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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Education degree in Education

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INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING: TRANSFORMATIONAL LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

Shannan Crowder

Graduate Program in Educational Studies

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Education

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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Abstract

This study applies the Experiential Learning Theory and the Transformational Learning Theory to International Service-Learning (ISL) in post-secondary education. International engagement in post-secondary institutions has become an important element in education. Developing global citizenship is a significant focus for many students and institutions. Higher educational institutions are increasingly being challenged to meet the demands of international connectivity and enhance the quality of learning for prospective students (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004, p. 95). ISL provides the opportunity for students to experience perspective transformation. In order for institutions to foster transformational learning, it is important for educators and researchers to have the capability to measure what is being learned, how the learning occurs, and how to support learning. This study sought to investigate how international learning experiences transformed the lives of students who participated in an ISL program, what the participants learned, and how they applied what they learned once they returned to their home country. A qualitative case study was conducted to investigate the perspective of students who participated in an ISL experience in East Africa between seven weeks to four months. Participant recommendations' regarding ISL were also provided as a means to assist the learning potential of ISL experiences for future students. Findings for this study suggest that areas of transformational learning did occur; however, increased preparation and support throughout the experience would have enhanced their learning.

Keywords: International Service-Learning, Service-Learning, Global Citizenship, Civic Engagement, Experiential Learning Theory, Transformational Learning Theory, Reciprocal Learning, Perspective Transformation

Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my parents, Sandy and Dave Crowder. They have been my biggest supporters throughout my education and I would never be where I am without their love and encouragement. I would also like to dedicate this to my Grandfather, Arnold Ivan Crowder. He has inspired me throughout my entire life to learn and taught me the importance of education. Before leaving for Tanzania the second time, I watched as my Grandfather became very ill. Only weeks before I departed for Tanzania he passed away in his home. Thank you Papa for teaching me the important things to value in my life and for believing in me.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

International engagement in post-secondary institutions has become an important element in education. Developing global citizenship is a significant focus for many students and educators. The need for developing global citizenship is being fostered through exchange programs and International Service-Learning (ISL). ISL provides the opportunity for students to experience a perspective transformation. In order for institutions to foster transformational learning, it is important for educators and researchers to have the capability to measure what is being learned, how learning occurs, and how to support what is learned. Even though many ISL programs claim to be supporting students and communities abroad in a reciprocal learning arrangement, it is critical to define what reciprocal learning entails, who is benefiting from the services being provided, and the main goal and purpose for engaging in ISL activities. As globalization continues to transform education, the emphasis on sending more students abroad continues to grow. With this increase, it is essential that organizations and institutions re-evaluate the foundation of ISL programs to ensure that critical measures are being taken to maximize learning opportunities.

By evaluating learning through the experiential and transformational learning processes within ISL, it is hoped that valuable insight will be gained that will assist in the progress of program design and foster transformational learning. Gaining information regarding recommendations for ISL programs will attempt to benefit organizations and institutions in developing a strategic method for optimal learning experiences. Through extensive evaluation and reconfiguration of existing programs that focus on enhancing the learning experience for students, ISL will better serve communities at home and abroad. ISL has the ability to enhance transformational learning and can be an effective addition to experiential learning if it promotes sustainable benefits for both students and communities.

1.1 Positioning the Researcher

I have had many opportunities in my life to work as a teacher and volunteer in international communities. I worked extensively and volunteered in South Korea, India, New Zealand, and East Africa. I believe I am very fortunate and enjoyed learning from all of my experiences. When I decided to travel to Tanzania in East Africa for the first time, to complete my Bachelors of Education international teaching placement, I noticed that my friends, family, and people within my local community had more questions and concerns than I had previously experienced when travelling to other international destinations. These questions and concerns led me to contemplate ISL, my intentions, and the intentions of the institutions I was working with.

During my first experience in East Africa, I taught at schools and volunteered at an orphanage for three weeks; it was my first ISL experience. The experience was transformative in many ways. I believed it furthered my understanding of self and my convictions. I was also able to apply what I had learned in communities at home. Upon returning to Canada I was able to implement the teaching skills I learned, support relationships between Canadian and Tanzanian students, and raise awareness and funds for educational resources for students in Tanzania. My experience in East Africa increased my global awareness, intercultural connectedness, and desire for social justice. It also brought forward many questions that I had never addressed. I began to consider the positive and negative impact our work was having on the local communities in East Africa. I re-evaluated the purpose and benefit of this type of service, and I questioned my own intentions and expectations. I knew I had an amazing experience, but I wondered if that was enough.

