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# The Utilization of Client-Based Service-Learning Applications in Emergency Management Graduate Curricula for the 21st Century

## Abstract

This qualitative case study gathered perceptions from alumni, clients, and professors to gain insight into how essential client-based service learning is to the preparedness of emergency management professionals enrolled in the Masters in Public Administration Emergency and Disaster Management program at the Metropolitan College of New York. Criteria for participant selection included employment as emergency managers, three to five years of experience in the field of emergency management, and past direct involvement in a major disaster event. Data was captured using individual in-depth interviews of 13 participants. Two focus groups were utilized: one comprised three faculty members in the role of project manager, and the second comprised three former clients who took part in client-based service learning projects with the college. Two field observations were conducted at client sites to examine the service learning process. Analysis yielded six emergent themes: the development of skills/knowledge, theory to practice, client commitment and engagement, client-based service-learning benefits, reflective thinking, and networking opportunities. Findings offer insight into current delivery practices, strengths of the program, and the challenges needed to address institutions of higher education offering emergency management programs. Recommendations include enhancing networking capabilities for students through client-based service learning, incorporating reflective thinking methods, building leadership capacity through course development using leadership theories, building leadership capacity through client-based learning projects and other experiential learning methods, enhancing client recommendations by implementing a request for proposal process, and ensuring client commitment for client-based service learning projects. Research on a larger scale is recommended to increase the generalizability of the results reported.

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The Utilization of Client-Based Service-Learning Applications in  
Emergency Management Graduate Curricula for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By

Thomas J. Carey III

Submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree  
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by

Dr. Claudia L. Edwards

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Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. School of Education

St. John Fisher College

December 2015

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## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to the members of the emergency management community who give their all when chaos and disaster strikes. Your resilience and skill to endure the unknown are appreciated in a growing profession that demands the most of our humanity. To my wife, Joanne, and son, Jason, thank you for the many sacrifices you made, your encouragement, and your sense of humor. Through your understanding and support, I was able to achieve my greatest academic milestone.

To my Committee, Dr. Claudia L. Edwards and Dr. Janet Lyons, thank you for your patience, guidance, and support in paving the road to scholarship. To my Executive Mentors, Dr. John Comiskey and Dr. Michael T. Mauer, thank you for your counsel over the years and throughout this dissertation process. To my colleagues at the Metropolitan College of New York, Director Ali Gheith of the Masters in Public Administration Emergency and Disaster Management program, Dean Humphrey Crookendale of the School of Public Affairs and Administration, and Dean Tilokie Depoo of the School of Business thank you for your immense support, genuine interest, and the assistance you provided.

To the participants of this study, thank you for sharing your experiences in adding to a limited body of knowledge in the use of experiential learning within emergency management curricula.

## **Biographical Sketch**

Thomas J. Carey III is an Adjunct Professor of Emergency Management at Metropolitan College of New York. Mr. Carey is a retired New York City Police Detective Sergeant and a retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major. He graduated from Long Island University at C.W. Post where he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in May 1991 in Criminal Justice. Mr. Carey also graduated from Long Island University at C.W. Post where he received a Master of Science degree in Criminal Justice and Security Administration in January 1999. He holds professional certifications to include the prestigious Certified Protection Professional and the Certified Emergency Manager. Tom entered St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2013 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Carey pursued his research in the discipline of emergency management higher education curricula under the direction of Dr. Claudia L. Edwards and Dr. Janet Lyons and received the Ed.D. degree in 2015.

## **Abstract**

This qualitative case study gathered perceptions from alumni, clients, and professors to gain insight into how essential client-based service learning is to the preparedness of emergency management professionals enrolled in the Masters in Public Administration Emergency and Disaster Management program at the Metropolitan College of New York. Criteria for participant selection included employment as emergency managers, three to five years of experience in the field of emergency management, and past direct involvement in a major disaster event.

Data was captured using individual in-depth interviews of 13 participants. Two focus groups were utilized: one comprised three faculty members in the role of project manager, and the second comprised three former clients who took part in client-based service learning projects with the college. Two field observations were conducted at client sites to examine the service learning process. Analysis yielded six emergent themes: the development of skills/knowledge, theory to practice, client commitment and engagement, client-based service-learning benefits, reflective thinking, and networking opportunities.

Findings offer insight into current delivery practices, strengths of the program, and the challenges needed to address institutions of higher education offering emergency management programs. Recommendations include enhancing networking capabilities for students through client-based service learning, incorporating reflective thinking methods, building leadership capacity through course development using leadership theories,

building leadership capacity through client-based learning projects and other experiential learning methods, enhancing client recommendations by implementing a request for proposal process, and ensuring client commitment for client-based service learning projects. Research on a larger scale is recommended to increase the generalizability of the results reported.



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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **Introduction**

As we enter the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the climate of catastrophic disasters and terrorist incidents continues to place demands upon professionals in the field of emergency management. Peerbolte and Collins (2013) noted that disasters have been occurring more frequently with a greater level of intensity, which often produces catastrophic results. Emergency managers have been tasked to plan for emergencies and disasters based on three major categories: natural disasters, human threats, and accidental (American Society Industrial Security [ASIS], 2011). Natural disasters range from weather-related incidents resulting from acts of nature, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and winter storms, to non-weather natural events, such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions (ASIS, 2011; U.S. Department of Homeland Security [USDHS], 2013). Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and Hurricane Sandy in 2012 were natural disasters that help illustrate the need for emergency management professionals to be better prepared to address victims of natural disasters at the local and regional level. For example, in spite of the systems in place for emergency managers, Hurricane Katrina resulted in 1,833 deaths, over one million people were displaced, and the estimated losses were at more than \$125 billion—designating Katrina the costliest hurricane in United States history (Rubin & Public Entity Risk Institute [PERI], 2007).

In October of 2012, the United States endured Hurricane Sandy—the-second-costliest hurricane in U.S. history. It resulted in in 286 deaths and more than \$65 billion

in property damage (U.S. Department of Commerce [USDC], 2013). This hurricane affected 24 states with severe damage to the states of New York and New Jersey (USDC, 2013). On January 28, 2014, Atlanta, Georgia endured a rare snowstorm that shut down the city, leaving thousands stranded in the snow (Harlow-Dion, 2014). Local government officials were unable to proactively manage the city's response to the storm, despite forecasts by the National Weather Service (NWS) (Reeves, 2014). Atlanta's Mayor Reed, in following the national trend, decided to hire an emergency manager for the city in order to coordinate a more effective regional response to future disasters (Bluestein & Leslie, 2014). Decision makers who take proactive postures provide their communities with a tremendous value in dealing with disasters (Caldwell, 2014).

Human threats are intentional adverse actions caused by adversaries who may commit acts of terrorism, civil disorder, and arson (ASIS, 2011; U.S. Department of Homeland Security [DHS], 2013). Boyne (2012) noted that living in a global environment has facilitated the rise in terrorist threats that pose additional obstacles for today's emergency managers and homeland security practitioners. The three terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 constituted the greatest deliberate attack on the U.S. mainland in the history of the country, claiming just under 3,000 lives (Rubin, 2012). At the World Trade Center site in New York City, 343 New York City firefighters, 37 Port Authority police officers, and 23 New York City police officers lost their lives (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks [NCTA], 2004). Findings from the 9-11 Commission (NCTA, 2004) revealed several structural problems within the city's unified response to large-scale emergencies. Findings from the report were the impetus for the formation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and a national response occurred to

include the development of the National Response System (Harrald, 2012). On April 15, 2013, our nation was once again shocked by an act of terrorism. Two terrorists set off two pressure cooker bombs near the finish line at the Boston Marathon resulting in three deaths and injuring 264 people (Kotz, 2013). This event cost the city of Boston between \$225 million and \$333 million in lost revenue due to the shutdown of the city in facilitating the manhunt of the two terrorists (Green & Winter, 2013). On December 14, 2012, Americans witnessed the unthinkable attack on an elementary school in Newtown, Connecticut where 20 children and six faculty members were killed by a lone gunman (Sedensky, 2013). These three acts depict human threats that represent deliberate adverse actions and events (ASIS, 2011).

Accidental threats are potential incidents that occur as a result of a non-deliberate adverse actions or failures of systems or structures such as hazardous material spills and telecommunications and computer outages (ASIS, 2011; DHS, 2013; Lindell, Perry, & Prater, 2007). An example of an accidental threat is the Deepwater Horizon drilling incident from April 20, 2010 in which an explosion of a drilling rig killed 11 crewmen, causing the largest offshore oil spill in U.S. history (Crittenden, 2010; Kiltz, 2011; National Commission on the BP Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and Offshore Drilling, 2011). The impact of the spill directly harmed the fishing, shrimping, and tourism industries (Upton, 2011). British Petroleum (BP) incurred more than \$37.2 billion in liability expenses for compensation to victims affected by the hazardous spill (Ritter, 2014).

In 2011, a devastating 8.9 magnitude earthquake and tsunami hit Japan (Kiltz, 2011) causing 15,884 deaths, 6,148 injuries, and \$300 billion in material damage (CNN

Library, 2014). This foreign disaster represented a natural event cascading into a nuclear crisis for Japan. On June 6, 2011, the tsunami affected the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant complex, which housed three nuclear reactors, causing full meltdowns and radioactive material that was released directly into the atmosphere after the Tsunami hit (CNN Library, 2014). The Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station disaster is considered the worst nuclear emergency since Chernobyl (Tabuchi, Sanger, & Bradsher, 2011). Grist (2007) believed that one disaster can promulgate other disasters in compounding a single event into a complex array of disassociated problems, as the Japanese tsunami of 2011 has demonstrated. Three years after the tsunami, nearly 270,000 people remained displaced from their homes, including many who may never be able to return home due to radioactive contamination (Yamaguchi, 2014).

These highly publicized events demonstrate the need for each jurisdiction to employ both competent and effective emergency managers. The emergency manager is the focal point in providing leadership within a jurisdiction or organization on the topics of hazards, disasters, and what to do about them (Blanchard, 2007). This individual takes on the role of a program director who develops and facilitates a community strategy for managing its risks and oversee its implementation (Canton, 2007). The emergency manager is required to orchestrate the four phases of emergency management (mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery) through the coordination of resources between government entities and private organizations in order to achieve success (Blanchard, 2007; Canton, 2007; Perry & Lindell, 2007). In addressing the needs of the nation, academia has rapidly increased the number of available emergency management and homeland security courses and programs (Bellavita & Gordon, 2006; Comiskey, 2014;

Cwiak, 2011; Drabek, 1987, 2007; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kiltz, 2011; McCreight, 2011; Polson, Persyn, & Cupp, 2010; Stewart & Vocino, 2013).

The discipline of emergency management demands knowledge and skills taken from the natural and physical sciences, the social and behavioral sciences, and the aspects of engineering and technology (Thomas & Mileti, 2003). Scholars view emergency management as an applied field of study that is oriented toward practice (Dilling, 2009). The field extends across contributing disciplines in diverse fields of study such as sociology, public administration, political science, business, economics, engineering, psychology, anthropology, geology, ecology, geography, meteorology, environmental science, criminal justice, fire science, urban and regional planning, and public health (Dilling, 2009). Emergency management, like most interdisciplinary fields, does not draw from a single theoretical base or pedagogy (McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003).

As we enter the second decade of the 21st century, we are left with some interesting dilemmas in preparing future generations for the profession of the emergency manager. Drabek (2007) and McCreight (2009) cited that there is a general lack of consensus within the higher education and professional communities in providing common practices. The current state of emergency management education and homeland security programs reveals that there is a lack of a national, professional accreditation body for these disciplines to emulate, and there is a lack of clear academic standards, guidelines, and a model curriculum that is supported and promulgated by such an accreditation body (Clement, 2011; McCreight, 2009; Stewart & Vocino, 2013). McCreight (2009) raised the following professional challenges that need to be considered in reforming emergency management and homeland security higher education programs:



the necessary core curriculum, educational requirements, and delivery mechanisms for career seekers to these fields.

The utilization of client-based service learning serves as the core for this research in examining how students can apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world projects (Pollard, 2012; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008). The incorporation of client-based service learning, also termed *capstone projects* in college curricula, have proven beneficial to both student and client (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). Client-based service learning is defined as real-world instruction that produces a useful report or product for a client (Waldner & Hunter, 2008). Clement (2011) asserted that a teaching pedagogy is effective when students are *actualized* in their ability to apply course instruction, content, and skill in a given situation. Client-based service learning allows students to achieve an understanding of what stakeholders require in deliverable services that are provided to them (Pollard, 2012). Students and clients exchange information and produce various industry-related products in the form of reports, plans, and assessments (McEntire, 2002; Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

Internships, job-shadowing, service learning, as well as drills and exercises, can provide a requisite need for the maturation and evolution of this academic discipline as being part of a standard of *best teaching practices* (Clement, 2011). Blanchard (2008) asserted that an experiential learning environment fosters the definition, vision, mission, and principles of emergency management. The trend toward experiential learning can be explained by several sociocultural factors such as a changing workforce and nontraditional learners entering academia (Cantor, 1997).

McCreight (2014), in his assessment of homeland security and emergency management curricula, noted that “America’s colleges must provide what DHS cannot: a skills-based graduate experience that blends operational and content knowledge with validated professional milestones” (p. 31). Client-based service learning can provide students with an opportunity to obtain skills through observation and experience while participating in a facilitator-led project (Drucker, Stefanovic, & Cunningham, 1996; Pollard, 2012). A gap exists in linking theory to practice before graduates obtain employment in a real-world setting (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Renger, Wood, & Granillo, 2011). Current delivery practices have proven insufficient as both undergraduate and graduate levels struggle to provide a credible, comprehensive, and challenging program of study in homeland security and emergency management (McCreight 2009). Client-based service learning projects can develop relevant skill sets in which students can acquire through this type of pedagogy (McEntire, 2002). These projects show how the integration of service learning plays a vital role in addressing this deficiency in designing future curricula for emergency management higher education (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003).

The Universities of North Texas, Central Florida, Jacksonville State, and the Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) are among the many higher learning institutions that have moved to integrating theory and practice in their graduate programs for emergency management professionals (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kushma, 2003; McEntire, 2002; Metropolitan College of New York [MCNY], 2013). This type of

preparation enables students to reinforce learned theories and demonstrate their application in gaining skills and abilities for future use (McEntire, 2002).

Service learning is one type of experiential learning that allows students to link their academic work with practical applications. Alexander (2013) referred to emergency management as a *hands on activity* because it requires a participatory approach to learning. Oyola-Yemaiel and Wilson (2005) argued that emergency managers can only professionalize the field by becoming the integrators of theoretical and practical knowledge. Service learning couples theory and emergency management practices through a facilitator or group project that takes students out of the classroom and into the community setting and enables them to comprehend the course material with clarity (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bryer, 2011; Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Jelier & Clarke, 1999; Kapucu, 2011; Lambright & Lu, 2009; McEntire, 2002; Ostrander, 2004). As noted by Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013), the core of service learning provides students with a “theoretical foundation with clear learning objectives, activities, and reflective components” (Kenworthy-U’Ren & Peterson, 2005, p. 272).

The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which experiential learning, through the use of client-based service learning, is essential to the preparedness of emergency management professionals upon graduating from a master’s program. Boyne (2012) concluded that educational institutions must use new pedagogies in preparing political leaders and front-line decision makers. The emergency manager is the front-line decision maker responsible for providing leadership and facilitating a community strategy to coordinate resources between government entities and private organizations (Canton, 2007; Blanchard, 2007; Perry & Lindell, 2007). Students and practitioners must learn to

prepare for an uncertain future and deal with the systematic stress the fields of homeland security and emergency management place upon them (Cosgrove, 1996; Kiltz, 2009).

### **Problem Statement**

In response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, emergency management and homeland security curricula have significantly increased in meeting public demand and providing vast educational opportunities for students (Bellavita & Gordon, 2006; Comiskey, 2014; Cwiak, 2011; Drabek, 2007; Kiltz, 2011; McCreight, 2014; Polson et al., 2010). In response to this increased interest, many emergency management curricula were developed rapidly and lacked both quality and rigor (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Stewart & Vocino, 2013). McCreight (2009) argued that the DHS, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and several professional associations have not provided American higher education with a common benchmark standard in emergency management and homeland security programs. McCreight (2014) argued that core competencies, certifications, and career paths in the emergency management field are subject to diverse opinion, as noted by various scholars in the field, such as Blanchard (2003, 2005), Cwiak (2011), Kapucu (2011), and Marks (2005). A grievous gap in the synthesis of core competencies has led to discourse in the waiting of the element of service learning in order to improve the delivery of courses within emergency management curricula (Jensen, 2014). Clement (2011) and others believed a professional accreditation body for academic programs in emergency management curricula could lend credibility to programs by providing some oversight in student preparation (McCreight, 2014; Stewart & Vocino, 2013).

Emergency management higher education is at a point in time where students and other stakeholders, including employers as well as educational institutions themselves, should understand curricular missions, goals, and content (Waugh & Sadiq, 2011). Stevens (2013) discussed how emergency management education has focused too heavily on knowledge development, and it has neglected the importance of obtaining applied skills through real-life experience through mentoring and internships, simulations, and other real-life experiences. In filling this void, institutions must provide a skills-based graduate experience that blends content knowledge with applied knowledge (McCreight, 2014). Client-based service learning and capstone projects can develop relevant skill sets that students can acquire for use in the field of emergency management (McEntire, 2002).

Hurricane Katrina provided us with an example of how many public officials and front-line responders are often unprepared to handle decision-making challenges posed by a crisis (Boyne, 2012). A master's degree program should emphasize analysis and management skills in the realm of decision making to include geographic information systems (GIS) mapping, financial management, project management, and grant-writing (Waugh & Sadiq, 2011). In preparing students to assume positions of leadership, educational institutions need to utilize new pedagogies, such as using simulations, to enhance decision-making skills, which can be used in service learning (Boyne, 2012; McCreight, 2014; Silvia, 2012). Modeling, simulations, and field studies are used significantly at Georgetown University's new Executive Masters of Professional Studies in Emergency and Disaster Management program (Suski, 2014). These types of experiential learning applications create an impactful learning environment for students (Suski, 2014).

Many academic institutions offer lecture-based instruction that may provide passivity to its students (Yontz & de la Peña McCook, 2003). The decisions emergency managers are required to make during a disaster become paramount in order to ensure the safety of others (Comfort & Wukich, 2013; Rubin & PERI, 2007). This process requires an active learning approach that the field of emergency management requires (Boyne, 2012; Comfort & Wukich, 2013; Silvia, 2012) opposed to passive learning alternatives (Campbell & McCabe, 2002; Poling & Hupp, 2009). Based on this logic, many current degree programs in emergency management do not include sufficient learning experiences that allow students to develop the professional practice skills needed in the field (Collins & Peerbolte, 2012; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kiltz, 2009). Learning environments that utilize experiential learning may prove beneficial as graduates entering the workforce do not possess the requisite skills necessary in performing their role effectively or efficiently (Burke & Bush, 2013; Levine, 2005).

The research base for experiential learning and the pedagogy of service learning is vast, but studies conducted in the discipline of emergency management remain limited. In one of the most comprehensive studies to date, Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) conducted a national study to promote a greater understanding of how service learning is used in emergency management programs. Their study revealed that programs incorporating service-learning projects foster networking, team building, and leadership skills and faculty time commitment and institutional support are necessary in achieving successful service-learning experiences (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, (2013).

## **Theoretical Rationale**

To gain insight into the value client-based service learning provides professionals pursuing graduate degrees in emergency management, this study examined Dewey's theory of experience (1938) and Kolb's experiential learning theory (1984), and it draws on the two conceptual frameworks of service learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999) and client-based service learning (Pollard, 2012; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008). The primary theory for this study is Dewey's theory of experience (1938a), which offers insight as to how students learn by doing and stresses the role of active learning as opposed to passive learning. Kolb (1984), drawing on the various works of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1951), and Piaget (1970, 1971) developed a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. Kolb developed the experiential learning theory (ELT), which can be utilized as a framework in examining the process where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Inspired by Dewey's theory of experiential learning, service learning provides colleges and universities a pedagogical tool in providing students with key skills and competencies in better preparing them for the role as an emergency manager (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). A client-based service-learning project produces a useful report or product for a client that meets Dewey's (1933) criteria in being defined as a type of service learning (Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

**Dewey's theory of experience.** John Dewey is recognized as the most important educational and social philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Giles & Eyler, 1994). He is not only respected by educational professionals but by professionals in the social sciences,

psychology, and philosophy. John Dewey was born in Burlington, Vermont, on October 20, 1859, and he died in 1952 at age 92 at his residence in New York City (McDermott, 1973). At 15, Dewey entered the University of Vermont and graduated with honors in 1879. In 1882, he attended the new graduate school at Johns Hopkins University until 1884 (Ryan, 1995). At Johns Hopkins University, Dewey was interested and committed to the idealism and philosophy of Hegel (Rockefeller, 1994). Hegel (1953) believed that there has to be a connection between expectation and experience in order for learning to occur. Dewey eventually became interested in the work of Darwin, which emphasized empirical data and experimentation in the logic of knowledge (Perricone, 2006). In 1894, Dewey became a professor of philosophy and the chairman of the Department of Philosophy, Psychology, and Education at the University of Chicago (McDermott, 1973). Due to the influences of his friend George Herbert Mead, Dewey was the acknowledged leader of the Chicago School (McDermott, 1973). As noted by Rucker (1969), the Chicago School philosophy reflected an awareness of interconnections among the advances being made in biology, psychology, and sociology. In 1904, Dewey became a professor at Teachers College at Columbia University in New York until 1930 (McDermott, 1973).

Dewey's major works include *How We Think* (1910), *Democracy and Education* (1916), *Experience and Nature* (1925), *Art as Experience* (1934), and *Experience and Education* (1938). Dewey (1938) thought that education should be student centered and that students should participate in directing and shaping their education. Dewey advocated for an educational structure that strikes a balance between delivering



knowledge while also taking into account the interests and experiences of the student (Dewey, 1902).

Dewey (1938a) specified that for an experience to be educative, it must contain two principles, which formed the core of his philosophy of experience: the principle of continuity and the principle of interaction. The principle of continuity states that all experience occurs along an experiential continuum in which experiences build on previous experiences need to be directed by a teacher. The teacher aids the student in shaping and directing these experiences to fit the continuum (Dewey, 1938a). The principle of interaction combines one's internal and objective aspects of an experience, which interact to form a situation (Dewey, 1938a). This situation becomes an instrument of understanding for the student, so he or she can deal effectively with future situations. These two principles, in forming this instrument, lead to actual knowledge and skills to deal with future experiences (Dewey, 1938). A student learns as a result of the transaction between the learner and the environment (Shumer, Murphy, & Berkas 1993).

Dewey (1938b) noted that education was a six-step process consisting of: (a) encountering a problem, (b) formulating a problem into a question to be answered, (c) gathering information to answer the past question, (d) developing a hypothesis, (e) testing the hypothesis, and (f) making warranted assertions. Dewey believed that this process should build on past student experience in order to provide students with the increased skills necessary to participate in democracy.

Dewey (1938) provided the necessary framework in the form of experiential learning for this study to build upon. Dewey's work underpinned the work of scholars in

experiential learning going forward (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Lambright & Lu, 2009).

**Kolb's experiential learning theory.** In 1984, David A. Kolb built the ELT, drawing on the works of scholars from several disciplines—notably John Dewey (1910, 1938), Paulo Freire (1974), Kurt William James (1890), Carl Jung (1931), Lewin (1951), Jean Piaget (1970, 1971), and Carl Rogers (1961, 1969)—to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. Kolb is best known for his research on experiential learning and learning styles (Kolb, 1984). Many draw on Kolb's work, *Experiential Learning* (1984), as a theory about how learners apprehend and transform various kinds of knowledge (Moore, 2010). Kolb's dominant school of thought was constructivist theory and his major bodies of work include: *Experiential Learning* (1984), *Organizational Behavior: An Experiential Approach to Human Behavior in Organizations* (1995), and *Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education* (2005).

Kolb (1984) presented a four-stage model in his book, *Experiential Learning*, by providing a foundation for experiential learning. Kolb found that human cognition and the stages of human growth development are consistent with the model he and Wolfe presented as part of his experiential learning theory (Kolb & Wolfe, 1981). Kolb graphically depicted this process of learning in a cyclic model or a spiral where the learner touches all the bases by experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neuman, 2010; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb (1984) argued that learners receive experience through either a concrete experience (CE) or an abstract conceptualization (AC). The CE depicts how learners take information in, and AC

identifies how learners internalize information (Felder, 1996). These experiences are then transformed through a lens of either a reflective observation (RO) or active experimentation (AE). The lens produces four different styles of learner: (a) divergers, (b) accommodators, (c) assimilators, and (d) convergers. The divergers are learners who are imaginative and can reflect on issues from various viewpoints. Accommodators are students who learn through a hands-on experience. Assimilators are learners who seek theory and build upon them through inductive reasoning. Convergers are learners who comprehend theories through their application and focus on deductive reasoning to solve problems.

The four components depicted in Kolb's (1984) ELT form two dimensions that are opposite one another: CE and AC form a grasping dimension—how one takes in information; and AE and RO form a processing dimension—how one makes information meaningful (Salter, Evans, & Forney, 2006). Kolb (1976) developed a nine-item self-report scale, which he revised in 1985 with a 12-item self-report questionnaire, to identify one's learning preferences (Kolb, 1985). Learners gravitate to one component of each of these two dimensions, which results in a preferred learning style indicated in Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI) (Kolb, 1976, 1984, 1993, 1999). Wilson (2000) believed that properly aligning a participant's learning style with a training activity enhances the effectiveness of that training. Wilson further argued that instructors can maximize participant learning by reducing class size to groups of 20 or less.

Kolb (1984), upon reviewing root metaphor theory originally presented by Stephen Pepper (1942), incorporated this model into his ELT. Pepper suggested that there are four ways of conceptualizing reality: (a) formism, (b) mechanism, (c) contextualism,

and (d) organism (Pepper, 1942). The formistic hypothesis (formism) examines the common sense approach of the similarity between two things that share specific characteristics (same form, type, or class). The mechanist hypothesis (mechanism) examines how parts of a machine interact with one another in a cause-and-effect mode. The contextualistic hypothesis (contextualism) is an historic event that is unique and is related to the specific context in which it occurred, and it is constantly changing. The organismic hypothesis (organicism) examines the development of an organism from its inception throughout its life cycle.

Scientists have identified various parts of the brain and their respective functions, showing how people acquire knowledge (Permaul, 2009). Using the neurophysiologic theory of Hebb (1949), many educators and brain researchers, such as Butler (1987), Dunn and Dunn (1992), Felder (1996), Gregorc (1984), Kolb (1984), and McCarthy (2000), and have conducted research in the learning styles of students that relate to the brain's hemispheres. Lumsdaine and Lumsdaine (1995) pointed out that each part of the brain develops as one grows, and they are subject to various cultural and social influences that include service-learning experiences. Roberts (2002) believed that experiences physically change the brain through internal and external stimuli. Zull (2002) argued that through the process of change, these experiences are transformed into knowledge.

As noted by Zull (2002), a biologist, the learning cycle presented by Kolb (1984) came about from the structure of the brain (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb's "transformation of experience" is the process of changing data into knowing (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). Zull (2002) referred to this transformation of the learner from a receiver of knowledge to a producer of knowledge as the *transformation line*. Zull argued that for this event to take

place, a bridging between the front and back cortexes of the brain must occur. The brain is wired so that the connections happen between these two hemispheres (back-front connection) when processing data (Zull, 2002). Using Kolb's learning cycle (1984), data enters learners through a concrete experience where it is organized and becomes rearranged through reflection. The transformation only takes place when the data is acted upon by the learner. The learner then converts the data into ideas, plans, and actions, which cause the transformation experience to occur (Kolb, 1984). This creation of knowledge can be revisited continuously as learners can test their own knowledge (Zull, 2002).

Kolb (1984) used the framework from ELT to develop an instrument for measuring various learning styles, which he identified as the Learning Style Inventory (LSI). The LSI approach has been widely used and accepted by educators in various disciplines of education (Carlisle, 2002; Kolb, 1981, 1984, 1985; Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001; Massey, Kim, & Mitchell, 2011).

Massey et al. (2011) conducted a study to examine the learning styles of undergraduate students in social work at Norfolk State University. Students in this study were required to take Kolb's LSI in order to identify their dominant learning styles (Massey et al., 2011). The results indicate that diverging and accommodating learning styles occurred most often. Students possessing these styles learn best in classes where activities include lectures, role playing exercises, discussions, opportunities to practice skills, and reflection (Massey et al., 2011).

