality of the program seems highly dependent on who delivers the training. Karen had two different Training Managers in her two years of service and found the focus of the training to be very different under each manager. In her first year, the focus was on lesson planning and working with students. In her second year, they focused more on professional development and having guest speakers from the community come and talk to the corps members. One common complaint was that time spend at training would have been better spent in the classroom with the kids. Rachel

said, “like those Friday sessions, you're like my kids could have really used me today. Um, but instead I'm here.” During her year Rachel said that training changed midyear after corps members complained that their time would have been better spent in the classroom. Trainings became more “intentional and they weren't just kind of time fillers” (Rachel, interview, August 2019).

Some participants felt that learning about lesson plans, teaching strategies, and classroom management were not as effective as trying things out in the classroom and working with kids. Desi said,

Like we talked about kids and people would like talk about what they were going to do when they were in a classroom with kids without ever having actually been in a classroom with kids. So that felt kind of weird in that way. (Desi, interview, August 2019)

Training programs need to feel relevant to corps members, which is difficult because everyone has different needs and expectations. Out of the nine people interviewed, only one had an education degree and one had taken a couple education classes before their year of service, so some training needs to focus on educational concepts.

Desi’s negative experience was primarily the result of conflicts with her Impact Manager. “She was really like a nasty person and she had a temper and she like lost her temper like one of the first days. Um, and like two people quit after that.” Her manager also censored them during conversations. Desi said, “There was like a certain narrative you were supposed to be talking about and if you kind of deviated from that or deviated

from like City Year is amazing, it was kind of like monitored.” It’s understandable that leadership would want to put some limits on what members talk about, in order to keep the conversation on track or to protect a student’s privacy; however, constructive discourse relies on the experience of others to process and resolve disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 2000). This is why having a training manual like the *Idealist’s Journey* is important. However, instead of using the *Idealist’s Journey* as way to guide the conversations, Desi’s group members were not given visible boundaries and then yelled at when they crossed those boundaries. Keeping conversations is track is also important because “when you get a group, you know, pretty motivated people, it becomes like a story-off where you like try to, I don't know, like outdo each other or like talk about your experience and how your experience is so much more unique than everyone else's.” (Karen, interview, August 2019).

Of all the people interviewed, Georgia probably had the most negative opinions of her City Year experiences. Georgia described the year as “legitimately awful.” She also felt that, while the mission is great:

They're not the best. I feel like that they're, they're okay, but they also are pushed people, they don't pay very well. So, you're working a lot of hours for not a lot of money. You're really overworked, you're stressed, they're not great. (Georgia, interview, August 2019)

Ways to address complaints. When asked if it would have been as effective if it had been easier, Georgia took a long pause and then said, “Now that I think about it, it might not have been as effective.” If City Year were easier more people would be able to

do it, and “if everybody does it and then it's like not as important.” Looking back Steven says, “I'm glad it was so tough ...it made me like a stronger person.”

While their complaints are not entirely baseless, they need to be taken with a grain of salt. Corps members are young and do not have a lot of experience in the world of work, so they lack the perspective to understand why some things are the way they are. Most people complain about their jobs, even they like what they do. As Paul said “there's inherently this thing of whenever you're working at job...you're like, my employer, right? Shakes their fist.” Many of the complaints that corps members had should sound familiar to anyone that has ever had a job. Management pretty much everywhere lacks transparency and makes decisions without consulting employees. Teachers often sit through terrible professional development sessions. City Year might have been the first time that participants dealt with bad managers, but it probably will not be the last.

Of course, difficulty is a key part of the City Year experience. The experience would not be the same if City Year members were not struggling. Corps members served in impoverished areas. The people that live there work low wage jobs, put in long hours at work, receive food stamps, and rely on public transportation. Living an approximation of how people in those communities live, gives corps members a better understanding of what life is like for the people that they serve. In some ways, the year was not as difficult as some members perceived. First, it's only a year or two of their lives. The struggle helped Tara understand her own privilege.

I am so fortunate to have a family to call on if stuff hits the fan, I'm not going to end up on the streets. I'm going to call my mom and she's going to tell me to come

home... People don't have that sorta that thing to fall back on... that safety net.
(Tara, interview, August 2019)

City Year corps members are young. While they may have had jobs before, for many City Year was the first time that they had a full-time, year-round obligation. Except for Paul, who was slightly older and had been working temporary jobs, everyone in this study had to learn how to be an adult during this year. For the first time in their lives, they had bills to pay, they had to get to work on time every day, they had to cook and clean for themselves. In retrospect, many participants in this study wondered if City Year only felt hard because they were learning how to be adults. Paul was the only person in this study who did not start City Year immediately after being in school. He was also the only person who did not complain about management or how the program was run. It's hard to know if this is because he was older and more experienced when he served or if it is because he experienced a better organized program.

Just because some of their complaints are perhaps overblown, does not mean that changes cannot be implemented. Participants suggested some ways that they year could have been easier. Desi felt like their attention was so divided between classroom duties and after school planning that they were never able to focus on one thing. The result was that their afterschool program wasn't great. "I didn't think we were like providing that great of the time for the students." Desi suggested having a different group run the afterschool programs, which added hours on to everyone else's day. However, the afterschool programs provided an opportunity for bonding and relationship building. Corps members typically work with a caseload of students and do not work with other students during the school day, so the afterschool programs provide them an opportunity

to work with all the kids in the school. Georgia reasonably suggested shortening the day by an hour.