When I decided to enter a Masters of Education program, I was anxious to learn more about East Africa and to further develop my understanding of the reciprocal learning process between Canada and African nations. Fortunately, I found an opportunity at my University that offered an ISL program. I was very excited and thought that I would be able to address many of my ISL questions and concerns. I applied for an internship where I would be staying in Tanzania for the duration of three months. I would be working with undergraduate students as we attempted to apply our academic knowledge in a foreign environment with local community members. My role was to work with an emerging organization on their marketing and business development plan, as I had previous experience and education in International Business Management.

Preceding my departure to East Africa the second time, I decided to take a more critical approach and really understand the purpose, motives, and intentions behind ISL. I believed that it was not only important to examine my questions and concerns but to understand the experiences of other students who embark on an ISL program.

During my second experience in East Africa, I realized that ISL experiences are of great benefit for many reasons, although opportunities for enhanced learning could be lost without having the proper supports in place. In addition, I realized developing a deeper understanding of ISL and the impact it can have on students who participate in these programs is essential. Considering this, I decided to interview students who were able to reflect upon their ISL experience once they returned to Canada in hope of contributing to future development and understanding of ISL programs.

1.2 Context

As globalization and international mobility increases, the interconnectedness within the global community has become a part of academic life. International mobility in higher education has ranged from 3-5 million staff and students who travel internationally annually for academic related reasons. Higher educational institutes are being challenged more frequently to meet the demands of international connectivity and increased quality of learning for prospective students (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004, p. 95). Coordinating policies and programs for expanding initiatives in international education is essential.

Internationalization in higher education is viewed as a necessary element of education today (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 8-10). The demand for researching international exchanges and experiences is important if students are to reach their learning potential. Since travel and global communication has expanded rapidly, it has become valuable for students to have firsthand experiences with other cultures and environments (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004).

With the focus on international connectivity and opportunities for prospective students who will attend University or College, institutions need to be prepared with a strategic method of achieving ultimate learning success. Humphries, Rauh, & McDine (2013) explains that defining studying abroad has been a challenge for many institutions and finding a centralized standard

program has been difficult (p. 41-42). Ron Faris (1999) believes that standard policies and practices for Service-Learning (SL) programs should be in partnership with the federal and provincial government as well as the voluntary sector (p. 5). The variance in ISL, SL, and exchange programs across Canadian Universities has proved to be challenging when course-credit, learning outcomes, and volunteer expectations are inconsistent.

The learning obtained from ISL is largely tied with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (1984), which has also gained great attention from forward-thinking educators. Kolb & Kolb (2005) believe that experiential learning is a new scientific way of learning (p. 193). Experiential learning empowers students to actualize their knowledge, gain practical experience, and further apply knowledge in the field. This type of learning enhances global citizenship, civic engagement, and can provide valuable insight for future academic and professional decisions made by the student. By understanding the importance of experiential learning, educators are also able to appreciate the value in transformative learning that is obtainable through the experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

In addition to using the ELT as an academic tool, it is also important to grasp an understanding of the Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) and how these two frameworks co-exist. Both frameworks define the possible learning experience gained in Service-Learning (SL) and ISL. Increasing learning quality by reforming the concept of traditional learning will promote institutions in meeting the demand of prospective students and the globalized world. Understanding how to support the increased demand of cross-cultural education, global awareness, and social justice in a practical form will service new generations of students. Using the world as a classroom can be an effective tool for learning success. Through the development of ISL, students will be able to excel in the globalized future.

1.3 Framing the Research Question

International education has the possibility of encouraging students to learn about other cultures, social and political institutions, languages, art, and literature. Intercultural education teaches students the subjective meaning that individuals ascribe to relationships, events, people and themselves (Selby, 2008, p. 4). For the purpose of this research, it is imperative to understand

experiential and transformational learning through international and intercultural education that occurs during ISL.