Kolb (1981), in developing the LSI, which combines the concrete-abstract and active-reflective dimensions, found that individuals fall into four basic types that

correspond to the four quadrants of the brain that ultimately predict an individual's dominant learning style. The LSI for this study comprised 20 questions that asked the respondents to rank four sentence endings on a scale of 1 to 4. The sentence endings were ranked based on the way the respondents responded to a new learning situation. Five undergraduate courses in the school of Social Work at Norfolk State University participated in this study in 2009. The sample size consisted of 86 volunteers out of a possible 101 students enrolled in these classes. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V17 was used to analyze the data.

**Service learning.** The roots of service learning can be traced to 1862 as part of the Land-Grant Act. It was an effort to acquire the intellectual power universities provided to improve agricultural and industrial life (Yontz & de la Peña McCook, 2003). This act led to the Cooperative Extension activities found in today's land-grant universities through the institutionalization of civic mission and community engagement projects (Yontz & de la Peña McCook, 2003). Robert Sigmon and William Ramsey coined the term "service learning" in 1967, which became a major first step toward providing conceptual clarity in learning. This term grew out of their work at the Southern Regional Education Board (Sigmon, 1990; Southern Regional Education Board, 1973). In subsequent years, the efforts in this field have focused on principles of good practice in combining service and learning and in developing a common, agreed-upon definition (Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Kendall, 1990; Shumer et al., 1993; Sigmon, 1990; Stanton, 1990). Giles and Eyler (1994) believed that the philosophy of John Dewey was among the legitimate source for developing a theory of service learning. Dewey (1938b) emphasized the relationship of learning to experience while advocating the integration of

theory and practice within the education system. Dewey (1916a) provided the service learning movement with the key concepts of community involvement and using learned knowledge from experience to improve society as a whole.

Recognized scholars in the field of service learning, Bringle and Hatcher (1996), defined service learning as:

a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 222)

The research on service learning suggests that the findings differ on the benefits to service learning. For example, a RAND study entitled, *Combining Service and Learning in Higher Education: Evaluation of the Learn and Serve America, Higher Education Program*, found modest effects on students' civic participation and life skills and no effects on their academic or career development (Gray, Ondaatje, & Zakaras, 1999). In contrast to Gray et al. (1999), other scholars have conducted multi-institutional studies that yield positive findings, particularly in the domain of student learning and academic development (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Lambright and Lu (2009) collected data from seven Masters of Public Administration (MPA) courses that were taught during the spring 2007 semester at a state university. The study examined a variety of factors that influence the effectiveness a service-learning project can have on achieving learning objectives. Lambright and Lu (2009), in their findings, revealed the items that impact in-service learning: (a) the extent that the project is integrated with

class materials, (b) whether or not students work in groups, and (c) whether or not the participating students are full-time.

Kendall (1990) viewed the service learning process as a collaborative approach in which both the student and community are learners. Ash, Clayton, and Moses (2009) viewed the outcomes of service learning differently by stating that it mainly contributes to personal development and growth, civic learning, and academic enhancement. By summarizing common definitions of service learning, McCrea (2004) stated as a guide: “The service must meet an actual community need; the learning from service must be clearly integrated with course objectives; reflection about the service experience is essential; and the relationship between service recipients and learners must be reciprocal” (p. 5).

**Reflection.** As part of service learning, students participate in a four-cycle process consisting of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The critical-reflection component of service learning was the direct result of John Dewey’s theories of education (Keeton, 1983). Kolb (1984), a follower of Dewey, built upon his framework of service learning educators. Kolb (1984) argued that learners receive experience through either a concrete experience or an abstract conceptualization, then transform these experiences through a lens of either reflective observation or active experimentation. The lens produces four different styles of learners: (a) divergers, (b) accommodators, (c) assimilators, and (d) convergers. Reflection is a key component to this learning process because it can link the concrete to the abstract (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).



Schön (1987), like Dewey (1933), believed practitioners build upon a collection of images, ideas, and past examples that they can draw upon in a given situation. Schön (1987) argued that many disciplines within applied sciences need to be combined with an epistemology that is practiced based using a *reflective practicum*. Schön's work (1983, 1987) provides educators with a framework in describing cognitive processes that translate theory into action.

Eyler, Giles, and Schmeide (1996) stated that reflection is a “transformative link between the action of serving and the ideas and understanding of learning” (p. 14). Chisholm (1987) noted that the pedagogy of service learning enables students to become the heart of a curriculum as they reflect upon their experience. Reflection enables students to critically process key concepts and principles learned from a course and acknowledge their application in real-world issues (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Eldred, 1996; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Howard, 1993; Kenny, Simon, Kiley-Brabeck, & Lerner, 2002; Jacoby, 2003).

Maxfield and Fisher (2012) pointed out reflection and journaling provide non-traditional students with key learning approaches that link coursework with the practitioner's career. Russell and Fisher (2014) conducted a case study using reflection and journaling as key learning approaches that fit non-traditional student styles. The study explored the impressions a homeland security course had on emergency service students. The findings revealed that non-traditional student learning styles met the main objectives for the homeland security course.

**Service learning in emergency management.** “Educators face a particular challenge in creating a learning environment in which students can develop this ability in

preparation and/or support for careers in emergency management” (Comfort & Wukich, 2013, p. 53). The pedagogy of service learning can be utilized in any academic discipline to expand course objectives through the lens of civic education, regardless of academic discipline (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Kraft, 1996; Parker-Gwin & Mabry, 1998). Dicke, Dowden, and Torres (2004) noted that service learning is among the tenets of the American Society for Public Administration’s (ASPA) (1999) professional code of ethics calling for members to provide a bridge for students between the classroom and the realism of the public service environment. McCreight (2014) argued that since the DHS or FEMA cannot act as an official custodian in shaping and influencing academic programs in producing competent professionals, it appears it is up to academia to provide for viable solutions. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) discussed the problem in developing programs that fail to provide sufficient guidance to what practitioners and the field demand. Kapucu and Connolly Knox recommended including the service-learning pedagogy to develop emergency management programs and curriculum in higher education. Stevens (2013) argued that emergency management education has focused too heavily on knowledge development, and it has neglected the importance of obtaining applied skills through hands-on experiences acquired through real-life experience, mentor- and internships, and simulations.

Using results from a national study, Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) sought to promote a greater understanding of how service learning is used in emergency management programs. The findings of the study indicate that three dominant modes of teaching are: online, face-to-face, and mixed mode. The size of these programs varies at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Based on the literature and feedback from

respondents, institutional support is necessary for service learning. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) found that carefully designed service-learning projects can provide students with key skills and competencies as part of their development process in the field of emergency management.

**Client-based service learning.** Client projects have become a staple for many university courses in learning project management skills (Cooke & Williams 2004; Keys 2003; Tynjälä, Pirhonen, Vartiainen, & Helle, 2010). Degree programs in public administration and public policy provide access to students for gaining insight by working on practicum projects with client organizations (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprague & Hu, 2015). Many institutions provide experiential learning projects, often termed *capstones*, where students combine theory and practice for the benefit of an outside agency (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). McEntire (2002) noted that capstones in emergency management can combine emergency management theory with knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs). The *Constructive Action* process at Metropolitan College of New York (2013) is a method for pulling theory and practice together and calls for the joining of the education site to the worksite (Cohen & College for Human Services, 1976). This experiential learning model termed Constructive Action follows the same fundamentals of a client-based or capstone project (MCNY, 2013). The objective of the CA serves the citizen, student practitioner in training, and the supporting organization (MCNY, 2013). In applying Dewey's (1933) philosophy, for an experience to be educative the learning and knowledge should be in the form of using projects as a means for producing learning from experience.

Dewey (1933) set forth four criteria that are necessary for “projects to be truly educative” (p. 217). These projects must “(a) generate interest; (b) be worthwhile intrinsically; (c) present problems that awaken new curiosity and create a demand for information; (d) cover a considerable time span and be capable of fostering development over time” (pp. 217-218).

Client-based service learning meets Dewey’s criteria by being defined as a type of service learning that produces a useful report or product for a client (Waldner & Hunter, 2008). In an effort to assess the success of client-based capstone projects from a client’s perspective, Schachter and Schwartz (2009) administered a post-project survey to 57 client organizations that took part in New York University’s Wagner Capstone Project for the 2006-2007 academic year. The findings indicated that capstone projects provided benefits to more than the student. The client’s needs were met while providing a valuable public service (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). Using the client survey by Schachter and Schwartz (2009) as a template for their survey, Sprague and Hu (2015) conducted a mixed-methods study to gain insight into how clients benefited from practicum and team programs. The clients that participated in the study revealed the effects of the students’ recommendations and how the projects’ overall impact on their organizations (Sprague & Hu, 2015).

Drucker et al. (1996) utilized two models for a student field experience in a public administration curriculum. The first model consisted of student teams observing and reporting the daily operations of a public agency (Drucker et al., 1996). The later model incorporated students taking on the role of consultants. Students in these models were broken down into teams sharing equal responsibility for tasks in the project. The

instructor took on the role of a project manager as he/she guided the class in attending to the client's needs through the integration of learned theories and practical applications (Waldner & Hunter, 2008). The focus remained on addressing the client's needs in delivering assignments and integrating theories into best practices. Students were given a consulting assignment that enabled them to find or diagnose a significant problem/opportunity and offer recommendations (Drucker et al., 1996). As noted by Waldner and Hunter (2008), the terminology of "client" signals to students the importance of their work outside the university. A client can be a governmental agency, nonprofit organization, or a private corporation. A contributing factor for success depends on the student-agency relationship in understanding the goals and objectives of both parties (Drucker et al., 1996). Clear guidelines should be established upon the undertaking of a service-learning project between students and community partners to ensure in its successful completion (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013).

### **Statement of the Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to gather perceptions from alumni, faculty, and clients in the field to ascertain what key knowledge, skills, and abilities are actually needed in the field of emergency management. This study examined a pedagogical model known as *service learning* with the emphasis on the conceptual framework of client-based service learning. Findings ascertained perceptions on the preparedness of emergency management professionals working in the area of client-based learning environments.

## **Research Questions**

This study examined the extent to which client-based learning is a valuable resource for preparing emergency management professionals to respond to new demands in emergency and disaster management for the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. Through a qualitative study, interviews, focus groups, and observations were conducted with seasoned professionals who were associated with the graduate program at Metropolitan College of New York. The research questions that have guided this study include:

1. What are the significant benefits that alumni perceive to have acquired as a result of taking part in a client-based service-learning project within an emergency management, higher education curriculum at Metropolitan College of New York?
2. How do client-based service-learning projects prepare emergency managers for the field in the 21st century?
3. How and to what extent does service learning create an intersection between the classroom and the practice of emergency management?

## **Significance of the Study**

Current delivery practices have proven insufficient as both undergraduate and graduate levels struggle to provide a credible, comprehensive, and challenging program of study in homeland security and emergency management (McCreight, 2009). Calls for the integration of service learning plays a vital role in addressing this deficiency by designing future curricula for emergency management higher education (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kapucu & Connolly, 2013; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003). The incorporation of client-based service-learning projects have proven

beneficial to both students and clients (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). The reported findings of this study may prove to be valuable to institutions of higher education that house emergency management programs in adapting an additional approach to current teaching methods. Academic policy makers, deans, department chairpersons, and faculty of emergency management higher education programs may consider incorporating the service-learning pedagogy as part of a best practice approach within their institution. Further, the findings gleaned from this study will contribute to a limited body of literature within the field of emergency management in which scholars and practitioners can build upon for future research and applications.

The increased demands by scholars to integrate experiential learning, namely the pedagogy of service learning, into existing emergency management curricula has created an awareness as to the issue of its delivery to students (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kapucu & Connolly, 2013; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2009, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003). The study seeks to bring about an increased level of awareness that may lead to an agreed upon acceptance of the implementation of service learning to future emergency management higher education curricula.

### **Definitions of Terms**

*After-Action Review (AAR)* – reports that summarize and analyze performance in both exercises and actual events. The reports for exercises may also evaluate achievement of the selected exercise objectives and demonstration of the overall capabilities being exercised (Blanchard, 2008).

*All-Hazards Approach* – anticipating any disaster that could confront one’s organization or jurisdiction (Blanchard, 2007) in terms of a natural, technological, and intentional (including terrorism) danger or risk.

*Capstone* – name given to experiential learning projects, where students combine theory and practice for the benefit of an outside agency (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009).

*Cognitive Theory* – learning where individuals construct an understanding of the world around them, then experience discrepancies that are presented by the environment and individual compare those understandings to what they already know. There are three components to the theory: (a) schemas, (b) adaption, (c) stages of development (Piaget, 1952).

*Comprehensive Emergency Management (CEM)* – process of simultaneously planning for all four phases of all hazards that impinge on an individual, government, or organization (Perry& Lindell, 2007).

*Constructive Action* – significant endeavor that is systematically planned, implemented, assessed, and documented each semester at the work or internship site to demonstrate mastery of the MCNY curriculum. As a learning methodology, the Constructive Action process enables a student to develop a body of living case studies with each focused on a key area of purposeful education and performance. Simultaneously, the process carefully builds analytical, writing, and communication skills. As a practice methodology, Constructive Action helps the practitioner prepare comprehensive and realistic plans, act on them effectively, and assess the outcomes that have been achieved. As an assessment methodology, it provides an appropriate basis for evaluating the competence of professionals and professionals-in-training (MCNY, 2013).



*Disaster* – An event that produces greater losses than a community can handle, including casualties, property damage, and significant environmental damage (Lindell et al., 2007).

*Emergency Manager* – person who possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities to effectively manage a comprehensive a disaster recovery program (Perry & Lindell, 2007).

*Emergency Operations Center (EOC)* – physical location at which the coordination of information and resources to support domestic incident management activities normally takes place. An EOC may be a temporary facility, or it may be located in a more central or permanently established facility, perhaps at a higher level of organization within a jurisdiction. EOCs can be organized by major functional disciplines (e.g., fire, law enforcement, and medical services), by jurisdictions (e.g., federal, state, regional, county, city, tribal), or some combinations thereof (FEMA, 2014).

*Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)* – response blueprint with details on vulnerability, resources, and appropriate actions. The EOP addresses strategy, tactics, responsibilities, and resources. These are the pillars of a jurisdiction’s emergency operations system (Perry& Lindell, 2007).

*Geographic Information Systems (GIS)* – software package that automates and organizes many layers of different information, creating products that are much more sophisticated than single view maps. Maps are linked to databases that enable users to visualize, manipulate, analyze, and display spatial data. Decision makers can use this computer software as a tool to determine the best location for a new facility, analyzing structural or environmental damage, viewing similar events in a neighborhood to detect a

pattern(s). GIS is useful in all aspects of disaster management from mitigation to planning to response and recovery (New York City Office of Emergency Management, 2014).

*Hazard and Vulnerability Assessment (HVA)* – evaluation or estimation that identifies the dangers to which a jurisdiction is exposed, derives the probabilities for impacts, and forecasts consequences (Perry& Lindell, 2007).

*Incident Commander (IC)* – individual responsible for all incident activities, including the development of strategies and tactics and the ordering and release of resources. The IC has overall authority and responsibility for conducting incident operations and is responsible for the management of all incident operations at the incident site (FEMA, 2014).

*Incident Command System (ICS)* – standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide for the adoption of an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. The ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure, which is designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. The ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations (FEMA, 2014).

*Integrated Emergency Management System (IEMS)* – similarities between natural hazards preparedness and the civil defense using an all-hazards approach (Purpura, 2007).

*New York Police Department Shield (NYPD Shield)* – umbrella program for a series of current and future New York Police Department (NYPD) initiatives that pertain to private sector security and counterterrorism. This is a public private partnership based on information sharing. NYPD SHIELD addresses private sector business on both an industry-specific and a geographic basis. This enables the NYPD to best serve the unique needs of each constituency. NYPD provides training services to assist public and private sector entities in defending against terrorism (NYPD SHIELD, 2015).

*Pressure-Cooker Bombs* – improvised explosive device (IED) made by placing trinitrotoluene (TNT) or other explosives in a pressure cooker and attaching a blasting cap at the top of the pressure cooker. The 2010 Times Square car bombing attempt in New York City (failed to explode), and the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings depict examples in which these devices were used (Crowley, 2013).

*Progressive Education* – knowledge that students learn from their experiences (Dewey, 1938). As interpreted by Roberts (2003), progressive education is the placing of students into real-life situations that allow students to learn from these experiences to gain knowledge that can be applied to different situations (Roberts, 2003).

*Purpose-Centered Education* – This type of education is based on the premise that students achieve high academic standards when they use their knowledge and skills to achieve a meaningful and complex purpose that makes a positive difference in their own lives and in the lives of others (MCNY, 2013).

## Chapter Summary

The landscape of disastrous events continues to plague our society, requiring the need to properly prepare tomorrow's leaders in emergency management and in meeting complex and unknown challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is crucial today to insist on the specifics of emerging challenges to be sure they are effectively acknowledged and tackled (Lagadec, 2007). Using the framework provided by Dewey (1938a) in the form of experiential learning gives emergency management students a foundation to build upon. Dewey's work (1916) is relevant to select pedagogical models of service learning, such as service learning in emergency management and client-based service learning, since he became one of the most famous proponents of hands-on learning or experiential education. Service learning is one type of experiential learning that allows students to link their academic work with practical applications. Service learning allows students to integrate theory (academic perspectives) and emergency management practice through a facilitated individual or group project that takes them out of the classroom and into a community setting and enables them to comprehend the course material better (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bryer, 2011; Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Jelier & Clarke, 1999; Kapucu, 2011; Lambright & Lu, 2009; McEntire, 2002; Ostrander, 2004). As Alexander (2013) pointed out, emergency management is a hands-on activity because it requires a participatory approach to learning. With these calls to integrate theory with practice, experiential learning, in general—and service learning, in particular—plays a vital role in designing higher education curricula for the emergency management discipline (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013).

For this study, the theory of experience was used to examine how Dewey's (1938a) educational philosophy helped forward the progressive education movement. This movement spawned the development of experiential education programs and experiments overtime. Dewey (1938a) praised the experiential learning process as students would learn by doing and stressed the role of active learning as opposed to passive learning.

Kolb and Kolb's (2005) theory of experiential learning can be utilized as a framework for examining the process in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Kolb (1984), drawing on the various works of Dewey (1938), Lewin (1951), and Piaget (1970), developed a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. Kolb (1984) argued that learners receive experience through either a concrete experience or an abstract conceptualization, then they transform these experiences through a lens of either reflective observation or active experimentation. The lens produces four different styles of learners: (a) divergers, (b) accommodators, (c) assimilators, and (d) convergers. The accommodator style of learning is relevant to this particular study because students learn through a hands-on experience (Kolb, 1984).

Service learning as a pedagogical tool has gained significant attention within academia, especially within professional disciplines such as emergency management (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). As noted by Roberts (2003), Dewey (1938a) believed that students should be placed into real-life situations that can enable them to apply learned experiences later in different situations. For knowledge to be useable, it has to be acquired in a situation (Eyler, 2009). This is relevant to the practice of emergency

management since new situations require the linking of learned knowledge to multiple experiences and examples. In this way, these learned experiences and examples are not isolated from other experience and knowledge (Eyler, 2009). The literature presented supports the proposition that the integration of a service learning pedagogy into the emergency management programs enhances the preparation of emergency management professionals. Future research can be conducted among students who complete service-learning projects to measure the impact of service learning on student learning in emergency management higher education programs (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013).

The utilization of client-based service learning serves as the core for this research in examining how students can apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world projects (Pollard, 2012; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008). Scholars have noted that the incorporation of client-based service learning, also termed capstone projects, in college curricula has proven beneficial to both student and client (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008). Client-based service learning provides students with an understanding of what stakeholders require in the delivery of services that are provided to them (Pollard, 2012). Schachter and Schwartz (2009) found that capstone projects provide benefits to more than the student but to that of the client's needs as well as providing a valuable public service. McEntire (2002) noted that capstones in emergency management courses develop relevant specific skill sets such as risk assessments, hazard and vulnerability assessments (HVAs), and emergency operations plans (EOPs), which students acquire through service learning.

The purpose of this study was to gather perceptions from alumni, faculty, and clients in the field to ascertain what key knowledge, skills, and abilities are actually

needed in the field of emergency management. This study examines the extent to which client-based learning is a valuable resource for preparing emergency management professionals to respond to new demands in emergency and disaster management for the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment.

The findings of this study will contribute to a limited body of literature within the field of emergency management higher education programs at the master's level. Perceptions have been ascertained on the preparedness of emergency management professionals working in the area of client-based learning environments.

The research questions that have guided this study include:

1. What are the significant benefits that alumni perceive to have acquired as a result of taking part in a client-based service-learning project within an emergency management, higher education curriculum at Metropolitan College of New York?
2. How do client-based service-learning projects prepare emergency managers for the field in the 21st century?
3. How and to what extent does service learning create an intersection between the classroom and the practice of emergency management?

Finally, this study may prove significant in the higher education community of emergency management for a number of reasons. Current delivery practices at institutions of higher education housing both undergraduate and graduate programs in homeland security and emergency management have proven to be insufficient (McCreight 2009). This study also calls for the integration of service learning by scholars and practitioners, alike, who want to address this deficiency in redesigning future

curricula for emergency management higher education programs (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kapucu & Connolly, 2013; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003). The inclusion of a client-based service learning pedagogy to current emergency management curricula may provide institutions with a more practical approach to their current methods of delivery.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature consisting of the historical perspectives of the emergency management profession, the evolution of emergency management in higher education at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the evolving role of the emergency manager. The literature review focuses on Dewey's theory of experience (1938a) and Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning, which provides a theoretical framework for analyzing the literature. Through the theoretical lens of experiential learning, the researcher conducted the study using a qualitative methodology. Chapter 3 provides further details to the methodology, research context, participants, data collection, and data analysis for the study. Chapter 4 presents a detailed analysis of the results and findings. Chapter 5 discusses of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future research and practice.



## **Chapter 2: Review of the Literature**

### **Introduction and Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to gain insight in examining the extent to which experiential learning, through the use of client-based service learning, is a needed component in the preparedness of emergency management professionals upon graduating from a master's program. The findings of the study contribute to a limited body of literature within the field of emergency management higher education programs at the master's level. The results of the study may lend to the adapting of a similar approach of the integration of service learning into undergraduate emergency management programs as well.

The purpose of this chapter is to present an analysis and synthesis of the research literature for the utilization of client-based service learning within emergency management higher education graduate curricula. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) and others (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003) discovered that the integration of service learning plays a vital role in addressing the deficiency in current educational practices offered to emergency management students within institutions of higher learning. The foundation emergency management professionals rely on is their training and education in which practices are delivered in a competent fashion that have proven insufficient to date (Brown, 2015; McCreight, 2014). These calls for the integration of a service learning component within

emergency management curricula in higher education points to additional research and action.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion on the historical perspectives of emergency management, the evolution of emergency management in higher education at the onset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and the evolving role of the emergency manager. A major discussion on Dewey's (1938a) theory of experience and a discussion of his theory by his critics follows. Dewey provided a framework in examining the progression and application toward the pedagogy of service learning followed by several studies (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray, Heneghan Ondaatje, Fricker, & Geschwind (2000); Lambright & Lu, 2009). Dewey's (1938a) theory of experience is recognized as the foundation for the development of service learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

The chapter continues with a brief discussion on service learning as a conceptual framework based on Dewey's (1938a) theory of experience, along with a key component of this framework known as reflection. Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning follows by providing a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. A brief discussion on the various parts of the brain and their respective functions related to how people acquire knowledge is examined (Duman, 2010; Lumsdaine & Lumsdaine, 1995; Zull, 2002). Kolb (1984) used the framework from ELT to develop an instrument for measuring various learning styles, which he identified as the Learning Style Inventory (LSI). This foundation of Kolb's (1984) study in experiential learning is discussed in detail by depicting the process of learning. A study conducted by Massey et al. (2011) is examined by identifying the learning styles of undergraduate students in social work at Norfolk State University.

Students in this study were required to take Kolb's LSI in order to identify their dominant learning styles (Massey et al., 2011). The final conceptual framework discussed in this chapter is the utilization of the pedagogy of service learning in its application to emergency management curricula (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). The researchers analyzed the results taken from a national study to promote a greater understanding of how service learning is used in emergency management programs.

Given the limited literature on service learning applications within Masters of Public Administration (MPA) programs (Lambright & Lu, 2009) and emergency management curricula specifically, Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) conducted a study indicating the inclusion of this pedagogy within current academic practices. Dewey's theory of experience (1938a) and Kolb's theory of experiential learning (1984) provides the basis for these conceptual frameworks that have evolved into client-based service learning (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprague & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

The analysis and synthesis of this literature revealed that key skills and competencies can be achieved with carefully designed service-learning projects for curricula in emergency management higher education programs. Finally, this chapter demonstrates and supports the need for continued research in this area, as evidenced by numerous researchers (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kapucu & Connolly, 2013; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Milet, 2003).

**Historical perspectives of emergency management.** Historically, emergency management in the United States has had little time to stabilize because it often undergoes severe alterations at not only the individual jurisdiction or state level but also

with each successive presidential administration or directors at the federal level, whose level of support helps determine the field's best practices for a given period of time (Grist, 2007). The origins of emergency management in the United States are rooted in the establishment of the Office of Civil Defense in May 1941 (Grist, 2007). Prior to the onset of World War II, private voluntary agencies, such as the American National Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and many others, bore the primary responsibility of disaster relief, and state and local governments coped as best they could with disaster impacts (Kreps, 1990). Americans during this time viewed disasters as all powerful and uncontrollable natural phenomena, and disaster response was limited to dealing with the aftermath of earthquakes, hurricanes, and other powerful weather systems (Roberts, Ward & Wamsley, 2012). During the 1950s, federal support for civil defense activities was vested in the Federal Civil Defense Administration (FCDA), an organization with minimal staff and financial resources and whose main role was to provide technical assistance (Haddow, Bullock, & Coppola, 2014). Only civil defense directors at the state and local levels of government became the first recognized face of emergency management in the United States (Haddow et al., 2014). In response to specific major natural disasters, such as Hurricane Betsy (1965) and Hurricane Camille (1969), emergency management actually began to emerge as a separate concern of the government (Waugh, 2000).

The overhaul from population protection in the Civil Defense era (during the two world wars and the ensuing Cold War), to an all-hazards approach has transformed the emergency management profession (Dilling, 2009). In 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed Executive Order 12127, which merged many separate disaster-related agencies

into a new Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (Exec. Order 12127, 1979). John Macy became FEMA's first director, focusing his efforts on emphasizing the similarities between natural hazards preparedness and civil defense, by developing a new concept called the *integrated emergency management system* (IEMS) (Haddow et al., 2014). This system was an all-hazards approach that included direction, control, and warning as functions common to all emergencies from minor events to major events (Purpura, 2007). The establishment of FEMA created responsibilities over a wide range of functions, including emergency preparedness, civil defense, disaster relief, emergency communications, flood and crime insurance, fire prevention, and continuity of government (Bea, 2012). FEMA was created on April 1, 1979, and consisted of four main components: the Federal Disaster Assistance Administration and the Federal Insurance Administration (FIA), both transferred from Housing and Urban Development (HUD); the Defense Civil Preparedness Agency, transferred from the Department of Defense; and the U.S. Fire Administration, which was transferred from the Department of Commerce (Exec. Order 12127, 1979). From its inception, FEMA has worked with a host of agencies and organizations, including state and local emergency management agencies, the American Red Cross and other voluntary agencies, and various federal agencies that have statutory authority for emergency management duties or have people or resources for response and recovery operations (Sylves, 2012).

During the closing decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, emergency management was shaped by what state and local governments did or did not do (Dymon & Platt, 1999). Unfortunately, assistance to a given community was never guaranteed as many businesses and property owners faced financial ruin (Grist, 2007). Despite mediocre

results during its first dozen years, especially in its response to Hurricane Andrew in 1992, FEMA's ability to manage domestic emergencies has increased with experience (Carafano & Weitz, 2005). The period between 1993 and 2000 was considered the golden years for FEMA (Sylves, 2012). FEMA's performance and image had improved to such an extent that both the public and many members of Congress, whether Democrat or Republican, came to hold a positive image of the agency (Daniels & Clark-Daniels, 2000). By 2001, state and local governments knew they could count on federal assistance to pay for debris removal, repair, restoration, or replacement of public facilities, community disaster loans to cover shortfalls in local tax revenue owing to a disaster and coverage of a major share of their emergency response costs (Platt, 1999).

