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Relationship Between Internships and Employment Competencies of Degreed Professionals Who Completed a College Internship

Shawn Barnwell
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Shawn Barnwell

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Walden University
2016

Abstract

Relationship Between Internships and Employment Competencies of Degreed
Professionals Who Completed a College Internship

by

Shawn Barnwell

MSW, Adelphi University, 2006

BPS, Audrey Cohen College, 1999

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

November 2016

Abstract

An estimated 1.5 million underemployed or unemployed college graduates have one or more college degrees, and many have high loan debt. Policy makers, students, and institutions of higher education are all concerned with the question of how prepared students are to enter the workforce upon graduation, yet little is known about whether internships are a strategy to improve career preparedness and gainful employment after graduation. Guided by Dewey and Kolb's experiential learning theory, the purpose of this nonexperimental study was to evaluate the impact of internships on career preparation from the perspective of graduates, specifically to evaluate whether graduates perceive participation in an internship improved their level of career preparedness in human services related fields. Post-internship survey data were acquired from a group of 21 graduates using the Career Benefits of CO-OP/Internship Experience instrument who were enrolled in a degree program at various colleges and universities in southeastern Virginia. These data were analyzed using a paired *t* test to compare pre and post internship perceptions of career preparedness. Results indicate a statistically significant improvement between the pre-internship and post-internship perceptions ($p = .05$). Furthermore, the study offers support to the notion that experiential learning may impact career success. This result indicates that internships may have a positive impact on career progression and gainful employment after graduation. The positive social change implications of this study includes recommendations to policy makers and university leaders to construct academic programs that incorporate internship opportunities, particularly to promote overall student success and future gainful employment.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my mother, Lena Livingston, father, Raymond Martin, son, Stg. Livingston, Carlton, daughter, Tiffani Livingston, and spouse, Phyllis Barnwell.

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I want to start by thanking God for the blessing of life, the ability to be in the Ph.D. program, and the strength to endure the journey because without God none of this is possible. I want to thank my parents for joining and giving me life. I want to thank my parents for their ongoing encouragement and belief in me, and the things I can accomplish. I also want to thank them for their understanding and love in all areas of life. I want to thank my children for their understanding, encouragement, and support during this journey.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Problem Statement.....	6
Nature of the Study.....	9
Research Questions.....	11
Theoretical Framework.....	13
Purpose of the Study.....	14
Operational Definitions.....	14
Assumptions.....	16
Delimitations.....	18
Limitations.....	19
Significance of Study.....	20
Summary.....	23
Chapter 2: Literature Review.....	25
Introduction.....	25
History.....	26
Theorists.....	27
Theoretical Framework.....	29
Experiential Learning.....	29

Internship	29
Stakeholders	30
Students	31
Higher Education	32
Employers	33
Economy	34
Department of Education	34
Higher Education	36
Internships	37
Career Development	40
Gaps in Knowledge	41
Social Change	42
Summary	43
Chapter 3: Research Method	45
Introduction	45
Research Questions	45
Research Design and Rationale	48
Population	51
Eligibility Criteria	52
Sample	52
Recruitment of Sample	53
Sample Setting	54

Research Instrument.....	54
Operationalization of Variables	55
Data Collection	56
Data Analysis Plan.....	58
Data Analysis	59
Threats to Internal Validity.....	60
Threats to External Validity.....	61
Ethical Consideration and Protection of Participants	61
Limitations	63
Controlling for Bias	63
Summary	64
Chapter 4: Results.....	66
Introduction.....	66
Data Collection	68
Results	72
Demographics	72
Results Summary	88
Summary	88
Chapter 5: Conclusion.....	90
Introduction.....	90
Interpretation of Findings	92
Limitations of the Study.....	93

Recommendations.....	94
Implication	97
Conclusion	99
Appendix A: Survey Instrument	111
Appendix B: Consent to Use Published Survey	115
Appendix C: Consent/Approval to Conduct the Survey.....	117
Appendix D: G* Power.....	118

List of Tables

Table 1. Descriptive Statistic: Age	72
Table 2. Descriptive Statistic: Gender	73
Table 3. Descriptive Statistic: Ethnicity	73
Table 4. Descriptive Statistic: Degree	73
Table 5. Descriptive Statistics: Gender, Age, And Ethnicity	75
Table 6. Analysis of Variance: Degree, Gender, Ethnicity, and Age	76
Table 7. Crosstabulation: Degree and Gender	77
Table 8. Crosstabulation: Ethnicity and Degree	78
Table 9. Crosstabulation: Age and Degree	79
Table 10. <i>t</i> test Results for Primary Research Question.	82
Table 11. <i>t</i> test: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Degree for Primary Research Question.....	82
Table 12. Regression Table: Degree, Ethnicity, Age, and Gender for the Secondary Research Question 1	84
Table 13. Regression Table Model: Degree, Ethnicity, Age, Gender Secondary Research Question 1	84
Table 14. Analysis of Variance: Degree, Gender, Ethnicity and Age	84
Table 15. Coefficients: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Degree for Secondary Research Question 2	85
Table 16. Descriptive Statistics: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Degree Secondary Research Question 2	86

Table 17. Pearson Correlations: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Degree for Secondary Research Question 2	86
Table 18. Descriptive Statistics: Gender, Ethnicity, Age, and Degree for Secondary Research Question 3	87

List of Figures

Figure 1. Crosstabulation: Gender and Degree.....	78
Figure 2. Crosstabulation: Ethnicity and Degree.....	79
Figure 3. Crosstabulation: Age and Degree	80

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Higher education is selling big dreams, and students are the buyers. Students attend college for various reasons, such as to attain a college degree or career preparation. More than 18.6 million students are enrolled in college (Davis & Bauman, 2011). In 2011, there were 1.3 million college graduates in America. Of them, 82% held a bachelor's degree. The remaining 18% obtained a master's degree or a doctoral degree (Spren, 2013, p. 3). Because students are interested in obtaining employment after graduation, I examined the impact, if any, between the career development of professionals through internships and the professional competencies of college graduates based on their perceptions. The results of this study may be of interest to students and college graduates who are looking for employment after graduation because it will provide evidence of how an internship may benefit their career development. This study may be of interest to students who have used loans to pay for their degree and must repay those loans after graduation. It will show the importance of career preparation to obtain employment after graduation to fulfill their loan repayment obligation. Eleven million students use loans to pay for a bachelor's degree (Brown, Haughwout, Lee, Mabutas, & Wilbert Van Der, 2012). In 2012, a total of 38.3 million degree seekers who borrowed funds (Federal Student Aid, 2016). The number increased to 41.6 million student loan borrowers in 2015 for all levels of degrees (Federal Student Aid, 2016). This study took into account each student borrows a different amount because each student's need is different.

When students select classes, they should select course that will support their intended career. The cost of classes differs, and it is important to ensure that the classes they take will lead to a college degree. It is also important that the student choose courses that will support their career. Because for-profit colleges and universities usually cost more than not-for-profit colleges and universities, students who attend for-profit schools should pay more attention to their educational choices. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2013), fulltime undergraduates attending college for the first time at private, for-profit four-year institutions have the highest student loan rate of 83%. First time fulltime undergraduate students of four-year private nonprofit institutions have a student loan rate of 64%. However, first time fulltime undergraduate students who attend four-year public institutions have a loan rate of 51% (NCES, 2013). Regardless of the type of school the first time fulltime undergraduate student attends, the student may increase their debt when he/she attends graduate school.

Students who pursue a graduate degree, and do not have financial support, such as a scholarship may use loans to pay for those studies. If a student uses loans to pay for graduate school, their student loan debt will increase. An estimated of 60% of students who use loans to pay for college and they are required to repay those loans. It is important that students prepare for employment after graduation. Students can prepare for employment after graduation through career preparation by participating in work-study programs, internships, and/or externships. Experiences that prepare students for their careers such as internships, will help increase their knowledge, skills, and abilities. The classroom courses will increase their knowledge regarding theories. The internships

students participate in should increase their career competencies, which could lead them to employment and, ultimately, a better quality of life.

However, members of society are saying students are graduating with limited employment skills (Levine, 2005). Students who graduate with loans will have repayment obligations. Because there is the requirement to repay their loans, students must prepare themselves to secure employment after graduation. “Students are more concerned now than ever before about the effectiveness of undergraduate preparation for employment following four years of increasingly expensive tuition” (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010, p. 76). Regardless of the financial concern, students still attend college, and those same students may seek employment after graduation.

In this research study, I explored whether a relationship exists between the career development of students who interned while pursuing their degree and their professional competencies after graduation. This research will contribute to social change by providing evidence for career preparation of students as 20.2 million students attended a college or a university during the year 2015 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). These students obtained degrees in various ways.

Students may obtain a degree online, in class, or in a hybrid setting (Summers, Waigandt, & Whittaker, 2005). Colleges and universities with online classes offer students flexibility with obtaining education (Summers, Waigandt, & Whittaker, 2005). The degree choices and types of programs are seemingly endless. The variable of cost depends on the school’s location (urban, rural, north, or south) as well as the type of institution, (e.g., private or public university or college, or technical schools/colleges).

For blended schools, students must factor in cost of room and board, such as hotels and travel fees to meet the face-to-face requirements. Students who study aboard may be required to meet the travel and hotel fees. Student must pay university fees, as well as the cost for books. The variations in school formats, and locations affect the cost of tuition, regardless of when a student attends school. During the years of 2014-2015 the average tuition for an undergraduate first time student was \$28,701 (NCSE, 2016). Master and doctoral/professional students' average tuition was \$10,979 for a public college or \$38,988 at a private college (NCSE, 2016).

Regardless of the cost, individuals continue to seek a bachelor's or advanced degree. It is believed by a large number of Americans that college is the foundation of a solid employment future (DiConti-Donahue, 2004). The Complete College America initiative discussed the importance of students completing college in order to address the economic gap in many states (Complete College America, 2011). A college degree will provide students with the education needed to obtain employment in their degree area (Davidovitch, Littman-Ovadia, & Soen, 2011). College administrators believe that the institution has a responsibility for preparing students for employment after graduation (Matthew, Taylor, & Ellis, 2012). Colleges that link work experience with classroom education are assisting students with career preparation.

Work experience provides students the chance to build their employment competency skills and abilities in their degree area while applying theory and knowledge (Dewey, 2011). To help ensure that students are employable after graduation, institutes of higher education are working to design programs that will lead to college completion

(Complete College America, 2009). Colleges and universities in 38 states are modifying their curricula. Each semester will have 15 credits hours of structured courses. This will ensure that students graduate in four years and spend less money over the course of their educational experience (Complete College America, 2013). Colleges are also combining theories attained through educational knowledge with practices earned through work experience (Austin & Zeh Rust, 2015). Students may be able to increase their professional competencies through interning, which may afford graduates a better chance of obtaining employment. Students who develop career skills can demonstrate to an employer their abilities that may assist the graduate with obtaining employment. An employed graduate may have the money required to repay their student loan debt, and avoid any negative consequences associated with student loan defaulting. The aforementioned assumptions were based on the study's hypotheses.

This study was based on four hypotheses. Those hypotheses are as follows: 1) A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates exists. 2) A significant statistical correlation between students who graduated between 2009 and 2014, and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present. 3) A significant statistical correlation between internship participation and student career development occurred. Lastly, no significant statistical difference between graduates' beliefs regarding their internship experience contributed to or led in their ability to attain employment.

Problem Statement

There is a concern about college graduates' career preparation and their abilities to obtain employment after graduation (Levine, 2015). In this study, I wanted to determine if internship involvement adequately prepares students for employment opportunities after graduation, as more than 1.5 million underemployed or unemployed college graduates. One study stated, "College graduates and employers are expressing dissatisfaction with the job competencies of new graduates" (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010, p. 97). Although, research shows colleges are viewed as the foundation for professional preparation, it still is unclear why society views graduates as unprepared for the workforce, and so many graduates are underemployed or unemployed.

The number of employed college graduates has decreased over the years. In 2010, an estimated 1.9 million U.S. workers who held at least a bachelor's degree and were unemployed (Eisner, 2010). Currently, United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reported that an estimated 1.8 million workers who hold at least a bachelor's degree are unemployed. Between the years 2010 and 2014, the number of unemployed bachelor's degree holders decreased; however, in 2015 the number of unemployed people with bachelor's degrees was still over 1.5 million (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). There are various reasons why a graduate may be underemployed or unemployed.

Some of the reasons are beyond anyone's control, such as an unstable economy and limited job availability. However, it is important that graduates address the matters

they *can* control, such as knowing their professional competencies, to help them obtain a job.

Professional competencies are skills that develop through distinct experiences, trainings, and/or education an individual has obtained, as well as attributes required for a job (Crosby, 2004). Students who engage in an internship can obtain professional competencies required to perform job tasks. Internship programs allow students to engage in learning that integrates classroom theory with practical applications (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2011). Degree programs that require an internship are designed to ensure that students are trained before entering the career field. For example, the field of social work has a mandatory field practicum requirement. The signature pedagogy for social work practice is field education (Council for Social Work Education, 2008).

There is no explicit connection between an internship and post-graduate employment. However, some scholars believe the practice of learning by doing is essential (Levine, 2015). Students can increase their professional competencies through the internship experiences. There are degree programs that do not required an internship. For example, students who study the field of social work on the bachelor's degree level are required to complete an internship (Council for Social Work Education, 2008). However, students who study psychology on a bachelor's degree level are not required to participate in an internship (American Psychological Association, 2007). Nonetheless, a masters or doctoral student studying psychology must complete an internship (American

Psychological Association, 2007), as well as a student in the field of social work (Council for Social Work Education, 2008).

Because it is not mandatory that all colleges or educational disciplines offer an internship, students will have to choose to participate in an internship. Students will have to decide if participating in an internship will be beneficial or satisfying to their academic and employment opportunities after graduation. If students elect to participate, each will have to consider if he/she wants to take the internship course, especially if there is a cost associated with the class. Depending on the location of the internship, a student may have to evaluate the cost of travel. For example, students who want to engage in international studies can attain real-world professional competencies by studying and interning abroad. The student will have to make a choice about whether or not he or she wants to incur expenses that may or may not benefit him/her when the degree is conferred. To help students with their decision, in this study, I sought to undertake research to the field of experiential learning focusing on internship education and professional development.

My intent in this research study was to add evidence based research to the field of experiential learning. The current literature examines diverse relationships between students' professional development and academic satisfaction. I conducted this study for the purpose of learning the opinions of how professionals perceived career development and its link to their internship experience. To test the study's research hypothesis that students who intern believe that their internship experience contributed to their professional competencies, I conducted a quantitative research study using a convenience

sample of adults who interned at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. There were variables in the study, which I will note.

The study had five dependent variables and one independent variable, as well as two covariate variables. The independent variable in the study was internship participation. The study's dependent variables were college graduates, college intern(s), career development, professional attainment, and professional competencies. The covariate variables in the study were students' interviewing skills (ability to impress the potential employer), and the ability to convey their professional competency. In this study, I controlled for covariate variables of professional competency, by asking the respondents if they believe that the internship provided advantages in securing employment after graduation.