Bennett (2008) argues that being globally minded and being a part of a global community requires the ability to engage in an intercultural experience that creates transformational learning (p. 13). International opportunities in education sectors continue to grow and the demand to develop greater global and cultural awareness remains. Although being a global citizen is critical for students in the age of international connectedness, there are still gaps in fully understanding how to educate students to obtain the best learning outcome. Considering research in the area of ISL and transformational learning is limited, this area of research needs to expand for institutions and students to optimize their learning potential.

1.4 The Research Question

In this research study, the main objective is to investigate what students are learning from participating in ISL programs, how transferable and sustainable those skills are once they return to Canada, and to hear recommendations from the participants for future ISL programs and students. Even though each participant in this study brings a different perspective of ISL, similarities and common themes were found amongst the data collected. These themes will be used to answer the research question.

The research questions for this study aim to investigate:

1. How international learning experiences transform the lives of students who participated in an ISL program?
2. What the participants learned from the experience and how they plan on applying what they have learned?
3. What recommendations can be made to increase the learning potential of an ISL experience for students in the future?

1.5 Gaps in Literature

When looking at SL, despite the fact it could potentially create benefits such as global and social awareness, it is not a guarantee. Research in this area often fails to report the unpredictable

nature of SL. Transformational learning from SL has demonstrated there is no direct way of defining how the transformation occurs (Deeley, 2010, p. 50). Despite this, Mitchell (2008) explains that researchers have suggested SL is an effective tool to aid students in expanding their learning and development. It is also important to take a critical approach to understanding SL and the possibility of adverse outcomes occurring if students are not properly supported (p. 51).

SL can affect students and communities in different ways. It is difficult to support an enhanced world view experience that will be equal for all those involved. There are too many variables associated with the experience, program, and individuals. In his research of transformational learning in ISL, Richard Kiely (2005) argues that the common belief that sustainable transformational learning is achieved by undergraduate students should not be assumed: "As the study findings presented in this article illustrate, the long-term impact of students' perspective transformation on their ability to change their lifestyle habits, resist cultural norms, and engage in social action is often ambiguous and problematic" (p. 5). Kiely's findings indicate that future research to understand a student's ability to change their lifestyle through perception transformation is necessary.

Mitchell (2008) recommends how thinking critically and analyzing the roles of the SL and SL programs is essential to communities. Service activities need to engage students and promote projects that focus on overcoming social justice issues, understanding diversity, and enhancing civic engagement. (p. 53). Without critically evaluating the role of the student and ISL programs, it is possible that the experience will create different outcomes than desired. Understanding the impact SL has on students will support future literature on improving the educational design of ISL.

While ISL is considered by many researchers to be an effective tool for international learning, challenges associated with ISL need to be addressed before ultimate learning success is gained. Disregarding essential components that lead to a negative ISL experience are detrimental to students, programs, and communities. Without critically evaluating ISL programs through extensive research on how to support experiential and transformative learning, students are not able to gain as much from the experience as they potentially could and unfortunate consequences could occur. This study will demonstrate that if extensive preparation and support are not

conducted, students may not be able to complete the duration of their stay, may have inaccurate expectations, not understand their purpose once they arrive, encounter situations that they are not prepared for, and may feel alienated and/or unproductive towards reaching their goals. Their cultural biases and ethnocentric worldview could increase without support during challenging situations (Mezirow, 1997, p.6).

Developing research in the area of ISL will maximize the potential of learning from the experience (Tonkin, 2011, p. 209). Research has the possibility to inform and assist the entire practice of ISL and help place students and program developers in a position to really make the most out of their experiences (Tonkin, 2011, p. 213). Research regarding the long-term effects of ISL on communities and individual students is also minimal and should be documented (Crabtree, 2008, p. 18).

Investigating the Transformational Learning Theory (TLT) in relation to ISL programs can foster greater experiences and is an important element of ISL to consider. Taylor (1998) explains that the practice of transformational learning has not been investigated extensively or adequately (Executive summary). By viewing the ISL experience through the lens of the TLT, it is hoped that students will be able to draw meaning through critical reflection processes The fact that the critical reflection process may potentially challenge their prior interpretations of how they viewed the world is vitally important to capture and is critical for the development of research in this area (Mezirow, 1997, p7).