The Clinton Administration raised the FEMA director position to a cabinet-level position (Grist, 2007) while providing a "multi-actor" environment of networking among various entities. The growth in political support for relief efforts and increased professionalism in emergency management, together, created an environment where the federal government's role expanded, and the political and public perception of a professionally run, competent federal system began to emerge (Rubin & PERI, 2007). This type of positive publicity and concomitant presidential promotion for FEMA enticed officials from several nations to seek advice on how their nations could form or improve their own emergency management (Sylves, 2012).

An era of networking became short-lived as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 led to massive organizational changes and programmatic shifts in emergency management (Haddow et al., 2014). "A new conceptual framework emerged – the homeland security paradigm" (Miraglia, 2013, p. 15). Defining this new programmatic

shift, McEntire (2005), Miraglia (2013), and Waugh and Streib (2006) noted that homeland security deals exclusively with terrorism and discounts America's ability to provide for an all-hazards approach. The newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in 2002 led to FEMA being quickly degraded from its cabinet-level agency to a directorate within this new agency (Birkland, 2009; Harrald, 2012). The Homeland Security Act of 2002 transferred most FEMA "functions, personnel, assets, and liabilities" (Homeland Security Act, 2002a, p. 2213) to the Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate of the new department (Homeland Security Act, 2002a). The most noteworthy exception was that the Office of Domestic Preparedness was transferred from the Department of Justice to the new DHS Border and Transportation Security Directorate to assume the terrorism-related training and preparedness responsibilities previously handled by FEMA's Office of National Preparedness (Homeland Security Act, 2002b). As a result of this reorganization, FEMA lost much of its bureaucratic and operational strength (Harrald, 2012). Cwaik (2009) noted that these efforts derailed emergency management's ability to professionalize the field at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

*The evolution of emergency management in higher education at the onset of the 21st century.* In 1992, Ms. Kay Goss was appointed by President Bill Clinton to serve as Associate FEMA Director of Preparedness who, in turn, designated Dr. Wayne Blanchard, Ph.D. (in 1994) to head the FEMA Emergency Management Institute (EMI) in Emmitsburg, MD (Marks, 2005). During Blanchard's tenure, he was instrumental in developing courses for universities and colleges to utilize, including curriculum, textbooks, and other resources (Blanchard, 2008). Since 1994, FEMA created the Higher

Education Program (Blanchard, 2008), which currently aligns higher education standards and curriculum with the needs demanded by the field (Stewart & Vocino, 2013). There have been a total of 17 higher education conferences, as of this writing, serving colleges and universities, emergency management professionals, and stakeholder organizations in creating an emergency management system that is resilient (FEMA, 2015).

According to the FEMA EMI (2015), there are 294 college emergency management programs: 72 certificate, diploma, focus-area, and minors; 54 associate degrees; 67 bachelor degrees; 92 masters-level programs; and nine doctoral-level programs. New legislation, policies, and practices are often the result of “focusing events” such as disasters (Tierney, 2005, p.1). The most significant change in the emergency management profession has been the increase in the number of academic degree programs in responding to national priorities, such as the War on Terror and catastrophic natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina (Stewart & Vocino, 2013). Many emergency management degree programs were created so rapidly that discrepancies in their quality and rigor were being questioned (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Stewart & Vocino, 2013).

Stewart and Vocino (2013) pointed out that the first onset of the growth for emergency management programs occurred in 1995 following the Oklahoma City bombing through the period of 9/11 in 2001 and by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This evolving, ungoverned environment has led to questionable student delivery practices in higher education including professional practices taking place in the field (Rollins & Rowan, 2007). Proper student outcomes, standardization of curriculum, industry



standards, and the need for accreditation and guidance remain unanswered by both academia and government (Stewart & Vocino, 2013).

*The evolving role of the emergency manager.* Each disaster is unique, often requiring a wide array of resources and a network of agencies working together to meet the needs of a community. The coordinator of all organizations, whether governmental, private sector, or nongovernmental, brought to the forefront the role of an emergency manager in giving the position authority and responsibility to ensure these entities worked together in mitigating a situation (Pittman, 2011). The role of this profession was often an additional responsibility assigned to fire chiefs, police chiefs, or experienced retirees from emergency services departments (Petak, 1985; Phelan, 2008). In some jurisdictions, the early positions in the new emergency management agencies were filled with civil defense directors who worked on a part-time basis or were volunteers (Grist, 2007). “Emergency managers are the conductors of the orchestra, they are not the musicians” (Glassey, 2012, p. 27). In other words, the first responders and partner agencies are the workers and the emergency manager is the one who coordinates all of the actions of the workers (Glassey, 2012).

Emergency managers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are required to have a core knowledge that reaches beyond incident response because it must also include the other phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, and recovery (Thomas & Mileti, 2003). According to Blanchard (2007), an emergency manager provides leadership within a jurisdiction or organization on the topics of hazards, disasters, and what to do about them. This position requires one to master the decision making process and understand the consequences of that decision (Department of the Army, 2012). The emergency

manager takes on the role of a program director who develops and facilitates a community strategy for managing its risks and oversees its implementation (Canton, 2007).

The emergency manager of today is required to orchestrate the four phases of emergency management through the coordination of resources between government entities and private organizations in order to achieve success. Cwaik (2009) argued that the managerial function of emergency management has historically received sporadic coverage from researchers and scholars. Petak (1985) noted an emergency manager is an organizational leader who manages the various conflicts that arise from the different philosophies and territorial hierarchies while facilitating current policies, plans, and programs. Political and management skills have become critical, as candidates for state, local, and private emergency management positions are now being judged on their training and experience rather than on their relationship to the community's political leadership (Haddow et al., 2014).

### **Review of the Literature**

**Client-based service learning.** Degree programs in public administration and public policy often require students to gain insight by working on practicum projects with client organizations (Sprague & Hu, 2015). Many schools associated with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration and Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management build into the curricular experiential learning models like capstone programs (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprague & Hu, 2015).

Metropolitan College of New York utilizes an experiential learning model, termed Constructive Action, which follows the same fundamentals of a client-based or capstone

project (MCNY, 2013). Service learning in the form of practicum projects, capstones, and client-based service learning can be applied to public administration curricula (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprague & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

Employers are increasingly seeking new university graduates with project management skills and competencies (Cooke & Williams, 2004; Keys 2003; Tynjälä et al., 2010). In learning project management skills, Pollard (2012) argued that students learn through different types techniques: (a) instructor-centered education, (b) learner centered education, and (c) project-based learning. Whitaker and Berner (2004) believed the value of MPA public service team projects develop student research and management skills. Smith (2005) discussed how students taking part in capstone projects are likely to experience many value conflicts and ethical dilemmas that they will face upon graduation. Client-based service learning has proven to benefit students after graduation by helping with their job searches, informing their career paths, and honing learned skills that they can apply to their craft (Sprague & Percy, 2014).

Much of the literature has focused largely on the impact of students working on practicum projects with client organizations (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Gray et al., 2000). Sprague and Hu (2015) examined the impact of participating client organizations that participated in the Public Policy Practicum Program at Stanford University from 2007-2013. The researchers conducted an online survey to capture perspectives of participating client organizations between 2007 and 2013. During this time period, 49 practicum projects were conducted for 37 different organizations. Three client contacts worked on more than one practicum project within the organization, but they were asked to fill out a separate survey for each project. Clients received the survey

upon completion of the project between the fall of 2011-2013. In order to measure the impact the project had on the respondents, follow-up emails were sent twice, and clients were sent surveys at least four months after project completion. Among the 49 project contacts, 42 participated in the survey, for a total response rate of 86%.

Sprague and Hu (2015) conducted a mixed-methods study to gain insight into how clients benefited from practicum and team programs. The quantitative portion of the study was inspired by Schachter and Schwartz (2009). The researchers used a 30-question survey consisting of questions about the impact of the practicum project and the client's overall experience with the practicum team and program. Most closed-ended questions used a 5-point Likert scale. These rankings were used to compute mean ratings and the distribution of responses.

A total of 81% of the respondents reported that that the practicum projects were quite helpful to their organization, providing a rating of 4.0 and above. A mean rating of 4.2 was given in this area. Some clients noted that students provided them with new ideas and different perspectives in addressing organizational issues. The clients identified the effects of the students' recommendations and the projects' overall impact on their organizations and other organizations. Of the respondents, 71% reported that the students provided their organizations with specific recommendations. In the study, some nonprofit organizations asked the students to evaluate state policies and make policy recommendations for which the organizations could advocate. The research revealed the degree in which student recommendations were implemented by the clients. Over 80% of the clients who received recommendations implemented them to some extent. A total of 10% of the clients fully implemented student recommendations. A mean rating of 4.2.

was revealed by those clients who implemented the recommendations students made that they found helpful. A rating of 5.0 was assessed by every respondent who indicated students were helpful and that they fully implemented their recommendations (Sprague & Hu, 2015).

Sprague and Hu (2015) conducted a qualitative analysis of the clients' free-response answers. From the open-ended responses to questions the researchers coded, they wanted to know which component(s) the clients found most helpful. The respondents were split somewhat evenly among identifying just one component (33%), two components (31%), or all three components (36%). The percent of respondents who identified a component as the most helpful or one of the most helpful was 62% for information gathering, 67% for background research, and 74% for analysis. Among the respondents who identified just one component as most helpful, 57% indicated *analysis*, 29% *background research*, and 14% specified *information gathering*. Although more clients identified the analysis component as the most useful, most respondents found the background research and information gathering components to be quite helpful as well (Sprague & Hu, 2015).

Sprague and Hu (2015) found that many clients reported that the students' work affected their existing plans and policies by reinforcing them (37%) or leading them to modify them (12%). Respondents stated practicum projects also led them to consider new plans and policies (34%) and 20% decided to implement them. Over half of the clients indicated that they used internal or other resources to follow up on, or complement, the students' work. In addition, 61% of clients reported that they shared the students' work with other organizations. Respondents who shared students' work shared that 41%

expected that the projects did have an impact on other organizations, 7% thought they did not, and 52% were unsure (Sprague & Hu, 2015).

Sprague and Hu (2015) identified four course design developments that substantially contributed to the high levels of satisfaction of the clients surveyed. Findings revealed that consulting-based course design, the setup of appropriate projects, close faculty involvement, and continuous feedback from client organizations were factors to consider in providing client satisfaction.

New York University's Robert E Wagner Graduate School of Public Service is among several graduate schools that integrate the capstone model into all of their MPA and Master of Urban Planning (MUP) programs as a final event. Students are enrolled into a capstone section with a faculty member and assigned a team-based project that addresses a real concern for a local, national, or international government or nonprofit agency (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). In an effort to assess the success of client-based capstone projects from a client's perspective, a post-project survey was administered to 57 client organizations that took part in NYU Wagner's Capstone project for the 2006-2007 academic year. A 24-item survey was sent to the client project liaisons who worked with the NYU Wagner project teams. A total of 278 students from the 304 students (91%) participated in a client-based capstone project for 2006-2007 academic year. A total of 42 out of 55 client agencies responded to the survey for a total response rate of 74%. The items were assessed using a 5-point Likert scale with the top rating of 5 indicating the most positive assessment, 3 representing neutral, or somewhat helpful appraisals, and the lowest rating of 1 represented the most negative assessment. Participants were given the opportunity to add comments and respond to several open-ended questions regarding the

lasting impact of the capstone project, overall satisfaction, and suggestions for improvement of the program (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009).

In this study, Schachter & Schwartz (2009) discovered that client-based service-learning projects, such as capstone projects, provide benefits to more than the student but to that of the client's needs, as well as providing a valuable public service. The researchers' findings revealed that clients indicated high overall satisfaction with the capstone program with a mean rating of 4.2 (N = 41; all rating scales up to 5.0), and rated the helpfulness of the capstone projects to their organizations with a mean rating of 3.9 (N = 42). The three primary variables of interest, which included the respondents' ratings of helpfulness to their organization, their assessment of the capstone projects' lasting impact, and overall satisfaction, were all significantly and positively correlated to one another. Clients' comments reflected that these projects provided them with an outside perspective that was helpful in confirming that they were on the right track in providing best practices for their organization (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009).

While findings from these studies show promise for client-based learning, scholars point to its limitations. For example, students complain that there is a lack of response from clients when requesting information in developing an agreed upon product (Waldner & Hunter, 2008). Similarly, students taking part in a client-based service-learning project in a distance-learning format find collaboration with the client and schedule conflicts an issue in the development of the product for the client (Killian, 2004). Most practicum projects with client organizations often prove successful, but scholars note clients have reported that students are sometimes unprepared, unreliable, unprofessional, and disinterested (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Vernon & Ward 1999; Worrall,

2007). This lack of focus may be attributed to student obligations to their academic calendar and short-term commitments (Vernon & Ward 1999; Worrall, 2007). University faculty do not always communicate sufficiently with partner organizations to inquire if client's needs and interests are being met (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Campbell & Lambright, 2011; Gazley, Bennett, & Littlepage, 2013; Gelmon, Holland, Seifer, Shinnamon, & Connors, 1998; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Vernon & Ward, 1999; Worrall, 2007).

Scholars have noted that the use of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) can remedy many of these types of issues between student and client expectations (Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Imperial, Perry, & Katula, 2007). These MOUs can also be applied to a compressed time-format class that requires a client-based service-learning project (Waldner & Hunter, 2008). A number of Masters in Public Administration practicum programs have used a publicized online request-for-proposal process in providing information and guidelines for their perspective clients (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprague & Hu, 2015). These proposed guidelines, when presented, can increase clarity among all stakeholders in client-based service-learning and capstone projects (Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Imperial et al., 2007; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprague & Hu, 2015).

**Dewey's theory of experience.** Dewey (1938a) is considered by many scholars as being the father of experiential learning during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). Dewey's education philosophy helped advance the progressive education movement in his work, *Experience and Education* (1938a), which spawned the development of experiential education. As cited in Kolb & Kolb, (2005), Dewey (1938a) argued that while traditional education had little need for theory given that practice is



determined by tradition, the new experiential approach to education needed a sound theory of experience to guide its conduct. Traditional education concerns itself in the memorization of a set of facts and performing automatic drills that do not constitute learning (Dewey, 1938a). Dewey (1938c) argued that students' power of judgment becomes impeded through this process as the lack of engagement causes students to associate learning with boredom. Roberts (2003) supported Dewey's argument that learners are unable to make a connection between course content and real-life situations within the traditional educational setting.

Dewey (1938c) believed students would not learn essential problem-solving skills if they had the answers to a set of given problems. Traditional education does not facilitate critical thinking skills (Dewey, 1910) that are essential in the fields of emergency management and homeland security (Boyne, 2012; Kiltz, 2009;). Critical thinking is essentially an active process in which one thinks things through by him- or herself, raise questions, finds relevant information, and solve problems on one's own (Dewey, 1910). Critical thinking needs to be fostered through decisive methods of instruction, so students can understand not only how to do things, but why they work the way they do, and what ethical principles are at stake as they engage in real-world activity (Moore, 2010). The acquisition of knowledge through traditional education does not guarantee that students will be able to apply learned skills in different situations (Roberts, 2003). For Dewey (1938a), an experience could only be educative if students go out into the real-world.

The principles of *progressive education*, compared with *traditional education* emphasize individuality (Dewey, 1938). Progressive education, or experiential learning,

provides for learning from the opportunities of the present as opposed to learning for a remote future (Roberts, 2003). Progressive education provides for a considerable amount of student-led activities, which is opposed to traditional education (Dewey, 1938). Dewey's theory of experience organizes content around real-life situations that can be applied to any area of knowledge (Roberts, 2003). As noted by Ryan (1995), Dewey believed that the point of education is to enhance one's experience and one's capacity for experience because this concept is not exactly transparent.

Dewey (1938) argued that all experiences are not educative. Roberts (2003) pointed out that Dewey used the term *mis-educative* to inform us that some experiences may distort the growth of future experience. These mis-educative experiences may limit one's capacity to act in a new situation or to obtain a richer experience (Dewey, 1938). Dewey believed "everything depends on the quality of the experience which is had" (1938, p. 27). Dewey (1938a) proposed that civilized people learn from their experience to influence the condition under which future experiences are had. Roberts (2003) noted that the quality of an experience is the most important component of Dewey's theory.

For an experience to be educative, Dewey (1938b) proposed two principles, which formed the core of his philosophy of experience: the principle of continuity and the principle of interaction. The principle of continuity states that all experience occurs along an experiential continuum in which experiences build on previous experiences that need to be directed by a teacher (Dewey, 1938). Dewey (1938) believed that it is the responsibility of the educator to provide the kind of experiences students receive. Roberts (2003) pointed out that selecting the correct experiences and surroundings that are conducive to students is key to experiential learning. Dewey (1938) believed that

instructors should consider subject matter, methods of instruction, the discipline, available materials, and the social organization of the institution when planning experiences for their students. The teacher aids the student in shaping and directing these experiences to fit the continuum (Dewey, 1938b).

The principles of continuity and interaction intersect and unite forming the “longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience” (Dewey, 1938b, p. 44). The principle of continuity provides the educator with assessing the educative value received from an experience (Giles, 1987). The principle of interaction combines one’s internal and objective aspects of an experience which interact to form a situation (Dewey, 1938b). This situation becomes an instrument of understanding for the student so he or she can deal effectively with future situations. These two principles, in forming this instrument, lead to actual knowledge and skills to deal with future experiences (Dewey, 1938). A student learns as a result of the transaction between the learner and the environment (Shumer et al., 1993). Giles and Eyler (1994) pointed out that the acquisition and application of knowledge is dependent on the context of a given interaction in a situation. The context is the key element that provides the learner with knowledge that is available through recall and application, which has been acquired through a situation (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Knowledge that is not obtained in this manner is segregated from experience and will not be available for transfer to new experiences (Giles & Eyler, 1994).

Dewey (1938a) praised the experiential learning process through which students learn by doing, and stressed the role of active learning as opposed to passive learning. Dewey’s work underpins the work of scholars in experiential learning going forward

(Astin et al., 2000; Eyer & Giles, 1999; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kolb, 1984; Lambright & Lu, 2009).

***Critics of Dewey's theory of experience.*** In relation to the teacher's role in education, opponents of Dewey's experiential learning process assert that student-led activities are chaotic and counterproductive to education (Roberts, 2003). Dewey (1938a) countered this argument by stating that free activity is very beneficial to student learning. Dewey's biggest critic was Robert Maynard Hutchins who became the president at the Chicago School in 1929 (Ryan, 1995). Dewey and Hutchins were both concerned with educating the whole person, but they differed in how that should occur (Hutchins, 1952). As cited by Johnston (2011), Hutchins's pleas for higher education were geared toward autonomy and control by faculty and administration, with more attention toward liberal arts and sciences, and less toward professional and vocational education. Hutchins (1952) believed that educating a person was an intellectual activity and a matter of studying the classics of Western civilization. Dewey (1938a) argued that traditional education had little need for theory and its practice was determined by tradition, therefore, the new experiential approach to education needed a sound theory of experience to guide its conduct (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). The principles of progressive education, compared with traditional education, emphasize individuality (Dewey, 1938). Furthermore, Dewey believed that "Everything depends upon the quality of the experience which is had" (Dewey, 1938c, p. 27).

**Service learning.** Gray et al. (2000) conducted a comprehensive assessment of the value of service learning through a grant awarded by Learn and Serve America, Higher Education (LSAHE, 1995). LSAHE is a national, service program administered

by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNS) that promotes service learning (CNS, 2014). The study focused on CNS's three broad goals for LSAHE: (a) to engage students in meeting community needs; (b) to enhance students' academic learning, civic responsibility, and life skills development; and (c) to promote institutional support for service. CNS established four priority areas of service students could take part in: education, human needs, public safety, and environment.

Gray et al. (2000) conducted a three-year longitudinal mixed-methods study. Between 1995 and 1997, the researchers examined the impact service learning had on students who participated in service-learning courses. Data for this study was gathered from multiple sources: 930 Learn and Serve America, LSAHE institutions (1995-1997); 847 community organizations (1995-1996); and 3492 students. The Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and RAND conducted three surveys over a three-year period then a final study in 1997. Two surveys of staff in community organizations, consisting of schools, agencies, or hospitals, in which students volunteered as part of a college- or university-based Learn and Serve program were conducted. Respondents rated the skills and contributions of college student volunteers. Over 400 organizations responded to each survey, producing a response rate of 66%. An annual survey of program directors in schools with LSAHE grants or sub-grants was conducted in the spring. Response rates ranged from 72% to 78%, and data were collected from over 260 programs each year.

The quantitative results revealed that between 1995 and 1997, there was an increase of 3,000 service-learning courses offered. In addition, two thirds of the LSAHE programs requested technical assistance from CNS. Four out of five institutional respondents involved students in direct community service. An average of 60 students per

program participated in course-based service learning and 10 students per program participated in co-curricular service learning for an average of 12 weeks a semester. Over 75% of the LSAHE grantee respondents created new service-learning courses, while a third of the respondent institutions added service activities to their new student orientation programs during 1995-1997.

A final survey for students was conducted in the spring 1997 and compared 725 service-learning students to 597 non-service-learning students. A key finding indicated that students who reported strong effects of service on their development were more likely than others to report that course content was linked to their service experiences. The service-learning group was found to have had slightly higher grade point averages, and they were more satisfied with their courses in comparison to students in the non-service-learning group.

The qualitative portion of the study consisted of site visits conducted by RAND to over 30 LSAHE programs. These visits included extensive interviews with faculty, staff, administrators, and students, and the researchers observed service-learning classes and also observed students engaged in volunteer work in community settings. About two-thirds of these visits were conducted jointly with faculty and graduate students from HERI at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The results of the qualitative portion of the study indicated that focus group interviews consisting of community organizations gave high marks to student volunteers from LSAHE institutions. These students were perceived as being more effective in comparison to other volunteer students. Of the community respondents, 90% indicated that the benefits of working with student volunteers outweighed the costs.

The overall findings of the study revealed that student satisfaction was higher with service-learning courses compared to traditional, non-service courses. Students in the service-learning classes reported improvements in life skills and expected future community involvement. However, they did not believe that either their academic skills or professional skills were important to career preparation or were increased through service learning. Different approaches yielded different outcomes because service-learning practices are not created equal. For example, courses applying constructs to students' service-learning experiences are notably stronger than those that just discuss service in the classroom. The investigators of the study reported no negative effects of service learning and no evidence that service learning courses are less demanding than traditional, non-service courses. Gray et al. (2000) noted that service-learning courses demand more time from students than the traditional courses did. Service-learning courses were also found to involve more writing than that of traditional courses because a reflection component may have been applied.

Additional findings by Gray et al. (2000) provided valuable direction for service-learning course and program development. The study indicated two noteworthy findings: (a) participation in service learning is positively associated with the gains in students' civic and interpersonal skills, and (b) the quality of the course does make a difference. These findings support both the concept and substance of best practices in service learning (Gray et al., 2000).

In contrast to Gray et al. (2000), other scholars conducted multi-institutional studies that have yielded positive findings, particularly in the domain of student learning and academic development (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999). In Eyler and Giles's

(1999) study, they assessed the impact of service learning and alternative models of service learning on college students. They presented national survey data in a longitudinal study combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. The data sets consisted of pre- and post-semester surveys and interviews of about 1,500 undergraduate college students (1,100 participated in service learning and 400 did not) from 20 colleges and universities across the United States; in-depth pre- and post-semester problem-solving interviews with 66 students from six colleges and universities; and in-depth interviews of 65 college students from six other institutions that explored student views of the nature of reflection in service learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The educational institutions were selected for this study based on their diverse geographical locations and the variety of service-learning activities they offered to students. The sample size of higher education institutions consisted of six private universities, five small liberal arts colleges, and eight public universities. Five institutions were located in the East, six in the Midwest, three in the South, and five in the West.

Quantitative data for the study was analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression with controls for age, gender, minority status, family income, and other community service during college. The qualitative data was analyzed through interviews that were transcribed and scored. Coding was utilized to identify themes that emerged from the study.

Findings from the first analysis of the study revealed that service learning had a positive impact on the following outcomes: personal development, social responsibility, interpersonal skills, tolerance and stereotyping, learning, and application of learning. The findings of the second analysis, using only the service-learning sample of 1,100 students,



revealed that students enrolled in courses where service learning was well integrated also demonstrated a greater ability to understand and apply knowledge than did students who took courses where service learning was absent or service learning was not well integrated. The researchers found that integration is, in part, based on the frequency of reflection opportunities. Reflection allows students the ability to make the connection between the service experience and course material through reflective opportunities (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Astin et al. (2000) conducted a mixed-methods study that had three parts: (a) a longitudinal study conducted on 22,000 undergraduate students on college campuses that included a comparative analysis of students who volunteered in three types of settings, and the researchers compared variables such as academic outcomes, efficacy, leadership, career plans, and plans to participate in further service after college; (b) a subset of the same group which studied different variables such as standardized test scores and other measurements; and (c) the qualitative portion of the study, which was conducted during the fall 1998 and winter 1999 quarters, involved in-depth case studies of service learning on three different college campuses: UCLA, Pepperdine University, and the University of Richmond. A minimum of five interviews and focus groups were held at each campus and included classroom observations.

The researchers used the theory of student involvement (Astin, 1984) and standpoint theory (Harding, 1991) as lenses to interpret service learning. The theory of student involvement was used to determine the quality and quantity of the students' academic and personal development during the academic experience (Astin, 1984). The researchers found that the effectiveness of service learning is based on a combination of

forms of involvement: academic involvement, involvement with people at the service site, student-student and student-faculty involvement, student discussions facilitated by faculty, and reflection. Standpoint theory enables students and faculty to understand the perspective of members of the service site (Astin et al., 2000). Standpoint theory, coupled with service learning as a pedagogical tool, allows students to develop empathy and become conscientious of people's perspectives within the community they are serving.

The findings of the study indicate the importance of reflection in making sense of theory, showed that theory and practice are mutually reinforcing, identified a shift from teaching to learning, showed the complex nature of learning interwoven with personal experiences, and advised on the placement of service learning in curriculum (Astin et al., 2000). In the study, service-learning courses were found to be more structured than students taking part in non-service learning courses. The researchers found students enrolled in the service-learning courses improved and achieved more in areas such as improvement in academic performance; writing and critical thinking skills; greater commitment to selected values, especially activism and promotion of racial understanding; increased self-efficacy; taking on leadership roles; and seeking a service-oriented career (Astin et al., 2000; Permaul, 2009).

An important factor worth noting in this study was that a student's degree of interest in a given subject area acted as a catalyst in providing a positive result from a service-learning experience (Astin et al., 2000). Linking a person's experienced knowledge to their educational interest kindles intrinsic motivation and increases learning effectiveness (Hunt, 1987, 1992).

Many of the positive outcomes reported in Astin et al. (2000) correspond closely with the outcomes reported in previous service-learning research by Eyler and Giles (1999). Findings from both studies revealed service learning had positive impacts on the following outcomes: learning, personal development, reflection, and interpersonal skills. Astin et al. (2000) and Eyler and Giles (1999) believed the use of written and oral reflection can be used in courses to integrate service with learning.

Hatcher, Bringle, and Muthiah (2004) reported similar findings from their study, which consisted of 471 undergraduate students enrolled in 17 service-learning classes from nine college campuses. Hatcher et al. were interested in answering the following two questions: Can the quality of the learning environment in service-learning classes be measured? Are there aspects of service-learning classes that are related to the variability in quality?

Results from a two-part quantitative survey indicated that the degree of integration of academic content with service learning and the nature of the reflection activities positively related to course quality. Part one of the study revealed that the quality of the learning environment of a service-learning course was measured based on combined items: active learning, course satisfaction, faculty interaction, peer interaction, perceived learning, and personal relevance of the course. Positive student feedback, based on the appraisal received on these components, were found to reflect the whole quality of the learning environment. Part two of the study assessed the qualities of the reflection activities within the studied service-learning courses. Hatcher et al. (2004) found three characteristics of reflection associated with a good learning environment: (a) reflection

activities that clarify personal values, (b) reflection activities that are part of the course, and (c) reflection activities that are structured with clear guidelines and directions.

The existing body of research on the various factors that influence educational outcomes of service learning is fragmented (Lambright & Lu, 2009). Most studies, with few exceptions, such as Mabry (1998) and Eyler & Giles (1999), tend to focus only on a few aspects of project structure or students' characteristics that affect service-learning outcomes (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Conrad & Hedin 1982; Fredericksen, 2000; Hatcher et al., 2004; Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Lima, 2005; Scales, Roehlkepartain, Neal, Kielsmaier, & Benson, 2006). In addressing the gap in this area of empirical research, Lambright and Lu (2009) conducted a study to present a clearer picture of the impact that a variety of factors can have on educational outcomes of service-learning projects.