Nature of the Study

This quantitative study was designed to test the hypothesis to learn whether a significant statistical difference between the perceptions of college graduates who participated in an internship as it relates to their professional competencies exists. Engel and Schutt (2005) reported that researchers use quantitative research methods to explain, describe, or evaluate a phenomenon. Quantitative studies allow a researcher to collect data that will create numerical descriptions. I used a convenience sample to obtain the data. A convenience sample is a portion of a larger sample, which is accessible to me (Shepris, Young, & Daniels, 2010). Surveys are used to obtain attitudes and opinions from groups of individuals who represent the sample (Reynolds, 2007). I collected data for the study using a published research survey titled Career Benefits of CO-OP/

Internship Experience Survey (Sawyer, 2008). The survey collected descriptive data. The survey's data was collected from college graduates who graduated from a college and/or a university between the years of 2009 through 2014 and interned at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare (CIBH), which is a nonprofit government agency in the South Hampton Roads area of Virginia. CIBH provides behavioral healthcare services to individuals who live in the Hampton Roads area.

CIBH provides services to individuals of all ages and races. CIBH offers mental health services, which consist of psychiatric evaluations and treatment, individual and group counseling, mental health case management, and medication management services. CIBH also offers substance abuse services, and services to individuals living with a diagnosis of Intellectual and/or Developmental Disability. The services offered to individuals with an Intellectual Disabilities include case management, residential, respite services, vocational assistance, and day support. CIBH has an early intervention program, and prevention program, as well as other services. CIBH has a volunteer division that offers individuals in the community the option to volunteer at the agency.

The volunteer department allows adult individuals not linked to a college or a university the option to volunteer in different departments. The volunteer department also allows students who are looking for internships this volunteer option. The volunteers are individuals from the community. The students represent local and distance colleges and universities. The students who intern at the agency are able to obtain college credits and/or experience through their volunteer experience. Student interns must be over the

age of 18 and enrolled in a college or a university. The student must also have support of the university or college to volunteer as an intern.

In the study, I used a convenience sampling from the population of college interns who represent a variety of academic majors, and degrees and who once interned at CIBH. A convenience sample is an acceptable number of individuals who represent the population of interest (Shepris, Young, & Daniels, 2010). The individuals who made up the convenience sample answered questions on a survey that answered the overall research questions that would test the study's hypotheses. I used the following research questions to test the hypotheses, to learn if a significant statistical relationship between undergraduate internship involvement and professional attainment is present.

Research Questions

This study had a primary research question (PRQ):

PRQ: To what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience?

H₁: A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present.

The following secondary questions (SRQ) support the primary research question PRQ.

SRQ1: What, if any, is the correlation between an internship program and obtaining work-related knowledge?

H_1^1 : A significant statistical correlation between graduates who graduated between the years of 2009 and 2014 and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present.

SRQ2: What is the correlation, if any, between internship participation and career skills/development of students?

H_1^2 : A significant statistical correlation between internship participation and students' career skill/development does exist.

SRQ3: To what extent do graduates believe their internship experience led to employment after graduation?

H_0^3 : A significant statistical difference between graduates' belief that their internship experience led to or contributed to their abilities to attain employment after graduation.

The questions identified if a relationship between internships/career preparation and work attainment is present based on the perception of college graduates. In the study, I analyzed their internship involvement as a career development experience. Employed graduates are counted as graduates with professional attainment. Each respondent was counted as one individual. The term college graduate represents students who were seeking any level of college degree (associate, bachelor's, master, or doctorate) during their internship. To obtain an answer to the research question, I used a published questionnaire (survey) to collect data for this quantitative research study from a convenience sample of college graduates.

Career Benefits of CO-OP/Internship Experience Survey (Sawyer, 2008) was the name of the published survey issued to the sample. The survey had 20 items. The respondents were asked to rate their experience from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The survey had a quality control question. The quality control question asked the respondents to select a number. Their response to the question ensured that respondents were accurately reading the questions on the survey. The questionnaire used laymen's terms to ensure the respondents understood the questions that were asked. Although each respondent received the same set of questions, each respondent's survey questions may have appeared in a random order in the electronic survey system. The responses were divided into groups to answer research questions. The responses were linked to each research question and hypothesis. Their responses regarded their experiential learning as students, which is the theoretical framework for the study.

Theoretical Framework

Experiential learning—the theoretical framework for this study—means learning by doing (Dewey, 2011). Dewey believed in the importance of integrating classroom theory and work experience. The importance of combining theory and experience may create well-rounded students who can employ what they learned from the teaching in their actions (Giles, 1987). DiConti-Donahue (2004) stated experiential learning is an educational philosophy with a foundation built on the focus that one's experience is the learning process. The experiential learning process of combining the classroom theories with experience creates a foundation of enhanced learning for a student. Experiential learning is used to engage students in work-related activities through internships.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the quantitative research study was to explore the affiliation, if any, between the perceptions of college graduates as it is linked to their career development and professional competencies after interning at a local city government agency. The study focused on college graduates who once interned at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare during the years 2009-2014. The study focused on the northeast region of the United States because many students in that area have considerably higher student loan borrowing rates than other areas in America (Economic Snapshot: Student Loan Debt, 2013). For this exploratory study, I contacted a collection of recent college graduates (2009-2014), and asked them to respond to the survey either online or by postal mail. The survey inquired about graduates' engagements and perceptions regarding their internship experience and employment attainment after graduation in relation to professional competencies. I controlled the variables that affect a graduate's ability to obtain a job after graduation in this study. The study had operational terms. I listed the definitions for those operation terms listed in this study.

Operational Definitions

Internship involvement: The independent variable for this study was internship involvement. An internship is an educational experience that links theory with practical experience. Jones (2006) stated internships offer employment experience to students and individuals who are interested in a career area. Hoy (2011) stated internships are the collaboration of work-related activities and academic qualification. The operational definition for the independent variable of internship involvement was the participation in

practical work-related experiences in certain disciplines, supervised by a professional in a work setting in collaboration with an educational setting (The Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). For the purpose of this study, the internships were unpaid, and were connected to the academic learning experience (Hoy, 2011)

This study had five dependent variables. Those five dependent variables were college degree graduate, college intern(s), career development, professional competencies, and professional attainment.

College graduates: Individuals who successfully completed an academic study beyond high school that resulted in the issuance of a college degree such as a bachelor's degree, which is traditionally represented as Bachelor of Arts (BA), or Bachelor of Science (BS) (The United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011). Some individuals will have an Associate of Art (AA) or Science (AS). For the purpose of this study, a college graduate also includes an advanced degree holder. An advanced degree holder may have a master's degree, professional, or doctorate degree, such as a Master of Arts (MA) or Science (MS), or Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)

College intern: An individual who is seeking a degree from a college or university that is accredited in the United States and engages in work-related activities while taking courses. An intern usually shadows a site supervised who provides supervision and guidance to the intern during the work-related experience. The intern will also attend a course with an instructor in a class setting. The student will usually discuss the internship experiences in the class setting.

Career development: For the purposes of this study, the operational definition for career development was defined as the soft and technical skills learned during the course of the internships and used in the professional setting. The skills learned during the internship are transferred to usable skills in professional environments. The next dependent variable was professional competencies followed by professional attainment.

Professional competencies: Skills required for employment. Professional competencies are a combination of soft and technical skills. Soft skills are the behaviors used in the work environment, such as work-related interpersonal skills, the ability to communicate effectively and listen attentively (Cord & Clements, 2010). *Professional competencies* also means the actions required to complete tasks associated with the position, the ability to work in a team setting (when needed), critical thinking skills, innovation, and solution-focused behavior. Although a student was introduced to the work setting, and he or she may have gained access to a professional setting, it is presumptuous to believe this will lead to employment.

Professional attainment: The ability to have secure employment after graduation and the compensation is as appropriate as possible for the position.

Assumptions

This study has three assumptions. The first assumption is academic retention, employment after graduation, followed by attainment of professional skills. Students who participate in experiential programs are more likely to finish their degree program (Levine, 2015). The assumption of students who participate in internships are more likely

to finish their academic study (academic retention) is premature. Students who engage in an internship may not complete their college education for various reasons, such as, but not limited to, academic dismissal, cost of tuition, or life demands.

Another assumption is that students who complete college will obtain employment. The completion of a college degree does not mean a graduate will secure employment. Some graduates may not enter into the workforce after graduation. Graduates may prolong their entry into the workforce by pursuing an advanced degree. The other assumption is students who complete college have the interviewing skills that demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and abilities that impress employers to offer employment. A graduate may not demonstrate his/her knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the position during the interview, and in such a case, the prospective employer will not offer a position. Also, the internship experience may not teach the graduate skills required for the position. I have listed some negative assumptions regarding internship and employment after graduation. However, there is a positive list of assumptions as well.

Students who intern may gain the skills needed for employment after graduation. These students are working in an environment that will allow them to witness and participate in work-related activities. The assumption is that the participation in work-related activities will provide students with the knowledge and skills required to impress prospective employers to obtain the job offers. Students who are involved with an internship may gain a sense of commitment to the internship, and remain at the site until

the completion of their degree. The internship site supervisor may gain an appreciation for the student's work, and offer employment after he/she completes the degree.

Delimitations

This study focused on college graduates who use an internship as career development. Students who started their career could influence the internal validity of the study's focus. Students who have a career and/or pursuing a higher degree may have a different opinion of how beneficial internships are. Students who have prior experience may enter into an internship with the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for the position. The student may have an understanding of the job and possibly not learn anything new, but may complete an educational requirement of field study. For example, a student who has a job as a social worker, and placed at another employment site to provide human service work may not gain increased job skills. However, he/she may be learning new theories in the classroom, which influences the experiential learning experience. Nonetheless, learning is occurring. The focus was to learn the opinions of graduates who prepared for a career through interning.

Because the study focused on career developmental through internships, the population includes graduates who interned, opposed to graduates who did not participate in an internship. The framework for this study was experiential learning. Students who did not participate in an internship were excluded from the study because they did not experience experiential learning, which is the theoretical framework for the study. Experiential learning refers to a dual process of studying and engaging in work-related activities, so all individuals in this study had to participate in an internship. The study

focused on students who graduated between the years 2009 and 2014. These students graduated during a time when there was an economic crisis in America. These students also graduated during a time when the government focused on high and/increased student loan rates, college completion, and employment opportunities for graduates (Harkins, 2013).

Limitations

I used a convenience sample, which represented the population I was able to access. I collected data from individuals who interned at CIBH. One of this study's limitations was the location. The location was a limitation because it only reflected the opinions of students who interned in the City of Chesapeake, located in the southeast region in Virginia. Most of the students who interned at CIBH were students from local colleges and universities. Most graduates were educated in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia. Because many of the students were educated in the Hampton Roads area of Virginia, the opinions of students who were educated in other regions (Northeast) were not part of the study causing a limitation of educational experience.

Another limitation was that the interns only discussed their experiences and perceptions based on their internship at CIBH. These limitations were necessary to narrow the study's population. I researched graduates who graduated during the years 2009-2014. These graduates may have been impacted by the economic crisis that was present during the year 2009, and their chances of obtaining employment after graduation may have been impacted. The respondents were only responding to their experience at

CIBH, opposed to other internship experiences. Although the study had limitations, the rationale for conducting the study was to learn graduates' opinions.

Significance of Study

The significance of this study is to add evidence to the theoretical framework of experiential learning. This study's significance will contribute to the practice of education. This study will also contribute to career development or career planning of students. A college education is one of the key elements in obtaining employment. There are an estimated 1,819,000 unemployed or underemployed college graduates (The Bureau of Labor, 2013). In 2015, an estimated 1.5 million college graduates who were underemployed or unemployed (Bureau of Labor, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, over 1,000,000 individuals have college debt. Of full-time undergraduate students who attend college for the first time at private for-profit four-year institutions, 83% have a higher student loan rate than those who attend non-for-profit institutions (NCES, 2013). It is important to decrease the number of unemployed or underemployed college graduates to ensure graduates can repay their loans, and avoid any negative consequences related to failure to repay student loan(s). The common consequences for students who fail to pay their loans are increased interest charges, garnishment of wages and taxes refunds, and fees associated with lawsuits that stem from the recoupment of the loan, as well as negative reporting to credit bureaus (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Although these consequences may take years to encounter, these consequences are systematic. Systematic consequences such as negative credit reporting may affect a person's ability to obtain employment, housing, and a line of

credit (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Graduates are offered assistance when they encounter trouble repaying their loans. Nevertheless, if a student makes wise financial decisions during the pursuit of his or her degree, those decisions may help to decrease the loan amount or he or she may spend the loan in a manner that may be profitable. A decreased loan amount benefits the graduate and the university.

Universities and colleges are being held to the following standard: They must ensure that graduates are prepared for employment after graduation. However, employers believe students are not ready for the work environment (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010). The federal government, students, parents/caretakers, and businesses have demanded that higher education be subject to increased accountability for providing education that increases students' employment chances after graduation (Landrum, Hettich, & Wilner, 2010). The Department of Education has responded to the demands made by students, parents/caretakers, and businesses by its resilience in demanding that colleges and universities that receive federal funding promote academic and career opportunities for students.

The United States Department of Education (2011) stated colleges and universities must provide gainful employment programs and provide vital opportunities to Americans who want to increase their skills and obtain a degree. The field of higher education must adapt to the demands that society has placed on higher education. Those demands are ensuring that students are prepared for their field of employment upon graduation. The societal implication of this study will aid the field of research regarding the benefit of cooperative education and internship programs.

It is hoped that this study will have educational significance and contribute to the field of higher education in the areas of experiential learning (cooperative education and internships), as well as curriculum design and educational programs. Individuals may use this study to learn the opinions of graduates who shared their internship experience, and whether or not it was profitable after graduation. Currently, students educated on the east coast have the highest student loan debt (Economic Snapshot: Student Loan Debt, 2013). Students should engage in activities that will assist in their ability to obtain employment, especially if they are educated in an area with the highest student loan debt, such as New York and Virginia. It is vital that students are aware of their options as they develop their career foundation.

Social Change

This quantitative research study was expected to contribute to social change by sharing the results of the study with the field of higher education. This study's hypothesis was accepted because the results show a significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment after graduation. Waters, Altus, and Wilkinson (2013) stated that the goal of higher education is to create the foundation for future professionals. It is vital to social change to develop future professionals. The development of qualified professionals who will provide services in the future may aid in quality service delivery to individuals in society. It is vital that individuals complete college, as college completion is a need in America to meet the employment needs of businesses (Complete College America, 2009).

It was this study's intent to add to social change by offering insight into the field of internships by discussing if there is a benefit between internships and/or employment opportunities, as well as and career development. It was my intent to have this study contribute to the field of experiential learning. The study may contribute to the design of higher education curricula as they prepare students for their career. Colleges and universities may consider the impact of internships on student career development. Increased career preparation may help students perform better on employment interviews. If students perform better on an employment interview, their chances of employment offers increase. The increased chances of employment affect social change. Graduates who attain competitive compensation are able to repay their student loans, and avoid negative consequences associated with loan default.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the proposed research. Chapter 1 presented the problem statement, nature of the study, and the research questions. Chapter 1 also introduced the theoretical framework for this study and the operational definitions. Chapter 1 discussed the delimitation and limitation that the study encountered. Chapter 1 concluded with the significance of the study and the study's effect on social change.