Tara and Georgia both talked about the importance of self-care. Georgia said that City Year talked a lot about self-care, but “there's not a whole lot of self-care happening.” City Year members are offered time off, late starts, and early release days, but it does not sound like they were used often. During Tara’s year of service, her corps instituted a policy where someone could leave two hours early one day a week. “We understood that people’s sustainability depended on them having free time to do things like go to the grocery store...or get to the bank when it's still open or meet the plumber in his business hours... those things are really important” (Tara, interview, August 2019). City Year members should be encouraged to take time off when they need it. They also need to learn how to recognize when they are getting burned out. Phoebe, Steven, and Desi all talked about being so burned out when City Year was over. Phoebe and Desi were both so worn out that they quit their first post-City Year job. Steven was so exhausted that he needed two years to process the experience. Finding a way to alleviate burnout may help alumni to move on in life when their year of service ends.

Having supportive relationships with management is very important. Karen said, “We had great leaders who did a good job navigating conversations,” and talked about the importance of having “that one person that they can consistently go to if they need it.” Paul had a very positive experience. He found that many people in leadership positions during his year started as corps members, so they were better able to support what corps members are going through.

Involving alumni, whether using them as staff, as mentors, or as guest speakers would be very beneficial to corps members. Having management who completed the program might help strengthen the culture and the environment. Alumni truly understand the experienced that corps members are going through. Involving alumni would also help corps members to network.

Obviously, trainings cannot be abandoned completely. There were some aspects of training that corps members liked. Overall, they liked the professional development and “life after City Year” components of the training. Paul, Steven, and Tara all liked the trainings where they discussed education reform. Since most people did not have an educational background, the training that covers lesson plan and classroom management need to be covered. Activities like the privilege walk or team building exercises are an important part of building a culture of trust. Efforts need to be made to ensure that training days feel valuable to the corps. Perhaps by involving corps members in planning and implementation or letting them vote on what they are interested in hearing about.

Even though it added on extra stress at the time, everyone also liked taking on leadership opportunities within the corps or in the schools. Sarah said, “City Year is a leadership youth development program. I just wish that every young person had the opportunity to have an organization invest so much in like I felt that I got very invested in.”

Summary

In Chapter 4, I presented my findings for how individuals experienced transformative learning as a result of participating in City Year. I provided a brief narrative for each of the participants that explained what happened during their year of service. Then I

examined six themes that emerged from the research: culture and training, relationships with students, relationships with cohort members, the nature of the program, the difficulty of the program, and time changed their views of the experience. These themes describe how the phenomenon occurred. These themes explained how the transformation occurred. Finally, I answered the research questions. I addressed how participants experienced the 10 steps of the transformative learning process. Then I explained the effect that the urban environment had on their transformation.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This phenomenological study explored how City Year participants experienced transformative learning resulting from their year of service. I was interested in discovering how participants described their transformation and the effects that the transformation had on their lives. Weaving together literature and findings, this final chapter addresses the elements of the City Year program that contribute to the transformative learning experience. This first section also examines why some people's transformation appears to be more profound than others. Then recommendations that can be used to inform future national service programs are made. Finally, I present recommendations for future research.

Key Findings

When writing a phenomenology, the researcher brackets out their own experience to remove any biases that might influence how the researcher view the phenomenon

(Merriam, 1998). Throughout the interview and analysis process, it was easy to bracket out my own experiences; my own transformative learning experience was a long time ago and was nothing like what the participants experiences. As I prepared to write Chapter Five, I started reflecting on what made City Year so successful at creating transformative learning experiences for the nine people in this study. Everyone I interviewed talked about how difficult their year of service was, but lots of things in life are hard and they are not transformative. The urban environment played a large role in everyone's transformation, but there are teachers that work in urban schools every day that do not experience a transformation. Something about City Year is different.

Then I thought about experiences that I have had that some elements in common with City Year but that were not transformative. First, I thought about the doctoral program. This doctoral program contains many of the same elements of City Year: the program is mentally exhausting and focused heavily on issues involving race and poverty. Much like corps members doctoral students are tired all the time, spend long hours together on campus, and commiserate after class. We made lifelong friends. We were different people when we finished than when we started. However, I would not describe the experience as transformative. The program is generally not participatory, much the learning we did was informational. While the program was challenging, for some of us it was the first time school was ever hard, the difficulty of the doctoral program probably did not rise to the level of a disorienting event. Finally, even though some of us may have changed jobs or progressed in our careers, I did not observe anyone in the program experiencing a complete career change the way many participants in this study did.

The teacher preparation program that I went through was participatory. We spent one semester student teaching. Student teaching was hard. For many of us, it was the first time we worked with students. Some of us worked other jobs or had other classes while we were teaching. And some of our student teaching assignments were in areas different than where we had grown up, but in my case that meant student teaching in a rural area. Issues of school inequality and poverty were not addressed at all, so the student teachers lacked the scaffolding necessary to process their experience in an urban school. Plus, there was little opportunity for reflection. Because it was not a cohort model, my classmates and I did not know each other very well. While we sometimes worked together to complete assignments, we were certainly not as close as City Year cohort members. The culture of my teacher education program did not lend itself to vulnerability, especially since many of us would be competing for the same jobs when we graduated.

What it is about City Year that it lends itself so well to transformative experiences and how do the elements of the program interact to support corps members transformations?

The perfect storm. There are many elements of City Year that lend itself to transformation for the participants in this study: the characteristics of the participants, the participatory nature, the disorienting dilemma, reflection and discussion, training and culture, the difficulty of the program, and the lasting impact that it has. Although different people experienced these elements to different degrees and in different ways, everyone experienced all the elements. Individually, none of these elements would lead to

a transformative experience, but the combination together provided a solid foundation to produce a transformative learning experience.

