

## Final Abstract

While reflecting on the experience of writing a thesis, I came to the realization that I truly enjoyed this process, at least most of it. I am the type of person who loves to learn and always seeks to obtain more knowledge in and out of the classroom. I am especially passionate about learning things that pertain to my major and my future career in the nonprofit sector which is why I came into this process optimistic for this thesis on a topic of my choice. Though I originally had no idea as to what L3Cs were, after spending a semester researching and writing about them I can now say I know more than I ever could have hoped about L3C models! Though I do not plan on starting an L3C, I now better understand social entrepreneurship as a movement and I know that I can take this knowledge and apply it to my career working with nonprofits and for-profits businesses alike. I have already used my thesis topic as a conversation point in internship interviews for next semester!

Though it was difficult at times to motivate myself to do the work, on the whole I enjoyed the research and writing and found that the work was much more manageable than I thought it would be. I viewed this work in five parts of which the first was planning. This part was one of the most difficult as I tried to match my ideas for what I wanted to write about with a relevant topic and information that actually existed. Once I determined my topic, I began researching. Researching and reading started out exciting as I learned details about L3Cs but near the end became somewhat redundant in the information that I read and frustrating when I simply could not find the information I needed. I enjoyed doing my own research and conducting interviews since I feel like with this research I was able to make a contribution to the field and produce something new. My favorite part was actually writing an outline because it was like building a map or a puzzle—I sorted out quotes and information from dozens of publications and readings into a ten-page outline. This outline was crucial to the success of this paper and was a valuable reference throughout this entire writing process. Writing, the fourth part, was easy because of my detailed outline and I was surprised at how quickly I filled up two dozen pages about L3Cs! The final phase was speaking at the SPEA honors thesis presentations; although I was nervous, I was proud to present my information to faculty and students and even more proud when people approached me afterwards saying that they thought I had an interesting topic and that they had learned valuable information from my presentation. It was a semester's worth of hard work: late nights reading 50 page publications, sore fingers from trying to type as quickly as my thoughts processed, hours editing the same phrases, and nervously pacing while rehearsing my presentation, but I am proud of the result.

I can now look back and realize that this experience has helped me both as a student and as a young nonprofit professional. Research and writing skills are not only valued in an academic setting, but also in the nonprofit sector as well. Since grant writing is an area that interests me, I now feel much more confident in my writing abilities and research skills. Presentation skills are crucial in almost any professional setting and I feel the presentation aspect of this thesis has helped to develop that as well. Additionally, working under Professor Beth Gazley has given me the opportunity to develop a mentor/mentee relationship with a nonprofit professional and through her I was able to meet other SPEA faculty that I will come into contact with as begin my graduate program in SPEA in the fall. Overall, I feel that this has been both a valuable and enjoyable experience and I now feel prepared and excited to write a graduate thesis in the upcoming years!