Chapter 2 reviews the scholarly literature related to experiential learning and career development. Chapter 2 discusses the history of experiential learning and two prominent theorists associated with experiential learning. Chapter 2 provides a review of the theoretical framework (experiential learning), internships, and career development.

Chapter 2 will also discuss the gap in knowledge. Chapter 2 concludes with a discussion on how this study links to social change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In this study, I explored the impact, if any, between students' career development (internships) and their professional competencies after graduation. College students who plan to seek employment after graduation may want to prepare themselves for the job market. One way to prepare students for employment after graduation is to offer an internship, which may provide students with the career development skills needed to help them transition from student status to professional practice (Matthew, Taylor, & Ellis, 2012). In this study, I explored an internship as career development and its association with employment competencies.

In collecting literature for the review—for the most part, limited to the past 10 years—the following databases were used, in addition to others: Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), Dissertation and Theses Databases, Academy of Management: Learning and Education, Higher Education Database, Medical Education Database, Journal of Cooperative Education, and the U.S. Department of Education. The following search terms were used: *career development of college students, internship involvement, students' participation in internships, benefits of internships, student satisfaction with internships, professional competencies of college graduates, postgraduate careers, and employer expectations of recently hired college graduates.* This study has some historical information that was written during the last 20 years. The literature review focuses on the development of internship education, experiential learning, and higher education. It examines the current trends of internship education and

its association with professionalism of graduates. This chapter discusses the opinions of stakeholders who are “students, graduates, employers, and the government (Blenkinsop & Scurry, 2010) as related to the career development of students.

Experiential learning—the theoretical framework for this study—is an activity that is linked to education (Dewey, 2011). For example, students are engaging in experiential learning when they link their classroom engagement to their work experience with the purpose of integrating learning from both. Before exploring Dewey’s contribution to the field of experiential learning, the chapter commences with a review of the history of experiential learning and its link to internship education.

History

History has shown that experiential learning started when an individual wanted to learn a trade from another person. The term used to describe experiential learning was *apprenticeship* (Patterson, 1997). An apprentice would learn the trade and its skills by observing an accomplished person who is was expert (Patterson, 1997). Colleges and universities use the practice of apprenticeship with internships: students observe by and trained from a skilled worker during their field placement/internship. Experiential learning programs emerged during the 1970s. Before then, the widely used term was *cooperative education*.

Cooperative education started in America during the early 1900s. Cooperative education was introduced by Herbert Schneider of the University of Cincinnati (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). Schneider believed that cooperative education would reinforce classroom learning by alternating employment-related experiences and classroom

learning. The introduction of cooperative education combined fieldwork with in-class learning (Blair, Millea, & Hammer, 2004). Colleges and universities have adapted the practice, but often use different names: field experience, field practicum experience (Council for Social Work Education, 2001), or internship (American Psychology Association, 2014). Regardless of the term used to describe the practice, the focus of an internship is to ensure that the linkage of learning is occurring between the educational and work experience environments.

One of the goals of an internship is to give students the chance to get work experience that is connected to the educational theories taught in the classroom (Dewey, 2011). The skills students gain during the work experience should lead to professional competencies (Matthew, Taylor, & Ellis, 2012). The combination of these two experiences enhances the learner's knowledge (Dewey, 2011).

Theorists

Scholars who are also theorists, such as John Dewey and David Kolb, were influential in developing the meaning of experiential education, which is rooted in the practice of internship education. John Dewey was one of the contributing theorists of experiential education. Dewey believed that collaboration of classroom learning and employment experience for a student would result in a student who had a better understanding of his/her purpose (Dewey, 2011). The skills and knowledge learned through experiential learning are guided by combining the educational institute and the student's experience (Dewey, 2011). Dewey (2011) argued that a person should apply their classroom knowledge to employment activities. Dewey also argued that there should

not be a division between, or a delay in applying educational knowledge to the workplace engagement (Dewey, 2011). The combination of knowledge and skill will enhance the education of the graduate and society. Dewey's counterpart, David Kolb expanded on the theory of experiential learning and Dewey's theory.

David Kolb agreed with Dewey that learning enhances one's experience (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). However, Kolb believed that a person's experience was an action of learning. Kolb's theory focused on the experiences that a person already possessed through life experience. Kolb believed that an individual's experience should be validated as a contribution to their learning (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). Kolb also believed that the experience one gained outside of the classroom was as valuable as the information taught in the classroom. Although Kolb and Dewey had slightly different opinions on the value of education, they both focused on experience as the linking educational factor.

Dewey's theory, however, focused on enhancing students' learning through experience. The integration of learning through experience will allow students to contribute to society (Dewey, 2011). Dewey's method would allow students to have increased problem-solving and critical thinking skills (Dewey, 2011). Kolb's theory focused on allowing students to enhance their experience through learning. Kolb believed that students who have experience might enhance their learning by engaging in higher education (Katula & Threnhauser, 1999). Regardless of the differences, both theorists focused on the collaboration of learning and experience, which is experiential learning. Experiential learning is the theoretical framework used for this study.

Theoretical Framework

Experiential Learning

DiConti-Donahue (2004) argued “Experiential learning is a philosophy of education based upon the primacy that experience is the learning process” (p. 174). The process is to combine the classroom theories with work experience to create a circle of enhanced learning. Hoy (2001) stated experiential learning is the involvement of work-related activities. Higher education uses experiential learning as a means to engage students in work-related activities while linking their experience with theory through an internship. The relationship between experience and theory enhances the student’s training and ability to understand the theories behind the practice (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Kolb and Kolb (2005) reported, “To improve learning in higher education, the primary focus should be on engaging students in a process that enhances their learning” (p. 194). Theory is taught in an educational setting; however, the experience is located in a work setting. The combination of education and work experience allows students to build the knowledge and skills needed in the employment field. The combination of education and work experience is known as an internship.

Internship

Internships allow students to link their professional training with their classroom education. Internships are offered at different times throughout a student’s educational experience. Internships also vary in length of time. For example, a student may engage in an internship for a day or as long as multiple quarters or semesters (Parks, Onwuegbuzie, & Cash, 2000). Regardless of the length of time one spends in an internship, the

internship is designed to offer work-related opportunities. The combined experience offers students the opportunity to use their classroom knowledge in a professional setting. Herr (2000) believed that internship education allows for the linkage between theoretical and methodological structures. The linkage between the two areas allows students and universities/colleges the opportunity to explore the ever-changing environment of professional work and maintain a connection to the theoretical knowledge. Because professional practice changes frequently, it is vital that continuity between the stakeholders and the professional development of students is present in higher education.

Stakeholders

Several stakeholders are involved in the professional development of students in higher education. Stakeholders are identified as students, the higher education system (colleges and universities), employers, and the economy (Cord and Clements, 2010). Each stakeholder has a different interest in the career preparation of college students. For example, students who want employment after graduation may want to receive professional development while seeking their degree. The higher education system may want to respond to the needs of those students. Employers may look to the higher education system as the deliverer of graduates who are educated and professionally trained. Employers seek individuals with degrees to fill positions that have complex tasks, such as the ever-changing field of technology (Shelley, 1992). An employee who has a college education could contribute to the economy. The economy would benefit from students who are able to locate and secure employment in order to repay their student loan debt and contribute to society.

Students

Many individuals believe that a college education is the foundation of a solid economic employment future (DiConti-Donahue, 2004). Higher education is responding to the aforementioned assumption by offering students opportunities to engage in career development activities. Colleges and universities are adding internship programs to the traditional curriculum. Internship opportunities provide students with the realities of employment in a position associated with their career choices (Simons, et al., 2012). Undergraduate students who engage in cooperative education or other work-related experience programs will gain skills that are vital to an employer (Raelin, et al., 2012). Internship experience also provides students with a glimpse of the expectations of a worker who is in the position. When a student learns the expectations of an employer, he/she learns the professional competencies associated with that job.

The hope is that the internship experience will help increase students' professional competencies prior to graduation. Student participation in experiential learning have increased over the years (National Association of College and Employers, 2011). Any skills and knowledge gained prior to graduation may help increase students' chances of employment in the competitive job market. The internship experience may provide students with an "edge" over someone who graduated and did not partake in an internship or a graduate with no work-related experience (Sublett & Mattingly, 1995). Students reported that they were interested in ensuring their degree and employment skills are in line with their career goals (Simons, et al., 2012).

Allen, Mims, Roberts, Kim, and Ryu (2007) discussed the value of their internship experience as students. Collectively, each author shared that the internship experience was beneficial. They further stated that opportunities after the internship presented themselves, which they believe were afforded to them because of the internship. Although these authors stated that they were satisfied with the internship experience, other students may not share the same experience. As noted by their internship experience, satisfaction was based on their engagement. Although there may be mixed reviews regarding internship involvement, colleges and universities should respond to the needs and satisfaction of students.

Higher Education

Members of society continue to believe that higher education is the foundation of a person's career, as per Cord and Clements (2010). Higher education's focus is to prepare students for workplace responsibilities (Cord & Clements, 2010). College curricula must address the current employment needs of graduates, and must respond in a manner that is visible to the learning community (Diconti-Donahue, 2004). The importance of an internship is to guide prospective students to prospective employment possibilities in their degree field (Tolich, 2012). As colleges prepare students for the workplace, there should be a transitional period. One of those transitional practices occurring during the transitional period is the engagement of internships. Work-related programs, such as an internship will allow students the opportunity to transition into the roles associated in the degree area (Cord & Clements, 2010). Colleges and universities may also offer career workshops where résumé writing is offered. Colleges that offer

students internship education essentially collaborate with the student to help add to their employment foundation. Universities and colleges also create relationships with possible employers who are in the community. Students who engage in internships increase human capital for prospective employers (Perna, 2010).

Employers

Employers are another group of stakeholders. Employers seek individuals with college degrees for certain positions (Roska & Levey, 2010). Because employers are seeking college graduates for positions, it is vital that graduates are prepared for the positions. A qualitative research study was conducted, and the respondents who were employers believed that the skills and knowledge students acquired during their internship could be used in the employment environment after graduation (Hoy, 2011). Employers believed that many entry-level new employees were once interns (Dobbs, 2013). A research article reported that employers use internships as a means to identify quality employees (Patterson, 1997). Internships offer employers the opportunity to hire staff members who are familiar with employment tasks associated with the position or their agency. Employers believe that new hires who were once interns have better performance skills than employees who have not interned (Dobbs, 2013). Employers are interested in having employees with experience. "A research study indicated that organizations spend less on resource training and development of employees who had cooperative education experience" (Braunstein & Stull, 2001, p. 13). When a company spends less on a new employee, there may be a financial benefit for the employer.

Finally, internships also help the economy, for they provide the student with income to help pay for student loans, living expenses, wardrobe costs, and even daily lunches.

Economy

The concern of under or unemployed college graduates is a societal one, which affects the economy. Roughly, 11 million individuals are under or unemployed (United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). Out of the 11 million individuals who are unemployed, more than 1.7 million hold a bachelor's or advanced degree (United States Department of Labor: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013.) A study was conducted addressing the under-employment rate of recent college graduates (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). The study reported underemployed graduates are individuals who are working in positions that do not require a college degree (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Some students may be under or unemployed by choice as they undergo a transitional period into their career field or in the pursuit of advanced degrees (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011). Regardless of the choice, some students are unable to pay back their loans because they have not secured appropriate competitive employment. The concern of students' inability to repay their loans or find employment that will afford them the opportunity to repay their loans has caught the interest of the federal government, especially for students from for-profit colleges and universities.

Department of Education

The Department of Education states for-profit institutions of higher education are costly and the cost of attendance does not offset the debt incurred (Department of Education, 2011). It is also believed that for-profit universities are not preparing students

for employment after graduation and have low retention rates. Although students have a choice of where they attend school, and there should be an understanding of the cost of education, The Department of Education and government official Senator Tom Harkins, (III) believes the enrollment practices of for-profit colleges and universities are flawed (Harkins, 2013).

Government officials, such as Iowa democratic Senator Tom Harkins, (III) investigated practices of the for-profit higher education system (Harkins, 2013). The investigation addressed the recruiting practices of for-profit universities and colleges, as well as the schools' retention rate, the ability to produce employment-ready graduates, and the debt associated with attending a for-profit university. The federal government has designed a system to help increase students' knowledge about the schools they are attending. Currently, schools are required to educate students on the potential student loan debt amount he/she may incur from attending a for-profit college or university (Hamilton, 2010). Schools that elect to accept federal student financial aid money are required to demonstrate their retention rate to students. Schools are also required to prepare students for employment after graduation (Hamilton, 2010). Although, it is difficult to determine the reasons for unemployed college graduates, the United States Department of Education has implemented gainful employment regulations to increase students' knowledge of the cost of attendance at for-profit colleges and universities (Department of Education, 2011).

Although the federal government has addressed the higher education practices, students must be proactive with the process as well. Students should ensure that they

obtain the most from their educational institution. Students who want to enter into the work field directly after graduation may benefit from courses that will allow for postgraduate employment. Higher education must address the demands of preparing students for the workforce (Cord & Clements, 2010). As higher education is seen as the means to create a foundation for professional development, ensuring a student obtains a professional skillset that is vital to the preparation.

Higher Education

Higher education is promoted as a resource by increasing a person's academic knowledge and financial wealth over the course of his/her life. "A broad agreement is present stating a college education is a key resource in obtaining socio-economic status in modern, industrial, and post-industrial societies" (Davidovitch, Littman-Ovadia, & Soen, 2011, p. 24). College graduates earn more over a lifetime than non-degree holders (Roksa, 2005) do. Individuals with a bachelor's degree will earn more than two million dollars over a lifetime opposed to individuals without a degree (Arney, Hardebeck, Estrada, & Permenter, 2006). The pursuit and attainment of a college degree is beneficial for long-term career growth as employers are seeking individuals who have a specific skillset and educational background (Arney, Hardebeck, Estrada, & Permenter, 2006).

The specific skillset can be learned during an internship experience. A study discussed the introduction of internship opportunities for students at their university as a response to declining enrollments, educational relevance, student expectation, and career opportunities (Sublett & Mattingly, 1995). The internships were implemented in one of their academic departments. The study sought to examine advantages and problems of

having an untraditional practice of mandating an internship for students (Sublett & Mattingly, 1995). The study highlighted an internship may create a burden on the university with locating internships for students who may not otherwise take on the tasks (Sublett & Mattingly, 1995). Students may also encounter financial burdens because there may be a tuition cost associated with the internship involvement. Nevertheless, their findings indicate that the internship was beneficial. The students and the internship site supervisor made positive statements about the internship experience (Sublett & Mattingly, 1995).