Characteristics of the participants. A specific type of person joins, and is transformed by, City Year. Everyone in this study was young, impressionable, and idealistic when they started City Year. Obviously, one does not have to be young to experience a transformation. Mezirow's transformative learning theory was based on adult women returning to college after a break. However, I think that being at an age when their brains were still forming was an important part of everyone's transformation.

People that sign up for City Year are looking for an opportunity to grow and change. City Year self-selects a particular kind of person. When someone decides to sign up for City Year, they are making a choice. They could apply for a different, less structured national service program, they could get jobs or go back to school, but they chose to do this program.

The most important factor in whether an experience is transformative or not, is whether the individual wants to learn (Merriam & Clark, 1993). While everyone in this study had different reasons for starting City Year, everyone was looking to get something out of the experience. Sarah said that the kind of people who sign up for City Year "need some structure or they've been the people that have been the overachievers at their colleges and universities and need to learn how to work well with others." Tara thought that a lot of people joined for the same reason she did "to gain a better sense of what I wanted to do with the rest of my life."

Even though City Year is a non-partisan organization, Tara, Phoebe, and Sarah all talked about individuals needing to be liberal in order to feel comfortable in City Year.

Finally, everyone in this study was white and middle class. Everyone's world view is based on a unconscious assumptions they've derived from their upbringing, life experience, culture, and education (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger, 2015). Worldviews are hard to change because they are often deeply ingrained and unconsciously held (Christie et al., 2015). During their year of service, everyone was exposed to cultures, educational experiences, and lifestyles different than their own. This allowed them to experience transformation in ways that an individual with culture or lifestyle similar to their service site may not have experienced.

City Year is participatory. For learning to be transformative it must be “participatory and interactive” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). City Year is a hands-on experience. Corps members are immersed in their environments. They spend 10-12 hours a day serving in urban schools. This provided a major benefit, because they were able to take their learning beyond the academic and into the real world. During interviews, some participants talked about how different it is to learn about issues involving poverty and inequality on an academic level during in school or online versus experiencing it firsthand. They noted that City Year allowed them to see how these issues played out in everyday life during their year of service. “I haven't just arrived these things online. Like I've seen them, and I've like known people who have gone through that” (Phoebe, interview, August 2019).

Everyone entered this year with set frames of reference, or assumptions through which we view and understand the world, and meaning schemes, or specific expectations,

beliefs, feelings, and attitudes (Kagen, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). Exposure to circumstances or experiences that challenge these assumptions provide opportunities for growth. Everyone started this year with preconceived notions about something which was challenged. Everyone experienced their challenges in different ways. Desi realized on her first day at the school that everything she had been told about her students was wrong. Phoebe started the year with idealistic expectations and then discovered that the year was going to be harder than she thought. Paul's academic knowledge was challenged. Paul said, "it challenged a lot of when you come out of an academic environment, right, you believe a lot of things and then they get challenged in the real world."

City Year did not just offer members the opportunity to participate in schools. City Year members are encouraged to take leadership positions within the corps, as well as write blogs, and help plan events. According to the City Year manual, corps members can assist with planning training, although this did not necessarily appear to be the case for every participant in this study, as many participants complained that issues about training were not taken into consideration. Many participants talked about taking on leadership positions in their schools or within the corps.

Race and disorienting dilemmas. Due to the participatory nature of City Year, members were exposed to a variety of situations that led to disorienting dilemmas. Disorienting dilemmas can be experienced differently. Disorientation can happen suddenly and dramatically. Paul described City Year as pivotal, "like in the dictionary definition of pivotal. Like, I pivoted the direction that my life was going." For other people, like Phoebe, disorienting events can occur gradually over time with a series of progressive changes in points of view (Mezirow, 2000).

There are many reasons why City Year leads to disorienting dilemmas. Exposure to other races, classes, environments, social norms, and points of view which can cause disorienting dilemmas (Cranton, 2000). In this study, participants were exposed to neighborhoods and schools that were very different than what they were used to. When asked about the difference between the schools they attended and the schools they served in, many people said that their service sites were “more diverse.” Many of their service sites were not diverse though. “Diverse” is a word that white people sometimes use when they are among the only white people in situation. For a district to be considered diverse, one race cannot make up more than 75% of the school system’s student body (Rabinowitz, Emamdjomeh, & Meckler, 2019). While the school districts that corps members served in may have been diverse, the individual schools with a City Year presence tend to be minority majority schools. For example, the Cleveland Public School District (CMSD) is a diverse district. According to the CMSD website, the demographics of the district are 64.1% black or African American, 16.3% Hispanic/Latino, 15.4% white, and 4.2% other (“Fast facts about CMSD,” 2019). One participant served at a school in Cleveland that is, according to the 2018-2019 Ohio School Report Card, 97% black or African American, and 100% economic disadvantaged.

In contrast to their service sites, all participants, except for Steven, went to school in districts that were very white and middle or upper middle class. For example, the high school Paul attended is 84.5% white, 9.2% economic disadvantaged, and received a B on the Ohio School Report Card (“Ohio school report cards,” 2019). For white people who are not used to it, being in the minority can be a disorienting experience. Karen talked about having adapt to her new surroundings, “It's just a whole another world. Literally

like, you know, people talk about Ebonics and code switching. I, you know, I had to learn the new language in order to function.” Karen also said that many of her peers, who grew up with backgrounds like hers, did not adapt as well and struggled more than she did.