Currently, there is limited research regarding the sustainable impact of transformational learning in ISL (Kiely, 2011, p. 261). Richard Kiely (2004) reports how domestic SL has been extensively documented, illustrating the positive impact it has had on students in many areas of their personal, professional, and academic life. However, Kiely (2004) mentions that ISL has not been as closely examined and that research that has been done is very limited on the perspective of students learning and overall development (p. 5). Keily (2011) explains, "because there have been relatively few longitudinal studies looking at the process of transformation in service-learning and intercultural learning, there is very little empirical evidence to support the critical assumption that cognitive transformation leads to subsequent personal and/or social behavioural change and/or action" (p. 261). This makes it difficult to calculate the success of an

international learning experience. Institutions are often bound to goals, credits, and how to define the experience (Humphries, et. at., 2013, p. 44-45). Gaining the perspective of students who have participated in ISL programs may help institutions better understand the experience, further develop insight into ISL, the impact it can have, and whether the desired outcome of programs has actually occurred as planned.

1.6 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

There were two theoretical frameworks chosen for this study. SL has been connected to David Kolb's (1984) ELT. Kolb (1984) believes that learning is a holistic process in adapting to the world (p.21). Kolb (1984) explains "experiential learning is not a molecular educational concept but rather is a molar concept describing the central process of human adaptation to the social and physical environment" (p. 31). Within Kolb's ELT, the process of reflective observation can co-exist with Jack Mezirow's TLT. Although both involve reflective practices, Jack Mezirow (1990) makes it very clear that there is a difference between reflection and critical reflection:

> Although reflection may be an integral part of making action decisions as well as an ex post facto critique of the process, critical reflection cannot become an integral element in the immediate action process. It requires a hiatus in which to reassess one's meaning perspectives and, if necessary, to transform them. Critical reflection is not concerned with the how or the how-to of action but with the why, the reasons for and consequences of what we do. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 13)

Mezirow constructed the TLT from Paulo Freire's (1970) theory of transformational learning that supported critical reflection in adult education (Dirkx, 1998, p. 3).

Mezirow furthered Freire's theory by looking at adult learning from the cognitive and developmental psychology position. Freire`s theory was similar to Mezirow`s because they both viewed "knowledge as something that is constructed by the individual in relation with others" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 3). Both theorists believed that "reflection and dialogue are key elements of the learning process, but Mezirow goes further in attempting to articulate the psychological and cognitive characteristics of this process, describing 10 phases to the transformative learning

process" (Dirkx, 1998, p. 4). For the purpose of this study, the ELT and Mezirow's TLT are used to understand the experiences of the five participants. The ten phases mentioned in Mezirow's process will be identified and applied to the emerging themes illustrated in the data. These ten phases will also correspond to psychological, convictional, and behavioural changes perceived of the participants.

1.7 Experiential Learning Theory

> Service-learning theorists and practitioners can readily adapt Kolb's learning cycle of concrete experience, cognitive reflection, abstract theorization, and experimentation to generate knowledge and facilitate learning in diverse contexts. Along with physically situating students in authentic environment, service-learning programs simplify the Kolb model further by encouraging some form of structured reflection to connect experience with concepts, ideas, and theories and generate new and applicable knowledge in concrete 'real-life' situations. (Kiely, 2005, p. 6)

This research will draw on the framework of experiential learning used in ISL in Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle. Savicki (2008) believes that experiential education is the foundation of all learning (pg. 75). Through understanding the process of ISL and the sustainability of what is serviced and learned, it is hoped that a further understanding of how and to what extent students learn through experience will develop.

There are four stages in the ELT. The first stage is the Concrete Experience (CE); this is when lessons are learned through adaptability and open mindedness. The second stage is Reflective Observation (RO); this occurs when a student learns from their experience and articulates why and how it happened. The third stage is the Abstract Conceptualization (AC); during this stage logic and ideas overtake feelings in understanding situations. Finally, Active Experimentation (AE); during this stage, students are able to test their theories and make predictions (Akella, 2010, p. 102). Theoretically, experiential learning has been reinforced by constructivist principles. Students are able to construct meaning and take an active role in learning when authentic responsibilities are applied (Mbugua, 2010, p. 89).