Internships

Cord and Clements (2010) reported that the workplace continually evolves, and students who plan to enter the workforce should be prepared for the ever-changing workforce. To address the demands of the workforce, employers are looking for students who have more than just theory knowledge. Cord and Clements (2010) reported employers are looking for graduates who are work ready and have “soft skills” (p. 288). Soft skills are linked to employability and are the skills of communication and effectively working with clients (Cord & Clements, 2010). It is believed that these soft skills are learned through an employment engagement, such as an internship (Cord & Clements, 2010). Cord and Clements’ (2010) study also reported that it is the responsibility of higher education to help students gain access to work-related learning, as well as to engage the opportunity of learning. Nonetheless, the shared responsibility and introducing students to the workforce through internships may create the base of lifelong

learning as well as professional development and competency for some students (Cord & Clements, 2010).

The common goal in higher education is to create a learning environment for students to gain professional competencies (Waters, Altus & Wilkinson, 2013). Those professional competencies are knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Water, Altus & Wilkinson, 2013). A study argued that professional competencies are learned in the community opposed to a classroom (Waters, Altus, & Wilkinson, 2013). Professional competencies are learned more by practice than from classroom instruction (Perry, 2012). Colleges and universities offer many degree disciplines. The variations of degrees will lead to different competencies required by students. The different competencies may be learned during the internship experience. Internships help increase the professional skills of students and expose them to the job requirements (Dobbs, 2013).

A study done on students in the degree field of tourism and hospitality, used internships to add to the learning experiences (Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen, & Chou, 2009). The internship experience is believed to provide quality-learning experience incorporating the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the industry (Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen, & Chou, 2009). Students who engage in an internship may experience stress (Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen & Chou, 2009). Although an internship experience may benefit a student, it is important to have support systems available to address the stress associated with work-related tasks (Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen & Chou, 2009). Internships allowed hospitality students the opportunity to experience real job situations. Schools must support internship students during their journey of professional development (Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen, &

Chou, 2009). Students who have fulltime or part-time employment may also require support from their college or university, as they, too, may experience stress.

The number of working students has increased to the point that the majority of students work during their higher education. The needs of students have changed over the years requiring students to work while pursuing a degree (Blake & Worsdale, 2009). A study reported that “nearly one in ten (eight percent) of fulltime, traditional age undergraduate students work at least thirty-five hours per week” (Perna, 2010, p. 30). Another study indicated that four out of ten students work to fund their education (Blake & Worsdale, 2009). Higher education must support students who work and attend school (Perna, 2010). This opinion is similar to that of Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen, and Chou (2009) who mentioned schools must support students who are interning. Students who work may potentially have the same educational and employment enhancement of students who intern (Perna, 2010). Regardless, if the experience is paid employment or an internship, colleges and universities should support their students to obtain success.

Students who worked had increased confidence, transferrable skills such as time management, and communication skills, all of which enhanced employability (Blake & Worsdale, 2009). Students who are engaged in paid employment have enhanced learning (Blake & Worsdale, 2009). The students gain skills that support their studies as it is recognized that learning is not limited to the classroom (Blake & Worsdale, 2009). With the increase of students who are working, higher education should make provisions. Students who are employed may share their knowledge gained at work in the class environment developing a linkage between academics and employment (Blake &

Worsdale, 2009). “Work experience linked to theory provides students with the theoretical and methodological structures to enhance the educational experience” (Herr, 2000, p. 39). “Assisting students in developing intellectual abilities, gaining deeper understanding, and building personal resources are goals of teaching and learning” (Dras & Miller, 2002, p. 881).

A study identified common forms of experiential learning in higher education, one being internship (Simons, Fehr, Blank, Connell, Georganas, Fernandez, & Peterson 2012)s. Internships seek to introduce students to experiences that they may encounter in the world of employment (Simons, et al., 2012). Students and field supervisors reported, “Internships enhanced the students’ knowledge of the content, allowing them to contribute to the welfare of the community and achieve their career goals” (Simons et al., 2012, p. 325). Internships are a form of career development.

Career Development

Students usually have a goal of entering into a career after obtaining their degree. A college degree is the gateway to economic advancement (Roska, 2005). Colleges and universities must prepare those students who want to enter into their career directly after graduating. Educators believe a linkage between students’ participation in an internship and transition to the profession does exist (Matthew, Taylor & Ellis, 2012). Because students seek education as a way to enter into their career field, colleges and universities should assist students with preparing for employment after graduation. The ever-changing employment market causes students to need employment preparation beyond the classroom education. Universities and colleges can provide students with educational

preparation through internships. Internships allow students to engage in career development and gain employment skills.

Students who engaged in professional training had increased their work beliefs and values (Hayward & Horvath, 2000). Career development increases students' learning. The students also had a better understanding of culture competency, as well as learning the terminology associated with their field of career interest (Simons et al., 2012). Students believed that career interest was enhanced through the internship experience (Simons et al., 2012). Students who are unsure of a career path may engage in an internship to help decide if they want to invest in a certain career choice. These opportunities also allow students to connect with possible employers for prospective postgraduate employment job offers (Danzger, 1988).

Gaps in Knowledge

Researchers should address the gaps in knowledge regarding students' working knowledge of their degree prior to graduation (Roska & Levey, 2010). "Future research is needed to conduct an in-depth analysis of skills acquired and careers pursued that provide a more precise portrayal of the relationship between occupational specificity and labor market trajectories" (Roska & Levey, 2010, p. 409). This research study addresses the gaps in knowledge of students obtaining working knowledge of their degree prior to graduation. Another study conducted research Taiwan, and recommended that additional research should be conducted in various industries and over an extended period (Chen, Ku, Shyr, Chen, & Chou, 2009). This study covered a five-year span encompassing the years of 2009-2014 and addressed the students in the United States. "Additional research

should develop a theoretical understanding of underemployment of graduates and focus on career development as the framework” (Scurry & Blenkinsopp, 2011, p. 655). This study explored career development; the framework is experiential learning, which focuses on developing students’ learning through vocational training. Another study recommended future exploration of diverse undergraduates enrolled in public and private colleges stating this would add to the area of research when addressing student learning and practicum/internship programs (Simon et al., 2012). This study also addressed social change.

Social Change

It is hoped this research study will add to the educational, career development, and economic structure in society. It is wished that this study will affect social change in the field of higher education. A study encouraged further study of experiential learning in higher education (Redcross, 2015). This study will add documented evidence about experiential education. It will also share literature from different scholars and their opinions, findings, and suggestions regarding experiential learning/internships. Universities can use this information to help in evidence-based decision making for the support or removal of an internship program. For example, internship departments may use this study to help identify the reasons for educational institutions to create supportive programs for students who are engaged in experiential education. Another study reported that students appreciate the internship program and think the experience is valuable, and for that reason, program resources should assist in experiential learning experiences (Diambra, Cole-Kakrzewsk, & Booher, 2004).

Students may use this study as a means to make decisions regarding educational classes, one of which may be an internship. “Students have concerns about the effectiveness of undergraduate preparation for employment once a student completes their degree” (Gault, Leach, & Duey, 2010, p. 76). Students who want to enter into the workforce directly after graduating from college may use this study as justification to engage in an internship. This study will also uncover valuable experiences linked to internships. The study will also demonstrate the responses of students and their feelings regarding their internship experiences. This study will also contribute to social change by identifying and creating a relationship between students and potential employers.

Summary

Chapter 2 provided an overview of scholarly literature and discussed the history and theoretical framework of experiential learning. An overview of the theorists who contributed to the field of experiential learning was discussed. There was reflection on the impact of internship and career development. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the gap of knowledge, and how this study will add to social change. In order to address this study’s hypothesis, a quantitative research investigation was conducted, and is discussed in the upcoming chapter.

Chapter 3 discusses the quantitative research method used to address the research hypothesis. The study used a published questionnaire (survey) to test the study’s hypothesis. I issued the survey to a convenience sample of college graduates who once interned at the Center for Services. The survey has a quality control question. The quality control question asked the respondents to select a number. Their response to the control

question ensured that respondents were reading the questions that were asked on the survey. The questionnaire used laymen's terms to ensure the respondents understood the questions that were asked. Although each respondent received the same set of questions, each respondent's survey questions may have appeared in a random order if he/she used the electronic survey. The responses were divided into groups, which represented the perceptions of individuals who participated in an internship and their beliefs and/or opinions regarding their internship experience and professional competencies.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to test the hypothesis that students who intern believe their internship experience contributed to their professional competencies. A review of the literature was conducted to determine the appropriate methodology for this study. The collection of literature highlighted the different methodologies used to conduct various studies addressing internship education, student satisfaction, and college graduates' professional competencies. The literature also helped me develop the methodology I used for this study. The literature focused on the identified population of college students and graduates. The literature also addressed the primary and secondary research questions that are linked to the hypothesis.

Chapter 3 discusses the research methodology and rationale, as well as the processes used to collect data for this research study. The primary research question was as follows: To what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience? This chapter discusses the population from which the sample was drawn, the sample size, and the procedures used for recruitment. The chapter highlights the research instrument, data collection, and analyses, as well as ethical procedures used to ensure ethical practices.

Research Questions

The primary research question (PRQ) is as follows:

PRQ: To what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience?

H_1 : A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present.

H_0 : No significant statistical relationship between undergraduate internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present.

To answer the primary research question and hypothesis, the following secondary research questions were asked.

The following secondary research questions (SRQ) are as follows:

SRQ1: What, if any, is the correlation between an internship program and obtaining work-related knowledge?

H_0^1 : No significant statistical correlation between graduates who graduated between the years of 2009-2014 and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present.

H_1^1 : A significant statistical correlation between graduates who graduated between the years of 2009-2014 and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present.

SRQ2: What is the correlation, if any, between internship participation and career skills/development of students?

H_0^2 : No significant statistical correlation between internship participation and students' career skill/development exists.

H_1^2 : A significant statistical correlation between internship participation and student career skill/development does exist.

SRQ₃: To what extent do graduates believe their internship experience led to their ability to attain employment after graduation?

H_0^1 : A significant statistical difference exists between graduates' belief that their internship experience led or contributed to their ability to attain employment after graduation.

H_1^2 : No significant statistical difference exists between graduates' belief that their internship experience led or contributed to their ability to attain employment after graduation.

In order to address the above research questions, I used a quantitative research design. Research has three designs: mixed methods (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010), qualitative, and quantitative (Engel & Schutt, 2005). A mixed-methods design has different approaches, such as, but not limited to grounded theory linked with a quantitative approach. A mixed methods approach allows a researcher to blend quantitative research methods with a quantitative approach to strengthen the results of the study (Engel & Schutt, 2005). I did not use the mixed-methods research designs for this study because its analyses would not answer the research questions. This study only used statistical analysis to answer the research question and for that reason, a mixed-method study was not required. I explored the analysis of a qualitative research method.

Qualitative research allows a researcher to explore a societal or identify group phenomena by assessing the events according to the participants (Engel & Schutt, 2005). When a researcher uses qualitative methods, s/he explores the words and/or observations of the sample without looking at a direct statistical interpretation (Engel & Schutt, 2005).

Statistical information answered the research question for this study. When a researcher conducts a qualitative research study, he/she has the option to observe and/or interview participants (Creswell, 2009). This study did not have the option to observe or interview the participants who participated in the study, as they were no longer interning at the CIBH. Because a researcher would have to collect data using interviews or observations, a mixed-method research model or qualitative approach was not ideal. This study used a quantitative research method because it allows a researcher to investigate the relationships between variables. The information gathered can be generalized from a sample to a population (Engel & Schutt, 2005).

Research Design and Rationale

For this study, I used a quantitative research method design because it allowed me to use a survey instrument for data collection, because it addresses the differences between variables, and because it obtains a statistical analysis to answer the hypotheses. This study used a survey instrument to collect data (Engel & Schutt, 2005). A quantitative study creates statistical data while identifying and describing the differences between variables (Engel & Schutt, 2005). This study used statistical data to answer the hypotheses. This study also used statistical data to describe the differences between the variables. This study had one independent variable. Internship involvement was the study's independent variable. This study had five dependent variables. The study's five dependent variables are college graduates, college intern(s), career development, professional attainment, and professional competencies. The covariate variables are the

student's interviewing skills (ability to impress the employer), the ability to convey their professional competencies related to the job, and previous job experience and exposure.

This quantitative research study used a survey research tool. "Survey research is considered the most important method of measurement in social science research" (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010, p. 81). Survey design research studies allow a researcher to generalize information from a population based on a sample (Creswell, 2009). This study's conclusion was drawn from the study's sample. "Quantitative research questions are directional because they state a relationship between two or more independent and dependent variables or a comparison between two or more groups of dependent variables" (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010, p. 191).

This study's intent was to compare groups of variables. Research is commonly used to describe individuals or characteristics of a system, as well as to obtain attitudes and opinions regarding groups of individuals (Reynolds, 2007). In this study, I hoped to obtain opinions from the sample regarding their postgraduate professional competencies based on their internship experiences. Quantitative research studies allow researchers the opportunity to collect data that will create numerical descriptions (Sheperis, Young & Daniels, 2010). This study used statistical data to determine if the hypothesis would be accepted or rejected.

The study used both online and paper survey instruments. The time constraints associated with a survey instrument result from the collecting of data. There was also the fact that graduates may or may not complete the surveys or return the surveys to the researcher. Graduates may not want to take the five to ten minutes required to complete

the survey. This study's outcome depended on the willingness of participants. Initially, it was difficult to determine how long it would take to finalize the study. The study operated on the premise that after 30 days of distributing the study, the study would finalize with the data returned to the researcher by the willing participants. I took into consideration the possible busy schedules of individuals and made the survey accessible through the Internet. Because the survey was available online, the participants were able to complete the survey online at their leisure. E-mailing surveys allows for faster processing than telephone surveys (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). E-mailing the surveys is more cost effective than regular mail. E-mailing the survey removed the cost associated with postage stamps and envelopes. Sending the survey using the e-mail system was easier. I was concerned that there may be limited responses from the population if the e-mail addresses on file were not active. There was also the concern that the e-mails would go to the prospective participant's spam folder, as my e-mail is not listed in their e-mail address box.

The ease associated with sending the survey link through e-mail helped with disseminating the survey and obtaining the response associated with the study. The online survey decreased the dependence and constraints of waiting for the surveys to be returned through the traditional mailing system and saved the cost of sending the survey via the United States Postal Service. Although there was the ease of sending the survey through the e-mail system, I opted to send the paper surveys to the population's last known address on file using postal mail. The method of using the United States Postal Service was used to assist in disseminating the surveys because of the limited guarantee that the

e-mail addresses on file are valid or the emails would enter the participants' e-mail inbox. I considered depending on the mail system because the e-mail addresses that are on file may not be current.

This study used a program named Survey Monkey for the online survey. Survey Monkey is an online survey system that administers online surveys. Survey Monkey collected the responses from respondents who participate in the online survey. The program collected the demographic information of the respondents, such as their ages, gender, ethnicity, degree, and major. The survey asked questions about their internship experience, professional attainment, and professional skills. The survey asked questions about career satisfaction and professional attainment. The data collected from a non-experimental convenience sample of the targeted population was used to obtain the statistical data.