Two participants had interesting interactions with students about race. Karen and Sarah both had students say something to the effect of “you aren’t white” to them. Both women reflected on that experience and wondered if maybe the children were not used to have a white person who cared that much for them. Sarah talked about letting students play with her hair. “they’ve probably never touched a white person or been able to hug a white person like, and vice versa. You know what I mean?” Even though there are white teachers in the schools, all participants talked about the bad relationships that teachers and students had. In addition to attending segregated schools, the neighborhoods that many of the students live in are very segregated. According to a report released by the Famicos Foundation (2019), 95% of one residents in one neighborhood where City Year serves, are black. If children living in Glenville do not regularly leave their immediate neighborhood, it is possible is it that they rarely see white people let alone have the opportunity to form close relationships with them. Given the racial and economic segregation in many cities, how likely is it that corps members would have developed such close relationships with those so unlike themselves if they had not done City Year?

Everyone in this study started with pre-conceived notions of what the year would be like. Some of them may had negative opinions of what they thought their students would be like. Desi talked about feeling some trepidation on her first day because of what she believed and what she had been told. Desi quickly realized that she was wrong about her students and had to reassess everything she thought she knew. Participants did not

just make judgements about their students. Georgia had the started the year thinking that she would not like Manchester. “I had that preconceived notion of like, oh, this is, this place is terrible. Like I'm gonna hate it. And then ended up really loving it.” Georgia felt that her roommate had made assumptions about Georgia because she is white. “She had this perception of me as a white woman that I was going to be...racist and I had to slowly win her over.” Desi learned that “certain narratives we're told are wrong” regarding educational opportunities. “I thought about education as being very equally are very similar everywhere you go. But it changed how I thought about that because now I realize it's so different depending on where you were.”

Reflection and discussion. City Year encourages reflection. City Year members regularly met with their Idealist’s Journey (IJ) groups to reflect on their experiences. Those that actively participated in their IJ group, like Paul, found it to be a very important part of the process. Other groups spent their time talking informally, rather than sticking to the exercises in the book. These conversations were also seen as beneficial. Everyone talked about discussions with fellow corps members after school hours, whether at home or on their commute. No one form of reflection and discussion seemed more effective than any other, the fact that it occurred was what was important.

City Year training sets the stage for effective discourse, whether the corps members take advantage of it or not. In order to have effective discourse, all participants must have feelings of trust, solidarity, and security. Additionally, everyone must be willing to find agreement and welcome different points of view (Mezirow, 2000). Unfortunately, not everyone felt free to talk during City Year events. Desi talked about feeling censored by her Impact Manager. “She would kind of be like, flip out and be like,

‘why are you saying it like that?’ Like that's someone's personal business and you're saying it to someone else.”

In addition to discussion and reflection during organized City Year training days, many of the participants talked with other corps members informally. Desi, Georgia, Karen, Phoebe, Rachel, Sarah, and Tara all lived with other corps members and they all talked about having discussions with their roommates. Paul did not live with corps members but commuted with a group of guys to school every day.

Informal discussion seemed to be a really important component of the transformative learning experience. Phoebe really struggled during her year, possibly because she did not discuss things with corps members as much as other participants did. She was uncomfortable talking about her struggles with her roommates. She did not like talking to City Year leadership during her coaching sessions. And she lost interest in her *Idealist's Journey* group. I do not want to say that Phoebe did not get anything out of her City Year experience, she clearly did, but she seems to have benefited the least out of all nine people I interviewed. Her inability to discuss her problems with others could be part of the reason for that.

City Year really sticks with you. In marketing, “stickiness” is a term used to describe how long consumers engage with or think about a particular brand. For example, how long do they spend on a website, how often do they visit, etc. For the participants in this study City Year is “sticky.” It resides in the mind of alumni long after their year of service is over. This allows City Year to potentially influence people’s lives years later.

Participants found themselves thinking about their experiences with City Year years after their year of service ended. As mentioned in Chapter 3, City Year corps members learn the Founding Stories and Putting Idealism to Work (PITW) sayings. Sarah finished her year of service over twenty years ago but used the Starfish Founding Story in a job interview this summer. Phoebe finished her year of service two years ago, but still finds herself thinking about PITWs. She often thinks of PITW #159 This is Hard and #160 Seek to Have a Hard Head and a Soft Heart, which says

Having a hard head means being mentally tough, courageous, disciplined and perseverant in the face of obstacles. All great endeavors and all social change require people with hard heads. As Robert F. Kennedy said to a group of young South Africans, “The world demands the qualities of youth—not a time of life, but a state of mind, a temper of the will, quality of the imagination, the predominance of courage over timidity, and the appetite for adventure over the love of ease.” At the same time, a hard head is best accompanied by a soft heart, by compassion, empathy and understanding. A soft heart means being emotionally available and supportive to those in need. All social change also depends on people with soft hearts. Both qualities require the other. A hard head without a soft heart can lead to cruelty or a survival of the fittest mentality. A soft heart without a heard head can be overindulgent, condescending and even patronizing. (*Idealist Handbook for City Year members*, 2019, p. 84)

Paul’s year of service ended in 2012, but he still uses City Year anecdotes in job interviews.

Even though I've had other jobs since then when people ask me like, name a time that you had a difficult experience or work with somebody, you're like, you know, implemented a project, I tend to default to the stuff that I did in City Year. (Paul, interview, August 2019)

Steven's final transformation did not occur until years after his service ended. After leaving City Year, he never thought he'd want to be a teacher. Instead he got a job at a bank. But City Year stuck with him. One day he realized that he did not want to work at a bank anymore and went back to school to be a teacher.

City Year also helped to create lasting friendships. Sarah is still friends with people from City Year, 20-years later. Paul is still friends with people in met in City Year. Georgia is attending one of her City Year roommate's weddings, seven years after they met.