Lambright and Lu (2009) collected data from seven MPA courses that were taught during the spring 2007 semester at a state university. All students assigned to these courses were required to participate in a service-learning project. The study examined a variety of factors that influence the effectiveness a service-learning project can have on achieving learning objectives. The research questions focused on two broad areas that dealt with the potential influence service learning has on educational outcomes. The first focus of the study was on the structure of the service-learning project itself. This led to the first research question: Are certain structures used for organizing service-learning projects more effective at achieving learning objectives than other structures? The second focus of the study examined the relationship between student characteristics and educational outcomes of service-learning projects, which led to the second research question: Do certain groups of students learn more from participating in service-learning

projects than other groups of students do? The issue of group dynamics in achieving learning objectives was examined.

This quantitative study was designed to gather qualitative data using both open- and close-ended questions. From the initial sample size of 88 students enrolled in these courses, 78 students completed the survey, providing the researchers with a response rate of 88.6%. The instructors teaching these seven courses completed a brief survey about the service-learning project. The survey concentrated heavily on the aspect of project structure within the service-learning project. Several variables were measured by the students, which included topics of: instructor guidance, project integration with course material, in-class time for reflection, the amount of time spent on the project, the student's influence over the direction of the project, and whether the project involved group activities (Lambright & Lu, 2009).

The survey data for Lambright and Lu (2009) study was analyzed by using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and multiple regression. The ANOVA analysis revealed that several project structures are associated with significant differences in educational outcomes. The findings of the study indicated that students who worked in groups gave their service-learning project a lower educational effectiveness rating compared to students who did not participate in group activities. Students who worked in groups were found to have significant differences in student educational effectiveness based on how well they perceived their group functioning as a team. This finding of how group dynamics influence service-learning projects that rely heavily on group work remains a challenge to instructors when selecting the composition of the groups at the onset of the project. Lambright and Lu (2009) cautioned instructors to monitor group cohesion

throughout the service-learning project. The ANOVA and multivariate analyses indicated that most student characteristics do not impact the educational outcomes of service learning. Lambright and Lu (2009) pointed out that this finding may be unique to MPA programs. These researchers believed that since the students were strongly committed to public service, they may have been more receptive to service learning than other types of graduate students. A final consideration to note from the study is the students' capacity to perform the actual service-learning project. Given that these projects might have been labor intensive and time sensitive, instructors should consider the emphasis placed on service learning within the curricula for part-time MPA programs (Lambright & Lu, 2009).

Few studies have examined the impact of student characteristics in relation to service-learning outcomes. Speck (2001), although an advocate for service learning, pointed out three major challenges or objections professors have to implementing service learning within their courses: (a) service learning takes too much time and too many resources, (b) service learning should not be required, and (c) service learning should be resisted because it is a form of indoctrination. However, the vast majority of researchers argued against these issues, finding that students are positively impacted by taking part in service learning (Astin et al, 2000; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Lambright & Lu, 2009).

**Reflection as a conceptual framework.** The critical-reflection component of service learning was the direct result of John Dewey's theories of education (Keeton, 1983). During an experience, brief opportunities for reflection should take place (Roberts, 2003). Dewey (1933) believed the purpose of an interaction is to derive learning from the

experience through reflective thinking, which leads to inquiry. Dewey (1933) referred to inquiry as the scientific method where an experience becomes problematized. The process of inquiry follows as this issue “perplexes and challenges the mind” (Dewey, 1933, p. 13). The idea of reflective thinking, the final element of Dewey’s ideas about learning and knowledge, are found to be relevant in how learning occurs in service learning (Giles & Eyler, 1994). Observation provides the link between what is experienced and how the experience is transformed to learning (Giles & Eyler). Reflection allows students to connect an actual experience and the knowledge they draw from that experience (Roberts, 2003). As cited by Giles and Eyler (1994), Dewey (1933) used the term *reflective thinking* to imply a type of thinking while using the term *reflective activity* to indicate a complete set of activities relating to reflection.

“Data (facts) and ideas (suggestions, possible solutions) thus form the two indispensable and correlative factors of all reflective activity” (Dewey, 1933, p. 104). In Dewey’s work, *How We Think* (1933), he discussed five phases or aspects of reflective thought: (a) suggestions, (b) intellectualism, (c) the hypothesis, (d) reasoning, and (e) testing the hypothesis in action. Suggestions provide one to consider more than one course of action. Intellectualism defines the problem and raises questions about the nature of the problem and possible solutions. The hypothesis develops the guiding idea based on observations and previous knowledge. Reasoning is the development of the hypothesis by applying knowledge and by developing the linkages in the sequence of ideas. Testing the hypothesis in action verifies that the problem is solved or a new problem is presented through further observation or experimentation.

David Kolb (1984), a follower of Dewey, built upon his framework of service learning educators. Kolb (1984) argued that learners receive experience through either a concrete experience or an abstract conceptualization, then transform these experiences through a lens of either reflective observation or active experimentation. The lens produces four different styles of learner: (a) divergers, (b) accommodators, (c) assimilators, and (d) convergers. Reflection is a key component to this learning process because it can link the concrete to the abstract (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997).

Schön (1987), like Dewey (1933), believed practitioners build upon a collection of images, ideas, and past examples that they can draw upon in a given situation. Schön (1987) argued that many disciplines within the applied sciences need to be combined with an epistemology that is practiced based using a reflective practicum. Schön's (1983, 1987) work provides educators with a framework to describe cognitive processes that translate theory to action.

Argyris (1993) believed that theories lead to action through observing espoused theories, theories that an individual claims to follow, and theories that can be inferred from a person's action. Argyris argued that if learning is to persist, one must look inward where a person needs to reflect critically on their own behavior, identify the ways they inadvertently contribute to their organization's problems, and then change how they act. Learning occurs through active reflection and feedback as theories are compared to practice (Argyris, 1993; Goldberg, 2012). Experiential learning is a model that consists of a series of loops in which the learner reflects upon his or her experiences (Argyris, 1993). Single-loop learning reflects and improves an existing process without questioning its basic operation. Double-loop learning reflects on underlying beliefs, allows for questions



to examine options as to how things can be done differently. Finally, in triple-loop learning, a person's underlying views and perspective about themselves and their organization shifts (Argyris, 1993).

Scholars have noted that the element of reflection is crucial in the experiential learning process (Cunningham, 1997; Imperial et al., 2007; Stout, 2013). Service learning reflects the experience students gain through a greater understanding of course content, appreciation of a select career field, and an enhanced sense of civic duties (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Successful service learning enables students to construct their own knowledge by using an experiential, inductive form of inquiry (Stout, 2013). Analytical theory is applied in this context when these experiences foster critical thinking and the linkage of theory and practice can be made (Collier & Williams, 2005).

Since reflection is central to the experiential pedagogical approach, techniques to capture these learning experiences is crucial for students in their learning process. As reflection comes in many forms, service-learning literature on public affairs programs has noted the use of techniques such as journals and essays (Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Dede, 2002; Koliba, 2004; McGaw & Weschler, 1999; Whitaker & Berner, 2004). Stout (2013) believed that reflective journals should be utilized in service-learning projects after every fieldwork visit. Having students maintain a reflective journal helps capture learned experiences in their academic journey. Journals provide the student by showing how theory plays out in practice, lessons are learned for future scenarios, and reflections reveal personal identity (Stout, 2013). Eyler and Giles (1999) noted that frequent opportunities provide students with the ability to reflect on the connection between the service experience and course material during the semester. Hatcher and Bringle (1997)

pointed out that reflection is not a practice that should be reserved until the end of a service experience.

Hatcher and Bringle (1997) suggested some effective reflection activities: (a) linking experience to the learning objectives, (b) providing guidance for reflection activities, (c) scheduling the activities regularly, (d) allowing for feedback and assessment, and (e) clarify values. Given that different students learn and process information differently, multiple techniques should be utilized in developing effective reflection activities. Imperial et al. (2007) suggested a combination of reflection activities: individual, written, and verbal group reflection. Bushouse and Morrison (2001) identified the practicum experience that is present in MPA programs can be improved by incorporating systematic reflection as a pedagogical tool. MPA practicums are often viewed as the capstone of a master's program where students learn skills throughout the program and apply them to a given real-world problem (Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009).

As part of service learning, students participate in a four-cycle process consisting of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). The pedagogy of service learning enables students to become the heart of a curriculum as they reflect upon experiences (Chisholm, 1987). Reflection enables students to critically process key concepts and principles learned from a course and acknowledge their application to real-world issues (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Eldred, 1996; Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Howard, 1993; Jacoby, 2003; Kenny et al., 2002). Fieldwork visits and related assignments should be captured in the form of journals to “address how theory plays out in practice, lessons learned for future scenarios,

and reflections on professional identity” (Stout, 2013, p. 227). Instructors can infuse more structure into the service-learning process by insisting on reflection through the use of journals, papers, and class discussions (Astin et al., 2000; Permaul, 2009). Eyler et al. (1996) stated that reflection is a “transformative link between the action of serving and the ideas and understanding of learning” (p. 14). Bushouse and Morrison (2001) pointed out that the use of evaluations by community stakeholders and students at the end of a course can also contribute to the reflective process. Client-based learning courses are service learning in character if self-reflection and awareness are promoted (Bryer, 2011; Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

Russell and Fisher (2014) conducted a case study using reflection and journaling as key learning approaches to fit non-traditional students’ styles. These non-traditional students consisted of practitioners who were identified as either law enforcement or emergency response personnel. The study explored the impressions a homeland security course had on emergency service students. The study took place at a state university in Utah. The researchers, utilizing a purposeful sampling, chose 17 participants out of a population of 54 students, representing one-third of the overall population that had successfully completed a homeland security course. The 17 participants consisted of 11 males and 6 females. Their ages ranged from 21 to 43 years. The level of education revealed 13 participants were college juniors and four were seniors. The majority of the participants in the study were current law enforcement practitioners and first responders.

This study required students to use journaling to reflect upon what they learned about homeland security. The course instructors used student journal entries to assess success in achieving course objectives. Russell and Fisher (2014) conducted their data

analysis by reading the students' reflections after removing the personal identifiers of each of the participants. Using a modified grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), the researchers developed themes that emerged from the students' reflections. The coding process revealed three emergent themes: global awareness, importance of a homeland security education and vulnerabilities to the nation. A major finding of the study revealed that non-traditional student learning styles met the main objectives for the homeland security course.

The findings of Russell and Fisher (2014) were consistent with other studies (Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Maxfield & Fisher, 2012) because service-learning reflection assignments helped make linkages between the course materials for non-traditional students. Reflective thinking and journaling assignments are well-suited for emergency services and homeland security education due to an existing population of student practitioners and non-traditional students (Goldberg, 2012; Russell & Fisher, 2014).

**Kolb's theory of experiential learning.** In 1984, Kolb built the foundation of ELT, drawing on the works of scholars from several disciplines, such as John Dewey (1938), Paulo Freire (1974), William James (1890), Carl Jung (1931), Kurt Lewin (1951), Jean Piaget (1970), and Carl Rogers (1969), to develop a holistic model of the experiential learning process and a multilinear model of adult development. Experiential learning has been used in the fields of education, management, computer science, psychology, medicine, nursing, accounting, and law (Kolb et al., 2001). The pragmatic nature of combining experience with learning is a concept evidenced by way of apprenticeships, internship, work study, and service-learning programs at all levels of

education (Kolb, 1984). As noted by Renger et al. (2011) experiential learning theory is consistent in both the design and philosophy of simulated exercises, which are relevant to the role of today's emergency manager. Emergency management is an applied field of study oriented toward practice (Dilling, 2009), which requires a participatory approach to learning (Alexander, 2013).

Massey et al. (2011) conducted a study to examine the learning styles of undergraduate students in social work at Norfolk State University in 2009. The researchers were interested in identifying and learning about each student's dominant learning style. The researchers used the theoretical framework of ELT for this study. Kolb et al. (2001) pointed out, when examining student learning styles, it is important to understand how students build on their experiences to construct new learning opportunities. The purpose of this study was to develop a level of knowledge for the faculty at Norfolk State University (Kolb et al., 2001). Students in this study were required to take Kolb's LSI in order to identify their dominant learning styles (Massey et al., 2011).

The findings of the study conducted by Massey et al. (2011) indicated that 81% of the respondents had either diverging or accommodating learning styles. Kolb (1984) explained that learners receive experience through either a concrete experience or an abstract conceptualization, then transform these experiences through a lens of either reflective observation or active experimentation. The lens produces four different styles of learner: (a) divergers, (b) accommodators, (c) assimilators, and (d) convergers. The divergers are learners who are imaginative and can reflect on issues from various viewpoints. Accommodators are students who learn through a hands-on experience.

Assimilators are learners who seek theory and build upon them through inductive reasoning. Convergers are learners who comprehend theories through their application and focus on deductive reasoning to solve problems.

The data presented by Massey et al. (2011) revealed that 40 students (46.51%) preferred the diverging style, while 30 of the participants (34.88%) favored the accommodating style. Approximately 10 students preferred the assimilating learning style (11.63%), and three preferred the converger learning style (3.49%). There were also the students (3.49%) who were balanced in their learning styles with a preference toward the accommodating style. A noteworthy result was the fact that all of the students were female (40), and they all indicated a preference to the diverging learning style.

The divergers (46.51%) were found to be the largest group of learners for this study. Divergers grasp experience through concrete experience (CE) and transform it through reflective observations (RO); these individuals are found to perform better in situations that require the formulation of ideas in which they learn by experience and are able to reflect upon them (Carlise, 2002; Kolb, 2000). The accommodating style (34.88%) was the second largest learning style captured from this study. The accommodating style's dominant learning abilities are active experimentation (AE) and concrete experience (CE). This particular style informs instructors to consider using activities such as role playing, discussions, and providing opportunities for practicing skills for these type of learners (Massey et al., 2011). Knowledge obtained from studies in which learning style profiles are examined aid in improving the experiential learning environment (Carlisle, 2002).

*Critics of Kolb's experiential theory.* Miettinen (2000), in comparing Kolb's experiential learning to Dewey's experiential thought and activity, noted that these terms are theoretically and epistemologically far apart. Miettinen (2000) believed that for Dewey, thinking and experience included objective forms of interaction between humans and the environment. Dewey (1910, 1916b, 1938b) believed that reflection generated a hypothesis that can only be tested in an experimental activity as a necessity for solving problems.

Critics argue that Kolb's work derived from *Experiential Learning* (1984) is problematic due to the special terminology used in his writing, which may be deemed as consultancy literature (Miettinen, 2000). In his work, Kolb (1984) expanded the foundation of his model and the extended societal application of the LSI. Criticisms of LSI are abundant (Coffield, Moseley, Hall, & Ecclestone, 2004; Miettinen, 2000; Webb, 2003). Given that Dewey is the developer of the LSI technology, scholars see this action as a marketing promotion (Miettinen, 2000). Coffield et al. (2004) challenged Kolb's ELT on conceptual and empirical grounds. Coffield et al. (2004) provided an example of whether the model represents four learning styles or four learning stages. This fundamental difference displays how learning styles can be related to inherited or acquired personality types, while learning stages are construed as the essential steps that make up the learning cycle (Bergsteiner, Avery, & Neumann, 2010). De Ciantis and Kirton (1996), in their assessment of ELT, maintained that Kolb's learning styles define a learning process rather than a style such as a personality trait. According to Bergsteiner et al. (2010), applying accepted modelling and categorization criteria to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model reveals fundamental flaws in graphic sufficiency and

simplification, categorical and definitional problems in relation to learning activities and typologies, misconstrued bi-polarities, and flawed logic. Although Kolb's LSI and ELT have received much criticism, many scholars believe his experiential learning model provides a foundation for service learning (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Massey et al., 2011) and training options for the emergency response trainer (Wilson, 2000). Kolb's (1984) reflection cycle has been widely embraced by advocates of experiential education while others continued to build on that work (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Eyer, 2002).

**Service learning in emergency management.** Service learning couples theory and emergency management practices through a facilitator or group project that takes students out of the classroom, into a community setting, and enables them to comprehend the course material with clarity (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bryer, 2011; Bushouse & Morrison, 2011; Jelier & Clarke, 1999; Kapucu, 2011; Lambright & Lu, 2009; McEntire, 2002; Ostrander, 2004). Service learning unites educational goals with professional practice by allowing students to experience typical activities and relationships of a given profession (Kushma, 2003). The pedagogy of service learning enables students to experience the ins and outs of the emergency management profession while gaining knowledge, making professional connections, and providing needed service to communities (Reed, 2014). The core of service learning provides students with a theoretical foundation consisting of clear learning objectives, activities, and reflective components (Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005). Since adult learners commonly display characteristics that reflect on experience that help promote the learning process (Kolb, 1984), emergent academic disciplines, such as emergency management and



homeland security, can be an appropriate venue for experiential learning (Goldberg, 2012).

“Educators face a particular challenge in creating a learning environment in which students can develop this ability in preparation and/or support for careers in emergency management” (Comfort & Wukich, 2013, p. 53). Dicke et al. (2004) noted that service learning is among the tenets of the American Society for Public Administration’s professional code of ethics, calling for members to provide a bridge for students between the classroom and the realism of the public service environment. Stevens, 2013 argued that emergency management education has focused too heavily on knowledge development, and it has neglected the importance of obtaining applied skills through hands-on experiences acquired through real-life experience, mentor and internships, and simulations. Higher education institutions, including the University of North Texas, University of Central Florida, Jacksonville State University, and Metropolitan College of New York, continue to make efforts through the incorporation of service learning activities by integrating theory and practice in preparing students for the field of emergency management (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kushma, 2003; McEntire, 2002; MCNY, 2013; Neal, 2000).

McCreight (2014) stated that one could argue that obtaining skill sets in a collegiate environment is challenging, but the counterargument is that they are being taught in our military academies and advanced-officer courses today. Stevens (2013) equated the lack of these experiences emergency managers receive would be similar to that of a medical student not completing residency and taking on the role of a surgeon immediately. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) suggested that carefully designed

service-learning projects provide students with key skills and competencies as part of their development process in the field of emergency management. Kushma (2003) pointed out that “service-learning allows students to ‘try on’ a number of emergency management roles and functions, and thus contributes to a successful transition from school to professional setting” (p. 4). Through service learning, students become more familiar with the “how to” aspect of emergency management functions, which provides a positive impact on their ability to enter the work force in the future (McEntire, 2002). As noted by Kapucu (2011), service learning in the emergency management field offers educators a tool for gaining a better understanding of the field, one that is sensitive to and based on practice and experience.

Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) presented a groundbreaking study with the inclusion of a service-learning pedagogy in emergency management curricula in graduate programs throughout the United States. These researchers discussed the problem in developing programs that fail to provide sufficient guidance to what practitioners and the field demand. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) recommended including the service-learning pedagogy to develop emergency management programs and curriculum in higher education. Their study provides a framework for integrating service learning into emergency management degree and certificate programs throughout the United States.

Using results from a national survey, Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) sought to promote a greater understanding of how service learning is used in emergency management programs. The researchers used a 5-point Likert scale to obtain responses from participants. Through purposeful sampling, coordinators and directors from 245 emergency management academic programs were sought to participate in the study. The

EMI at FEMA provided names and addresses to the authors of the study. Using Dillman's tailored design methodology (2007), an electronic questionnaire using SurveyMonkey was sent to 227 participants. The questionnaire consisted of a mix of Likert scale questions and open-ended questions.

A total of 70 (30.8%) participants responded to the study. Of the 70 responses, 50 (22%) were useable replies. A little over half of the respondents (55.9%) reported that they incorporate service learning as part of their curriculum. The respondents surveyed represented emergency management and homeland security academic programs in 25 of the 46 states surveyed. Of the respondents, 75% represented universities programs and 30% represented community or technical colleges. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) noted that emergency management academic programs have been operating, on average, for approximately eight years, and they are housed in a variety of departments and schools. Of the reporting departments reporting, 26% were housed in Public Administration/Affairs/Management, 15% in Emergency Services/Disaster Management, 14% in Public Health/Health Services, 9% in Environmental/Earth Sciences, 9% in Engineering, 9% in Criminal Justice, 7% in Public Safety (7%), 7% in Business Management, 4% in Social/Behavior Sciences, 2% in Political Science, 2% in Urban Planning, and 2% in Protective Services.

The findings of the study indicate three dominant modes of teaching: online (38%), face-to-face (36%), and mixed mode (26%). As noted by the researchers, emergency management programs vary in size at the undergraduate and graduate level. Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) found that the majority of respondents for this study (65.1%) were enrolled because they showed an interest in a professional career in

emergency management or homeland security. Other respondents (34.9%) were seasoned professionals in the field of emergency management who were interested in advancing their careers in emergency management, homeland security, or related fields. A little over half of the respondents (55.9%) indicated that their program incorporated service learning as part of the curriculum. Service learning has been included in the program for an average of 4.5 years. Yet, 65% of the respondents reported that only 10% to 30% of emergency management courses include a service-learning component. Of the respondents, 12% indicated that half of their courses have service-learning projects, and a few respondents (6%) said that 75% of their courses included service learning. In addition, of the respondents, 18% indicated that all of their emergency management courses incorporate service-learning projects. Most respondents (82%) had interdisciplinary service-learning programs. The promotion of university-community collaboration (85%) and the contribution to faculty learning about the local community (75%) were viewed as significant service-learning factors by respondents.

For 48% of the respondents, service-learning projects were mandatory; for 47% of the respondents, the projects were voluntary. Respondents preferred individual service-learning projects (64%) over group projects (43%) if given a choice. Nearly all of the respondents (89%) indicated that they integrated course materials into their projects, and the same percentage believed that student reflection is an essential part of the service-learning process. For 79% of respondents, civic engagement was viewed as part of their service-learning program.

In evaluating student progress: 82% of respondents evaluated their progress throughout the service-learning project, and 72% of students actively designed and

executed the project. For 96% of the respondents, service-learning projects were perceived as positively affecting students' intellectual growth, while 79% felt that it affected their research skills. Three fourths of respondents included an evaluation strategy to assess the impact of service-learning projects on students' learning.

The feedback received from the respondents in conjunction with the literature revealed that institutional support for a service-learning project is necessary. Most respondents felt supported by their department (86%) and university (79%), yet 28% of did not have a service-learning office that provided assistance for faculty planning, implementing, and monitoring service-learning projects.

Using a 5-point Likert scale, 97% of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that the main goal of service learning within their program was to link theory with practice, while 96% agreed and strongly agreed that service learning better prepared them as future emergency managers. The study suggests that carefully designed service-learning projects provide students with key skills and competencies as part of their development process.

Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) further recommended that based on the literature (Ash et al., 2009; Bushouse, 2005), students should become active participants in the service-learning process to reduce some of the faculty time commitment in the phases of design, execution, and evaluation. The researchers reported that the most successful service-learning projects (45%) involved students developing emergency management plans, manuals, or guidelines for various entities that included government, private, and nonprofit organizations.

## Chapter Summary

This chapter offered an overview of the relevant schools of thought on emergency management and the extent to which service learning adequately prepares emergency manager professionals for the field. The landscape of disastrous events continues to plague our society, requiring the need to properly prepare tomorrow's leaders in emergency management to meet complex and unknown challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. To gain insight into the pedagogies of experiential learning, namely service learning, this chapter offered an overview of the theories of Dewey (1938a) and Kolb (1984).

Using the theoretical frameworks provided by Dewey (1938a) and Kolb (1984) on experiential learning may provide emergency management students a foundation upon which to draw. Dewey and Kolb's work underpins the work of scholars in experiential learning going forward (Astin et al., 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Lambright & Lu, 2009). Apprenticeships, internships, work study, and service-learning programs enable students to combine classroom learning with outside experiences (Kolb, 1984).

Service learning is one type of experiential learning that allows students to link their academic work with practical applications. Service learning allows students to integrate theory (academic perspectives) and emergency management practice through a facilitated individual or group project that takes them out of the classroom and into a community setting enabling them to better comprehend the course material (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bryer, 2011; Bushouse & Morrison, 2001; Jelier & Clarke, 1999; Kapucu, 2011; Lambright & Lu, 2009; McEntire, 2002; Ostrander, 2004). As Alexander (2013) pointed out, emergency management is a hands-on activity because it requires a

participatory approach to learning. With these calls to integrate theory with practice, experiential learning, in general—and service learning, in particular—play a vital role in designing higher education curricula for the emergency management discipline (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to gather perceptions from alumni, faculty, and clients to ascertain what key knowledge, skills, and abilities are actually needed in the field of emergency management. This study examined a pedagogical model known as service learning with the emphasis on the conceptual framework of client-based service learning. With the use of client-based service learning, the study sought to examine how students can utilize resources outside of the academic institution to gain practical experiences for the workplace.

US colleges and universities have given significant attention to service learning as a pedagogical tool (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). The shift from theory-based education to experienced-based education is explained through several socio-cultural factors including a changing workforce and the entrance of non-traditional learners into academia (Cantor, 1997; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). Scholars in emergency management higher education (Clement, 2011; Blanchard, 2007; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; McCreight, 2014) recommend that the academic community incorporate this service-learning pedagogy as part of the development of emergency management programs and curricula.

Over the course of time, disasters have promulgated the need to establish new legislation, policies, and practices (Tierney, 2005). The overhaul from civil-defense activities to an all-hazards approach established by FEMA has transformed the

emergency management profession tremendously (Dilling, 2009; Purpura, 2007). The rise of emergency management academic programs in response to national priorities include the War on Terror and catastrophic natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina (Stewart & Vocino, 2013). To date, current delivery practices have proven insufficient in providing students with the proper foundation an emergency management professional relies on—their training and education (McCreight, 2014). Given the historical development of the role of today's emergency manager leads one to expect a person who can provide leadership to an organization or community on the topics of hazards, disasters, and what to do about them (Blanchard, 2007). Scholars point to the integration of service learning in playing a vital role to address the deficiency in current educational practices that are offered to emergency management students obtain the applied knowledge and skills the profession demands (Clement, 2011; Darlington, 2008; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; Kiltz, 2009; McCreight, 2014; Thomas & Mileti, 2003).

Through the course of reviewing the relevant literature presented here, it became evident that there are benefits to students and clients who take part in practicum courses and other service-learning experiences. As discussed throughout this chapter, researchers such as Astin et al. (2000), Elyer and Giles (1999), Gray et al. (2000), Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013), Lambright and Lu (2009), Schachter and Schwartz (2009), and Sprague and Hu (2015) have expressed the need for additional scholarly research on the pedagogies of service learning. Service learning within emergency management curricula has had success in the form of capstone courses, client-based projects, and experiential experiences taking place among clients, communities, and students (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013, Kushma, 2003; McEntire, 2002; Reed, 2014).



Through the theoretical lens of experiential learning, the researcher conducted this study using a qualitative methodology. Chapter 3 provides further details on the methodology, research context, participants, data collection, and data analysis of the study.

## **Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This research has examined the integration of client-based service learning within emergency management curricula in preparing graduate students for the field upon graduation. There are many emergency management academic programs today that are striving toward linking students' theoretical and practical knowledge upon entering the field of emergency management (Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013; McCreight, 2009). The objective of this research was to determine what type of benefits client-based service learning provides students in their preparation for serving in the role as an emergency manager. A case study approach was utilized to conduct this qualitative study. Case study research is suitable for the studying of individuals, groups, or an entire program or activities (Creswell, 2013). Merriam (2001) believed case studies can directly influence policies, procedures, and future research. This case study approach has enabled the researcher to conduct an in-depth analysis of how the pedagogy of service learning can be utilized within an emergency management master's program. This type of research allows the researcher to study a case within a real-life setting (Yin, 2014). The intent of this case analysis was to focus on a single instrumental case study. This enabled the researcher to focus on a specific issue rather than on the case itself (Creswell, 2013). It is the hope that this study will contribute to the literature on service learning that is designed to equip emergency management professionals with the skills needed in the areas of disaster preparedness and relief.

Qualitative methods were used to collect data from professionals in the field of emergency management in order to gain their insight as to the value of client-based service learning. Perceptions were gathered for the purpose of identifying how today's academic institutions that house emergency management education can create realistic client-based service-learning environments. Information for this study was obtained through the use of in-depth interviews with former students, focus groups consisting of instructors in the role as project managers, and former clients of the Metropolitan College of New York Emergency and Disaster Management program.

The essential questions that guided this study were:

1. What are the significant benefits that alumni perceive to have acquired as a result of taking part in a client-based service-learning project within an emergency management higher education curriculum at Metropolitan College of New York?
2. How do client-based service-learning projects prepare emergency managers for the field in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?
3. How and to what extent does service learning create an intersection between the classroom and the practice of emergency management?