Historically, people have been involved in experiential learning well before formal education strategies were implemented. People learned to use life experiences to solve daily problems that they encountered (Savicki, 2008, p. 75). Akella (2010) defines the ELT model as a method to understand various stages and forms of learning. Akella believes ELT as essential in furthering an understanding of the different ways people process and receive new information. The ELT model can be used to explore issues related to adult education and participant centered learning (p. 100). Kolb has explained that all learners use the experiential learning cycle differently. Some learners focus on certain stages longer than others. The learning styles used often reflect the individual's learning ability and learning history (p. 102). Although each stage is equally important, critical reflection enables the construction of meaning and transformation of perceptions.

The understanding of ELT was adopted by educators because of the direct interaction between experiences and subject matter. Wurdinger & Carlson (2010) explain that it is imperative that students test their understanding through experience (p. 9). Wurdinger & Carlson also state that "students need to experience things firsthand by creating, designing, building, and testing ideas in order to determine their worth" (p. 9). Experiential learning can occur either by taking a step-by-step process that distinctly leads to learning something or is derived from the real world environment (Wurdinger & Carlson , 2010, p. 11).

When experiential learning is applied to learning internationally, a different type of emotional flexibility and resiliency is needed. Students who participate in an ISL program have habitual ways of thinking and feeling that may not correspond with the host country they are visiting. The feelings and emotions they experience can be challenging. Students may feel the need to reject the culture if they are not prepared (Savicki, 2008, p. 74). Consequently, it is essential that students critically reflect after the ISL experience to develop an understanding of their position and to become self-aware. Critical reflection will support them in constructing meaning from what they experience (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1).

Deeley (2010) describes critical reflection as a form of critical thinking and is an essential element of SL (p. 44). This type of reflection enables students to construct meaning from their experiences by understanding which elements were successful and which need improvement

(Kelshaw, Lazarus, & Minier, 2009, p. 120). The literature that has looked at the impact of experiential learning has primarily been conducted via qualitative studies that use personal reflections and observations that document the learning process, feelings, and critical moments experienced by a student (Akella, 2010, p. 104). By understanding the stages of ELT, a researcher is able to gain an in-depth perspective of the participants' position. Reflective Observation "is the second stage in Kolb's learning cycle. It is the stage where the learner critically reflects on his/her performance, thinks about techniques to improve his/her previous actions and experiences" (Akella, 2010, p. 107). Reflective observation and critical reflection are both essential in ELT and TLT.

By reflecting upon an ISL experience, a student should be able to gain more intercultural awareness and cultural responsiveness. By cultivating and applying a more culturally responsive pedagogy, educators and students will be able to use this information to better respond to globalization and interconnectedness (Mbugua, 2010, p. 87).

1.8 Transformational Learning Theory

> A defining condition of being human is that we have to understand the meaning of our experience. For some, any uncritically assimilated explanation by an authority figure will suffice. But in contemporary society we must learn to make our own interpretations rather than act on the purpose, beliefs, judgments, and feelings of others. Facilitating such understanding is the cardinal goal of adult education. Transformative learning develops autonomous thinking. (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5)

TLT is also known as "perspective transformation" (Mezirow, 1990, p.13). TLT was actualized by Jack Mezirow and is known as a constructivist theory. It enables an individual to construct meaning from an experience (Mezirow, 1990, p.1). Mezriow expanded upon Freire's focus on social justice and transformational learning by viewing perspective transformation through a cognitive development and psychological position (Baumgartner, 2001, p. 17). Kitchenham (2010) outlines Mezirow's (1978a, 1978b) Ten Phases of Transformative Learning (p.105):

1. A disorienting dilemma

2. A self-examination with feelings of guilt, shame, anger, or frustration
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
6. Planning of a course of action
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective

The ten phases listed are the result of Mezirow's research in 1975 where he investigated women in the United States who were returning to school or work after an extended time period. Mezirow's research discovered the importance of critical reflection and critical self-reflection. Mezirow learned that the participants in this study had gone through a "personal transformation." Understanding the personal transformation that took place, Mezirow was able to identify the ten phases that contributed to transformational learning (Kitchenham, 2010, p. 105).