Population

The targeted population for this study encompassed college graduates who interned/volunteered at CIBH during the years 2009-2014. During the years of 2009-2014, there were 100 students who interned at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. As 100 students interned at the agency during the years of 2009-2014, the population for this study is 100 former interns. Initially, it was expected that the population consisted of 100 former interns and only 90 individuals would partake in the study. I did not send the survey to the former students who once interned in my department, which initially would eliminate ten individuals. This decision was made to

increase the internal validity of the survey. Although the target population was 100 individuals, only those in the population who met the eligibility criteria could participate.

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible to participate in this study the respondent had to have interned at CIBH while pursuing a college degree. S/He had to be 18 years of age or older. The participants had to confer their college degree during the years of 2009-2014, as well. Individuals who met the eligibility criteria were issued the study's research instrument to rate their opinions about their internship experience and perceptions. Those individuals who met the eligibility criteria were part of the study's sample. "The sample must be appropriate and adequate for the study, even if it is not represented" (Engel and Schutt, 2005, p. 286).

Sample

The initial information stated that 100 individuals volunteered at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare, and only 90 former students would be sampled. "Sampling is a means of identifying and selecting a portion of the total population" (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010, p. 10). I did not send a survey to those whom I once supervised. This study used a power analysis to determine the appropriate sample size for this study. This study used a convenience sample to obtain the data. Convenience sampling is a sample obtained based on a nonrandom method (Sheperis, Young, & Daniels, 2010, p. 11). This study's data is based on the surveys completed and returned by past interns who once interned at the Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. A power analysis was conducted to determine the appropriate sample size for this study.

This study used a power analysis to determine the required sample size for this study. I used the G*Power computer program to calculate the sample size for the study (Appendix E). G*Power is a computer program that computes statistical data, such as the sample population (UCLA: Statistical Consulting, 2014). The G*Power computer program calculated the sample using the statistical processes of a *f*-test ANCOVA: Fixed effects, main effects, and interactions. The effect size *f* was 1.0 with a α err prob equal .05, the power .95 (1- β er prob .95). The numerator of degree of freedom (df) was 10, the numbers of groups were two, and the number of covariates equal one. The output yielded the following results of Non-centrally parameter of λ equal 33.0000000, Critical F of 2.1645799; Denominator df equaled 30 for a Total sample size of 33 with an Actual power of 0.9535423. (Appendix F). The G*Power program determined that a sample size of 33 individuals was the minimum needed to not accept the null hypothesis (UCLA: Statistical Consulting, 2014). The required sample size was 33. I had to recruit the suggested sample for this study.

Recruitment of Sample

Engle and Schutt (2005) stated that researchers should connect with organizations and agencies to promote awareness and increase credibility of the survey. To help promote the credibility of the survey, the survey was mailed with an IRB approved consent form, which listed the details and purpose of the research study. The mailing package invited the sample to complete the survey online or on paper. The survey information package provided the prospective respondent with options to take the survey online or return the survey by postal mail. Before the respondents could participate in the

survey, they had to read and agree to the terms listed on the consent form. Because consent was required to participate in the study, individuals had to be over the age of 18 to participate, which was one of the eligibility criteria. Those individuals who agreed to participate in the study were able to take the survey at their convenience in a setting that was conducive to their needs.

Sample Setting

Engel and Schutt (2005) suggested that researchers should go where the participants are located. The sample setting for this study was any convenient location for the sample participant. The sample setting environment may have varied per respondent as the sample participants could take the survey at their convenience online or via postal mail. The questionnaire was administered online and through the postal mail. The respondent was able to take the survey wherever and whenever s/he had access to a computer and the internet, or s/he had the options to fill out the paper questionnaire and mail it back to me. Because the respondents were able to complete the survey at their convenience, the sample setting could have been in the participants' home, place of work, or local area such as a park or library. Regardless of the sample setting, all individuals were issued the same research instrument.

Research Instrument

The study used a published survey instrument named Career Benefits of CO-OP/Internship Experience Survey (Sawyer, 2008). The Career Benefits of CO-OP/Internship Experience Survey had 20 items with a five point Likert scale rating. The survey was designed to obtain the perceptions that graduates had regarding their

internship experience and its influences upon their employment attainment and career development. Surveys are highly used to measure quality, and are a common tool used in research studies (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Likert scale is used to obtain individuals' perceptions and feelings about a service or interaction (Jamieson, 2004), which is the rationale for using a Likert scale survey for this study.

The Likert scale surveys are designed to solicit responses based on a range of answers. Likert scales are structured using groups of categories. For example, the categories may represent a range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Likert scale surveys are constructed in various ways. Common practices are associated with the Likert scale such as having five or seven choices on the response scale (Allen & Seaman, 2007). In addition to having positive and negative responses for choices, there must be adverbs, such as *strongly* located in the statement. For example, the positive choice may have strongly agree or strongly disagree for a negative choice option (Allen & Seaman, 2007). This study used a five-point Likert scale survey with the following range of scores: 1. (*strongly disagree*) 2. (*disagree*) 3. (*neutral*) 4. (*agree*) 5. (*strongly agree*). This study elected to use a survey because a survey is efficient in regards to time, cost, and practicality. Each participant took less than 15 minutes to complete the survey. A copy of the survey is located in Appendix A. The survey had operational variables.

Operationalization of Variables

This study counted all independent and dependent variables as one event or individual experience. The independent variable, college internship/internship involvement addressed the secondary research question number one. The dependent

variable college graduates addressed the PRQ1. The next dependent variable is college intern(s). The dependent variable of college interns was linked to the SRQ1. The dependent variable of career development is related to the SRQ2. The next dependent variable is professional attainment. Professional attainment is related to the secondary research question number three. Lastly, the dependent variable of professional competencies is associated with the primary research question number one. To answer the primary and secondary research questions, data collection occurred.

Data Collection

Before conducting the research needed to test the research hypotheses, I applied for research approval from Walden University's Institution Research Board (IRB). Walden University's IRB approved my IRB application on November 19, 2014. The IRB approval number is 11-19-14-0244142. After receiving approval from IRB to conduct the dissertation research, I sent the approval to the community partner CIBH. Upon receipt of the IRB approval, the community partner provided me with the contact information for the population. I provided the community partner with a copy of the Career Benefits of Co-Op/Internship Experience (Sawyer, 2008) survey for review. After obtaining the contact information for the interns, I prepared and mailed the Career Benefits of Co-Op/Internship Experience (Sawyer, 2008) to the individuals who represented the population and who met the criteria. I sent the career survey to the last known address of the former interns who met the criteria.

The responses were collected using an Internet survey program named Survey Monkey and postal mail. The surveys that were returned via mail were placed into the

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for processing, “The foundation of all questionnaires is the question” (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmais, 2008, p. 230). The questions on the questionnaire helped to answer the primary research question, as well as the associated questions that are linked to the hypothesis. Darrel Sawyer, Ph.D. (2008) created the questionnaire. The name of the survey is Career Benefits of CO-OP/ Internship Experience Survey (Sawyer, 2008), which is located in the appendix (Appendix B). “The purpose of the Career Benefits of CO-OP/Internship Experience study was to examine the perceptions of South Dakota School of Mines and Technology (SDSM&T from 1986 to 2006) regarding their co-op or internship experiences and their career development” (Sawyer, 2008, p.118). The Career Benefits of CO-OP/ Internship Experience Survey was used to obtain the perceptions of graduates regarding their internship experience and career development. The questionnaire has 20 items, and it took five to ten minutes to complete. A context validity matrix to ensure reliability and validity of the survey (Sawyer, 2008). A pilot survey was conducted, and a critique sheet was used to increase the survey’s validity and reliability (Sawyer, 2008). The pilot survey was conducted on SDSM&T graduates who graduated from 1986 to 2006 (Sawyer, 2008). The questions for the questionnaire were “critiqued by the South Dakota Career Planning and Placement Association” to ensure validity and reliability (Sawyer, 2008, p. 46).

The questionnaire collected identifying and subjective information from respondents. The respondents’ responses were captured electronically. The introduction to the survey contained information about the survey, such as the purpose, instructions on

how to access and complete the survey, and all ethical considerations, such as the protection of the person's anonymity. The respondents' anonymity was also protected in the survey conducted through Survey Monkey. Once the respondent agreed to the terms and conditions of the survey, the survey commenced.

The consent form provided information regarding the purpose of the study. The consent form informed the respondent of the estimated time it would take to complete the survey. The consent form also informed the respondents that their identity would be anonymous and that by clicking the survey link he/she consented to partake in the survey. Additionally, it informed them that the answers would be documented in a research study. Because the study was a survey, there was no exit interview. The survey closed with a message thanking the participants for their time and participation in the survey. The respondents were provided an e-mail address if they wanted additional information about the study. The consent form is located in Appendix B. All the data collected was processed to gather statistical information that helped answer the research question. The data analysis plan helped to ensure that the information was processed accordingly.

Data Analysis Plan

The respondents answered questions in the Survey Monkey system. Some respondents returned the survey through postal mail. To maintain the integrity of data produced from research, researchers should use statistical tests to obtain the statistical significance (National Academy of Science, National Academy of Engineering, and Institute of Medicine, 2009). This study used statistical significance to address the hypothesis. The participants' answers were logged into Survey Monkey program, and

then transferred into SPSS 20.1 statistical program. The SPSS program analyzed the data by running different tests. Those tests were *t* tests, to obtain the mean, standard deviation, analyses of variances (ANOVAs), and multiple regressions. “An overall analysis-of-variance test is conducted to assess whether means on a dependent variable are significantly different among groups” (Green & Salkind, 2001, p. 184). The research questions obtained statistical data regarding graduates’ perceptions regarding their internship experience, career development, and professional attainment. This study was looking for a 95% confidence interval of difference when testing the hypothesis. The data analysis plan was followed to obtain the analysis of data based on the information from the research instrument.

Data Analysis

This study’s main research question is, to what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their undergraduate internship experience. The main research question was analyzed using a *t* test to determine the statistical difference between the perceptions of college graduates as it relates to their internship experience and employment after graduation. The *t* test helped to determine if the study’s hypothesis is accurate by obtaining the percentages of opinions. The *t* test analyzed the respondents’ perception regarding their internship and professional competencies. The multiple regression analysis examined the relationship among variables. The secondary research questions number one and three were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The multiple regression analysis determined the relationship between the college graduates’ perception regarding their internship involvement and

work-related knowledge. A crosstabulation was used to analyze secondary research question number two. The crosstabulation answered the question regarding the relationship between the internship participation and student skills/development. Crosstabulation helped to determine if a statistical correlation between students' career development and internship involvement is present. The third research question was analyzed using descriptive statistics.

The study analyzed the demographic data using an ANOVA. Analyzing data through the ANOVA process helped examine the averages in the groups of participants. The ANOVA helped to determine the differences among gender and age groups. The ANOVA helped me to learn their opinions regarding the internship involvement and its relationship to obtaining employment after graduating with a college degree. The different statistical analyses helped answer the study's hypothesis. I also monitored for the threats to internal and external validity.

Threats to Internal Validity

Threats to validity are present in research. The threat to internal validity in this study may be maturation. Students' opinions regarding their relationship between their internship experience and job skills may vary during their professional growth. The individuals in the study may have gained knowledge, skills, and abilities after their participation in the internship through classes, observation, and training, which added to their professional development. The increased knowledge may be the cause of their improved professional skills. This may also affect their opinions regarding the benefits, if any, that the internship may have had on their professional development.

Threats to External Validity

The threat to external validity is the ability to generalize this study to the general population of college graduates. Over a million individuals have a college degree. More students graduate each year with at least a bachelor's degree. The sample size for this study, was 100. A sample size of 100 individuals is small based on the population size of over one million. Because the sample is small compared to the population size, it is difficult to generalize the findings to the entire population. Although this is a small population, the practice to ensure ethical consideration and protecting the rights of participants was still considered a priority.

Ethical Consideration and Protection of Participants

This study ensured ethical consideration and the protection of participants before and during the data collection process. I reviewed the policies and procedures that govern research at CIBH and received approval to conduct the study from the agency's executive director. The approval to conduct the study at the community partner is located in Appendix C. Furthermore, to ensure that the study was not placing the sample at risk, the study obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University before the research was conducted. After receiving approval from the IRB (Approval No. 11-19-14-0244142), the study commenced.

All the data associated with the study is stored on an external hard drive. The IRB approved my consent form, which has the IRB approval number in the body of the document (Appendix D). The file is password protected. Before the respondents answered the survey questions, the study obtained formal consent from the respondents.

The study executed this task by having respondents agree that they had read and understood the informed consent information, which included the privacy and participation of risk information. The informed consent was located at the beginning of the survey. The participants had to agree to the consent before moving forward with the study. All ethical procedures associated with data collection were practiced when executing any tasks associated with the research study. When conducting any research connected to the study all directives from the Institutional Review Board directives were followed as well.

The respondents did not provide their names or contact information. However, the survey asked for the respondents' gender, age, and race. Nevertheless, the anonymity of the graduates was ensured throughout the survey. The system logged the number of individuals who responded to the survey; however, the system did not record contact information. Because the information is not linked directly to a respondent, if the respondent had questions, he or she would have to contact me using the information provided on the consent form. The survey used informal terms to ensure the participants understood of the questions in the study. This research also ensured that the purpose of the study was clear in the consent form.

One of the ethical concerns related to recruitment is that students and/or universities may assume that the research is focusing on their institution or internship site. I informed the site and the participants that the information gathered was only used to obtain the perceptions of former interns regarding their experience as interns, their career development experience, and postgraduate professional competencies. The other

ethical concern was the validity of the individuals who completed the survey. As the study was online, I was unable to definitively determine if the individuals who completed the survey had obtained a degree or went to college. Nonetheless, it is hoped that the actual former interns responded to the survey. This also had limitations.

Limitations

The study's limitations were in the area of demographics as the information focused on former interns who interned at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. The study was also limited by the years (2009-2014) that the degree was conferred. Another limitation was in the area of work experience. The students may have had a range of experiences prior to the enrollment into their degree program, but were only required to answer about their career development as interns. Another limitation is the bias associated with closed-ended questions. Closed-ended questions contain bias because respondents are required to pick a predetermined response (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008, p. 233). The limitation of predetermined responses affects the ability to expand on the students' perceptions. The population size of 90 individuals is also a limitation. In addition to limitations, this study had to control for bias.

Controlling for Bias

I controlled for bias in this study through the actions of being neutral. The collected surveys did not ask for identifying information from the respondents. As I did not obtain identifying information, I was not able to obtain an emotional connection to the responses. I did not send the surveys to the individuals who once interned in my department. I had limited to no concerns with the comments made by the students, as

their experiences do not reflect upon my department. Furthermore, the study did not ask the students to discuss which department he/she interned in, so I would not know what department the respondents were discussing. Another noted bias in this study is the limitations.