**Positionality.** Researchers in a qualitative study convey their background, how it informs the reader on the information being studied from one's own perspective, and what gains can be made for both the researcher and the reader (Creswell, 2013; Wolcott, 2010). As an adjunct professor at the study site and a recognized professional in the field of emergency management, the researcher is viewed as an "insider." Being recognized as an insider enabled the researcher to draw upon a network of academic emergency

managers and first responder professionals in gaining access to key stakeholders and experts who were willing to take part this study. Having over 30 years of experience in the field of emergency management was useful for developing relationships with the participants because of the ability to share relevant information (Maxwell, 2005). The field of emergency management is moving to a more collaborative approach as practitioners and researchers are openly sharing information with one another (Comfort, 2007; Kapucu, 2009; Kapucu & Garayev, 2012; Kapucu, Garayev, & Wang, 2013; Waugh & Streib, 2006). The reciprocity process of researcher and respondent has led to the mutual objective of learning from one another. The researcher provided the respondents with an opportunity to contribute to the field through the interview process. A level of trust was established and was exhibited through honest and insightful feedback. This insider status, coupled with current industry practices, increased the potential in the collection of genuine data for this study.

While there are many attributes to being an insider, there are also disadvantages that warrant discussion. First, the researcher and participant relationship ran the risk of the participants providing information that he/she believed was what the researcher wanted to hear. Secondly, there was a potential for bias when the insider was investigating his own works and the works of his fellow insiders—all of whom were invested in the program under study. Because there was a natural desire for favorable findings, there was the potential for the researcher to interpret evidence from a skewed lens. In order to address these disadvantages, the researcher employed select methods to minimize bias. For example, interviews were taped in order to collect verbatim notes. This guarded against the researcher bias when interpreting what was being said. The

researcher also collected data from multiple sources, which achieved triangulation. A research assistant was employed to double check the codes created by the researcher, and a set of questions pertaining to client-based service learning was developed for each group of participants within the study.

### **Research Context**

The study was conducted at the Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) which is a private institution located in an urban setting in the borough of Manhattan. Founded in 1964, MCNY has a unique approach to learning, which is described as purpose-centered education. MCNY is a not-for-profit, accredited, private college that appeals to highly motivated adult learners from the New York metropolitan area (MCNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment [OIRA], 2014b). The mission statement for MCNY is to provide a superior, experientially based education that fosters personal and professional development, promotes social justice, and encourages positive change in workplaces and communities. The school's founder, Audrey Cohen, was committed to the ideals of social justice, educational excellence, and educational opportunity (MCNY, 2013a). Cohen (Cohen & College for Human Services, 1976) believed that education must empower individuals and make a positive change in organizations and communities.

MCNY's programs are housed under its three main schools: The Audrey Cohen School for Human Services and Education, the School of Business, and the School of Public Affairs (MCNY, 2013b). The Emergency and Disaster Management (EDM) master's program operates out of the School of Public Affairs. The program was established in response to the terrorist attacks that occurred in New York City on September 11, 2001 (MCNY, EDM, 2013d). The EDM program takes 16 months to

complete in which students receive 45 credits over four semesters of study (MCNY, 2015). The program integrates MCNY's purpose-centered system of education where students develop an actual comprehensive emergency management plan for a client as part of a real-world consulting assignment (MCNY, 2015). Students work as a group to develop a single comprehensive emergency management plan for a government agency, private business, or nonprofit organization. Professors serve as project managers in facilitating student responsibilities, and they act as a liaison to the client being served (MCNY, 2015).

According to the MCNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the student enrollment for the fall of 2013 was 344 graduate students (MCNY OIRA, 2014a). The race/ethnicity of the student body of MCNY's graduate programs were 11% nonresident alien, 58% Black or African American, 13% Hispanic or Latino, 8% White, 1% American Indian or Alaska Native, 2% Asian, 0% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 2% two or more races, and 6% race and ethnicity unknown (MCNY OIRA, 2014a). The demographics of the EDM master's program was 11% nonresident alien, 41% Black or African American, 14% Hispanic or Latino, 27% White, 0% American Indian or Alaska Native, 3% Asian, 0% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0% two or more races, and 5% race and ethnicity unknown (2014a). On average, the EDM program at MCNY admits approximately 50 graduate students per year to their program (Williams, 2015). Approximately 85% of the student body is enrolled full time with the remaining 15% attending classes on a part-time basis (Williams, 2015). The graduation rates for all new graduate students during the fall semesters from 2006-2013 revealed an overall average of 79% completing the program (Williams, 2015).

According to the MCNY Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, the student enrollment for the spring of 2014 was approximately 1,140 graduate students (2014a). The race/ethnicity of the student body of MCNY's graduate programs were 60% Black or African American, 17% Hispanic, 11% unknown, 6% White, two or more races 2%, American Indian or 1% Alaska Native, and 1% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (2014a). The demographics of the EDM master's program was 70% African American/Caribbean, 12% Hispanic, 6% White, 1% Middle Eastern, 1% Asian, and 10% unknown (MCNY, 2014). The EDM discipline at MCNY admits approximately 50 graduate students per year to their program. According to the MCNY EDM program, approximately 94% of the student body is enrolled fulltime with the remaining 6% attending classes on a part time basis (MCNY OIRA, 2015). The graduation rates for students enrolled in the EDM program is 95% (MCNY OIRA, 2015).

Metropolitan College of New York has benefitted from the heightened interest in emergency management as a result of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 and other recent disaster events. In addition, during 2010, MCNY received a great deal of media attention for granting six scholarships to Haitian citizens who were affected by the earthquake that devastated their country (MCNY, 2011). This initiative, along with the heightened interest in emergency management, was a contributing factor to recruitment efforts for the EDM program. The 2010 enrollment represented a significant increase in the diversity of students, and the college has continued to benefit from a rich enrollment of diverse students from all over the world and from a variety of professional backgrounds (Williams, 2014).

The first key component of MCNY's mission statement is for the institution to provide superior and experientially based education (MCNY, 2013c). This component is extremely relevant to the organization's purpose as well as the EDM program. The college has demonstrated its commitment to helping nontraditional students achieve educational and professional goals through unique, progressive methods (MCNY, 2013a). Russell and Fisher (2014) found that emergency management practitioners who return to school have different learning expectations compared to that of traditional students. Nontraditional students are able to bridge academics with practitioner experience through experiential learning methodologies within course content (Goldberg, 2012). Many students within the EDM program represent the trend of nontraditional learners in academic settings (Canter, 1997; Kapucu & Connolly Knox, 2013). The college's constructive action is a method for pulling theory and practice together for joining the education site to the worksite (Cohen, 1997). The EDM program incorporates experiential and service learning within in all cohort capstone projects (MCNY, 2013a). The program also provides students with an opportunity to attend a one-week, on-site study module abroad (MCNY, 2015).

The second component of MCNY's mission statement, fostering personal and professional development of students, is supported by the EDM program both internally and externally (MCNY, 2013c). Students enrolled in the MPA EDM program are encouraged to join the Epsilon Pi Phi Honor Society upon making the dean's list. Epsilon Pi Phi strives to advance and recognize emergency management and homeland security as a discipline and profession (Foundation of Higher Education Incorporated, 2013). Students in the EDM program are strongly encouraged to join the International



Association of Emergency Managers (IAEM) during their coursework at MCNY. The IAEM created the Certified Emergency Manager program to raise and maintain professional standards for emergency managers (International Association of Emergency Managers [IAEM], 2014). The Certified Emergency Manager and the Associate Emergency Manager certifications are often sought by many employers (IAEM, 2014). The association brings professionals of the emergency management community together to address issues debated or considered in Congress (Haddow et al., 2014).

### **Research Participants**

A purposeful sampling provided accessibility for the researcher to an information-rich population who provided insight and experiences that were of central importance to the research topic (Patton, 1990). The research participants consisted of 13 alumni who were enrolled in the MCNY MPA EDM program, three college professors who were employed as project managers, and three former clients. The criteria for selecting the participants for the study included that they be employed as emergency managers at the time of the interview, have three to five years of experience in the field of emergency management, and that they had been directly involved in a major disaster event. With the proposed participant list containing as many as 18 members, a total of 13 alumni agreed to be interviewed individually. The process of purposeful sampling was utilized in choosing the participants.

In February 2015, the St. John Fisher College Institutional Review Board (IRB) was sent the proposed research study for review and an expedited approval. In March 2015, the researcher received a letter of support from Metropolitan College of New York giving him permission to contact its alumni (Appendix A). In April, the researcher sent

out 24 invitations to alumni, college professors, and seasoned professionals who met the established criteria, inviting them to participate in the study (Appendix B). Each participant was given 10 business days to respond to the invitation. Follow-up letters were sent to those participants who did not respond. For the 19 individuals who agreed to participate, confirmation emails and consent forms were forwarded (Appendix C). The letter of invitation (Appendix B) and the letter of consent (Appendix C) were slightly edited for each participant type. Once the signed confirmation letters were received, the researcher scheduled a meeting place that was mutually convenient for both the researcher and respondent.

The interviews were recorded using a H1 Handy Recorder device, and they were conducted wherein the researcher posed a combination of semi-structured and open-ended questions to the participants. Prior to the start of each interview, the researcher stated the purpose, the intended length of the interview, and that participation was voluntary. Respondents were able to choose to end their participation at any time. The participants were notified that during the research study process if they felt their rights had been violated or abused, they could contact the chairperson of the project or the IRB committee of St. John Fisher College. All efforts were made to keep the participants' identities confidential. All interviews were coded to protect the anonymity of the research participants. All observation notes were also coded. Consent forms, which contain personal information, were kept separate and personal information was removed from the coded materials. Only the researcher will be able to link the research materials to an informed consent form. A third party transcribed all interviews and signed a confidentiality agreement before the work began. There was no personally identifiable

information disseminated. All recordings and transcriptions were uploaded to a locked and password-protected laptop. All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office for three years following the completion of the project at which time they will be destroyed. The participants who took part in this study were not compensated for their participation.

### **Instruments Used in Data Collection**

An acceptable practice for a case study is for the researcher to select a site or sites to study that includes programs, events, processes, activities, individuals, or several individuals (Creswell, 2013). A consistent line of inquiry, coupled with a fluid rather than a rigid conversation, is a common approach found in case study research (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). A self-developed instrument was designed from the research questions. The research questions were aligned to pertain to the participants' perceptions of their client-based service-learning projects. Open-ended semi-structured interview questions were used to interview each group of participants who were involved within the study (Appendix D). The research instrument was slightly amended to be more specifically aligned with each participant group. The designed questions were inspired by the theoretical framework and literature review.

Dewey (1938a) believed that an experience could only be educative if that experience led out into the real world. Kolb (1984) expanded on Dewey's work (1938a) and argued that experiential learning theory is a process of learning where a learner experiences, reflects, thinks, and acts. Emergency management scholars support these findings because this field of study is oriented toward practice (Dilling, 2009), which requires a participatory approach to learning (Alexander, 2013). The research questions

that were developed by the researcher searched for evidence that was consistent with the theories presented by Dewey (1938a) and Kolb (1984). The questions were constructed to elicit responses from the participants in an effort to gain an understanding of what attributes learned in the MCNY MPA EDM program could be transferred into the field. Furthermore, the goal was to investigate what benefits the program provided to the students upon graduation, while they were working already in the field of emergency management.

**Validation of instruments.** The researcher sought to design a valid research instrument using the perspective of others working in the field of emergency management. Obtaining a source with experience and knowledge from a group of experts was sought to provide their perspective (Willis, Inman, & Valenti, 2010). A panel consisting of six experts in the field of emergency management were convened to assist in designing the research instruments for this study. A letter of invitation (Appendix E) and the letter of consent (Appendix F) were sent to each participant. The panel of experts was utilized as a group of external auditors that enabled the researcher to validate the semi-structured interview questions, which were designed to serve as the research instrument for the study (Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Case study researchers need to document their procedures by documenting as many of the steps of a given procedure as possible (Yin, 2014). The members were representative of the potential participants and each had a minimum of three to five years of experience in the field, and they had all been directly involved in a major disaster event. A focus group session was held where the experts reviewed the instrument and gave feedback on the

relevancy of the questions. Based on their feedback/comments, adjustments were made to the research instrument.

Data was collected from a variety of methods to obtain several perspectives. The collection of qualitative data for this study was achieved using three methods—in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations.

**In-depth interviews.** Semi-structured interviews can ensure that critical questions and concepts are being addressed during the interview process (Willis, 2007). Open-ended questioning enables the researcher to understand the world as seen by the participants through their responses (Patton, 1990). Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions were used to interview the participants in this study. The main instrument used in data collection consisted of a list of several interview questions created by the researcher (Appendix D). The data was recorded by using a digital MP-3 recording device during the face-to-face interviews. To prevent the researcher from asking leading or restrictive questioning, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim by a third party prior to analysis.

**Focus groups.** Focus groups reflect the agreements and disagreements among a group such as experts on a particular topic (Willis et al., 2010). These groups provide an opportunity for the expression of different views points rather than to achieve a consensus (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher serves as a moderator who tries to induce all the members of a group to express their opinions without providing direction or at times minimal direction (Yin, 2011). To gain insight into the unique experiences of stakeholders in the position to influence the shaping of emergency management higher education programs, two focus groups were held—one group consisted of three faculty

members who developed curricula and offered instruction, and the second group consisted of three former clients who took part in client-based service-learning projects with the EDM program at MCNY. Both groups were seasoned professionals with a minimum of six years of experience who had been directly involved in a major disaster event. Schachter and Schwartz (2009) argued that input from the client's perspective is implicit in supporting the assumption that students provide a valuable public service. Understanding client satisfaction also provides a gauge as to the value academic programs provide to employers (Sprague & Hu, 2015).

**Observations.** Site visits are valid sources that can enrich the understanding of an approach to a professional practice (Willis et al., 2010). For this study, the researcher took on the role of a participant-as-observer to collect data by way of observations of two site visits. The role of participant-as-observer informed the researcher by observing current students formally, as in conducting a scheduled event; and at other times, informally by observing the participants outside a structured environment such as a classroom (Gold, 1958). The researcher was able to assume a variety of roles during the fieldwork situations (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2011) and gain access to events that would have been otherwise inaccessible to the study (Yin, 2014). Permission to conduct observations at a client's hospital was obtained through a letter of consent (Appendix G). This situation enabled the researcher to engage in activities that were appropriate to the situation and to observe the participants' activities, their interactions with others, and to note the physical aspects of the participants' environment (Spradley, 1980).

Rich, descriptive detail was sought for this study to allow the participants and their settings to be described in detail (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988). The researcher gathered data through observing current students, at the time of the study, and their instructors in their learning environments. Yin (2014) noted that field notes are an integral part of the researcher's database. Field notes and recordings were taken to capture two observations. The participants were observed taking part in two field activities as part of their client-based service-learning projects at a hospital in New York City. The first observation took place adjacent to an emergency room within a hospital in New York City. There were four students, one instructor, one client, and one hospital police officer all of whom took part in a risk assessment of a client-based service-learning project. The second observation took place in an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) within the same hospital in New York City as the previously recounted observation. There were four student participants, one instructor participant, one client participant, two external evaluators, two observers, and approximately 20 hospital staff members (all who were not participants in the study) who attended the tabletop exercise that focused on an active shooter scenario.

### **Procedures for Data Collection and Analysis**

A priori themes are rich when they are developed from the investigator's decision about the chosen topics and how best to query informants about those topics (Dey, 1993). Beforehand, a provisional list of codes was determined by the researcher in order to integrate the study's conceptual framework, which enabled an analysis that aided in answering the research questions (Saldaña, 2009). The literature and research on service learning within emergency management higher education programs enabled the researcher to develop a priori codes, which were used as a preliminary guide. This a priori approach provided the characteristics of the phenomenon being studied including

agreed-upon professional definitions found in the literature reviews, theoretical orientations, and personal experiences (Bulmer, 1979; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Strauss, 1987).

The process of analyzing data entailed identifying themes (Ryan & Bernard, 2003) through cutting and sorting of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The goal was to identify those themes related to the research that were most important and common to all sampling subsets, for example MCNY alumni, college professors in the role of project manager, former clients, and observations. The researcher used Microsoft Excel to dissect each interview to reveal themes reflective of the participants' original statements and ideas. The first round of coding was accomplished through the creation of a data book. The data book was produced using quotations from transcripts that were separated by Excel rows into chunks (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which contained a single idea, expression, or concept (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This stage of coding led to a total of 776 original codes. During the second round of coding, each chunk was coded using a brief, exact, and accurate phrase that the researcher felt best described the original statement. This process yielded 189 codes, which were developed by the researcher upon examining the data (Saldaña, 2009). A total of 14 major themes and 60 sub-themes emerged from the coding of the data.

Finally, the researcher conducted a third round of coding to refine themes previously discovered in round two. This process entailed differentiating among passages and the consolidation of codes to generate fine-grained themes (Dey, 1993; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Through this process, a total of six themes and 18 sub-themes were extracted and identified from the data (Table 3.1).



Table 3.1

*Themes from Individual Interviews and Focus Group Participants, and Observations*

Theme Number	Theme	Sub-Themes
1	Skill/Knowledge	Development of Skills Retention of Lessons Learned Terminology
2	Theory to Practice	Real-World Applications Hands-On Approach Thinking Strategies
3	Client Commitment & Engagement	Positive Buy-In Neutral Buy-In Negative Buy-In
4	Client-Based Service Learning Benefits	Student Benefits Client Benefits Institutional Benefits
5	Reflective Thinking	Journaling as an Instructional Tool Reflection Paper and Notetaking After-Action Review and Reflective Discussion
6	Networking Opportunities	Internships Job Shadowing Employment Opportunities

**Triangulation.** Data triangulation involves the use of various sources of information by the researcher (Guion, 2001). For the purposes of triangulation, there were three data sources used to develop themes and sub-themes from the data collected for this study. The first source consisted of 13 alumni who were enrolled in the MCNY MPA EDM program and who participated in one-on-one in-depth interviews. The second data source came from a focus group consisting of three college professors who were employed as project managers. The third set of data came from three former clients who had participated in a client-based service-learning project. These three separate sources of

data collection facilitated triangulation, which included perspectives received from the three groups of participants. The three data sources were examined for any commonalities and differences among the participants of the study.

In triangulation, researchers utilize multiple sources to collect and corroborate data (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patten, 2009). Stringer (2014) believed that by incorporating multiple sources of information, they aid in enhancing the credibility of a given study. The development of convergent evidence enabled the researcher in triangulating the data to strengthen the construct validity of this case study (Yin, 2014).

### **Chapter Summary**

The methodology chosen for this study was a qualitative case study. The intent of this case analysis was to focus on a single instrumental case study. This process enabled the researcher to focus on a specific issue rather than on the case itself (Creswell, 2013). This case was selected based on the prominence of a college that engages in experiential learning and service learning as part of its mission statement (MCNY, 2013c). Using the theoretical frameworks provided by Dewey (1938a) and Kolb (1984) on experiential learning, the researcher was inspired to conduct this study.

The study took place at the Metropolitan College of New York using a purposeful sampling that consisted of selected participants being invited to engage in face-to-face interviews and focus groups. Criteria for selecting the participants for the study included that they were employed as emergency managers at the time of the interviews, had three to five years of experience in the field of emergency management, and that they had been directly involved in a major disaster event. The researcher also conducted observations and took field notes of a current client-based service-learning project at the clients' sites.

The semi-structured interview questions were created using the literature review and the theoretical framework discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. The selected participants were invited to participate in the study via email. The participants who agreed to take part in the study completed an informed-consent form and returned the document to the researcher prior to the interview. The interviews with the individual participants and two focus groups were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Field notes of observations were also taken and coded. A research assistant was employed to double check the codes created by the researcher. Three rounds of coding were performed, which yielded six major themes and 18 sub-themes from the original set of 776 codes. A detailed analysis of the collected data is provided in Chapter 4.

## **Chapter 4: Results**

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine the extent to which experiential learning through the use of client-based service learning is essential to the preparedness of emergency management professionals upon graduating from a master's program. This study was intended to provide best practices in serving graduate students enrolled within emergency management master's programs. The researcher drew upon Dewey's theory of experience (1938a) as a main theoretical base, as well as Kolb's experiential theory (1984), and the conceptual frameworks of service learning, reflection, and client-based service learning.

This study obtained perceptions from 13 individuals participating in in-depth interviews and six individuals participating in two focus group discussions. The researcher also gathered data from two field observations. The individual interviews consisted of alumni that were employed as emergency managers, at the time of the interviews, with three to five years of experience that have been directly involved in at least one major disaster event. Focus group 1 consisted of three college professors who had experience as project managers in client-based service-learning projects. The three college professors had more than 20 years of experience in the field of emergency management and had been directly involved in a major disaster event. Focus group 2 consisted of three former clients of the MCNY MPA EDM program's capstone project.

Data from two field observations were made that captured the study participants interacting with the clients at the clients' worksites.

This chapter presents an overview of the findings from the answers to the research questions developed for this study. The chapter progresses to a more in-depth discussion of the data analysis and findings. The findings offer insight on the learning environments and type of support needed for academic success for EDM students through understanding the various perspectives offered by alumni, college professors, and former clients. A summary of the findings follows.

**Research question 1.** What are the significant benefits that alumni perceive to have acquired as a result of taking part in a client-based service-learning project within an emergency management higher education curriculum at Metropolitan College of New York?

Faculty, clients, and alumnus participants identified that the client-based service-learning process provided various benefits to each group of respondents. The professor and client participants felt that the notoriety generated from client-based service-learning projects at Metropolitan College of New York would entice future employers to hire graduates from the program. The alumnus participants perceived that they had acquired three beneficial areas as a result of their project: support and guidance, networking opportunities, and obtaining employment upon graduation. Several alumnus participants believed that classmates who were practitioners in the field shared their experiences, which provided students with a rich and in-depth learning environment. These same participants found that their practitioner classmates often provided them with valuable feedback and technical support throughout the client-based service-learning process.

Clients felt that the students with various experiences in the field helped their classmates in achieving project milestones. The majority of the alumnus participants spoke of their enhanced ability to network and build relationships with others who were employed in the emergency management field. The alumnus participants viewed that by working with actual clients, coupled with learning emergency-management-related skills enabled them to attain employment upon graduation.

**Research question 2.** How do client-based service-learning projects prepare emergency managers for the field in the 21st century?

All of the alumnus participants believed that the client-based service-learning process enabled them to develop knowledge and skills that are a necessity to a 21<sup>st</sup> century emergency manager. All of the participants—alumni, professors, and clients—considered client-based learning as an area of high importance in the preparation of students entering the career field of emergency management. Many alumnus participants identified leadership as being a vital skill to grasping and apply in the field. The alumnus and professor participants discussed the value of reflective thinking and how it should be incorporated into the client-based service-learning process as part of the students' preparation. Also, the alumnus and professor participants found the after-action review (AAR) process was a good instructional tool that was beneficial to both their learning process and the client by identifying organizational problems.

**Research question 3.** How and to what extent does service learning create an intersection between the classroom and the practice of emergency management?

A majority of the alumnus participants believed that the client-based service-learning process provided them with the ability to experience a real-life process while

being in a field environment. The alumnus participants also felt that their project lent itself to collaborating with others outside the academic institution, which quickly immersed them into the emergency management culture. The clients felt the students provided their organizations with fresh perspectives in identifying a lack of oversight in emergency and disaster protocols. Both professor and alumnus participants felt that the client-based service-learning process provided them with the ability to apply learned theories from the classroom by using a hands-on approach. All of the participants of the study conveyed the importance of both learning and applying what they identified as three thinking strategies: tactical, strategic, and critical thinking. Issues around client commitment and engagement were found to affect the outcomes of the participants' client-based service-learning projects.

### **Data Analysis and Findings**

To gain a better understanding of the participants, it is important to provide general background information about those who participated in the individual interviews. Before providing an analysis of the data and the findings, the demographics of the participants and a biographical overview is provided. Following the descriptive analysis, there is a cross analysis of the data to show the results of triangulation of data.

**Descriptive analysis.** The analysis entails descriptions of the respondents who participated in the in-depth interviews, two focus groups, and observations. The alumnus who participated in the individual interviews represented a diverse group in years of experience in the field of emergency management, the industry they served, and the entity in which they were employed. Their experiences were different but shared that they were able to obtain employment within the emergency management field upon

graduating from the MCNY MPA EDM program. The gender demographics of the alumnus participants included four females and nine males. Nine participants were white, three were African American/Black, and one was Hispanic. The ages ranged from mid-20s to mid-40s. The biographical information of the alumnus participants includes:

***Participant 1.*** Participant 1 was a Watch Officer for FEMA with five years' experience in the field of emergency management. His duties included analyzing natural disasters or man-made emergencies, developing response and recovery strategies, and briefing executive leadership.

***Participant 2.*** Participant 2 was the co-founder and president of an emergency management consulting organization. He had six years of experience in the field of emergency management. His client-base ranged from large municipalities to private corporations. Prior to attending the MCNY MPA EDM program, Participant 2 had been an emergency medical technician (EMT) serving several hospitals in the New York metropolitan area.

***Participant 3.*** Participant 3 was responsible for coordinating emergency preparedness activities for the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene. He had three years of experience in the field of emergency management. Participant 3 coordinated his agency's Emergency Response Group to ensure they were properly trained and prepared to respond to emergencies.

***Participant 4.*** Participant 4 was a business continuity and disaster recovery manager for a major airline. He had three years of experience in the field of emergency management. Prior to attending the MCNY MPA EDM program, Participant 4 had also



attained five years of experience as a first responder. This participant had been employed as an EMT in a suburb of a major city in the northeast.

***Participant 5.*** Participant 5 was a continuity planner for New York City Emergency Management. He had 11 years of experience in the field of emergency management. He assisted city agencies in developing and maintaining their continuity of operations plans.

***Participant 6.*** Participant 6 was a senior project manager at a nonprofit healthcare entity. She had three years of experience in the field of emergency management. She coordinated care and emergency management initiatives. Participant 6 was involved in conducting training through the use of drills and exercises, continuity planning, and participation in select city emergency-response activities designated by New York City's Emergency Management.

***Participant 7.*** Participant 7 was a senior watch analyst for FEMA with seven years of experience. He conducted analyses of the potential impacts natural disasters and man-made emergencies can have within his FEMA region. Participant 7 assisted senior leadership within FEMA in making decisions that affect response actions to any type of all-hazards event.

***Participant 8.*** Participant 8 was a disaster recovery specialist who reported to the Office of Emergency Management for a quasi-governmental transportation agency. She had three years of experience in the field of emergency management. During her short tenure, Participant 8 has handled several large-scale emergencies including a train accident and a plane crash. This participant assisted her agency in various facets of incident command and emergency management functions.

***Participant 9.*** Participant 9 was a consultant and trainer for the Texas A&M Extension Service with over 10 years of emergency management experience. He provided governmental agencies with training and exercises to enhance their readiness capabilities in protecting critical infrastructures and key resources from both natural and manmade threats.

***Participant 10.*** Participant 10 was a business continuity manager who reported to the Office of Emergency Management for a quasi-governmental transportation agency. Prior to that, she was a private-sector liaison for the New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness in which she managed a statewide program that focused on preparedness. Participant 10 has three years' experience in the field of emergency management.

***Participant 11.*** Participant 11 was an emergency manager for the New York City Department of Transportation with approximately 10 years of experience in the field of emergency management. She coordinated her agency's resources with other city agencies in meeting the needs of the city in a given emergency or disaster.

***Participant 12.*** Participant 12 was an emergency preparedness specialist for New York City Emergency Management. Prior to that, he was an emergency planner for a nonprofit healthcare entity. Participant 12 also had volunteered for the Disaster Action Team at the American Red Cross and for the New York City Community Emergency Response Team and had three years of experience in the field of emergency management.

***Participant 13.*** Participant 13 was senior associate director for a New York City hospital with over 19 years of experience in the field of emergency management. Prior to working at a city hospital, Participant 13 worked at a private hospital where he served in

a management capacity overseeing emergency services that included the oversight of the emergency department, the ambulance service, the emergency management department, and the community training center.

Table 4.1 captures a brief description of each alumnus participant interviewed.