Some participants have applied for jobs with City Year since finishing their year of service. Sarah worked for City Year. Phoebe and Paul both applied for staff jobs. Paul is also involved in alumni activities and he talks to new corps members during training.

You have to work for it. As mentioned in Chapter 4, City Year is hard. Participants all talked about how tired they were. Karen described it as “mentally taxing.” Paul talked about feeling “worn down” by January. At some point they all probably suffered from compassion fatigue. Many did not think they would be able to finish the year and thought about quitting. I think that the difficulty is an important component of the transformation. Obviously, there is some difficulty in experiencing a disorienting

dilemma and working out how to resolve it, but City Year is challenging outside of that experience.

Their stipend keeps them at poverty level. They qualify for food stamps, just as many of the families in their schools do. They may rely on public transportation. In the early years of City Year members were not allowed to use their own vehicles to get to their service site, instead they had to take the public transportation everywhere. Now they are provided with a bus pass, but they are allowed to use their own cars.

Their living situation may be challenging. Corps members often live with fellow corps members, who may even be complete strangers. Many participants in this study lived with other City Year members. Karen lived with four total strangers and Tara lived with six other people. Other participants moved to a new city to serve, so they had to learn how to navigate a new city. Phoebe moved to Cleveland from Dayton with two friends. Desi moved from Westchester County New York to Philadelphia. Rachel moved from the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio to Chicago.

The entire experience was not just exhaustion and struggles, of course. All the participants genuinely enjoyed making connections with students and fellow corps members. Many of Sarah's fellow alumni have moved on to do really great things, which makes her very happy. "And so, I'm really happy that I got to be part of something so powerful and now we have gone out into the world and are making the world a better place."

Training and culture. I wrote in Chapter Four about City Year's training program and how it fosters a strong sense of culture. Even though the trainings were not very

popular, they served several important functions. In order to solve a disorienting dilemma, you must learn more about it (Mezirow, 1978). City Year's training program teaches corps members about many of the issues they may confront during service, like poverty and privilege. City Year also teaches corps members leadership, communication, and problem-solving skills. These skills are very important when corps members are engaged in discourse with their fellow corps members. For example, having strong communication skills helps corps members discuss their issues openly and clearly. Problem-solving skills help corps members develop resolutions to issues that arise from disorienting dilemmas.

Many participants expressed that the time spent training would have been better spent in the classroom. This is a shame, because reflection is such an important part of the process. I do not think that everyone understood the impact that the reflection and discussion portions of training had on their transformation. Rachel's group completed *The Idealist's Journey* exercise, so she understood that it was an important part of the process. "Honestly I do think it is very helpful. Um, I think that's really important to have people that you can talk to and work things out with."

In order to successfully promote transformation, City Year created a strong culture. City Year's culture is so prevailing that training was described as "indoctrinating" and was compared to a cult, a religion, and the military. However, as much as people grumbled about the mandatory physical training and silly chants, this culture creates an environment in which people felt comfortable sharing difficulties, offering solutions, and providing feedback. Feelings of security, trust, and solidarity are vital for effective discourse (Mezirow, 2000). Participants talked a lot about hating the

some of the rituals, like PT, but the rituals are a very important part of the process, in some ways because corps members could bond over it. “It definitely built us up as a community. Like because we were like disgruntled a lot of the time and tired and we can complain about that. It got us together in a way.”

Strong bonds between members is vital to the transformative process. In order to confront a dilemma, one needs to reassess their previously held beliefs (Mezirow, 1978). It’s very important to have a supportive atmosphere, so that members feel comfortable sharing their beliefs. These beliefs can be awkward or uncomfortable to talk about. Most people are not used to talking about issues of race or class. People generally do not like to admit to personal failings or talk about why they are struggling. Some participants did not feel comfortable sharing in group but felt very comfortable sharing with roommates and friends. It did not seem to matter where they shared, they just needed to share.

Finally, the most important factor in whether an experience is transformative or not, is whether the individual wants to learn (Merriam & Clark, 1993). City Year’s culture encourages growth, transformation, and openness, but they cannot force people to fully participate. Initially, Georgia was resistant to being vulnerable, but as the year went on, she became more comfortable, and as a result, she learned a lot about herself during her year. One person quit during Tara’s year of service because he was unwilling to “look introspectively at himself and have that growth.”

A Continuum of Transformation.

Everyone in this study experienced transformation to varying degrees. Participants experienced many of the 10 steps of the transformative learning framework. At a minimum, everyone experienced a disorienting dilemma, reflected on the incident,

talked about it with others, and made changes or took action in their lives. Some participants experienced greater transformation than others. On one end of the spectrum was Paul. Paul's life was the most directly impacted. His worldview changed and his career plans drastically changed. Paul was also the most enthusiastic about City Year's training program and enjoyed the *Idealists' Journey's* reflection exercises. On the other end of the spectrum is Phoebe. While Phoebe recognizes the influence that City Year had on her life, her future plans were least affected by City Year. She also participated the least enthusiastically in training and reflection activities.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

The main goal of this study was to explore the ways in which City Year participants experienced transformative learning. This was accomplished by conducting semi-structured interviews with nine City Year alumni. All participants had completed at least one year of City Year and had experienced transformation resulting from that service. These interviews developed a foundation of knowledge surrounding the essence of the experience of the phenomenon of transformative learning. At the start of this paper, I proposed that this study would have implications for future City Year training programs. The participants' lived experiences serve as the basis for my recommendations.

