



Research Design for Service Learning Scholars

**Boyer Scholars Orientation
IUPUI**

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**Kathy Steinberg
Assessment Specialist
IUPUI Center for Service and
Learning
317-274-0110
ksteinbe@iupui.edu**

Research Cycle

- Ask question, refine, define, lit review
- Decide on methods
- Determine how to analyze data
- Institutional Review Board
- Collect data
- Analyze data
- Summarize, publish, disseminate
- Ask new question

Types of Research Questions

- **What is**—questions that move us toward a picture of what the problem or issue or behavior looks like
- **What works**—finding evidence for effectiveness of strategies or interventions*
- **Visions of the possible**—questions about what could be (opinions)
- **New conceptual frameworks**—questions that lead to new models and ways of understanding practice

***What outcome from your
service learning experience
are you sure occurs for your
students?***


***What evidence do you have
that this outcome occurs?***






***What aspect of the course do
you think produces this
outcome?***

***Why do you think that this
aspect of the course results
in this outcome?***





***Can you identify any construct
that you think explains why
the course components
produce that outcome?***

***Do you think that these
components of the course result
in this outcome equally for all
students?***

***If not, then for which students
does it apply and for which does
it not?***



Ethical Issues

- Institutional Review Board (IRB)

http://www.iupui.edu/~resgrad/spon/rescom_human_menu.htm

- Informed consent
- Right to privacy, anonymity, confidentiality
- Protection from harm

Clarifying Terms

- **Research** – theoretic frame, scientific design, control for causality, robust analysis, validity/reliability, generalizes
- **Program Evaluation** – funder-driven, biased sample, narrow focus on anticipated outcomes, lack of controls for causality, narrow focus on specific program
- **Evaluation Research** – coherence of program design and outcomes, procedures that allow for causal inferences, clear implications beyond the idiosyncratic program that was evaluated

Types of Research



- **Correlational:** Activities producing information about what relationship exists between aspects of a class, course, or program
- **Experimental:** Activities producing information about why a specific outcome occurred
- **Quantitative vs Qualitative**



Service Learning Student Outcomes (potential Dependent Variables)

- **Academic**

- Learning
- Cognitive processes
- Critical thinking
- Persistence and retention
- Achievement and aspirations
- Integration

- **Life Skills**

- Racial tolerance
- Cultural understanding
- Self-efficacy
- Problem solving
- Career clarification
- Leadership



Service Learning Student Outcomes

Civic and Social Responsibility

- Commitment to community
- Aspirations to volunteer
- Empathy
- Philanthropy
- Civic-minded professional

Personal Development

- Moral development
- Self-concept
- Motives, attitudes, and values
- Personal development



Character Strengths and Virtues

(Petersen & Seligman)

- **Wisdom and knowledge**--creativity, curiosity, open-mindedness, love of learning and perspective.
- **Courage**--Bravery, persistence, integrity and vitality.
- **Humanity**--Love, kindness and social intelligence.
- **Justice**--Citizenship, fairness and leadership.
- **Temperance**--Forgiveness, humility, prudence and self-regulation.
- **Transcendence**--Appreciation of beauty and excellence, gratitude, hope, humor and spirituality.



Potential Methods

- Interviews, focus groups
- Questionnaires, surveys
- Content analysis of reflections and other documents
- Secondary analysis of existing data
- Quasi-experiments
- Observations
- Case studies
- Course portfolios
- Exit interviews

Use of Mixed Methods

- Mixed methods are not necessarily better, but they can help when they:
 - Are selected based upon theory and constructs
 - Provide complementary types of information
 - Produce converging results
 - Are all based on multiple indicators

Use of Multiple Indicators

- Multiple indicators are superior (quantitative and qualitative) whether focusing on:
 - Items on a scale
 - Time samples
 - Journal entries
 - Courses or campuses
 - Skills
 - Intentions
- **See Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004 for a collection of scales**