Table 4.1

*Overview of Alumnus Research Participants*

Participant(s)	Supported Agency/Industry	Stakeholder Category	Years of Experience
2	FEMA	Government	6
1	Consulting Firm	Private	6
1	NYC Department of Health	Government	3
1	Airlines/Transportation	Private	8
2	NYC Emergency Management	Government	7
1	Healthcare	Nonprofit	3
2	Transportation Agency	Quasi-Government	3
1	Texas A&M Extension Service	Private	10
1	NYC Department of Transportation	Government	10
1	NYC Hospital	Government	19

The three college professors who agreed to participate in the study all had over 20 years of experience in the field of emergency management, and they had been directly involved in at least one major disaster event. The gender demographics of the participants in the project manager focus group included three males. Two participants were White and one participant categorized his ethnicity as *other*. The ages of the participants ranged from the mid-40s to the early 60s. The biographical information for the participants in the project manager professor focus-group include:

**Participant 14.** Participant 14 was a trainer for a municipal health department and an adjunct professor. He had over 20 years of experience in the field of emergency management. Participant 14 was a certified emergency manager (CEM) and master exercise practitioner.

**Participant 15.** Participant 15 was the director of emergency management for a quasi-governmental transportation agency and an adjunct professor. He was a former NYPD police officer and a CEM. Participant 15 had over 30 years of experience in the field of emergency management.

**Participant 16.** Participant 16 was a highly decorated fire chief for the Fire Department City of New York (FDNY) and an adjunct professor. Participant 16 had 30 years of experience in the field of emergency management.

Members of the focus group, at the time of the interviews, served as project managers in the program at the research study site. See Table 4.2 for a brief description of each focus group member interviewed.

Table 4.2

*Description of Project Manager Professor Focus-Group Participants*

Participant	Industry/Agency	Stakeholder Category	Years of Experience
1	Public Health	Government	20+
2	Transportation	Quasi-Government	30+
3	FDNY	Government	30

The participants in the second focus group represented the clients that engaged in a partnership with the MCNY MPA EDM program. These clients enabled students to take part in client-based learning at their facilities coupled with classroom instruction that

was provided by the MCNY project manager professors. The gender demographics of the client focus-group participants included three males. One participant was White and two participants were African American/Black. The ages of the participants ranged from the mid-30s to the early 50s. The biographical information of the participants of the client focus-group include:

***Participant 17.*** Participant 17 was the director of EMS for a private hospital in New York City. He was responsible for the coordination of EMS resources and for providing training to his personnel. In addition to his primary employment as director of EMS, he did private consulting in emergency preparedness and exercise design. Participant 17 had 20 years of experience in the field of emergency management and holds the CEM certification.

***Participant 18.*** Participant 18 was a director of emergency preparedness for a large hospital in New York City. He was responsible for preparing and training hospital staff to address emergencies that an urban hospital might face on a daily basis. Participant 18 is an alumnus of the MCNY MPA EDM program and is very familiar with the Constructive Action process. He had six years of experience in the field of emergency management.

***Participant 19.*** Participant 19 was an operations manager for a major disaster relief organization. He was responsible for the training, coordination, and response of volunteers to local disasters. Participant 19 trained both youths and adults to prepare them for response to routine emergencies, such as building fires and large-scale disasters, such as hurricanes. This participant had over 30 years of experience in the field of emergency management.

Each client participants oversaw project operations at their respective sites under the supervision of the MCNY professors. The clients participants were employed at private, government, and nonprofit agencies (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

*Description of Client Focus-Group Participants*

Participant	Industry/Agency	Stakeholder Category	Years of Experience
1	Hospitals	Private	20+
2	Hospitals	Government	6
3	Disaster Relief	Nonprofit	30+

**Descriptive analysis of observations conducted.** To gain a better understanding of the projects the alumnus participants conducted, it was important to provide general background information about some of the processes they participated in. Current student participants conducting their client-based service learning projects were observed in their field environment. The researcher used notes to capture two observations that took place at a large hospital in New York City.

The first observation consisted of students performing a risk analysis for their client. The observation took place in the vicinity of an emergency room within a large municipal hospital in New York City. There were four student participants, one instructor participant, one client participant, and one hospital police officer (not a study participant) who were present for the risk-analysis component of the client-based service-learning project. The client and the officer assisted the observation participants in gaining access to restricted areas in the emergency room area. These individuals also provided information to the observation participants when they were asked questions. The

observation participants were provided with maps and a copy of the Hospital Emergency Management Program Assessment form from the client. The assessment consisted of 53 questions with captions consisting of a pre- and post-visit questions that included a comments section. The students used these tools to conduct a risk assessment as part of their client-based service-learning project.

The students were observed conducting a risk assessment of the adjoining areas of the hospital's emergency room including all external patient-receiving areas. The student participants were observed by the researcher while they were developing several types of knowledge and skills during this process of the client-based service-learning project. The student participants were observed for approximately one hour. Their assessment culminated in the development of an actual risk assessment for the hospital.

The second observation consisted of a tabletop exercise which the student participants facilitated for the hospital staff that their client supported. The observation took place in an emergency operations center (EOC) within a large municipal hospital in New York City. There were four student participants, one instructor participant, one client participant, two external evaluators, two observers and approximately 20 hospital staff members (none of whom were observation participants) who attended the exercise. The student participants facilitated various scripted scenarios to their audience, which were laid out in chronological order. The facilitator provided additional information and personnel and increased the urgency of receiving feedback from the hospital staff. This enabled the staff to react to each scenario by using the knowledge they possessed and by utilizing existing hospital procedures. At the conclusion of the tabletop exercise, the hospital staff and client were able to identify some shortcomings that their procedures did

not cover and the need to reevaluate them. The implementation of additional protocols and the need for active shooter training for all personnel who worked in the hospital would become mandatory. The participants were observed for a period of 2 hours and 30 minutes.

**Cross analysis of the individual interviews, focus groups, and observations.**

Following the 13 individual interviews, the two focus groups, and two observations, the data analysis resulted in 189 individual codes. Six emerging themes and 18 sub-themes were developed after further analysis. The themes that emerged and provided context to the overall experiences of the study participants were (a) development of skills/knowledge, (b) theory to practice, (c) client commitment and engagement, (d) client-based service-learning benefits, (e) reflective thinking, and (f) networking opportunities. The major themes correlate to the three research questions in this study supported by the frequency of the sub-themes (Table 4.4).

A detailed description of all of the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the data along with sample quotes that substantiate them follow. These themes and sub-themes best describe the converging perspectives of the participants and the observations made by the researcher in an attempt to answer the research questions of this study.

***Theme 1: skills/knowledge.*** This theme captured participant perceptions on the benefits they received as a result of taking part in a client-based service-learning project. All 13 alumnus participants taking part in the study believed the development of skills was one of the main benefits derived from the client-based service-learning program. A total of eight alumnus and two project manager professors felt that the retention of lessons learned proved valuable given that they were transferable into their work settings



upon graduation. Lastly, five alumnus participants identified the importance of learning and grasping emergency management terminology.

Table 4.4

*Frequencies of Sub-Themes in Alumnus Participant Interviews*

Theme Number	Theme	Sub-Theme	(n)	%
1	Skill/Knowledge	Development of skills	13	100
		Retention of Lessons Learned	8	62
		Terminology	5	38
2	Theory to Practice	Real-World Applications	11	85
		Hands-On Approach	11	46
		Thinking Strategies	13	100
3	Client Commitment & Engagement	Positive Buy-In	6	46
		Neutral Buy-In	10	77
		Negative Buy-In	13	100
4	Client-Based Service Learning Benefits	Student Benefits	13	100
		Client Benefits	11	85
		Institutional Benefits	2	15
5	Reflective Thinking	Journaling as an Instructional Tool	7	54
		Reflection Paper and Notetaking	10	77
		After-Action Review and Reflective Discussion	9	69
6	Networking Opportunities	Internships	7	54
		Job Shadowing	4	31
		Employment Opportunities	9	69

*Sub-theme: development of skills/knowledge.* The development of skills and general knowledge was a major factor in preparing students for the field of emergency management. During client-based service-learning projects, alumnus participants developed emergency management skills, which included hazard vulnerability

assessments, GIS mapping, risk assessments, emergency operations plans, and conducting an after-action review. All 13 alumnus participants taking part in this study considered this area of high importance for obtaining the necessary skills and knowledge to prepare them to be an emergency manager in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These alumnus participants stated that these products developed for the clients were applicable to the needs of the field.

One client focus group participant shared the importance of learning skill sets from the emergency and disaster management program at MCNY. The participant stated, "Yeah, there are a lot of skills that you get from it [client-based service-learning project]. . . . writing it up for example, writing a plan okay, writing an after action report, how to do a matrix, . . . the components of the matrix, like who's responsible and for what . . . it can be modifiable, of course, and so forth, and the target capabilities list, you know, all these things that fall into play so that when they [the students] go out there in the field, they can say I can do this."

*Sub-theme: retention of lessons learned.* The alumnus participants considered the application and retention of the lessons learned component as a key takeaway from the program. For example, alumnus participants revealed that learned experiences from the client-based service-learning project had led into professional work outside their academic institution. One respondent spoke about how this type of learning process enabled him to retain the lessons he learned and he applied them to his job.

It is after you've completed the project, it's after some time has gone by, and it's after you really even have in the forefront of your mind. But as you're doing your day to day job, and you're trying to do these processes beginning to end in a

technical way and through the actual proper steps, you know, you feel like some of the more capacity built.

A total of eight alumnus participants expressed the importance of retention. Seven of the alumnus participants had positive experiences of retaining knowledge learned from their client-based learning projects. One alumnus participant shared that he believed that this factor was important but he had experienced some loss of knowledge and skills after graduation. While he did not remember everything, he felt very prepared for developing and executing plans. Also, he found he had improved in some areas that pertained directly to his employment. He stated,

I have retained some of what I have learned, although some of the skills are perishable. . . . Most of the applications I personally do not have exposure to except for “plans” I found that I had a great improvement in writing, reviewing plans, and understanding plans.

*Sub-theme: terminology.* The project manager professor focus group participants and alumnus participants viewed the issue of grasping terminology in emergency management to be essential in both academia and in the field. Participating in client-based service learning exposes students to how terminology is used in the field. Terminology aids both students and practitioners with baseline knowledge in linking basic emergency management principles to the field environment. A project manager professor participant described that emergency management students must understand basic skills and tasks, which include understanding terminology well before developing a service-learning project for a given client. The respondent stated,

Students have to first understand the basics of emergency management, have a foundation. They have to understand the terminology, then they have to do an assessment of the community that they are working with. They have to understand the culture of that community and the services of the resources available in that community.

The alumnus participants shared their experiences on how terminology coexists in the classroom and in the workplace. One alumnus participant described grasping emergency management terminology as being essential in the workplace. In relation to his client-based service-learning project experience, he stated,

You get to see what the practitioners are seeing in an academic setting at the same time. Yeah, we get to see how they speak and how, if they say if someone calls for a “bus,” they need an ambulance; they don’t need a school bus! Being able to understand that and see how they interact with each other. Awesome!

Another alumnus participant expressed how the opportunity of experiential learning enabled her to make the connection between terminologies discussed in class and how they apply to what is taking place in the field. She stated,

So, it was one of those instances where you think you’re in school, and you’re like, I don’t know why they keep harping on this; I’ll never see this again. And then I remember when I probably moved on to one of my plans here at my agency; definitely within the first year . . . and I was like oh, look, there’s one of the words! So, that was one of the first I would say that I can remember one of the ah hah moments to say okay, this vocabulary does exist, it’s doesn’t just exist in the classroom, but it does exist in the world of emergency management.

*Theme 2: theory to practice.* The participants were asked to share their perceptions of the intersection between the classroom and the practice of emergency management. All of the alumnus participants shared that the concept of theory to practice led to real-world applications, hands-on-opportunities, and a host of thinking strategies. Of the 13 alumnus participants, 11 believed that classroom learning became more apparent when its application became necessary. Theory was perceived as useful when it was needed or helpful in a real-life situation. The alumnus participants articulated the need for education to provide them with some knowledge to apply to real-life situations. They perceived the value in applying theory where fits into preparing students for the real-world of emergency management. These same alumnus participants also reflected on their experiences working with professionals in the field. They believed that the client-based service-learning process availed many hands-on-opportunities for them that were conducive to learning. Finally, the alumnus participants believed that by finding the appropriate theory and where it fits can be applied to inductive processes in real-life situations.

All 13 alumnus participants and one field observation revealed that the use of thinking strategies were of key importance in both the classroom and the field. The usage of logic and critical thinking became the forefront of discussion by the all participants in how they were actually applied in practice. One project manager professor participant from the focus group shared that students must utilize thinking strategies to overcome obstacles that the field renders practitioners on a routine basis. Both alumnus participants and the project manager professor focus group participants felt the client-based service-

learning process in MCNY's Constructive Action process was a superior teaching method compared to traditional classroom teaching styles.

*Sub-theme: real-world applications.* The alumnus participants viewed that the client-based service-learning process provided a living context from the classroom, which was supported by theoretical studies culminating into viable results. The alumnus participants felt that they were able to provide tangible deliverables to the client while enhancing their student portfolios. They also believed that, at times, a concept is not truly understood by the students until they can experience it in a real-life situation. The alumnus participants noted that the study of theory itself does not cover real-life processes in a field environment. However, they felt this particular learning process lent itself to the collaboration with others and gave them a general sense of dealing with the emergency management culture. One alumnus participant described his experience with collaboration during his client-based service-learning process. He stated, "A lot of collaboration, a lot of being able to call and being able to work with different organizations that you wouldn't have had contact with before."

Another alumnus participant described her client-based service-learning project as being solution oriented. She stated,

We were doing real-world work; we were actually thinking through legitimate problems and how to solve something that's actual, it's not theoretical. And so I think that's, I take that into my job now and there are issues that come up [at the respondent's agency] and my first question is well, how can we fix it, how can we solve it? It's one thing to talk about it, but how can we actually have a logical practical solution to this problem?

*Sub-theme: hands-on approach.* The alumnus participants noted that throughout the client-based service-learning process, they were given many opportunities to apply theory to practice by utilizing a hands-on approach. The alumnus participants believed this learning process had a real-world context that provided a robust hands-on experience that better prepared them to work in the community. Some participants expressed their concern that they needed more internships in receiving a better hands-on experience from the MCNY MPA EDM program. These same participants also believed that by offering mentorships and job shadowing programs with outside agencies, it could enhance that area within the EDM program. One alumnus participant shared her thoughts as to how she was able to apply and retain knowledge learned from her client-based service-learning project of a senior center. She stated,

I was taking what I was learning in the classroom about hazard vulnerability and applying it to an actual facility in New York. So for me, that was huge, and I did say, oh I get it now, and then throughout the rest of my academic career and even now, at work, things come up, and I have that moment of like oh, oh now I understand.

Another alumnus participant described his class experience in conducting a client-based service-learning project with a private hospital. He stated,

It was very interactive, it got everybody involved in the process, it was great that it developed relationships for the students that weren't already in the field. It really enabled them [the students] to see firsthand, operations of a hospital whether it be a drill, exercise, functional drill . . . .

*Sub-theme: thinking strategies.* All of the 13 alumnus participants viewed there was a necessity to apply various thinking strategies within the field of emergency management. Some alumnus participants shared how they utilized these thinking strategies during their client-based service-learning project. These participants referred to important thinking strategies as: strategic, tactical, and critical thinking. One alumnus shared his perception of tactical thinking during his client-based service-learning project. His comment captures the essence of what several participants felt about the importance of utilizing critical thinking strategies in the field of emergency management.

For this CA, we were extremely tactical, we learned how they [municipal fire department] go out on the road . . . from staging . . . [the students] learned how to create these big-picture visions of how emergency management works. We're not necessarily exposed every day as to how an EMT or how a fireman would go out and do their job and how what we affect up top transfers to how they do their job on the road. The fact that we got that in-grained, in-depth understanding of that, and I was able to help coach my fellow classmates through that process because I'd had that [professional background as a first responder].

A total of seven alumnus participants, all three project manager professor focus group member participants, and the three client focus group member participants believed that utilizing Incident Command System (ICS) studies should be in-depth when taught to students. Some alumnus participants stressed the importance in utilizing ICS as part of the client-based service-learning project in the form of experiential learning. These alumnus participants felt that a more hands-on approach would enhance strategic thinking



skills. One project manager professor focus group member shared his perspective as to how the ICS course develops strategic thinking for students.

I think we have the opportunity to take it one more step. Seriously, . . . there are so many elements of ICS, which develop strategy, which develop planning, which develop operations, which is about logistics, that's a course onto itself . . . but there are so many other aspects of it that build an intelligent approach to how you manage something, that I think that isolating it into four sections is convenient, it probably was necessary, but I think if we honestly look at this, it's a course onto itself because it develops strategic thinking, and I think that's the element of ICS.

One alumnus participant believed that the process of applying critical thinking was very valuable for the field of emergency management. He described a theorist's definition of critical thinking that he utilized during his client-based service-learning project. He stated, “. . . doing a hands-on approach and working things out and seeing how issues arise and how to deal with them.” Critical thinking is an active process in which you think things through in order to solve problems yourself.

During an observation of a risk assessment, student participants at a large metropolitan hospital in New York City were tasked to identify various active-shooter threat scenarios for the hospital emergency room. The instructor played an active role in engaging the students. For example, prior to conducting the exercise, the students were instructed by their professor to record observations and think critically before rendering any actual assessments. Throughout the visit at the hospital, the instructor prompted his students to ask questions of their host and hospital staff to enhance critical thinking.

***Theme 3: client commitment and engagement.*** Several issues articulated by the alumnus participants were situations that affected the amount of commitment and engagement the clients provided toward their service-learning projects. Both alumnus participants and all three project manager professor focus group members determined that clients were more or less helpful based on the amount of buy-in provided to them in the form of interaction and support. These participants concluded that not all clients are equally involved regarding their commitment and engagement toward a given client-based service-learning project. The alumnus participant opinions fell into three categories: positive, neutral, and no buy-in at all.

*Sub-theme: buy-in: positive.* The alumnus participants felt that their experiences were greatly enhanced when the clients granted them access to personnel and organizational resources. Two members of the project manager professor focus group and all 13 alumnus participants felt that client-buy-in was necessary to achieve course objectives and goals. Both the professors and alumnus felt that having access to resources helped them understand the client organization in emergency preparedness services that can be provided to the client. The quote below captures the essence of what one project manager professor felt about the importance of obtaining client commitment.

The students are doing a lot of work, but they don't always have that access that they need, and they do need a lot of time to get an understanding of what the organization is about, and sometimes the client doesn't know what they need. So, you really have to get a pretty good understanding of the operation and what they need.

An alumnus participant stressed the importance of student engagements with the client in gaining familiarity with the organization and its physical structure. She believed that it would assist the client in receiving a better deliverable upon completion of the client-based service-learning project. She shared her point of view:

Once a month that class should either be there, . . . for example if you have a fixed structure, you need to know that structure inside and out. I mean to the point of knowing the whole area around it, knowing how the sewage runs, sewage backs up and floods in a rainstorm and especially here in New York City where you have a new city built on top of an old one, literally.

When the alumnus participants understood their clients' needs through a collaborative approach, they were able to develop a more tangible product for them compared to those who lacked this approach. Some clients readily shared their acceptance or adoption of the deliverables that the students provided in the form of plans and procedures for them.

One alumnus participant used a collaborative approach to engage a national disaster organization in meeting the needs for her cohort's client-based service-learning project. Through a reciprocal process, both the client and students were able to develop tangible deliverables. She stated,

We had to understand what their needs are, and we worked with them, and we revised the document until it really met the needs that they had. So we tried to engage a number of people in the process and solicit their input, and so we developed a product that they were very happy with and they communicated that

with us and, again, it was about continuity planning and succession and developing tangible things that they can utilize.

Another alumni participant described the experience he had with a fire station that had been destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. One deliverable his class was responsible to provide was an HVA for a local fire department. He stated,

We got to present this to the leadership and a bunch of the firemen . . . . We had such a great turnout from them to come and see what we were presenting, it's really hard to get, you know, they're volunteers; they don't have to be there. So we had a lot of the paid guys that were there and which they didn't have to be there either, they weren't on the clock, they didn't have to show up. We had a ton of volunteers come out from the leadership down to new members and a new committee was formed to better documents and to work through implementing this immediately. The fact that this was done so expeditiously, we left the room, when we were done and we left, they went into another room for two hours of reading our documents and implementation and how can we affect this change.

*Sub-theme: buy-in: neutral.* Client buy-in was not as evident for organizations not directly involved with emergency management functions. For example, some private and not-for-profit agencies were only concerned in providing services based on their bottom line. Some alumnus participants felt that their clients' organizational needs superseded student requests, making the exchange process challenging. In some cases, this led to limited engagements with emergency management students. The alumnus participants felt that buy-in from administrators in these types of organizations tended to be marginal at best. Several participants pointed out that administrators from these types of

organizations felt they were burdened with unfunded mandates to upgrade the emergency management plans. In these instances, the alumnus participants felt their time and talents were not maximized.

One alumnus participant believed that the client should have been more engaged in the client-based service-learning process. The client, which was a private hospital, took part in only one planning meeting with the students prior to an exercise. The alumni participant did understand that the client's hospital staff had other obligations and did meet the minimal requirement of an established meeting schedule. She stated,

One external planning meeting. With my class, I'm pretty sure it was not that many, maybe one prior to the exercise itself, but I would have preferred to have the clients learn how to do exercises on their own so that they can actually take away something from us being there.

Another alumni participant felt that the client committed to a client-based service-learning project out of necessity. His comment captures the essence of what several participants felt about students obtaining marginal client commitment.

Students felt the client wouldn't follow up on making adjustments [over time] to the emergency operations plan [students had prepared for the client]. The client just wanted to save money and not invest too many resources into the project. . . . [However] the client became aware of their vulnerabilities as a result of the students conducting a Hazard Vulnerability Assessment [for the client].

*Sub-theme: buy-in: negative.* The alumnus participants noted that when stakeholder commitment to the client-based service-learning project was not solid, student learning and the quality of deliverables ultimately suffered. A majority of the

alumnus participants wished they had more time and accessibility to the client during the client-based service-learning process. One professor from the focus group also noted that students always conveyed to him that they wished more time could be spent with clients during the client-based service learning process. In some cases, the alumnus participants felt that buy-in from the client was difficult to achieve. Some alumnus participants were disappointed in the clients' lack of engagement and low level of commitment toward student projects.

Some clients that participated in the client-based service learning with MCNY did not always embrace the partnership with the vigor that the alumnus participants and faculty expected. The alumnus participants felt that their student project ranked as a low priority for the client, which often ended up on the backburner of their scheduling. Some alumnus participants felt clients would not update or maintain emergency-preparedness-related plans that were developed for them. One alumni participant reflected that she had to constantly advocate on behalf of her class with the client as to the importance of the class project. She stated,

We also have to do a lot of advocacy for why we're there, why we're doing emergency management. When we were meeting department heads, it was definitely always like kind of start from scratch with each individual person that you would encounter so . . . you know, we could create the buy-in for this exercise. As you probably know, emergency management is usually one of those things that falls off to the end of the year because nobody really wants to deal with it. So that was definitely one of those things that I took, I learned from the most. This culture around emergency management working to advocate for

emergency management and then being able to successfully complete an event such as a full-scale exercise with a very difficult client . . . because the competing part already is people wearing four or five different hats. Definitely, exercises was not one thing they wanted to pay a lot of attention to! So as a team, we kind of took in most of the responsibility to do all of the preplanning and the work for them. You know, we got our own evaluators, our own controllers, we got all that, and the hospital just had to like be the players . . . I learned a lot from that experience.

All of the participants from the project manager professor focus group believed that some clients do not always remain committed throughout the client-based learning partnerships. The focus group agreed that this problem needed to be addressed on a continual basis in meeting both student and project expectations. One project manager professor focus group member captured the perspectives of other faculty members regarding the importance of client commitment.

One of the critical variables has to do with stakeholders and the time that the stakeholder, and the commitment of the stakeholder, to the school, to the students in regards to the product. So, that's something that I've seen in the past several times in regards to this whole CA concept. . . . the school has to get a commitment from the stakeholder, it's important, you can't just rely on the students being able to do that. So, it has to be a give and take between the stakeholders and the college, and there has to be some ground rules, too, in regards to the commitment of the client. So [the Emergency and Disaster program Director] does a really good job on that but that is something that is critical to the whole project because

if you're not getting that commitment from the client there's something lacking there.

***Theme 4: client-based service-learning benefits.*** The alumnus participants and clients participants, alike, revealed through their responses that client-based service-learning provides several benefits to all parties involved in the process. Data collected through interviews with the focus groups and observations showed trends in perceptions of how client-based service learning is beneficial to students, clients, and the institution.

*Sub-theme: student benefits.* The alumnus participants shared their views of the benefits of applying leadership skills and a strong connection between classroom learning and practice. For example, four alumnus participants valued the ability to experience a leadership position with the support and guidance of their instructors. One alumni participant shared his experience in taking on a leadership role where he felt accountable for his actions in the decisions he made during his project. He believed that by taking on the role as team leader, it proved to be a valuable experience for him. He stated,

It's such a unique opportunity to be a leader. You know, that's something that I don't think we touched on is that I actually felt like a leader, I felt accountable, and I felt accountable for the subjects I had. Accountability. Yeah, because this is affecting real change for a department that had to turn around . . . , and they had to, this wasn't make believe, it wasn't an exercise, it was . . . something that they had lives which depended on the work that we did, the lives of first responders and citizens.

A majority of the alumnus participants believed that the quality of instruction they received from the program led to strong connections between classroom learning and



practice. Those who had very little emergency management experience felt that a student's perspective, regardless of their background, could be elevated through taking part in the client-based service-learning process. These alumnus participants shared that the process aided students in achieving a proper foundation for the emergency management field.

One participant who was from the project manager professor focus group shared that students working in various fields brought valuable wisdom and diverse experiences to the classroom. He believed this dynamic added a richness and depth to the overall learning experience throughout the program.

The alumnus participants from one client-based service-learning project believed that having diverse skill sets among their fellow classmates provided their client with expertise that enriched the client experience as the result of participating in a service-learning project with MCNY students. One alumni participant shared her view on the quality of instruction she received during her time in the MCNY MPA EDM program.

The variety of instructors, no one was from any specific field . . . and not to knock any of the other programs . . . we had a mix of instructors from both the private and public sectors . . . [sharing] different styles and procedures and things of that nature.

Another alumni participant who was new to the field of emergency management had the perspective of being an outsider or a blank slate regarding the coursework material at MCNY. He stated,

I didn't know the four functions of emergency management until I got to MCNY. I'm sitting in one doctor's class, and I'm saying, "Wait a second, 2 + 2 is 5 here,

you know . . . , You know the Federal Insurance, the FIMA, Federal Insurance Management Agency, okay mitigation handles that, okay I understand now, hey you know, thanks doc.”

Lastly, the project manager professor focus group participants pointed out that some students graduate and seek employment with various local, state, and federal governmental agencies. They believed that students should have an understanding of how first responders operate and view various emergencies. All of the professor participants shared that by providing experiential learning opportunities to students helps them make connections to the field environment. One professor believed that students should be familiar with first-responder viewpoints when formulating emergency plans for their jurisdictions upon graduation. He stated,

So that’s where I come in, my role in some of the courses I teach, and I’ve taught in emergency management, is to give them a little bit of an understanding of the first-responder viewpoint, specifically fire department in regards to some of the other areas like you mentioned COOP [Continuity of Operations Plan] and some of these other areas that we’re going to be touching on in regards to formulating a plan.

*Sub-theme: client benefits.* Two members of the client focus group shared that students bring different perspectives into the organizations they serve. A client participant taking part in a service-learning project shared that people entering into a new organizations pick up problems that people who have been there for a long time might have missed. The client believed that having an outside perspective had enhanced the value of the deliverables the students provided to his organization. This client focus

group member captured the perspectives of other client members in how students provide benefits to outside organizations through a client-based service-learning project.

So when I looked at their risk assessment and, you know, there were just things in there that they saw that I didn't even think about, and I mean that's the beauty of having the different eyes and the different backgrounds coming to your organization, because they start to see things that you missed, and you've been there for a long time, it's easy for you to oversee these things.

*Sub-theme: institutional benefits.* The alumnus participants shared that the MPA EDM program at MCNY received institutional benefits because students favored the pedagogy of service learning used in the context of working with a client. Two alumnus participants agreed that the experiential component was a highly valuable piece of education to bring into the field of emergency management. The growing notoriety of the program became apparent to the alumnus participants when their instructor was approached by a prospective client to lobby for a partnership. One alumni participant believed the institution would benefit by receiving popularity for providing students with employment opportunities. This participant felt that by providing a good program that is known to produce emergency managers is mutually beneficial to all stakeholders.