This study revealed several things about City Year. First, all participants experienced the transformative learning framework differently. There are ten steps to the transformative learning framework. This study analyzed how different people experienced the ten steps in different ways. These results are important, because many transformative learning studies do not describe how individuals experience each element

of the transformative learning experience. The exercises that City Year members are supposed to do with their Idealist's Journey groups often correspond to the steps of the transformative learning process. For example, in one activity they are asked to identify a crisis, for some this may be a disorienting dilemma. After identifying a crisis, members of the group work through potential solutions, obstacles, and outcomes. By examining how and when different members experienced steps in the framework, training programs can be adjusted to better meet the needs of the participants. Every participant experienced the third step, undergo deep assessment, long after their time with City Year ended. Some participants felt that because they were so worn out by their day-to-day activities, they did not have time or mental energy to think deeply. It appears that the design of program prohibits students from having the time and mental energy to reflect deeply. It is also worth considering that there is nothing wrong with completing a step after some time away from the situation. Transformation might benefit from some perspective that can only be gained by time away from the experience.

The second implication of the study is derived from criticisms of the program. This study identified several areas of improvement based on common complaints about the program. The general consensus was that the year is difficult, perhaps too difficult. Clearly, everyone in the study was able to complete their year of service, even though many of them did not think they would be able to. Although everyone talked about other members quitting during their year of service, the program does not seem to have a high attrition rate. Additionally, several participants ended their year of City Year with a negative outlook towards the program. By the end of the year many participants were tired, stressed out, and had an overall negative impression of the experience. While the

difficulty of the program is a very important aspect of the transformative process, slight changes may improve the member's experience during the year and their impressions after the program ends. Some suggested tweaks to the program, such as slightly shortening days or allowing for flexible schedules, would not drastically change the program, but may relieve stress and improve morale.

Another criticism of the program was the general dissatisfaction with the weekly trainings. Regularly talking with other City Year members was an important part of the transformative process. Everyone in the study appreciated being able to process their experiences among their peers. The formal training exercises, such as those done in their Idealist's Journey groups, were less popular. Some groups skipped the training activities altogether. It's hard to know how important the structured activities are in the transformation process; participants who liked the activities really liked them, but those that did not like them really did not like them. Structured can possibly be changed to be more accessible to everyone, so that all members can benefit from the experience.

It was very clear from the interviews that alumni wish they were more involved with the program. Overall, City Year does a good job of involving alumni in the beginning and end of the year ceremonies. City Year also contacts alumni to solicit donations or whenever the program may be adversely affected by the federal budget. Participants interviewed expressed the desire to be involved more. Alumni can be used to help improve training, by suggesting changes to the formal training program, by giving presentations during weekly training, or by acting as supportive mentors to current mentors.

The program today is not the same as it was in 1998, and it will not be the same program in twenty-one years as it is today. The City Year program, and its training curriculum, will continue to change and evolve. It is hard as an outsider to know how proposed changes may alter the experience of the program. Ultimately, any changes to the program need to come from City Year alumni.

Recommendations for Further Research

This phenomenological study offered a view of the essence of the experience of transformational learning among City Year members. Previous research has not explored the experience of City Year alumni using a transformational framework. Limitations involved include factors specific to phenomenology. This study focused solely on the transformative experience of a specific group of City Year alumni. It did not focus on any other experiences that they had while completing their year of service. The interview questions were very focused on the transformative learning experience, for example, how participants experienced a disorienting dilemma or how and when corps members reflected on their experiences. Interview questions also narrowly focused on possible outcomes of a transformative learning experience, such as a change in career or an expanded worldview. City Year members undoubtedly have experiences during their year of service that did not fall into those two categories and can be explored.

There are many factors that influence whether an experience will be transformative for one person and not another. An individual's background, history, and other socio-cultural factors can shape the transformative experience (Merriam et al., 2007). All participants in this study, either through self-selection or happenstance, were white and middle class. It is unknown how someone from a different social class might

experience City Year. City Year members that are from the areas where they serve, or who graduated from a public school similar to their service site, will probably experience City Year differently. Future studies should examine, the interaction between race, class, and ethnicity in City Year participants.

Many participants talked about one of the limitations of City Year being the short-term nature of the relationships they form with students. This study does not focus the experience of the students in the schools. Children in high poverty schools tend to be more transient and attend schools with high teacher turnover rates. Future studies should examine these relationships from the student's point of view.

This study identified several key features that I believe contribute to why City Year was so successful in encouraging transformative learning. These features included the participatory nature, the effects that race had eliciting disorienting dilemmas, the "sticky" nature of City Year, the difficulty of the program, and the role that training and culture played. These individual characteristics could be investigated further.

Some people experienced the 10 steps of the transformative learning framework differently. For example, some experienced a dramatic disorientating dilemma, like a traumatic event or a disturbing experience. They then also experienced a corresponding dramatic transformation, like a complete change in career goals. Others experienced a gradual transformation that went unnoticed at the time and had less notable transformations. Some people actively participated in discourse and self-reflection, while other participants were less active. Future studies can look at the degree to which people are transformed and the relationship between that transformation and the way they experienced elements of the transformative learning framework.

Conclusion

Previous studies on City Year have not investigated the phenomenon of transformative learning on corps members. To address this gap in the literature, my study explored how individuals experienced a transformation resulting from participating in City Year. This study used a phenomenological methodology to form six descriptive themes. I interviewed nine City Year alumni who also self-identified as being transformed due to their year of service.