The aforementioned limitations were designed to ensure a manageable and accurate study of the population. The focus of the study is on the experiences of interns who have interned at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. “The emphasis is upon the phenomenon being studied and not upon its distribution in the general population” (Suchman, 1962, p. 110). The questions in the study created bias because the answers were predetermined. The survey questions were designed with limited to no ambiguity in order to address the bias in the survey. Researchers should create survey instruments that lack ambiguity and are not difficult to understand (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Donghoo, & Podsakoff, 2003). Although the respondents in the study are adults with at least an associate degree education, I identified a survey that uses laymen’s terms for easy reading and understanding.

Summary

This chapter presented the research method that was used to conduct this study, which was a non-random quantitative survey based on a convenience sample. The targeted sample size was 33 college graduates who participated in an internship at Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. The data were collected using a questionnaire-based survey on graduates’ satisfaction regarding their internship experience, and its impact on their career development. Chapter 3 discussed the ethical

consideration and protection of participants, as well as the study's limitations, population, sample, sample setting, the recruitment style, and eligibility criteria to participate in the study, as well as the research instrument. The chapter concluded with a discussion on monitoring for bias. The data collection, the results, and summaries are discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 provides an overview of the analysis used to obtain statistical data to answer the study's hypothesis. The upcoming chapter discusses the process of the data collection, and the findings of the statistical tests used to obtain the statistical information required to answer the hypotheses. The next chapter provides demographic information of the survey respondents, and the interpretation of the findings as related to the literature. A summary of the results is also in the fourth chapter.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship, if any, between the career development of students who interned during their pursuit of their degree and their professional competencies after graduation. Chapter 4 discusses the results of this dissertation research study. This chapter recaps the research questions and hypotheses. There is a discussion on the data collection process and outcomes as well as a description of how the data was collected and the processes used in this endeavor. This chapter discusses the targeted population and the sample of individuals who responded to the survey. The results of the study are described later in this chapter, as well. The chapter concludes with a summary of Chapter 4 and then the transition into Chapter five.

Research Questions

The individuals who participated in the study were former interns at CIBH. The respondents in the study were studying for a college degree while interning at the CIBH. This study used a survey instrument titled “Career Benefits of Co-Op/Internship Experience” (Sawyer, 2008). The respondents were asked to complete the survey, which took about 5-10 minutes. The responses to the survey questions answered the following research questions.

This study had one primary research question (PRQ) and three secondary research questions (SRQ). The PRQ was as follows:

PRQ: To what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience?

The SRQs were as follows:

SRQ1: What, if any, is the correlation between an internship program and obtaining work-related knowledge?

SRQ2: What is the correlation, if any, between internship participation and career skills/development of students?

SRQ3: To what extent do graduates believe their internship experience led to their abilities to attain employment after graduation?

Each of the aforementioned research questions is linked to a specific hypothesis.

The hypothesis for the PRQ is as follows:

H_1 : A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present.

H_0 : No significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present.

In order to answer the primary research question, secondary research questions were explored. The hypotheses associated with those research questions are as follows:

SRQ1: What, if any, is the correlation between an internship program and obtaining work-related knowledge?

H_0^1 : No significant statistical correlation between graduates who graduated between the years of 2009-2014 and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present.

H_1^1 : A significant statistical correlation between graduates who graduated between the years of 2009-2014 and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present.

SRQ2: What is the correlation, if any, between internship participation and career skills/development of students?

H_0^2 : No significant statistical correlation between internship participation and career skill/development of students exists.

H_1^2 : A significant statistical correlation between internship participation and students' career skill/development does exist.

SRQ3: To what extent do graduates believe their internship experience led to their ability to attain employment after graduation?

H_0^3 : A significant statistical difference between graduates' belief that their internship experience led or contributed to their abilities to attain employment after graduation.

H_1^3 : No statistical difference between graduates' belief that their internship experience led or contributed to their abilities to attain employment after graduation is present.

Data Collection

During the development stage of the proposal, I was informed by the community partner that the population consisted of 90 former interns. Initially, I was informed that I supervised 10 previous interns. To remove the chance of representing bias information, I removed these interns from the study. As listed in the proposal, removing the former

interns from the mailing list and leaving their applications with the volunteer coordinator ensured compliance with the IRB application approval standards. By removing 10 former interns, the population would yield 80 former interns whom I could contact. However, the number changed after I received the list of former interns from the community partner.

The data from CIBH showed that the population had 84 individuals who had once interned or volunteered at the community partner during the years 2009-2014. I removed the names of the former interns who interned with me. The actual data showed that five individuals interned with me. Those five individuals were removed from the list. Then there were 79 former interns or volunteers remaining. I processed the remaining information to determine who met the criteria to participate in the survey. To participate in this quantitative research study individuals had to be adults who were working toward a college degree. The data yielded the following results.

There were 15 individuals in a vocational program working toward a diploma in nursing, and they did not meet the educational criteria to participate in the study. The nurses did not meet the criteria because they were pursuing a nursing diploma, not a college degree. There was one individual who completed an internship application, but she did not intern at the community partner. The respondent asked for her information to be deleted from my list of students. As per the respondent's request, I removed the respondent's name from the mailing list and shredded the internship application. Another person who interned was an adolescent. This study addressed individuals who were over 18 years of age, and because this individual was an adolescent, she did not meet the age to consent. As the adolescent was not of age to consent, an application was not sent to her

address. There were six individuals who were not seeking a degree and volunteering their services to the agency. This study's focus is on interns who were pursuing a degree. Because the volunteers were not working toward a degree, they were not sent a survey. I counted the number of individuals who did not meet the criteria. The final number of individuals who did not meet the criteria was 23.

After removing the 23 individuals listed above, I mailed 56 individuals a copy of the survey, survey cover letter, and IRB approved consent form. The individuals who were sent the survey represented different levels of education and educational disciplines.

There were 27 former interns who immediately met the criteria to participate in the study as they were working on a bachelor's of nursing degree. There were two individuals who were working on an associate degree in human services. There were ten individuals who were working toward a master's degree in various disciplines. There were eight individuals who interned at the community partner whose internship applications did not indicate the level of the degree that the interns were pursuing. However, their application did show they had completed a college degree and were classified as students. Nonetheless, it was hard to determine if the individuals were working on a second bachelor's degree or a master's degree. Because I was able to determine that the individuals were working toward a degree, I sent a survey to their last known address. There were nine individuals who were working on a bachelor's degree in different disciplines, as well.

As written in the proposal, I collected data over the course of 30 days. The data collection started on December 1, 2014 and ended on December 30, 2014. I mailed the

surveys on November 24, 2014 to the individuals who met the criteria. I allocated seven days for the surveys to arrive at the destination. I estimated that all of the surveys arrived at the individuals' location on December 1, 2014. I estimated another seven days for the surveys to be returned to me. After January 7, 2015, I officially closed the survey. When I initially sent the surveys, there was a low response rate. I sent the surveys again on March 28, 2015 to those who met the criteria. I allowed seven days for delivery, which was April 7, 2015. The data collection ended on May 4, 2015. On May 5, 2015, the survey officially closed. I processed the data received.

There were nine surveys returned to me for various reasons. A survey was returned to me because of an incorrect address. I compared the addresses to the data on file, and the mailing label was accurate. The assumption was that the addresses on file were not accurate. There were four surveys returned to me because the former interns had moved from those addresses and the time to forward the mail had expired. I received another four surveys because the individuals were no longer living at the addresses on file, and there were no forwarding addresses. I received 21 survey responses. Some of the respondents completed the survey online. Other respondents mailed their responses back to me via postal mail in the provided prepaid envelopes. I analyzed the returned data by processing the demographic information using arithmetic and the SPSS program as listed in the proposal.

Results

Demographics

The analysis of data is presented in text and tables. The information is presented in two ways to provide a visual representation of the text table for clarity. I analyzed the respondents' demographic data and found that three individuals represented the age group of 18-23. Ten individuals represented the age group of 24-29. Five individuals represented the age group of 30-40. The last age group included those who were over 40 years old. There were three individuals who were over 40. There were 20 females and one male who responded to the survey. The male respondent was African American. There were nine females who were African American. The other 11 females were White. The univariate analysis highlighted the following results:

Table 1.

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18-23	3	14.3	14.3	14.3
24-29	10	47.6	47.6	61.9
Valid 30-40	5	23.8	23.8	85.7
over 40	3	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 2.

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	20	95.2	95.2	95.2
Valid Male	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

Table 3.

Ethnicity	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
African American	10	47.6	47.6	47.6
Valid White	11	52.4	52.4	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

All of the respondents were working toward a degree during their tenure at the community partner.

Table 4.

Degree	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Bachelor Level Graduate	14	66.7	66.7	66.7
Valid Master Level Graduate	6	28.6	28.6	95.2
Associate Level Graduate	1	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	21	100.0	100.0	

The 14 individuals who were working toward a bachelor's degree represented the following racial groups. There was one African American female working toward her an

associate degree. There were five African American females who were working toward a bachelor's degree. There were nine White females who were working toward a bachelor's degree. There were five females and one male who were working on a master's degree. The one male respondent who was working on his master's degree represented the African American race. There were two African American females working on their master's degree. Lastly, there were three White females working toward their master's degree. The respondents represented different age groups and sought different degrees.

There was one male and one female respondent who are African-American and represented the age range of 18-24. Both of them were working toward a master's degree. There was one individual who represented the White race who was working on a master's degree and represented the age range of 24-29. There were three females who represented the age group of 40 plus. One of the females in the 40 plus age group is African American and working on a master's degree.

There was one African American female working on her an associate degree in the age group 24-29. There were four White females and four African American females in the same age group (24-29) working on a bachelor's degree. In the age group of 30-40, there were four individuals who were working toward a bachelor's degree. Those four females are African American. There was one female in the age group of over 40 who is White and working toward a bachelor's degree. The demographic information was placed into SPSS, to obtain a descriptive and ANOVA data output.

Table 5.

Descriptive		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Gender	Bachelor Level Graduate	14	1.0000	.00000	.00000	1.0000	1.0000	1.00	1.00
	Master Level Graduate	6	1.1667	.40825	.16667	.7382	1.5951	1.00	2.00
	Associate Level Graduate	1	1.0000					1.00	1.00
	Total	21	1.0476	.21822	.04762	.9483	1.1470	1.00	2.00
	Ethnicity	Bachelor Level Graduate	14	1.5714	.51355	.13725	1.2749	1.8679	1.00
Master Level Graduate		6	1.3333	.51640	.21082	.7914	1.8753	1.00	2.00
Associate Level Graduate		1	2.0000					2.00	2.00
Total		21	1.5238	.51177	.11168	1.2909	1.7568	1.00	2.00
Age		Bachelor Level Graduate	14	2.2857	.82542	.22060	1.8091	2.7623	1.00
	Master Level Graduate	6	2.6667	1.21106	.49441	1.3957	3.9376	1.00	4.00
	Associate Level Graduate	1	2.0000					2.00	2.00
	Total	21	2.3810	.92066	.20090	1.9619	2.8000	1.00	4.00

Table 6.

ANOVA

Anova		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Gender	Between Groups	.119	2	.060	1.286	.301
	Within Groups	.833	18	.046		
	Total	.952	20			
Ethnicity	Between Groups	.476	2	.238	.900	.424
	Within Groups	4.762	18	.265		
	Total	5.238	20			
Age	Between Groups	.762	2	.381	.424	.661
	Within Groups	16.190	18	.899		
	Total	16.952	20			

Table 7.

Crosstabulation Degree and Gender

Crosstabulation Degree and Gender	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Gender * Degree	21	100.0%	0	0.0%	21	100.0%

Count

Gender * Degree Crosstabulation		Degree		Total
		Bachelor Level Graduate	Master Level Graduate	
Gender	Female	15	5	20
	Male	0	1	1
Total		15	6	21

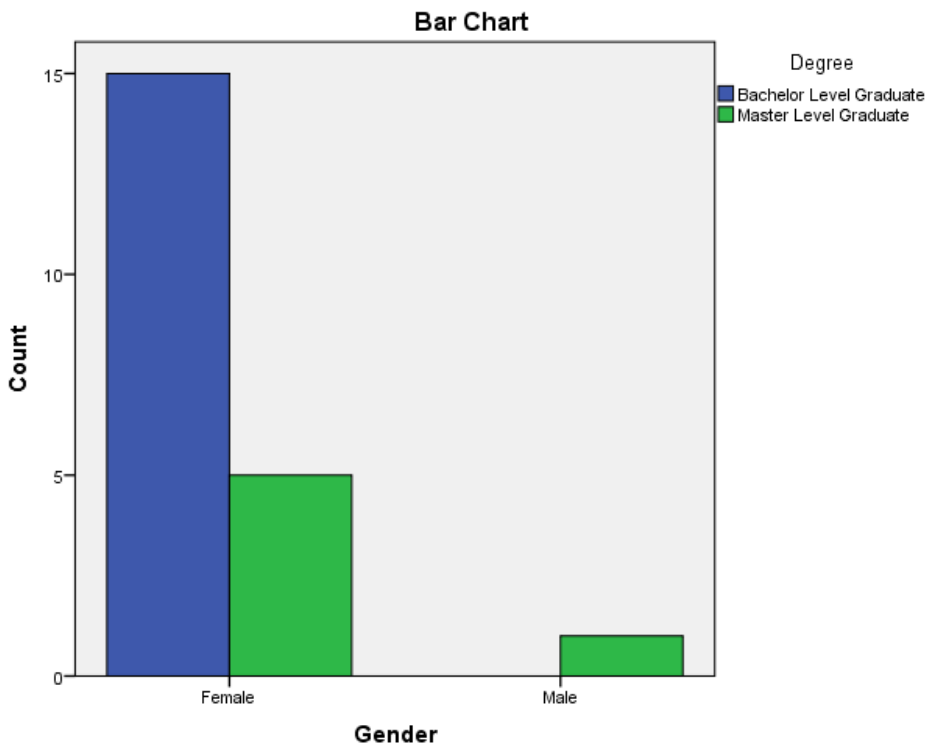


Figure 1. Crosstabulation Illustrating Gender and Degree.

Table 8.

Crosstabulation Illustrating Ethnicity and Degree

Case Processing Summary	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Ethnicity * Degree	21	100.0%	0	0.0%	21	100.0%

Degree Crosstabulation Ethnicity		Degree		Total
		Bachelor Level Graduate	Master Level Graduate	
Ethnicity	African American	6	4	10
	White	9	2	11
Total		15	6	21

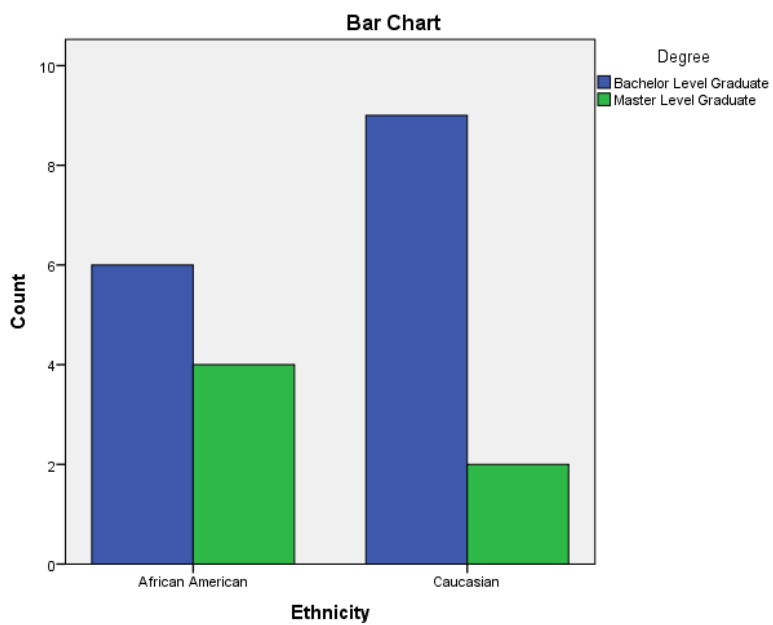


Figure 2. Crosstabulation Illustrating Ethnicity and Degree.