An example of how the respondents believed this process provided benefits for the institution was also evident in a focus group discussion among the clients who participated in the program. One client stated,

I had brought in *NYPD Shield* to do a presentation. After the presentation, I realized how unprepared we were because nobody really talked about an active shooter, and in that presentation, we had over 50 staff members and everyone in

there was just in awe of what they were talking about. So after that, there were so many questions going around, what we would do, do we have a code or anything like that. We didn't even actually have a plan in place for that yet. That's what started getting the wheels turning, and I started thinking about it. I met with my hospital police director, we started talking about it, and I said you know, maybe I could talk to somebody in MCNY . . . . I ran into [an instructor ] and him and I had a talk and I asked him, you know something, why don't you do this for me, why don't we do an active shooter, and it's all based on that presentation which I realized wow. So that led to a constructive action.

One alumni participant believed it was vital for MCNY's MPA EDM program to maintain partnerships with existing clients and graduates working in the community. This alumni participant pointed out that the institution would benefit in receiving notoriety by providing a good program that was known to produce emergency managers.

Additionally, this participant felt this type of reputation would entice future employers to hire graduates from the program. She stated,

In order to keep the program going, we all have to keep each other in mind, I need you to be good students because I need folks to know that the school is still in existence, and it's still putting out good emergency managers, and you need me to be a good emergency manager so when you show up, they say I want somebody from that program, because [Participant #'s name] came from that program. So, it's just like a wheel.

***Theme 5: reflective thinking.*** The concept of reflective thinking allowed students to connect experience and knowledge drawn from course content to understand main

ideas. The alumnus participants had an opportunity to share their thoughts on how reflective thinking assignments should be administered by their instructors throughout their client-based service-learning process. The alumnus participants believed reflection could be achieved through reflective papers, journaling, note taking, an after-action review (AAR), and a reflective discussion. The majority of alumnus participants interviewed did not utilize a journal or write a reflective paper. Only seven alumnus participants identified that journaling was a good instructional tool to be used by their instructors. Of the alumnus participants, 10 believed reflection paper assignments and notetaking were helpful assignments. A total of nine alumnus participants believed that after-action reviews and reflective discussions provided reflective value in their learning process.

*Sub-theme: journaling as an instructional tool.* The majority of the alumnus participants did not utilize a journal, but most felt that journaling as an instructional tool had value. The alumnus participants did have mixed opinions in this area as it relates to instructional value. Seven out of 13 alumnus respondents believed that journaling provided the students with instructional value. Other alumnus participants provided no opinion or believed journaling as an instructional tool had a low value to them.

One alumni participant shared his thoughts on the value of maintaining a journal from the client-based service-learning process. He stated, “It’s a good thing to do because it makes you think about what you experienced, what you learned, what you accomplished, and to put it into some context.”

Another alumni participant believed that maintaining a journal for personal reflection upon completion of the EDM program could prove useful. However, this

participant believed a reflective paper would prove to be a better evaluation tool for instructors to utilize. He stated,

So if this is just for your own benefit, I think a journal could be fine, but if you're trying to enforce it, you're trying to actually hold some accountability [here], I think a paper would be more realistic to have participation across the whole class right? So I know myself, . . . if you told me to just keep a journal on these things and you're never going to read it or collect it, but you want me to keep a journal, I'm probably not going to do it. If you asked me to write a paper, I'm going to probably be more purposeful about it . . . it would force me to go through the exercise, and it is an important exercise, so there's always a value in that kind of thing.

*Sub-theme: reflection papers and note taking.* Although reflection papers were not used during their client-based service-learning projects, 10 alumnus participants felt a reflective paper would have been a good instructional tool. The alumnus participants believed reflection papers to be deliberate in conveying key concepts learned from the coursework. One alumni participant believed that a reflection paper should be discussed in a chronological order, which would lead to a critical examination of what was learned. Another alumni participant shared that her cohort did not have any reflective thinking assignments during her attendance at MCNY. She shared the perspectives of other alumnus participants that a reflection paper would have helped her and other students capture new material better.

I think we [students] would have benefited from [a reflective assignment] that yes, especially somebody like me who was new to the field. . . . but I do think that

writing it all down or capturing [thoughts in] some way would be helpful. But one of the things that we always run into . . . you write these things down and do people actually read it? Like are they actually going to look at it?

One alumni participant felt that the students should produce reflective assignments for their professors as part of their curriculum. He stated,

I would definitely have them [students] reflect on their product(s) [deliverables in the client-based service-learning project] so, one, they can realize what they've done, and they can also realize the potential . . . of what they've done, and realize any mistakes that they've made along the way and can also provide great feedback for the program if they give constructive criticism on how well or how badly it went.

Approximately 10 alumnus participants and one project manager focus group member believed that note taking was an essential part of the EDM curricula in capturing knowledge and experiences. A few participants stated that the note taking of facts and observations was useful for the application in the field. One professor participant captured the importance of taking and retaining notes when taking part in a client-based service-learning environment. The professor believed referring to one's notes can aid emergency management students in the decision making process in a given field situation.

I think when they do something, they should understand why they did it and the context that they did it and certainly the time and place that they did it. So I've always asked them, when you make a decision, formulate why you made the decision and what influenced that decision, because there's always an opportunity

that there's going to be a repeat performance on everything, and if you're going to have something to reference back to, as to why did I do that then, and why shouldn't I do it now. Well, if they're not keeping notes on what they're doing, then what benefit does it have, especially when they're still trying to develop an idea of how this field works.

*Sub-theme: After-action review (AAR) and reflective discussion.* Overall, the alumnus participants, faculty, and clients felt that an AAR was an important element of the program for various reasons. Both the alumnus and professor focus group participants believed that the AAR process was a good instructional tool that reinforced the students' learning and revealed problems their clients faced. The alumnus participants were able to provide advice and useable facts to their clients that were gleaned from the AARs. One client who partnered with the MCNY EDM program shared his experience.

So it was a great learning experience in that we had done drills in the past, but we never did anything as detailed with the help of MCNY, as far as the after-action reports and hot washes; they were really, really detailed. [The students] actually created, developed . . . a template for like a hot wash and after-action report that was a more detailed report that really helped us identify the problems of, say, the exercise to identify what issues that we had within our system.

One project manager professor focus group participant with a background as a fire chief, shared his thoughts concerning how an AAR reinforces lessons learned from a practitioner point of view. He stated,

You can learn a lot from the things that you've done in the past, which reinforces why you do something [in the future]. So we've taken on that after-action review,



we've brought documentation in from the fire service after a major operations [showed the students], it's been very helpful to us [as instructors] to summarize [the event of what was learned]. [As an instructor I am concerned] what you've done [the student], come up with reasoning why you made those decisions and like we've said, lessons learned, lessons reinforced, and it's tied in perfectly to the CA.

While nine alumnus participants felt that the AAR functioned as a good reflective thinking tool, the same number of students believed that the issue of having reflective discussion proved to be of greater importance. There were varying perceptions on when and how these discussions should be incorporated into the learning objectives. Some alumnus participants felt it should take place at the end of the semester and some felt it should be used throughout the program.

One alumnus participant shared her reflective discussion experience that she shared with her classmates who were broken down into a team configuration for the duration of her class project. This participant was a proponent for having reflective discussions throughout the client-based service-learning process. She stated,

We talked about it, it wasn't so specific as taking notes, but I know that we talked about it. My team . . . we had regular meetings, we met every week, we talked about . . . where are we going with this [what the client needs] and [what we learned] . . .

Some alumnus participants felt the reflective discussion should take place at the end of each semester, upon completion of an after-action review/hot wash, and after the client receives their final presentation. One alumnus participant captured the perspectives

of the alumnus participants as to why they believed a reflective discussion should take place at the end of a client-based service-learning project. He stated,

After our CA, . . . we presented it to the whole program including most of the professors and the director . . . of the EDM program, and the president of MCNY also attended . . . we [student's cohort] showed the video that I created, we got great feedback from it. We were asked some very specific questions about the process of going through this, and then afterwards, we kind of did a hot wash with the [project manager] professor and the group [cohort] internally . . . we . . . reflected on, "Okay, what have we done, how can we use this now in the future, not just the products that we've created, but like the tools that we've learned?" It was definitely beneficial to reflect past on it.

Reflection can be captured by students by using variety of methods. One alumnus participant described her perspective of the reflective process by how individuals captured their thoughts and processed them. She stated,

I think that people process things differently. I think reflection is always important, but I think people reflect in different ways, and some people want to write it down, and some people want to talk about it. So, I think you would have to almost individualize it or customize it to the person. But I think that reflection should be a part of it to say, "What did we do here, what did we do well, what were the results, what could we have done better?" I think that's vital!

***Theme 6: networking opportunities.*** The alumnus participants revealed that the client-based service-learning process enabled them to take part in several networking opportunities. A majority of the alumnus participants believed the process led them into

the actual emergency management career path. A total of seven alumnus participants emphasized that internships helped students network, gain additional knowledge, and practical skills. Four alumnus participants believed that job shadowing enabled students in gaining first-hand knowledge the field of emergency management. Employment opportunities also proved to be beneficial, as nine alumnus participants were able to establish networks as a result of their client-based service-learning project.

One alumni participant shared his perspective as to how the case study site enabled him to make connections, establish relationships with his classmates, and network outside of the college. He believed that emergency management would be much more effective in brick-and-mortar schools, because the field of emergency management is all about networking and relationships. This participant stressed that face-to-face contact was essential compared to getting satisfaction out of virtual connections. He stated,

The value I got out of that program is less about the learning and more about the relationships that I've built and just having, I mean honestly, it sounds silly, by just having beers afterwards and still bouncing these things off of each other outside of the classroom, still getting invited to exercises from my other classmates, still getting involved in work they're doing. Just tomorrow, I'll be having a friend of mine from the Department of Health coming over because they're going to, they're looking to solve some . . . . So you're saying collaboration here is . . . . I'm sorry, I know you don't want me beating around words, yes sure, collaboration. But really it's the in person, excuse me, it's

developing relationships, it's a relationship business, this whole field is relationships, and I just don't think you could do it virtually in the same way.

*Sub-theme: internships.* This study emphasized the importance of taking part in an internship with an agency for seven alumnus participants in gaining additional knowledge and practical skills. The participants briefly discussed this area of concern earlier in other themes that emerged. One alumni participant made a personal connection in obtaining experience working with a national disaster recovery organization upon completion of her client-based service-learning project through an internship. This participant continued to maintain a relationship with the organization by supporting them in their efforts when she moved on to work for a state agency. She stated,

I actually went on to continue working with them doing an internship, where I continued to work with one of the organizations . . . associated with [a disaster relief organization]. . . . And I continue to work on some other things that I became really passionate about the work and their cause and their mission, and when I went into my other job [state government agency], I actually reached out to the New Jersey equivalent and made sure that they were integrated in the work that I was doing.

*Sub-theme: job shadowing.* A total of four alumnus participants and one member from the project manager professor focus group believed that job shadowing conveys first-hand knowledge of an occupation to students. This situation allows students to make connections from the classroom to the actual job site. One alumnus felt that shadowing an individual at a job site provided students with a practical opportunity in gaining knowledge. She stated,

If there somehow is a shadowing opportunity, I would highly suggest that MCNY pursues that . . . I know, because I learned mostly by shadowing. For example, we [students] were assigned to the EOC, the Emergency Operations Center, upstairs, it's a big, big floor where it's the city's emergency operations center. When a big disaster happens, agencies report there. It's very intimidating when you first come into New York City Emergency Management. But I learned from doing, I learned from shadowing, and then from being activated. So, if there's some way a grad program can have a shadow program with first responders and a command center, command element, that could be definitely beneficial.

Another alumni participant shared her view on how job shadowing could be utilized within an emergency management curriculum through attending a scheduled drill with various agencies. She said,

One of the things that I probably would suggest is that not doing it on a large scale, of course, because you can't really do it, but if you have 15 agencies participating, especially in the larger drills, you know, take five students, go to five agencies and say can you take these students and have them shadow [your personnel]?

A project manager professor focus group member, who is also employed as a fire chief for the FDNY, conveyed the importance for students to receive a better understanding of emergency management education through job shadowing. He illustrated a learning scenario in how students could understand the inner workings of the ICS approach through job shadowing. Participant # 16 believed that the job shadowing technique allowed students to gain first-hand knowledge of the various components of the

ICS. He stated the essence of the importance of obtaining necessary knowledge for the field through job shadowing:

[The] fire service adopted it [ICS]. During 9/11, I was there, I was on the first incident management team for FDNY down at Ground Zero, and been out west a number of times utilizing ICS with the forest service personnel who were the experts in it, you know? They're the ones who developed it in the early 70s dealing with the forest fires across jurisdictions and all that, handling large-scale events, that kind of thing. We partnered up with the forest service here at MCNY, sending students out on a forest fire, just recently, to get better on shadowing people in various components of ICS. So, as you can tell, I'm a strong advocate of utilizing it; it's used at all different levels, it's something that the students should have a strong understanding of, that's my opinion on it.

*Sub-theme: employment opportunities.* Most of the alumnus participants found that the client-based service-learning process benefited them the most by obtaining employment upon the completion of their college education. Nine alumnus participants were able to gain employment based on relationships made with clients and their associates upon graduation. This also included connections made with fellow students who were employed in the field of emergency management. One alumni participant believed that the knowledge gained from the client-based service-learning project better prepared students for working in the community. He stated, “[The client-based service-learning process] definitely accelerated people’s opportunities as far as getting a job in the career path of emergency management. So it definitely was helpful.”

Some alumnus participants were interested in seeking employment as a consultant to support government and private-sector interests within field of emergency management. These alumnus participants realized the value in emergency managers constantly updating and maintaining their technological capacities to better serve their communities. One alumni participant shared a connection he made with a municipality as a result of his client-based service-learning project. He stated, “I continue to do private work with [a municipality] and their constituents based off the introduction that was made through our CA.”

A detailed description of all themes and sub-themes emerged from the data along with sample quotes that substantiated them. These themes and sub-themes best described the converging perspectives of the participants and the observations made by the researcher in an attempt to answer the research questions of this study.

**Triangulation of data.** In order to test for trustworthiness of the data collected, three sources of data were used—in-depth interviews, focus groups, and observations. The findings revealed that the data collected from these three sources were congruent. For example, there was consistency across two types of data collected in response to the research question, What were the benefits of the program? Several respondents who participated in the in-depth interviews and focus groups found that the most beneficial aspect of the program was to be able identify problems in an organization and develop and implement resolutions to address the problems. There were consistencies in the type of benefits realized. Trends in responses include students gaining a better understanding of terminology used in the field, leadership skills, peer-to-peer learning, and feelings of empowerment to offer valuable real-life recommendations to clients. Finally, the data

from the transcripts revealed students believed the client-based service-learning process gave them many opportunities to apply theory to practice, utilizing a hands-on approach. All of these responses were consistent among the respondents during the one-on-one interviews and during the client and faculty focus group discussions.

The respondents' perceptions on the benefits received from the program, were also consistent with data collected from the observations. During a tabletop exercise, the researcher was able to observe interactions between the student, client, and instructors that showed the students linking theories learned from the classroom and applied them to a real-life hospital setting. For example, the students were very aggressive in soliciting feedback from hospital incident command staff (HICS) in response to an active-shooter situation. It appeared that the questions the students used to probe the client were reflective of the theories discussed in class. This resulted in the client being able to use the knowledge they already possessed on protocols for the existing hospital during life-threatening situations. The data collected from the observations revealed peer-to-peer learning took place during the end of the session where the students were able to identify some shortcomings that the client's procedures did not currently cover for their client's organization. Other data collected from the observations that were consistent with data collected from the interview and focus group transcripts were students expressing signs of empowerment from realizing they were providing valuable solutions to real-life threatening situations. For example, the researcher observed students making several verbal and physical expressions of satisfaction when they learned that, as a result of their table top exercise, the client made several recommendations for changing the hospital's protocol for training all staff on how to handle an active-shooter situations.



The alumnus participants believed that some clients became disengaged, which affected their behaviors and the outcomes of their service-learning projects. They reported that clients became disengaged and unresponsive to student emails and phone calls over the course of the project. The professor participants from the project manager focus group agreed that maintaining client engagement and commitment was a critical variable in developing a viable emergency preparedness plan for any client.

In addition to the congruency among multiple sources of data collected for this study, the findings were also consistent with several studies in the literature (Drucker et al, 1996; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008). There was often a disconnect in the engagement process during client-based service-learning projects on the part of the student (Vernon & Ward, 1999; Worall, 2007). The students, in turn, complained that there was a lack of response from clients in the development of an agreed-upon product for the client (Killian, 2004; Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

### **Summary of Results**

This research study analyzed how experiential learning through the use of a client-based service-learning process can prepare emergency management professionals upon graduating from an Emergency and Disaster Management master's program. Specifically, a case study was used to examine the master's program for emergency management at the Metropolitan College of New York. It explored the extent to which client-based services were a valuable component of the program that prepared professionals in the field of emergency services. The research questions guided the

coding of the data into six major themes and 18 sub-themes, and eight major findings were discovered.

There were eight significant findings from the study. These findings offer practical insight to institutions that are providing higher education programs in emergency management at the master's level. The findings offer awareness on the opportunities that client-based service learning provides to students in higher education emergency management programs.

**Finding 1: Client-based service learning builds networking capacities for students.** The alumnus participants discussed the importance of obtaining networking opportunities in the field of emergency management. A majority of these participants spoke about the capacity to network and build relationships with people currently employed in the field. These participants felt strongly that networking with others would enable them to be in a better position to attain employment. Of the alumnus participants, seven believed that taking part in the client-based service-learning process, coupled with an internship, would make them more marketable for employers. Several participants felt that they could gain additional knowledge and practical skills through this combination.

A total of nine alumnus participants believed that the client-based service-learning process enabled them to attain employment upon completion of their college education. More than half of the participants shared that their service-learning experience in dealing with real clients shaped their ability in being gainfully employed immediately upon graduation. Some participants shared that while participating in the program, they were able to establish and maintain a solid relationship with the client they served while in college. Of all of the alumnus participants, only two were able to make connections with

the client's associates who served them in the capacity as a private-sector partner or a vendor. Upon graduating, these participants reconnected with these associates and are currently employed as consultants.

**Finding 2: Client-based service learning provides students with many opportunities to apply theory to practice in a real-world setting.** The alumnus participants believed that theory was useful when it can be applied to real-life situations in emergency management. Most of these participants believed that the client-based service-learning project provided them with the ability to experience real-life processes while being in a field environment. The alumnus participants believed that the client-based service-learning process, itself, provided many opportunities for them to apply learned theories from class in their projects using a hands-on approach.

Some alumnus participants felt strongly that additional opportunities should be added to the client-based service-learning process to enhance the real-world setting approach. These participants believed that learning opportunities in the form of mentorships, internships, and job shadowing could aid students in gaining additional field experience.

**Finding 3: Reinforcement of reflective thinking assignments used in client-based service-learning projects can be beneficial to a student's learning process.** The alumnus participants discussed several variations of reflective thinking as a result of this study. While more than half of the respondents believed reflective thinking was important in the process of learning, there were varying points of view on how and when reflective thinking should be utilized in the program. The literature supports this finding given that the students reflected on their experiences differently. The majority of the alumnus

participants interviewed did not utilize a journal or write a reflective paper. However, a few participants felt that journaling as an instructional tool had value. Some of the alumnus participants felt a reflective paper would be a good instructional tool for the instructors to utilize. Other participants believed that note taking was an essential method that students should utilize during their client-based service-learning process.

Most alumnus participants felt that it was important for them and the client to participate in an after-action review (AAR) during the client-based service-learning process. Overall, nine of the alumnus participants believed that the AAR process was a good instructional tool that was beneficial to both their learning process and the client in identifying organizational problems. These participants found they were able to provide advice and useable deliverables to their clients that were gleaned from the AARs.

**Finding 4: Building leadership capacity is an important aspect of the client-based learning project.** Many of the alumnus participants identified leadership as a vital skill to be able to both learn and be applied within the field of emergency management. Of the alumnus participants, four found that having the ability to experience a leadership position with the support and guidance of others was very valuable. These participants believed that peer-to-peer assistance enabled them to practice leadership throughout their client-based service-learning process. The alumnus participants stated they were empowered by these individuals, and they were able to learn from one another throughout the process. Specific ways in which the respondents believed leadership development was achieved during the client-based service-learning process was through accountability. The alumnus participants learned how client-based projects made them feel more

accountable to the program. These respondents revealed that this skill was transferable in preparing students to take on the role as an emergency manager.

**Finding 5: Client-based projects facilitate the process of collaboration that contributes to student's ability to become immersed into the program.** Some of the alumnus participants felt that the client-based service-learning process enabled them to collaborate with others in the field of emergency management. The participants believed that students learned to work with clients on emergency management related issues through a collaborative approach. Some alumnus participants believed that the client-based service-learning process allowed students to become solution oriented through the collaboration of client partnerships. Through a reciprocal process, both the client and students were able to develop project expectations and goals.

The alumnus participants shared that a collaborative approach allowed students to obtain additional insight and feedback from clients during their client-based service-learning process. A few participants felt that collaborating with their client gave them a general sense of dealing with the emergency management culture. One alumnus participant stated the trend of collaboration could begin in college during the client-based service-learning process in effort to reduce the silo mentality that affects many organizations today. This same alumnus participant further stated students would benefit from collaborating with students of other cohorts within their institution of higher education. The literature supports this finding that the field of emergency management is moving to a more collaborative approach.

**Finding 6: Not all clients are equally committed or engaged to client-based service-learning projects.** Issues around client commitment and engagement were found

to affect the outcomes of many alumnus participants' client-based service-learning experiences. These participants believed that each client committed and engaged with them differently during the various stages of the client-based service-learning process. Three sub-themes, such as positive buy-in, neutral-buy-in, and negative buy-in, were essential to several alumnus participants.

The alumnus participants who received positive buy-in from their client were able to obtain easy access to both personnel and resources, collaborate with the client, and produce tangible deliverables that resulted in a positive experience. These participants felt that they were better able to engage their client through accessing their personnel and resources to meet course objectives. Some alumnus participants believed clients that were more responsive to them engaged in a dialogue that enabled collaboration to take place. In turn, the alumnus participants and the client were able to develop a more tangible product for them compared to those who lacked this approach.

All of the alumnus participants noted that the clients, overall, had a neutral buy-in perspective when it came to addressing emergency preparedness issues for their organizations. Some alumnus participants believed that when they encountered clients that either did not understand the importance of emergency preparedness or were undermanned, they received a low-priority buy-in. However, these clients were willing to participate in the client-based service-learning project with the students. The alumnus participants understood that most clients had other responsibilities to their organizations and, as a result, it was difficult for these clients to engage with EMD students. Several participants pointed out that administrators from these types of organizations felt they were burdened with unfunded mandates to upgrade the emergency management plans. In

these instances, the alumnus participants had mixed feelings as to whether their time and talents were properly maximized.

All of the alumnus participants within the study strongly believed that negative buy-in produced a disengaged stakeholder in commitment, which reflected poorly on the student's ability to meet course objectives. The alumnus participants wished they had more time and accessibility to the clients throughout the client-based service-learning process. In some cases, a few alumnus participants felt buy-in from the client was difficult to achieve. Many alumnus participants further believed that the quality of deliverables to the client ultimately suffered at times as a result of this behavior. A few alumnus felt that the plans they developed for a client would not be utilized for the client's organization. These same participants shared that they felt this way due to the inconsistent engagement they received from their client.

**Finding 7: Students identify organizational problems for clients and some recommendations for change are implemented.** The alumnus participants felt they became part of the solution process for the client during their service-learning process. The alumni shared that clients utilized their recommendations and deliverables from the client-based service-learning project for their organizations. The literature supports that student recommendations impact client organizations ranging from debating an issue to the actual implementation of specific changes in policies and programs (Bushouse, 2005; Sprague & Hu, 2015). Further, the literature revealed that student work benefited client organizations through their assessments and the production of new tools and resources (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). Client participants shared that students were able to identify operational issues that needed to be addressed, and the clients found the need to

implement new policies and procedures. Client focus group participants stated that the students provided their organizations with a fresh perspective when it came to identifying improvements. One client participant believed that students brought an outside perspective by addressing what employees were not aware of or were dismissing as unimportant.



## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to gather perceptions from alumni, clients, and professors to gain insight into the extent to which client-based learning is essential to the preparedness of emergency management professionals enrolled the Masters in Public Administration Emergency and Disaster Recovery program offered at the Metropolitan College of New York. The findings offer insight into current delivery practices, the strengths of the program, as well as the challenges that need to be addressed in institutions of higher education that offer emergency management programs. This chapter provides an overview of the implications of the findings, the limitations of the study, and recommendations for future research.

### **Implications of Findings**

The overall results from the findings suggest that the MPA in Emergency and Disaster Management program at Metropolitan College of New York offers an enriched program that is equipping new emergency management professionals with the skills needed to respond the new 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. These results offer practical insight to institutions that provide higher education programs in emergency management at the master's level. The findings offer awareness of the opportunities client-based service learning provides to students in higher education for emergency management programs. These overall findings provide value to administrators as well as contribute to the

literature on the utilization of client-based service-learning applications in emergency management curricula. Seven implications resulted from this study.

**Implication 1: Administrators for emergency management graduate programs might examine client-based services as a pedagogical approach for experiential learning.** At the core of experiential learning is the opportunity to learn in environments where students can apply theory to practice in real-life settings. The findings from this study revealed that students' desire for more diversity in the offerings of experiential opportunities which included internships, mentorships, and job shadowing. Administrators responsible for developing curricula for emergency management programs might review their processes to identify potential sites for experiential learning and determine if there is a need to diversify their portfolio of partnerships. The alumnus participants in the study believed that having the opportunity to participate in client-based service learning increased their capacity as new leaders in the field. This process offered them the opportunities to meet and develop relationships with seasoned professionals in the field. This ability to network led students to new career opportunities, and further equipped them with vital leadership skills. In spite of the benefits to client-based learning, many participants believed that an internship and job shadowing component would be beneficial additions to the client-based service-learning program. Providing a combination of these two components would make graduates of the program more marketable in the workplace. Finally, the alumnus participants thought mentoring was another important factor in preparing them for the field.

**Implication 2: Reflective thinking is an essential skill students must achieve in order to maximize the benefits of a tool for learning for students participating in**

**client-based service-learning projects.** The project managers and instructors for emergency management graduate programs might examine their approach for helping the students develop their capacity as reflective thinkers as well as to put the processes in place to measure the extent to which these skills have been mastered. The findings from the study suggest students recognize the value of reflective thinking. In spite of the value of this skill, several alumnus respondents were not taking advantage of the recommended assignments to reinforce skill development with reflective thinking. Administrators responsible for developing curricula and pedagogy for emergency management programs might examine the various approaches instructors use to make the process of reflection an integral part of the students' learned experiences. Administrators might examine the current systems that are in place to hold the students accountable for enhancing skills in the area of reflection development. What processes are in place to ensure students are aware of faculty expectations for developing skills in reflective thinking?

**Implication 3: Building leadership capacity during client-based service learning promotes growth in areas of teamwork and collaboration.** Graduate programs in emergency management are designed to develop leaders for the new 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. The findings from this study offer rich examples where MCNY's graduate program offers opportunities for students to develop into leaders in their own right. Several alumnus participants discussed the important role of the team leader, which contributed to their growth and development; the assignments they received, which promoted team work; and the collaboration they engaged in, were all examples of how the respondents expressed the sense of empowerment they gained through the program. This can only be achieved through a form of experiential learning in which proper

guidance and supervision is provided by an instructor. Faculty responsible for developing curricula and pedagogy might examine the theoretical and conceptual frameworks under which current curriculum and pedagogy are designed for their program.

**Implication 4: Administrators might examine systems that are already in place to ensure clients who offer their sites for experiential learning are committed to achieving the prescribed expectations of the program.** The findings from the study show that not all clients are equally committed or engaged to client-based service-learning projects. All of the alumnus participants in this study indicated that client commitment and engagement affected their behavior and the outcome of their service-learning projects. Administrators might examine the administrative structures in place that formalize the agreements between clients and the institution. They may be interested in examining language in the contracts that outline the terms and conditions of the agreement, methods for reporting, and processes for providing support to the client.

Overall, the findings from the study suggest the emergency management program at Metropolitan College of New York is providing students with the important skills needed to prepare professionals for the new 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. This section provided an overview of the impact the findings from the study might have on the delivery of educational programs from other institutions of higher education offered to students.