My findings revealed six themes relating to how students experienced transformational learning due to their City Year participation: City Year culture and training, relationships with students, relationships with corps members, the nature of the program, the difficulty of the program, and how time changed views of the program. City Year's training and culture encouraged transformation. Corps members formed meaningful relationships with students. Corps members also formed close relationships with other corps members. The difficult nature of the program pushed corps members and encouraged growth. Over time, individual's views of their experience have changed.

This research has provided a deep insight into how City Year alumni describe and understand their transformative learning experience. The design of this study focused on the voices of the participants. Each individual interviewed shared valuable insights into the essence of the experience of the phenomenon. This study is the first step to better understand how participation in City Year transforms individuals.

Implications for future practices were derived from the participants understanding of their experience. These recommendations can be used to inform City Year's training program.

Recommendations for future research include looking at other experiences or forms of learning, personal factors such as race or class that may influence transformative learning experiences, the effect that City Year has the youth they work with, and the key factors that may influence individual outcomes.

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APPENDIX A

TYOLOGY OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

Transformative Learning Outcome	Depth/Evidence of Deep Impact	Breadth/Evidence of Impact on Multiple Life Contexts	Relative Stability/Evidence that Change is not Temporary
Worldview: Assumptions, etc.			
Worldview: More Inclusive			
Epistemology: More Discriminating			
Epistemology: More Open			
Epistemology: More Reflective			
Ontology: Emotionally Capable of Change			
Ontology: More Self-directed			
Behavior: Actions Consistent with New Perspective			

APPENDIX B
PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire was hosted at <https://bethsekerak.typeform.com/to/SwV8q0>

The text is as follows:

This study is about the transformative learning experience that resulted from your participation in City Year. Transformative learning is different than just learning new facts or information. Instead, it is a process where you learn something new about yourself or the world you live in, and it changes the way you see yourself or the world. Ultimately you become a different person at the end at the end of the process.

If you feel like you have had a transformative experience and would like to talk about it, please click Start to continue.

After clicking start, participants will be provided with a link to a pdf version of the informed consent document.

In order to continue, they will be required to answer the following questions in the affirmative:

- I am 18 years or older and have read and understood the consent form and agree to participate in an interview. Y/N
- I agree to have an interview audio taped. Y/N
- I understand that I can choose to answer any questions and I can end an interview at any time. Y/N
- Did you complete at least one 1-year term with City Year? Y/N

After they answer the above questions, they will be presented with the following questions:

- What is your name?
- What is your age?
- What is your gender?
- What is the highest level of you've education completed?
- Where did you grow up? (City and State)
- How was the neighborhood you served in different from where you grew up? For example, did you grow up in a suburb and serve in an urban area or are you from a small town but served in a large city.
- What school year(s) did you participate in City Year?
- What school and city did you serve at?
- Did you choose to serve at this location, or did you let City Year place you there?
- How was the school you served at different from where you went to school? For example, did you go to a very small school, but serve in a large school.
- Before City Year, did you have any other jobs working with children (camp counselor, mentor, etc.)? (if yes, please explain)
- Prior to City Year, what were your career plans?
- Why did you decide to sign up for City Year?

There are 10 steps to the transformative learning process, we will primarily talk about four of them: Of a disorienting dilemma, self-reflection, reflection with others, and action.

1. Experience a disorienting dilemma
2. Undergo self-examination
3. Conduct a deep assessment of personal assumptions
4. Share and analyze experience with others
5. Explore options for new ways of acting
6. Build competence and self-confidence in new roles
7. Take action- can be small scale (change in thoughts) or large scale (social action)
8. Acquire knowledge or skills for action
9. Try new roles and assess feedback
10. Reintegrate into society with a new perspective.

The first step involves experiencing a triggering event or disorienting dilemma. Everyone experiences this event differently. The event can be a sudden “Ah-ha! light bulb moment” or it can be a gradual realization over time. Some examples are of disorienting dilemmas are:

- being confronted with knowledge that challenges what you thought you knew and causes you to reassess your beliefs
- exposure to social norms or expectations different than those you are accustomed to
- a negative performance review or other difficulty at work or school

- a social or political event such as an election
- a crisis, like death, illness, a breakup, or financial problems
- a positive change such as graduation, a new job, a new relationship.
- relationship conflict

After experiencing this event, you may experience cognitive dissonance, emotional turmoil, confusion, or you may feel physically ill as your brain struggles to process this new information.

For our interview, please think of a time when you may have experienced such an event. We will talk it through when we meet.

If you have any pictures or other documents (artwork, diary, yearbook, Idealist's Journey, etc.) that you think best illustrate your experience with City Year, please bring them to the interview

- What is your email address?
- What is your phone number?
- What is the best way to get a hold of you: Text, email, or no preference?

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- Please describe your expectations before starting City Year. What did you hope to achieve personally and professionally?
- Please describe a typical day from the moment you woke up until the moment you fell asleep. What happened each day at school? What happened during City Year trainings?
- Are there any stories that you'd like to share?
- The first step of transformative learning is to experience a disorienting dilemma. A disorienting dilemma is defined as “an inner disequilibrium in which the harmony of the self is disturbed yet the problem is neither understood nor specifically named.” A disorienting dilemma cannot be solved by learning more about the problem or learning to cope with the problem. In order to confront the dilemma, one must undergo significant changes, by reassessing previously held beliefs. There are many possible ways to experience a disorienting dilemma. For example, you might have had a very positive or very negative experience lead you to question how you see the world. You might also have experienced a series of small life changes, none of which are dramatic in themselves, but that cumulatively lead to you questioning how you see the world.
 - Can you describe a time when you experienced a disorienting dilemma?
Can you describe that experience?