Table 9.

Crosstabulation Age and Degree

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age * Degree	21	100.0%	0	0.0%	21	100.0%

Age * Degree Crosstabulation

Count		Degree		Total
		Bachelor Level Graduate	Master Level Graduate	
Age	18-23	2	1	3
	24-29	8	2	10
	30-40	4	1	5
	over 40	1	2	3
Total		15	6	21

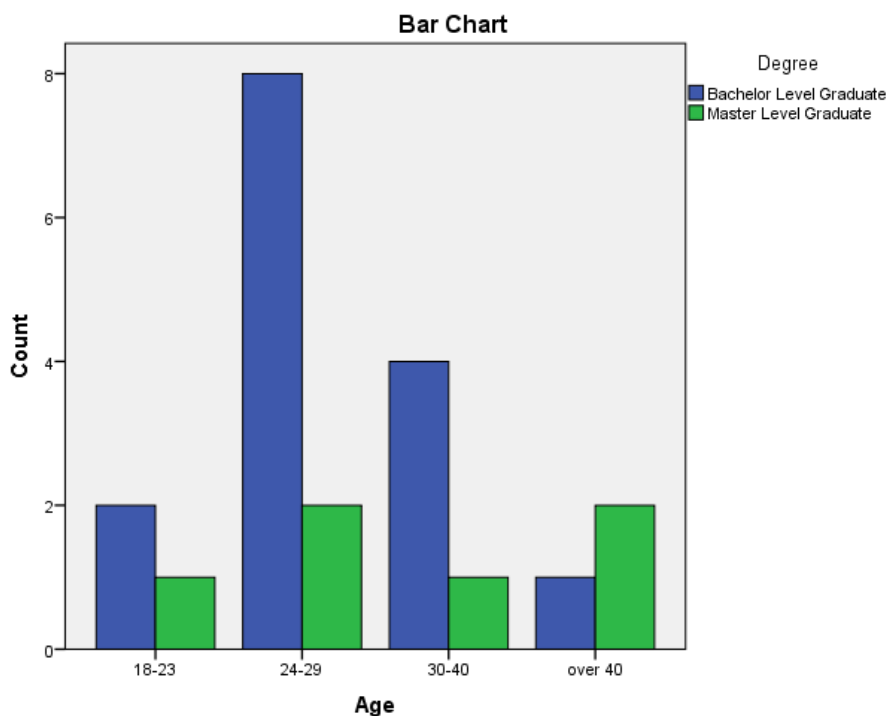


Figure 3. Crosstabulation Illustrating Age and Degree.

After obtaining the demographic information, I proceeded with processing the respondents' answers to answer the primary and secondary research questions. The primary research question asked, to what extent if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience. To obtain an answer to the research question, the respondents were asked to evaluate their internship experience. After evaluating their internship experience, the respondents were to answer the survey questions using a Likert rating scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being the lowest, 5 being the highest). The respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which he or she agreed or disagreed with each of the statements regarding their internship experience and their career development. The respondents used the rating scale of 1 to 5. An answer of 1

indicated that the respondent strongly disagreed with the statement. A rating of 2 specified the respondent disagreed with the statement. When a respondent used a rating of 3, it highlighted a neutral opinion to the statement. A rating of 4 suggested that the respondent agreed with the statement. The last rating of 5 indicated the respondent strongly agreed with the statement. These ratings were also used to answer the secondary research question.

The primary research question for this dissertation asked, to what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive that their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience. I used question number 16 on the survey instrument to determine the answer to the primary research question. Item number 16 on the survey instrument asked respondents to rate if their internship experience contributed to their overall career development. There were 21 individuals who responded to the survey. All 21 respondents had a positive response to the question. However, there was a difference in the responses. Two individuals ($N = 2$) had a neutral response regarding if their internship contributed to their overall career development. The two individuals who elected the neutral response represented 9.52% of the responses. Ten individuals ($N = 10$), which represents 47.62% of the respondents, agreed that an internship experience contributed to his/her overall career development. There were 42.66% ($N = 9$) of respondents who strongly agreed that the internship contributed to their overall career development. Collectively the responses showed that 90.48% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the internship contributed to their overall career development. The responses to question number 16

were placed into the SPSS to be analyzed using a *t* test. The *t* test output yields the following results:

Table 10.

t test Results for Primary Research Question

One-Sample Statistics				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Gender	21	1.0476	.21822	.04762
Ethnicity	21	1.5238	.51177	.11168
Age	21	2.3810	.92066	.20090
Degree	21	1.38	.590	.129
CSQ16	21	4.2381	.70034	.15283

Table 11.

t Test Result for Primary Research Question

One-Sample Test						
One-Sample Test	Test			Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
	Value = 0 t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)		Lower	Upper
Gender	22.000	20	.000	1.04762	.9483	1.1470
Ethnicity	13.645	20	.000	1.52381	1.2909	1.7568
Age	11.851	20	.000	2.38095	1.9619	2.8000
Degree	10.733	20	.000	1.381	1.11	1.65

This dissertation had three SRQ. SRQ number one asked what, if any, is the correlation between an internship program and obtaining work-related knowledge. The responses to question number seven on the research instrument would answer the secondary research question. Statement number seven asked respondents to rate if their internship experience improved their ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical programs. All of the respondents answered question number seven. There were different degrees of responses. One individual ($N = 1$) that represented 4.76% of the responses answered that he/she strongly disagreed that the internship increased his/her ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems. Another respondent ($N = 1$) that represented 4.76% of the responses answered that he/she disagreed that the internship improved his/her ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems. There were 33.33% of the respondents ($N = 7$) who neutrally believed that the internship experience did enhance their ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems. The last two ratings represented those who agree and strongly agree with statement number seven. Of the respondents ($N = 10$), 47.62% agreed with statement number seven, and 9.52% ($N = 2$) of the respondents strongly agreed with statement number seven. Mutually, more than 90% of the respondents agreed that the internship did enhance their abilities to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems. The respondents' responses were also placed in SPSS to determine the statistical significance among the respondents' answers. A statistical significance among the respondents was present, which is evidenced by the SPSS data output below.

Table 12.

Regression Table Analysis for the Secondary Research Question Number One

Variables Entered/Removed			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Degree, Ethnicity, Age, Gender ^b		Enter

a. Dependent Variable: CSQ7

b. All requested variables entered.

Table 13. Regression Table: Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.527 ^a	.278	.098	.95674

a. Predictors: (Constant), Degree, Ethnicity, Age, Gender

Table 14.

ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	5.640	4	1.410	1.540	.238 ^b
	Residual	14.646	16	.915		
	Total	20.286	20			

a. Dependent Variable: CSQ7

b. Predictors: (Constant), Degree, Ethnicity, Age, Gender

Table 15.

Coefficients

Model	Coefficients ^a				
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	3.114	1.685		1.848	.083
Gender	1.293	1.117	.280	1.158	.264
1 Ethnicity	.077	.430	.039	.180	.860
Age	-.043	.252	-.040	-.172	.865
Degree	-.867	.381	-.508	-2.279	.037

a. Dependent Variable: CSQ7

The SRQ number two (SRQ2) asked what correlation, if any, exists between internship participation and students career skills/development. I used question number 12 on the research instrument to answer SRQ2. All of the respondents answered question number 12 on the survey. Survey question number 12 asked the respondents if their internship experience increased their confidence in their capabilities with their job tasks. There were 4.76% of the respondents ($N = 1$) who strongly agreed with the statement and 9.52% of the respondents ($N = 2$) who disagreed with the statement. There were 28.57% of the respondents ($N = 6$) who had a neutral response. Nine of the respondents, which make up 42.86% of the responses, agreed that the internship increased their confidence in their capabilities with their job duties. The final three ($N = 3$) responses, which make up 14.29% of responses strongly agreed that the internship increased their confidence level. Once again, the respondents' information was placed into the SPSS program. The SPSS program yielded that a statistical significance exists.

Table 16.

Descriptive Statistics for Secondary Research Question Two

	Descriptive Statistics		
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Gender	1.0476	.21822	21
Ethnicity	1.5238	.51177	21
Age	2.3810	.92066	21
Degree	1.38	.590	21
CSQ2	3.6667	.91287	21

Table 17.

Correlations for Secondary Research Question Two

		Correlations				
		Gender	Ethnicity	Age	Degree	CSQ2
Gender	Pearson Correlation	1	-.235	-.344	.241	.084
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.306	.127	.293	.718
	N	21	21	21	21	21
Ethnicity	Pearson Correlation	-.235	1	.086	-.032	-.143
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.306		.711	.892	.537
	N	21	21	21	21	21
Age	Pearson Correlation	-.344	.086	1	.088	-.139
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.127	.711		.705	.548
	N	21	21	21	21	21
Degree	Pearson Correlation	.241	-.032	.088	1	-.217
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.293	.892	.705		.345
	N	21	21	21	21	21
CSQ2	Pearson Correlation	.084	-.143	-.139	-.217	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.718	.537	.548	.345	
	N	21	21	21	21	21

The last SRQ (SRQ3) asked the graduates, to what extent do they believe that their internship experience aided in their abilities to attain employment after graduation. The responses to item number two on the survey instrument answered SRQ3. Survey question number two asked the respondents if their internship experience provided an advantage in securing employment after graduation. After a comprehensive review of the findings, the following conclusions were determined. There were three respondents ($N = 3$) 14.29% who disagreed that the internship provided an advantage in securing employment after graduation. There were 19.05% ($N = 4$) who had a neutral opinion regarding their ability to secure employment after graduation. The majority of respondents ($N = 11$), which makes up 52.38% of the responses, agreed that the internship provided an advantage in securing employment after graduation. Three individuals ($N = 3$) 14.29% strongly agreed that an internship provided an advantage in securing employment after graduation. The responses were also placed into the SPSS system. SPSS system revealed the following results, which indicates a significant statistical relationship.

Table 18.

Descriptive Statistics for Secondary Research Question Three

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Gender	21	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.0476	.21822	.048
Ethnicity	21	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.5238	.51177	.262
Age	21	3.00	1.00	4.00	2.3810	.92066	.848
Degree	21	2	1	3	1.38	.590	.348
CSQ2	21	3.00	2.00	5.00	3.6667	.91287	.833
Valid N (list wise)	21						

Results Summary

The PRQ, to what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience is linked to (H_1). A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present. The SRQ1, SQR2, and SRQ3, which supported the primary research question yielded rejections of each H_1^1 , H_1^2 , and H_1^3 .

I did not reject the H_1 : A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates is present.

The SRQ1: H_1^1 : A significant statistical correlation between graduates who graduated between the years of 2009-2014 and their work-related knowledge after participating in an internship is present, was not rejected.

SRQ2: H_1^2 : A significant statistical correlation between internship participation and students' career skill/development does exist, was accepted.

SRQ3: H_0^3 : There is no significant statistical difference between graduates' belief that their internship experience led or contributed to their abilities to attain employment after graduation, was accepted.

Summary

The quantitative findings indicate that 90.48% of the respondents in the study had a positive response to their internship experience. The results showed that more than 90% of the individuals either agreed or strongly agreed that the internship contributed to their overall career development. All of the respondents in the study either agreed ($N = 5$, 23.81%) or strongly agreed ($N = 16$) 73.16% that they would recommend that current

students obtain an internship experience prior to graduation. There were 57.14% of the respondents ($N = 12$) who agreed or strongly agreed that the internship experience did enhance their ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems. There were 33.33% of individuals ($N = 7$) who had a neutral response in this category. The survey also showed that 57.12% of the respondents ($N = 12$) agreed or strongly agreed that the internship increased their confidence in their capabilities with their job tasks. However, there were 66.67% of respondents ($N = 14$) who believe the internship gave them an advantage in securing employment after graduation. The review of the data analysis showed that the participation in an internship at the community partner was beneficial for most students.

Chapter 5 will recap the study's purpose and will provide a summary of the research findings. A discussion on how the findings are linked to the scholarly literature is discussed. The limitations of the study and the recommendations for further research will be conversed. The chapter will conclude with implications for social change.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter 5 provides a comprehensive review of the study's purpose, the nature of the study, and the rationale for conducting the study. This chapter discusses how the findings support the literature pertaining to the field of experiential learning. Chapter 5 discuss the research findings, and how it links to the body of knowledge presented in the field of experiential learning. Chapter 5 shows the limitations of the study. This chapter also highlights the recommendations and the rationale for continued research. The chapter will end by discussing the implication for positive social change, as well as the study's overall conclusion.

I conducted this study to learn the opinions of how professionals perceived career development and its link to their internship experience. This quantitative research study explored the relationship, if any, between the professional competencies and career development of college graduates and their internship experience after interning at a local city government agency. The respondents in the study were adult college interns working toward a degree while interning at Chesapeake Integrated Behavior Healthcare. Another reason for this research study was to learn if professionals believe that an internship experience had any correlation on their career development while they pursued their degree. I wanted to explore the perceptions of professionals as they reflected on their internship experience as a student and its impact on their career development, performance, and employment attainment.

This research study was conducted using a convenience sample of former interns who were working on a degree at the associate, bachelor, and master levels CIBH between the years of 2009-2014. This study used the Career Benefits of Co-Op/Internship Experience (Sawyer, 2008) survey instrument, which had a Likert scale rating from 1 to 5: 1. (*strongly disagree*), 2. (*disagree*), 3. (*neutral*), 4. (*agree*), and 5. (*strongly agree*). Twenty-one individuals (66% of the sample size) responded to the survey. Each person was asked to respond to one survey. After a comprehensive review of the respondents' answers, I learned that the majority had a positive response to their internship experience.

The quantitative findings showed that 90% of former interns agree or strongly agree that the internship contributed to their overall career development. Ninety percent either agreed or strongly agreed that current students should obtain an internship experience prior to graduation. More than 50% agreed or strongly agreed that the internship experience enhanced their ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems. The survey results showed more than 50%, but less than 60% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that the internship increased their confidence in their capabilities to perform their job tasks. Sixty-six percent of respondents believed that the internship gave them an advantage in securing employment after graduation. The review of the data analysis showed that participation in an internship was beneficial to most graduates in all the areas identified above (career development, career attainment, and confidence).