### **Limitations**

The decision to use a qualitative method for collecting data was designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the Emergency and Disaster Management MPA program at MCNY. In addition to gaining data through two observations, a small sample size of 19

respondents was used for collecting and analyzing data. The particularistic feature in qualitative studies makes it difficult to consider how the findings can be generalized to some broader set of conditions except those displayed in this study (Yin, 2011). Because the findings from this study are unique to a phenomenon taking place in a local setting, the findings are not generalizable.

The researcher is an adjunct professor at the research site and is a recognized professional with over 30 years in the field of emergency management. In conducting all of the interviews, in the observations, while analyzing the data, and in presenting the findings, it is possible the researcher may have unintentionally inserted his biases into the study and the results. However, the researcher was able to employ select methods to reduce bias. This included triangulating the collected data from multiple sources of data and employing an independent consultant to verify the coding process used for analyzing data. In addition, the findings from this study were consistent with data from a national study conducted by Kapucu and Connolly Knox (2013) as to how service learning can be utilized in emergency management higher education programs as well as with the literature on the pedagogy of client-based service learning (McEntire, 2002; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008).

## **Recommendations**

**Enhance networking capabilities for students through the pedagogy of client-based service learning.** Administrators need to develop a portfolio of clients who are willing to offer a variety of experiential opportunities in the form of internships, for job shadowing of seasoned professionals in the field, and by incorporating additional mentorships. Administrators might take greater responsibility in matching client projects

with students to ensure student learning objectives are properly met. The findings from the study reveal the difficulty in engaging clients who offer the appropriate settings for experiential learning. Administrators responsible for recruitment might draw upon theories of collaboration to develop a marketing strategy designed to create partnerships where all stakeholders find value in participating in client-based learning. Through a more collaborative approach, practitioners and educational institutions that maintain emergency management programs can address the issue of providing student support for taking part in client-based service-learning projects.

**Reflective thinking methods should be incorporated within the client-based service-learning process.** Faculty responsible for developing curriculum might draw upon the literature regarding reflections (Astin et al., 2000; Permaul, 2009; Russell & Fisher, 2014; Waldner & Hunter, 2008) to find ways to integrate a reflection requirement within the program design to reinforce student-learning in this area. Guidance to achieve reflection milestones should be provided by instructors at the onset of the client-based service-learning process. The measurement of student performance can be assessed through the development of a rubric by an instructor at the beginning of each semester. The rubric could evaluate student achievements in the form of documenting new learned knowledge and what it means to them. Reflective assignments aid the instructor in obtaining feedback as to what is going on within the client-based service-learning process from a student's point of view.

Professors should have students take copious field notes at client sites to capture their experiences and to aid them in the production of reflection assignments. Students can incorporate learned theories, case studies, and knowledge gained from FEMA

independent study courses into their reflective assignments. Administration should oversee this process to ensure this pedagogical approach is being properly utilized. A majority of the alumnus participants felt that writing reflection papers and note taking were most beneficial to their learning process.

**Build leadership capacity through course development using leadership theories.** Given the limited empirical evidence on leadership development in the field of emergency management, administrators might draw upon leadership theories created for the development of leaders in other sectors, such as Avolio and Bass's (1994, 1995) theories on transformational leadership, Tichy's (1979, 1983) theories for leading organizations, servant leadership theory, contingency theories, and situational leadership theories are all theories that faculty might draw upon for instructions in leadership development. Transformational leadership style lends itself to the development of a collaborative environment, which is well suited for the emergency management culture. Emergency management program faculty should examine research conducted by leadership study experts in determining the appropriate styles that are most suitable in preparing emergency managers for the field.

Curriculum developers should incorporate double-loop learning as part of the curricula (Argyris, 2008). This learning occurs when an error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying norms, policies, and objectives. The double-loop theory can be utilized by new emergency managers in how their duties relate to correcting and modifying organizational, governmental, and community change. Emergency managers are often tasked to provide recommendations to political figures in establishing plans and policies for a given community.

Additionally, building leadership capacity for future emergency managers must start with the addition of leadership literature specific to the field of emergency management (Canton, 2013; Stern, 2013; Van Wart & Kapucu, 2011). Researchers might consider examining leadership and decision-making processes in how emergency managers meet the challenges to a given disaster. Researchers, instructors, and practitioners in the field can draw upon a host of case studies to accomplish the task of preparing tomorrow's emergency managers.

**Build leadership capacity through client-based learning projects and other experiential learning methods.** Emergency management is an applied field requiring practitioners to put theory into action. Newly hired emergency managers are expected to perform under stressful conditions while providing favorable results. The learning curve is extremely steep for this position because this occupation is results orientated with a small margin for error. Administrators of emergency management graduate programs are strongly encouraged to provide an experiential component within their emergency management curricula. The inclusion of simulation exercises, games, and role playing as part of service-learning projects needs to be further explored by educators. These exercises can provide emergency management students with realistic insight in preparing them to take on a leadership role upon graduation. The utilization of experiential learning to sharpen leadership skills provides for a practical solution in preparing tomorrow's emergency manager to address challenges within the field. The more time that can be allotted for the students to apply theory to the real-world environment is a key task for educators to fulfill in meeting the demands of the field.



**Enhance client recommendations by implementing a request-for-proposal process.** Administrators supporting emergency management graduate curricula should consider utilizing an online request-for-proposal (RFP) process to solicit agencies and organizations that would be considered a good fit for a client-based service-learning project. The goals and objectives of the client need to match that of the students throughout a client-based service-learning project. Using this type of selection process could enhance the student recommendation and deliverable processes so that prospective clients can think about what projects can actually impact their organizations. All too often, clients are obtained through established contacts with the institution that provide a limited pool of potential projects for students. At present, the RFP process is not being practiced at Metropolitan College of New York. This process provides academic institutions with a wider spectrum for potential clients who can better serve its students. Administrators should continue to maintain established client contacts while obtaining new ones through an RFP process with governmental, private sector, and nonprofit organizations.

**Ensure client commitment for client-based service-learning projects.** All of the alumnus participants in this study indicated that client commitment and engagement affected their behavior and the outcome of their service-learning projects. These alumnus participants reported that some clients became disconnected in addressing student concerns during the client-based service-learning process. Administrators and faculty responsible for recruiting worksites for client-based partnerships should follow up on the progress of a client-based service-learning project throughout the process. Perspective clients should understand the commitment level of the program and their responsibilities

to both the student and institution. Prior to the project, a schedule should be put into place requiring clients to provide students with a minimum number of set engagements. These actions can be achieved through the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that outlines services and expectations. The MOU should include specifics on a client's responsibility for engaging the student, ways to generate on-going feedback regarding client satisfaction, and opportunities for students and clients to "check-in" to ensure reciprocal deliverables are realized.

### **Conclusion**

As we enter the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are left with some interesting dilemmas in preparing future generations for the profession of the emergency manager. Client-based service learning can be an important pedagogical tool as one type of experiential learning strategy in serving emergency management programs in higher education. As indicated by the respondents in this study, client-based service learning links theoretical perspectives with practice in an environment where students are provided a real-world experience in working with clients.

The purpose of this study was to gather perceptions from alumni, faculty, and clients in the field to ascertain what key knowledge, skills, and abilities are actually needed in the field of emergency management. This study examined the extent to which client-based learning is a valuable resource for preparing emergency management professionals to respond to the new demands in emergency and disaster management for the 21<sup>st</sup> century environment. Through a qualitative study, interviews, focus groups, and observations were conducted with seasoned professionals associated with the graduate program at Metropolitan College of New York.

The findings of this study were consistent with the literature, which offered concrete examples of how a client-based service-learning program can be implemented and improved (McEntire, 2002; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008). The theoretical frameworks that guided this study were Dewey's (1938) theory of experiential learning and Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. These two theories informed the researcher in the utilization of the conceptual frameworks of service learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999) and client based service learning (Schachter & Schwartz, 2009; Sprauge & Hu, 2015; Waldner & Hunter, 2008) for this study. The conceptual framework of reflection is a central experiential pedagogical approach that connects a student's client-based service-learning experience with the course material that is learned during the semester. Capturing this knowledge prior to the completion of each semester is a crucial step for students in their learning processes. These theories and conceptual frameworks helped the researcher in examining the participants of this study on how client-based service learning aids prepare them to take on the role of a 21<sup>st</sup> century emergency manager.

Emergency management curricula lends itself to the implementation of client-based service learning due to the nature in which the individuals are expected to perform upon graduating. The findings from the study also show that the program produced new professionals in the field who left the program empowered from their learned experiences and were ready to enter the field as practitioners. The Emergency and Disaster Management program at the Metropolitan College of New York lends itself to providing an experientially supported education for a practitioner-based clientele. Students applied

theory to practice throughout the program to obtain the necessary skill sets for future use within the field.

Although the program is relatively successful, there is much room for improvement in various stages of the program. Administrators currently utilize limited networks in obtaining future clients for the service-learning projects. Partnerships based on long-term relationships remain the norm, and in some cases they limit the students' frequency of potential experiences. New partnerships need to be expanded through an established request-for-proposal (RFP) process in which the institution can better serve its students by offering a wider spectrum of potential clients. This process would enable program administrators and future clients, alike, to streamline projects that are a proper fit for all parties concerned. Additional sites for experiential learning, along with a variety of organizations, need to be available to emergency management students. Newly established partnerships could be forged in building collaborative relationships where all partners receive mutual benefits. The RFP process should begin by having the institution advertise the mutual benefits that are available to perspective clients by using an online process. A listing of the various types of emergency preparedness and recovery projects students are able to perform, along with a standard questionnaire on the school's website, can aid in the process. School administrators would have to invest in the time to provide adequate orientation and some training to perspective clients to familiarize them with the client-based service-learning process, but many academic institutions have had favorable experiences utilizing the RFP process to bolster their number of potential clients.

Another key finding from this study revealed that alumnus participants felt that reflection assignments were beneficial to their learning process. The study identified an

inconsistency in instructional methods as to the delivery of recommended approaches provided by the literature. Reflection assignments varied in length, depth, and frequency throughout the emergency disaster management master's program. The incorporation of a reflective component with the exception of an AAR component was absent in most cases. It appeared that some client-based learning projects utilized an AAR instead of using an actual reflection component as recommended by the literature. Reflection assignments should be used in emergency management college curricula on a regular basis as AARs have proven beneficial for practitioners in the field. Instructors need to play a stronger role in providing clear guidelines in the administration of reflection assignments to their students as part of a best-practice approach within the program.

The study further revealed that students were not evaluated through an established rubric that followed recommendations provided by the literature. Administrators need to provide clear guidance to instructors in administering reflective assignments and grading criteria for students. This process will enable instructors to clearly define student expectations and hold students accountable for reflection assignments throughout the program. Instructors can better enhance student perceptions of what they learned by following an established grading criteria recommended by various works within the literature.

Based on the literature and perceptions captured through interviews, focus groups, and observations, a successful emergency management client-based service-learning program will have both client and institutional support from multiple levels of these organizations. An integral approach to the success of any client-based service-learning program lies in the type of commitment made by the client. Administrators and

instructors must ensure systems are put into place for following up with clients to ensure meeting their expectations. In turn, clients should become familiar with the learning approach of a consulting-based course structure practiced by the students at Metropolitan College of New York. Clients need to be held accountable by providing students with scheduled meeting engagements in which viable feedback is obtained. Instructors must take on the role as a full-fledged project manager to ensure deliverables are met in a timely fashion. Client satisfaction can be achieved through instructor check-ins, team meetings with students, peer evaluations, online posting forums, reflection assignments using journals, and instituting situational reporting assignments.

There is an increasing level of literature being published of experiential learning projects, often termed capstones, client-based courses, client-based service learning, or practicum projects using clients to facilitate student learning objectives. While the literature surrounding the issue of integrating service learning into curricula is relevant, there has been only one quantitative study conducted in the discipline of emergency management within higher educational institutions. This study is the first qualitative study of its kind in addressing a similar issue. The researcher hopes that others in the field of emergency management will contribute to a very limited body of knowledge.

Practical skill sets and applied knowledge take center stage for an emergency manager to exercise in daily activities. Institutions of higher education that house emergency management graduate programs should consider adapting an experience-supported theoretical education in conjunction with the current traditional theory-based education. Institutions have a responsibility to provide the delivery of relevant knowledge and experiences to today's 21<sup>st</sup> century emergency management student. To properly

address the needs of this challenging field requires institutions to dispense both realistic and performance-oriented educational models to future practitioners.

The current state of emergency management MPA education reveals that there is a void in providing practical skills and applied knowledge to graduate students. The findings from this study show the pedagogy of client-based service learning is a practical fit for emergency management curricula. Client-based service learning provides students with the ability to apply course instruction, content, and skills in meeting the demands of a real-world situation. This method employs an instructor to provide guidance and immediate feedback to students when they are navigating through daily program challenges that are similar to the field.

The study reported that learning in the classroom can be reinforced through experiential learning in real-world settings. Theory can be applied to practice through the utilization of experiential learning in the form of client-based service learning where students can apply what they have learned in the form of a project, report, or other task designated by a client. This pedagogy is highly effective in teaching students the applied knowledge and practical skills that are best suited for the discipline of emergency management. Further research on a larger scale will increase the generalizability of the results reported by this study. It is recommended that further studies include other curriculum developers because their roles in the curricula process might provide further insights.

As a professional in the field of emergency management, I recognize that as crises manifests themselves, emergency managers face great demands in finding immediate solutions. The 21<sup>st</sup> century disasters have taken on a new form, frequency, and

magnitude, where emergency management professionals rely on the foundation of their skills and education to address the challenges at hand. As a researcher and scholar, I have learned to appreciate the perspectives of my colleagues, mentors, and students in seeking the best possible ways in preparing tomorrow's emergency managers for the field. I believe that colleges and universities are an integral component in the emergency management educational network. I am a strong advocate for the use of experiential learning pedagogies in emergency management curricula in the form of client-based service learning. The utilization of a service-learning component in emergency management curricula better equips tomorrow's graduates with the necessary skill sets that the profession calls for in this field. It is recommended that administrators of higher education institutions that offer emergency management programs attend FEMA's Annual Higher Education Conference to gain insight into the current academic practices being taught throughout the country.



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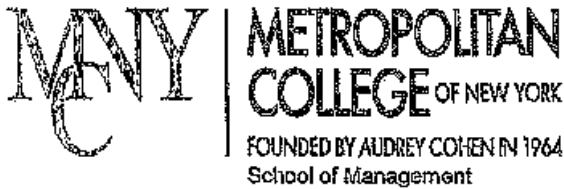
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Appendix A

Letter of Support from Metropolitan College of New York



Humphrey Crookendale,  
Dean of the School for  
Public Affairs and  
Administration  
[HCrookendale@mcny.edu](mailto:HCrookendale@mcny.edu)  
Metropolitan College of  
New York  
431 Canal Street  
New York, NY 10013  
  
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212-343-6476 fax  
  
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March 20, 2015

St. John Fisher College  
Institutional Review Board  
3690 East Avenue  
Rochester, New York 14618

Dr. Lynd-Baita,

I am writing to confirm that Mr. Thomas Carey an adjunct instructor at Metropolitan College of New York has the college's permission to contact its alumni for the purpose of conducting research related to his Executive Leadership program in the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Metropolitan College of New York is familiar with Mr. Carey's study and further supports his research efforts as a Doctoral Candidate within your institution.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at 212 343-1234 ext. 2600.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Humphrey Crookendale'.

Humphrey Crookendale,  
Dean, School for Public Affairs and Administration

## **Appendix B**

### **Sample Letter of Invitation to Alumni Professionals**

Dear Emergency Management Professional:

My name is Tom Carey and I am a doctoral student in the Executive Leadership program in the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. I am conducting a research study on the utilization of service learning in emergency management graduate curricula for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am interested in learning about how the integration of service learning within emergency management curricula prepares graduate students for the field upon graduation. You should consider participating in this research study since your input can directly assist the researcher and the field of emergency management in preparing tomorrow's practitioners. As part of the research requirements for the doctoral degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study under the direction of my dissertation chair Dr. Claudia L. Edwards [REDACTED].

The role you fulfill within the field of emergency management directly impacts the future of others. You have been identified as an alumni from the Emergency and Disaster Management Master's program at Metropolitan College of New York. Your contact information was received through your past or current correspondence with me as an adjunct professor at Metropolitan College of New York. The Emergency and Disaster Management program at Metropolitan College of New York is supporting his research efforts.

You are being invited to take part in an interview. The criteria of selection will consist of 15 alumni who will have familiarity with the Constructive Action process at the research site, are currently employed as emergency managers with at least 3-5 years of experience and have been directly involved in a major disaster event. You will be interviewed on an individual basis. The interview will take place at an agreed upon location and it will last for about an hour. If you agree to participate, the undersigned will be very flexible with



you or your designee in scheduling a date and time to conduct the interview. You will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form which will be emailed to you prior to our scheduled meeting. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any time. If you are interested in participating in the study please try to respond within 10 business days upon receipt of this request. A follow up email will be sent to you after the timeframe above expires. Participants who are selected for the study will receive a follow up email with more details and consent forms for signatures.

Your participation and the information shared with the researcher during the process will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. In addition should you decide to participate and change your mind, you can decide at any point during the interview process to withdraw from the study without penalty or consequences.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned if you have any questions. If you are interested in participating, please contact the researcher at [REDACTED].

Thank you in advance for your interest in participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Tom Carey  
Doctoral Candidate, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education, St. John Fisher College

## Appendix C

### Sample Informed Consent Form for Alumni Professionals

**Title of Study:** The Utilization of Service Learning Applications in Emergency Management Graduate Curricula for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Name of Researcher:** Tom Carey, Ed.D. Candidate, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Contact information: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Claudia L. Edwards, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Contact information: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which experiential learning through the use of client-based service learning is paramount to the preparedness of emergency management professionals upon graduation from a master's program.

**Study Procedures:** You will be interviewed on an individual basis for a minimum of sixty minutes about the utilization of client-based service learning applications in emergency management graduate curricula. The interview will be recorded via two hand recorders and transcribed. Observation notes will also be taken during the interview.

**Participation:** You were selected as a participant for the research study based on the criteria of having familiarity with the Constructive Action process at the Metropolitan College of New York, are currently employed as emergency manager with at least three years of experience and have been directly involved in a major disaster event. Participation in this research study is voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any time. At any time during the research study process if you feel your rights have been violated or abused, you may contact the Chairperson of the project or the Institutional Review Board committee of St. John Fisher College.

**Confidentiality:** All efforts will be made to keep the participant's identity confidential. All interviews will be coded as to protect the identities of all research participants. All observation notes will also be coded. Consent forms, which contain personal information, will be kept separate and personal information will be removed from any coded materials. Only the researcher will be able to link the research materials to an informed consent form. A third party will be transcribing all interviews and will sign a confidentiality agreement before any work should begin. All recordings and transcriptions will be uploaded to a locked and password protected laptop. All transcripts, observation notes, and interview materials will be stored in locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. There will be no personally identifiable information disseminated.

**Risks:** None.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for the purposes of participating in this study.

**Questions about the Research:** If you have questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher Tom Carey at [REDACTED]

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any that may be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

**Questions about your Rights as Research Participants:** If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact the following:

Dr. Claudia Edwards  
[REDACTED]

Eileen Lynd-Balta  
Institutional Review Board Office

St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618



**Statement of Age and Consent:** Your signature indicates that:  
You are at least 18 years of age;  
The research study has been explained to you;  
Your questions have been fully answered;  
You freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Name of participant (please print):  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Semi-structured Interview Questions for Alumni Professionals

**Research Question #1: What are the significant benefits that alumni perceive to have acquired as a result of taking part in a client-based service-learning project within an emergency management higher education curriculum at Metropolitan College of New York?**

1. What is your current position or title?
2. What type of client-based service-learning project was conducted for the Constructive Action phase within the EDM program at MCNY?
  - a. What type of organization was supported (government, private or not for profit)?
3. What tasks and skills were developed (i.e. development of HVAs, EOPs, MOUs) from the client-based service-learning project?
4. What should be added to the EDM MPA Constructive Action to enhance useable knowledge to apply to the field?
5. Do you currently work within an environment similar to that of your service-learning project when you were in the MCNY EDM program?
  - a. If Yes, is it community-based or client-based?
  - b. What type of population is served (government, private or not for profit)?

**Research Question #2: To what extent do you believe client-based service learning has enabled you to be prepared as a 21st century emergency manager?**

6. Did the client-based service-learning project better assist the organization in its preparedness?
  - a. Explain.
7. Did you feel better prepared than other college graduates who have not participated in any type of service-learning projects?
  - a. Explain
8. Which skills did you find transferable from the client-based service-learning project into the everyday practices as a 21<sup>st</sup> century emergency manager?
9. What were your expected deliverables for the client-based service project?
  - a. Do you believe the deliverables satisfied by the client upon completion of the project?
    - i. Explain.

**Research Question #3: How and to what extent does client-based service learning create an intersection between the classroom and the practice of emergency management?**

10. What course learning objectives did you recognize that you have gained as a result of your service learning experience upon graduation?
11. Were you able to retain knowledge learned from your client-based service-learning project and apply it to a field setting?
  - a. Explain.

12. Was there a reflective component utilized in your course such as papers, journaling, or note taking?
  - a. Did you keep a reflective journal, paper or take notes during your Constructive Action experience?
  - b. Do you think journaling or some form of note taking would help you in any way?
    - i. How?
13. Does ICS experience make a more qualified emergency manager?
14. Do you believe students should receive some form of ICS training as part of their college education? If Yes, should it be extensive?
  - a. Explain.
  - b. Should there be an experiential component of ICS for the student to take part in?
15. What question did I not ask that needs to be asked when it comes to client-based service learning (the Constructive Action)?

## **Appendix E**

### **Sample Letter of Invitation to Panel of Experts**

Dear Emergency Management Professional:

My name is Tom Carey and I am a doctoral student in the Executive Leadership program in the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. I am conducting a research study on the utilization of service learning in emergency management graduate curricula for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I am interested in learning about how the integration of service learning within emergency management curricula prepares graduate students for the field upon graduation. You should consider participating in this research study since your input can directly assist the researcher and the field of emergency management in preparing tomorrow's practitioners. As part of the research requirements for the doctoral degree, I am conducting a qualitative research study under the direction of my dissertation chair Dr. Claudia L. Edwards [REDACTED]

The role you fulfill within the field of emergency management directly impacts the future of others. You have been identified as a postgraduate student from the Emergency and Disaster Management Master's program at Metropolitan College of New York. Your contact information was received through your past or current correspondence with me as an adjunct professor at Metropolitan College of New York. The Emergency and Disaster Management program at Metropolitan College of New York is supporting his research efforts.

You are being invited to take part in reviewing the questions that will be asked to the research participants. The criteria of selection for the panel will consist of three alumni and three college professors who have experience as project managers in service learning projects. This panel of experts has familiarity with the Constructive Action process at the research site, are currently employed as emergency managers with at least 3-5 years of experience and have been directly involved in a major disaster event. The interview will



take place at an agreed upon location and it will last for about an hour. If you agree to participate, the undersigned will be very flexible with you or your designee in scheduling a date and time to come to your office to conduct a sixty-minute interview. You will be asked to complete an Informed Consent Form which will be emailed to you prior to our scheduled meeting. Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any time. If you are interested in participating in the study please try to respond within 10 business days upon receipt of this request. A follow-up email will be sent to you after the timeframe above expires. Participants who are selected for the study will receive a follow up email with more details and consent forms for signatures.

Your participation and the information shared with the researcher during the process will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. If you decide to participate in the study, all efforts will be taken to ensure your anonymity is safeguarded. In addition should you decide to participate and change your mind, you can decide at any point during the interview process to withdraw from the study without penalty or consequences.

Please feel free to contact the undersigned if you have any questions. If you are interested in participating, please contact the researcher at [REDACTED]

Thank you in advance for your interest in participating in this study.

Sincerely,

Tom Carey  
Doctoral Candidate, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education, St. John Fisher College

## Appendix F

### Sample Informed Consent Form for Panel of Experts

**Title of Study:** The Utilization of Service Learning Applications in Emergency Management Graduate Curricula for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Name of Researcher:** Tom Carey, Ed.D. Candidate, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Contact information: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Claudia L. Edwards, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Contact information: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which experiential learning through the use of client-based service learning is paramount to the preparedness of emergency management professionals upon graduation from a master's program.

**Study Procedures:** You will meet in a group setting to review the open-ended semi-structured interview questions that will be posed to each participant or group. The meeting will last a minimum of sixty minutes about the utilization of client-based service learning applications in emergency management graduate curricula. Members of the panel of experts will validate the research questions and provide advice if questions need to be revised. Observation notes will also be taken during this time.

**Participation:** You were selected as a participant for the research study based on the criteria of having familiarity with the Constructive Action process at the Metropolitan College of New York, are currently employed as emergency manager with at least three to five years of experience and have been directly involved in a major disaster event. Participation in this research study is voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any time. At any time during the research study process if you feel your

rights have been violated or abused, you may contact the Chairperson of the project or the Institutional Review Board committee of St. John Fisher College.

**Confidentiality:** All efforts will be made to keep the participant's identity confidential. All interviews will be coded as to protect the identities of all research participants. All observation notes will also be coded. Consent forms, which contain personal information, will be kept separate and personal information will be removed from any coded materials. Only the researcher will be able to link the research materials to an informed consent form. A third party will be transcribing all interviews and will sign a confidentiality agreement before any work should begin. All recordings and transcriptions will be uploaded to a locked and password protected laptop. All transcripts, observation notes, and interview materials will be stored in locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. There will be no personally identifiable information disseminated.

**Risks:** None.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for the purposes of participating in this study.

**Questions about the Research:** If you have questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher Tom Carey at [REDACTED]

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any that may be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

**Questions about your Rights as Research Participants:** If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact the following:

Dr. Claudia Edwards  
[REDACTED]

Eileen Lynd-Balta  
Institutional Review Board Office  
St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618



**Statement of Age and Consent:** Your signature indicates that:  
You are at least 18 years of age;  
The research study has been explained to you;  
Your questions have been fully answered;  
You freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Name of participant (please print):

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

### Informed Consent Form for Observations of MCNY Student's Field Work at Client Hospital

**Title of Study:** The Utilization of Service Learning Applications in Emergency Management Graduate Curricula for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**Name of Researcher:** Tom Carey, Ed.D. Candidate, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Contact information: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Faculty Supervisor:** Dr. Claudia L. Edwards, Ralph C. Wilson Jr. School of Education at St. John Fisher College. Contact information: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**Purpose of Study:** The purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which experiential learning through the use of client-based service learning is paramount to the preparedness of emergency management professionals upon graduation from a master's program.

**Study Procedures:** The researcher at your facility will observe current students of the Metropolitan College of New York (MCNY) Masters in Public Administration's (MPA) Emergency and Disaster Management (EDM) Program engaged in their Constructive Action (CA) process. Observation notes will be taken during a series of field visits at the hospital. Student's actions to include a description of the physical environment will be noted.

**Participation:** Your facility was selected since the MCNY MPA EDM program students are currently engaged in a partnership with your agency in completing their CA. Participation in this research study is voluntary and you may choose to end your participation at any time. At any time during the research study process if you feel your

rights have been violated or abused, you may contact the Chairperson of the project or the Institutional Review Board committee of St. John Fisher College.

**Confidentiality:** All efforts will be made to keep the facility's identity confidential. All observation notes will also be coded. Consent forms, which contain personal information, will be kept separate and personal information will be removed from any coded materials. Only the researcher will be able to link the research materials to an informed consent form. All observations notes will be stored in locked file cabinet in the researcher's office. There will be no personally identifiable information disseminated.

**Risks:** None.

**Compensation:** Participants will not be compensated for the purposes of participating in this study.

**Questions about the Research:** If you have questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher Tom Carey at [REDACTED]

**Your rights:** As a research participant, you have the right to:

1. Have the purpose of the study, and the expected risks and benefits fully explained to you before you choose to participate.
2. Withdraw from participation at any time without penalty.
3. Refuse to answer a particular question without penalty.
4. Be informed of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any that may be advantageous to you.
5. Be informed of the results of the study.

**Questions about your Rights as Research Participants:** If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact the following:

Dr. Claudia Edwards  
[REDACTED]

Eileen Lynd-Balta  
Institutional Review Board Office  
St. John Fisher College, 3690 East Avenue, Rochester, NY 14618  
[REDACTED]

**Statement of Age and Consent:** Your signature indicates that:  
You are at least 18 years of age;  
The research study has been explained to you;  
Your questions have been fully answered;  
You freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Name of participant (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_