- The next step is to undergo self-examination or reflection. After experiencing a disorienting event, you may have critically examined your beliefs as they related to your experience.
 - Can you talk about reflection? How did you reflect on your experiences?
 - What role did reflection play in how you processed things?
 - Did you use *The Idealist's Journey* for self-reflection? If yes, how useful did you find it?
- The next step is to share and analyze experience with others
 - Who did you talk to?
 - Did City Year's training encourage discourse and reflection? How?
 - Did you talk about your experiences during training? Did *The Idealist's Journey* aid you in this? If so, how?
 - Can the City Year training program do something to support members' experiences like the one you had?
- The last step involves taking action. Action can be small scale (change in thoughts) or large scale (social action). Some forms of action might be changing school or career plans or becoming more active in your community.
 - Did participation in City Year change your school or career plans? If yes - how? Why did you feel that way at the time? How do you feel about it now?
 - Did participation in City Year change the way you see/think about the world/yourself/your community?

- Thinking about your experience in City Year: describe how you came to realize that you had experienced a transformation. When did you first realize this transformation had happened? Was it while it was happening, mid-change, after it had happened, or just now while you are talking about it?
- There are many possible ways to describe a transformation:
 - Do you feel that City Year changed your worldview - the way you understand the world and how it works?
 - If yes, please explain. Was this a permanent change? How do you think this has affected your life?
 - Do you feel that you've become more critical of culturally accepted norms rather than passive accepting them?
 - If yes, please explain. Was this a permanent change? How do you think this has affected your life?
 - Do you think you are/were more open to experiencing transformative learning in the future?
 - If yes, please explain. Was this a permanent change? How do you think this has affected your life?
 - Thinking about any assumptions, beliefs, attitudes or expectation that you have held, do you feel that City Year changed the way the you understand the world and how it works (worldview)? Do you think your behaviors reflect these changes?
 - Do you think the transformation touched on more than one aspect of your life?
 - How do you think time has changed the transformative experience? Was the transformation short-lived?

- What did your being in an urban environment have to do with it (if anything)?
- What role did City Year play in getting to where you are today?
- Given what we've talked today, where do you see yourself going in the future?
- Given what you have said about your life before starting City Year and what you are doing now, how do you understand the effect that City Year had on your life?

APPENDIX D
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year?	What role did the urban environment play in that transformation?	How can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your expectations before starting City Year? What did you think the year would be like? • Can you describe a time when you experienced a disorienting dilemma? Can you describe that experience? • Can you talk about reflection? How did you reflect on your experiences? • What role did reflection play in how you processed things? • Who did you talk to? • Did City Year change your school or career plans? If yes - how? Why did you feel that way at the time? How do you feel about it now? • Did City Year change the way you see/think about the world/yourself/your community? • Thinking about your experience in City Year: describe how you came to realize that you had experienced a transformation. When did you first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me a bit about the school you served at. How was it different from where you went to school? • What did your being in an urban environment have to do with it (if anything)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can the City Year training program do something to support members' experiences like the one you had? • Did City Year's training encourage discourse and reflection? How?

What is the impact of a transformative learning experience resulting from participation in City Year?	What role did the urban environment play in that transformation?	How can this phenomenon be used to inform City Year's training program?
<p>realize this transformation had happened? Was it while it was happening, mid-change, after it had happened, or just now while you are talking about it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that City Year changed your worldview - the way you understand the world and how it works? • Do you think the transformation touched on more than one aspect of your life? • How do you think time has changed the transformative experience? Was the transformative short-lived? • What role did City Year play in getting to where you are today? • Given what we've talked today, where do you see yourself going in the future? • Given what you have said about your life before starting City Year and what you are doing now, how do you understand the effect that City Year had on your life? 		

APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT FORM



Cleveland State University

A qualitative study of transformative learning among City Year participants

Dear Participant:

My name is Elizabeth Sekerak and I am a doctoral student in the Urban Education Ph.D. program at Cleveland State University. I am working with Dr. Bryan Harper, who is a member of the College of Education and Human Services faculty and the principal investigator for this research project. The purpose of our study is to explore how participation in City Year may have had a transformative effect on your life.

We are asking you to participate in this research project. The study consists of one interview with you at a time and location that is convenient to you. This interview will be semi-structured interviews will occur for approximately one hour. I will facilitate this interview. We will record the interview digitally, if you consent for us to do so. Your responses to interview questions will be kept confidential. The interview will be given a code number and will be transcribed. Only members of the research team will have access to the transcripts and tapes. This is to ensure your confidentiality and privacy. Excerpts from the interview may be included in a final report, or in related reports during and after the study. Your name will not be attached to the interview or transcripts or any subsequent reports.

Your participation may involve benefits, such as an opportunity to reflect and gain additional insights into the transformative learning experience of participation in City Year. It may also involve discomfort concerning aspects of your experience as it relates to this topic, but there are no known risks other than those associated with everyday living. Your participation in this study will contribute to a better understanding of this topic.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to stop at any time or to decline to answer a question. Should you agree to have the interview audio-taped, you may turn off the recorder at any point during an interview. In the event that you experience any emotional discomfort, we encourage you to seek assistance at the counseling center 216-687-2277.

If you have any questions about this study, you may contact me at 216-367-2417 or Dr. Bryan Harper at 216-875-9770.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Please indicate your agreement to participate by signing below.

I am 18 years or older and have read and understood this consent form and agree to participate in the interview.

Yes No

I agree to have the interview audio-taped.

Yes No

I understand that if I have any questions about my rights as a research participant,
I can contact the Cleveland State University Institutional Board at 216-687-3630.

Signature: _____

Name: _____ (Please Print)

Date: _____