Using the data analysis computed from SPSS, I accepted H_1 : A significant statistical relationship between internship involvement and professional attainment of graduates who graduated between the years of 2009-2014 is present.

Based on the SPSS data, I concluded that graduates who interned at the community partner obtained work-related knowledge that contributed to their career development. Currently, literature that addresses internships and cooperative education state internships do help students with professional development. The findings in the study coincide with the literature on experiential learning.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings from this study supported the literature review. Colleges and universities should provide students with an environment that will ensure the learning of specific competencies that are linked to knowledge, skills, and attitudes that demonstrate professional competence (Waters, Altus, & Wilkinson, 2013). PRQ: To what extent, if any, do college graduates perceive their professional competencies are linked to their internship experience? The results of this doctoral study showed that 90% of the respondents agreed that the participation in the internship increased their professional abilities. Internships allow students to have real-life work experience. A study reported 66% of the students who engaged in an internship believed that their experience provided greater or much greater growth in their professional identity (Waters, Altus, & Wilkinson, 2013). Another study reported that students agreed that the experience enhanced their knowledge and real-world application of skill needed to perform the job tasks (Cornell, Johnson, and Schwartz's, 2013). SRQ1: What, if any, is the correlation

between an internship program and obtaining work-related knowledge? In this study, more than 50% of respondents indicated that the internship improved their ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems.

The SRQs sought to find if a correlation between internship participation and the student's skill development exists. In this study, 57% of respondents who collectively agreed or strongly agreed that the internship experience correlated with their career skills/development. In this study, I also wanted to know if respondents believed that the internship helped them obtain employment. SRQ3: To what extent do graduates believe their internship experience led to employment after graduation? In this study, 66% either agreed or strongly agreed that the internship experience gave them an advantage in securing employment after graduation. This study's findings are consistent with the literature. A completed internship helped students obtain employment after graduation (Callanan & Benzing, 2004). Because employers seek candidates with experience, those applicants with experience have an advantage.

Limitations of the Study

Although, the study's findings are linked with the current literature, this research study does have limitations. This study had limitations in the area of the population. To remove bias, the opportunity to obtain increase responses was hindered. I was unable to send five individuals who were in the population a survey. This influenced the sample size. This study had a small sample size ($N = 33$). Only 66% of the population responded ($N = 21$ individuals) to the survey making it difficult to generalize this study's results to the other interns in a similar population. This study was limited in the area of gender, too.

There was only one male ($N = 1$) who responded to the survey, which limits the study's ability to be generalized to males. Although CIBH is a city government agency, I only had the approval to send the survey to former interns at CIBH, opposed to all of the interns who interned at the City of Chesapeake. I focused on individuals at one local city government agency when conducting the study, which cannot be generalized to larger government agencies, such as the federal government, local governments, or larger cities. The limitations of this study provide the need to conduct additional research. The areas of recommended research are listed in the upcoming paragraph.

Recommendations

Various authors discussed the benefits of experiential learning. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the scholarly literature in the field of experiential learning suggests the importance of having students engage in an internship. The use of internships in student learning is valuable. Internships provide students with the real-world employment experiences (Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). Students who engage in real-world professional activities are more professionally capable when they enter the employment field. These interactions allow students to build relationships with possible employers and mentors (Cornell, Johnson, & Schwartz, 2013). Internships usually occur during a student's senior or junior year in college. It may be in a student's best interest to start an internship earlier than their junior or senior year. Starting a student's internship during their sophomore year will allow the cycle of learning to occur sooner.

The literature continues to express a need to conduct research that reflects the independent growth of students. Students should have more autonomy with selecting

internship locations, participating in learning objectives, and projects (Perrin, 2014). Colleges and universities should design internship programs that are long enough to ensure a work-related learning experience. A study states students and faculty must agree an internship should have two units of services for the positive learning results (Coker & Porter, 2015). The extension of students' internship education allows the students to increase their career preparation knowledge over the course of months opposed to a few weeks.

I recommend that additional investigations are conducted in the area of experiential learning focusing on internships and its relationship to career development that are linked directly to the students' career goals. The need is for creating an experience that relates directly to the students' career goals (Coker & Porter, 2015). Internships with direct goals and objectives for students may ensure that their knowledge is embedded in their career goals. The increase in internship experiences will allow students to gain more knowledge in a particular work-related area of practice. The student will also have an opportunity to bridge the academic knowledge with work experience. For example, students who study pre-law and have a desire to practice criminal law as a trial attorney will work with a trial attorney who practices criminal law. He/she will not work in a law firm with no contact with a criminal lawyer or a trial attorney.

This study focused on a group of interns who interned at a city government agency. It is recommended that future studies explore internships of students in different settings, such as private and nonprofit organizations. It is recommended to conduct a study that will investigate supervisors who work with interns and their experiences.

College and university officials send students to different companies for real-world exposure; however, it is vital to know if those internship supervisors have the skills and knowledge to lead, guide, or teach students.

I recommend that a study be conducted on a larger population. Fifty-two percent of respondents in the study believed an internship provided them with an advantage in securing employment after graduation. There should be a study to learn what affects a student's inability to advance in their career after completing an internship. There should also be an investigation into this study using different methodologies.

This was a quantitative research study, which used a convenience sample. It is recommended that another study is conducted using a qualitative research method. A qualitative research study allows a researcher to interview individuals to obtain answers that are not predetermined. I also recommend a mixed method research study would provide additional insight into the individuals by expanding on predetermined responses. It is recommended to share the survey results with the internship site host.

Internship supervisors may be interested in learning what benefits the students are receiving at their agency. By sharing the information with the internship supervisor, he/she will learn if the internship had any impact on the students in regards to education and career growth. It is also recommended to locate students who did not participate in an internship and compare their career development experience with those who participated in an internship. Finally, it is recommended that a study should be conducted in a setting where more male responses could be gathered. These recommendations are linked to the study's implications for social change.

Implication

This study has a potential influence for social change for the millions of students who enter college each year. Waters, Altus, and Wilkinson (2013) argued a focal point of higher education is to ensure students learn theory and professional skills. On an individual level of social change, this study's results highlighted the impact that an internship had on each person. The study's results showed that each individual had a different level of experience. Nonetheless, the results highlighted that 90% of individuals suggest that students should engage in an internship. This study highlights for those who are interning or currently enrolled in college the opinions of students who have interned, and how it benefitted them after graduation.

This study contributes to social change by highlighting the value of participating in an internship. This study showed that for some students who engaged in an internship gained skills that increased their chances of employment. When students are able to obtain employment after graduation, they are able to provide for their families and contribute to the community. Students are able to work at community businesses and organizations. Companies that allow students to intern at their organization and obtain work-related skills invest in potential future employees. When companies invest in students, it builds relationships between businesses and higher education, which contributes to social change.

Community relationships affect social change. Students who intern build relationships with potential employers, which may help increase their chances of locating employment after graduation. Callanan and Benzing (2004) reported that students who

intern are engaged in activities that allow for a connection with potential employers. The relationship between higher education and the community allows for the colleges and universities to follow the trends in the employment field, which helps educate future graduates. The implication of colleges and universities being aware of the employment trends will help build policies in higher education addressing educational policy that addresses career development. Higher education personnel will be able to design programs that are outlined in the curriculum, as well as implement the policies to ensure college success.

Currently, an initiative exists to help college students become successful with completing college as quickly as possible without unnecessary delays. The Complete College America (2014) is the initiative designed to help students meet their goals of college completion. As Americans address the academic needs of students, adding the career component is vital. Students who are on track for completing their education on time will also leave with career skills. Maintaining the theoretical implication of experiential learning is part of the cycle of learning. Experiential learning will enable the educational and work-related growth of students. The combining of education with career development is vital for future professionals. Through the Complete College America initiative, students will spend less money on classes. The students will only take the classes they need. Students will engage in an internship and increase their work-related skills, and become active professionals in society that will contribute to social change. Lastly, this study will contribute to social change by adding to the body of knowledge addressing experiential learning.

Conclusion

This study explored the relationship of internships and the professional development of professionals. The literature in Chapters 2 and five highlighted the importance of experiential learning. The literature mentioned also showed how vital internship experiences are for students, as well as the movement to increase students' exposure to real-work experiences. The purpose of this study was to learn the value of the internships and to learn whether the internship was beneficial to the students. The statistical results showed that 90% of individuals agreed that students should partake in an internship. Based on the data collected from the surveys, I recommend that students participate in an internship during the pursuit of their education. Career development of future practitioners is an important factor for students' overall educational development. The theoretical framework of experiential learning has proven successful for some students. Regardless of the method of learning, education and then experience as written by Dewey (2011), or experience and then education expressed by Kolb (2005) as the cycle of learning is essential to students and for social change.

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Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Career Benefits of CO-OP/Internship Experience Survey

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of bachelor level graduates from 2009 to 2013 regarding their internship experience and their career development. On a scale of one to five (one-lowest, five being the highest), please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each of the statements below regarding your internship experience and your career development.

My co-op or internship experience...

Rating scale: 1-Strongly disagree, 2- Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4- Agree, 5-Strongly agree

1. Helped to confirm or reinforce my career choice.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
2. Provided an advantage in securing employment after graduation.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
3. Contributed to my career advancement and provided opportunities for increased responsibilities at work.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
4. Enhanced my ability to transition into my employer's organization.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
5. Contributed to my satisfaction with my career choice.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
6. Improved my ability to function effectively on teams.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

7. Improved my ability to identify, analyze, and solve technical problems.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
8. Improved my ability to communicate effectively.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
9. Helped me recognize the need to engage in lifelong learning.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
10. Increased my understanding of professional, ethical, and social responsibilities.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
11. Enhanced my self-esteem.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
12. Increased my confidence in my capabilities in my job tasks.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
13. Developed my interpersonal skills and ability to get along with others.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
14. Developed my sense of autonomy and independence.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
15. Increased my respect for diversity and understanding of cultural differences.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
16. Contributed to my overall career development.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree
17. Was a positive experience.
 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

In reflecting on my internship experience:

18. I would recommend that current students obtain intern experience prior to graduation.

1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

19. I would recommend my career to others.

1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

20. I am satisfied with my career.

1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral, 4. Agree, 5. Strongly agree

Please provide any additional benefits or comments about your co-op or internship experience not addressed in the above questions.

For the purposes of data analysis of the survey responses, please provide the following demographic information:

Gender: male or female _____

Ethnicity: _____

White Native American African American Hispanic Asian American other

Your age during your internship completion: _____
18-23, 24-29, 30-40, over 41

Degree and major: _____

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated. We hope that others may benefit in the future from what is learned as a result of this study.

Reference:

- Sawyer, D. (2008). Career Benefits of Cooperative Education and Internships:
Perception of Graduates from a rural Midwest engineering and science institution.
South Dakota School of Mines & Technology.

Appendix B: Consent to Use Published Survey

Printable Format

Page 1 of 2

Subject : RE: [Fwd: Formal request to use your research instrument]
Date : Wed, Jan 22, 2014 08:55 AM CST
From : "Sawyer, Darrell R." <Darrell.Sawyer@sdsmt.edu>
To : "shawn.mondie@waldenu.edu" <shawn.mondie@waldenu.edu>
Attachment : image002.png

Hi Shawn,

In response to your email, I hereby give you permission to use my research instrument for your dissertation study with the parameters outlined in your request. I appreciate your interest in using my research instrument. Best wishes for the successful completion of your dissertation! Thank you.

Darrell

PS- My apology for the delay in responding. I never did receive your email at work, and last evening I discovered your email sent to my home address that had been flagged as spam.

Darrell Sawyer, Ed.D.
 Director, Career and Professional Development Center
 South Dakota School of Mines & Technology



From: Sawyer [mailto:dsa2532@rushmore.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 21, 2014 7:49 PM
To: Sawyer, Darrell R.
Subject: FW: [Fwd: Formal request to use your research instrument]

-----Original Message-----

From: Shawn Mondie [mailto:shawn.mondie@waldenu.edu]
Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2014 3:51 PM
To: DarrellSawyer@SDSMT.edu; shawnmsw06@gmail.com; dsa2532@rushmore.com
Subject: [Fwd: Formal request to use your research instrument]

Hello Dr. Darrell Sawyer.

My name is Shawn Mondie. I am a doctoral student attending Walden University. I am currently writing my dissertation with a working title: An Examination of the Relationship among Undergraduate Internships and Post-Graduate Employment Outcomes of Graduates who attend profit universities and colleges. During the process of locating scholarly works for the literature review section, I located your dissertation titled Career Benefits of Cooperative Education and Internship: Perception of Graduates from a Rural Midwest Engineering and Science Institution (2008). After a comprehensive review of your research instrument (survey), I believe that your instrument would benefit my dissertation.

Please accept this email as a formal request to use your research instrument within my dissertation. I will only use the instrument with my study. I will properly cite/reference the instrument within my dissertation ensuring credit to you the publishing author.

If you decide to grant me permission to use your instrument, please respond to this email. Please attach any terms and conditions that you want me to follow while using your instrument.

https://my.campuscruiser.com/printable_area.html?01210424

2/3/2014

Please use the information below to contact me, if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Shawn Mondie-Barnwell

Mrs. Shawn Mondie-Barnwell, MSW

(646) 319-5422-cell

Shawn.Mondie@waldenu.edu

Shawnmsw06@gmail.com

Appendix C: Consent/Approval to Conduct the Survey



September 16, 2014

Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare
224 Great Bridge Boulevard
Chesapeake, VA 23320
Tel: (757) 547-9334

Shawn Barnwell
Community Options Program
2104 Steppingstone Square
Chesapeake, VA 23320

Dear Shawn:

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled *Examining the Relationship between Undergraduate Internships and Employment Competencies of Bachelor Level Professionals Within Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare*. As part of this study, I authorize you to work with the Volunteer Coordinator who will provide the contact information of former CIBH interns. You will mail your survey directly to the former interns at your own expense. The information related to the survey will be mailed back to you at your P.O. Box address, which is not facilitated with Chesapeake Integrated Behavioral Healthcare. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion.

We understand that our organization's responsibilities include allowing you to work with the Volunteer Coordinator who will provide the contact information for individuals who interned here between the years of 2009 through 2013. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Joseph Scislowicz, LPC
Executive Director

cc: Carol Williams, CIBH Volunteer Coordinator

Fax Numbers

Administration
757-819-6292

ID / Infant Services
757-547-3477

MH/SA Services
757-819-6149

Emergency Services
757-819-6326

Medical Records
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Appendix D: G* Power

G* Power result for total sample size

[2] -- Monday, April 14, 2014 -- 21:46:01

F tests - ANCOVA: Fixed effects, main effects and interactions

Analysis: A priori: Compute required sample size

Input:	Effect size f	=	1.0000000
	α err prob	=	0.05
	Power (1- β err prob)	=	0.95
	Numerator df	=	10
	Number of groups	=	2
	Number of covariates	=	1
Output:	Noncentrality parameter λ	=	33.0000000
	Critical F	=	2.1645799
	Denominator df	=	30
	Total sample size	=	33
	Actual power	=	0.9535423