In addition to identifying with the ten phases outlined above, Mezirow also discovered that an individual must undergo critical reflection. Critical reflection will challenge an individual's presuppositions in prior learning:

> Critical reflection addresses the question of the justification for the very premises on which problems are posed or defined in the first place. We very commonly check our prior learning to confirm that we have correctly proceeded to solve problems, but becoming critically aware of our own presuppositions involves challenging our established and habitual patterns of expectations, the meaning perspective with which we have made sense out of our encounters with the world, others, and ourselves. (Mezirow, 1990, p. 12)

In order to make sense of an experience, it is important for an individual to create an interpretation of the experience (Mezirow, 1990, p. 2).

Richard Kiely (2005) explains how Mezirow's transformational learning model is a framework that is used in SL. It is a model that focuses on how meaning is constructed from experiences and how learning and behavioural changes can be made through critical incidents (pg. 6). The interpretation an individual has of the experience will direct decisions and actions. Making meaning from an experience is the process of learning (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Taylor (1998) also explains that drawing meaning out of an experience is the process of transformative learning (p. 1). Transformational learning is a unique strategy that is abstract and grounded in human communication. The TLT describes learning as a process of using prior interpretations as a tool to construe a revised interpretation. The new interpretation is a result of an experience and will be used in actions taken in the future (Taylor, 1998, p. 5; Mezirow, 1996, p. 162).

Adults acquire experience throughout their lives. The experiences shape their frame of reference. A frame of reference often includes their values, feelings, and conditioned responses. It also restricts the ability to embrace ideas or beliefs that do not fit into our preconceptions. Through transformative learning, learners are able to move towards a more inclusive and self-reflective frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). Reflection is a process that enables an individual to correct distorted beliefs and exercise a problem-solving strategy (Mezirow, 1990, p. 1). Without going through the transformational learning process, adults become victims of habits of their mind. Mezirow (1997) describes habits of the mind as ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism is defined as the predispositions that "others" (outside of one's group) are inferior to the individual and/or the group in which the individual identifies with (i.e. cultural, religious, racial, gender). This can lead to labeling and judging of things that are not understood (pg. 6).

Looking at revising interpretations of meaning through experience is an effective way of fostering transformation. Fostering transformational learning is essential considering experiential learning does not always lead to transformative learning. Hunter (2008) explains how it should not be assumed that bringing students to a foreign country will automatically result in the type of learning intended from study abroad experiences (p. 93). As explained by Mezirow (1997) we transform our frame of reference through critical reflection. This reflection is based on assumptions which have become interpretation and habits of the mind. Critical reflection challenges our frame of references and transforms our belief and point of view (p. 7).

Transformational learning is difficult to separate from normative development. It has been stated that learning and servicing abroad creates a transformative opportunity and is more valuable than that of a classroom (Hunter, 2008, p. 94). Promoting opportunities for students abroad to learn and service is effective yet, proving the extent of its impact can be challenging. Researchers have found that it is difficult to measure the degree to which a student is transformed through ISL. Kiely (2004) describes how the long-term impact and transformation of student perspectives, following an ISL experience, is often ambiguous. An individual's ability to change habits, engage is social action, and resist cultural norms is unclear (p. 5). For transformational learning to be considered successful, it should ignite a deep structural change in basic thoughts, feelings, and actions (Hunter, 2008, p. 94).

Jack Mezirow believes that there are two dimensions of making meanin: making meaning schemes, such as attitudes, beliefs, and feelings; and meaning perspective, which is a philosophical world view (Hunter, 2008, p. 94). In ISL a student will demonstrate their transformation through increasing their intercultural competence through new meaning schemes and perspectives. Critically reflecting from an experience enables an individual to reorganize the way they construct meaning and eventually restructure their interpretation or perspective.

1.9 Summary

This chapter outlined the research problem which explained the importance of understanding what is learned during and after a student participates in an ISL program, and how the information learned is carried forward in the communities. This chapter also explained gaps in the literature which describe the current shortage of information regarding ISL and transformational learning. The research question introduced in this chapter intends to investigate (1) how international learning experiences transform the lives of students who participated in an ISL program. In addition, two sub-questions that will be analyzed include (2) what the participants learned from the experience and how they plan on applying what they have learned, and (3) what recommendations can be made to increase the learning potential of an ISL experience for students in the future.

This chapter clarified the conceptual frameworks that will be used to investigate and assist in understanding the learning associated with ISL. Looking at ISL through the framework of ELT and TLT should increase an understanding of the learning experienced by the participants in this study. Understanding the relationship between ELT, TLT, and ISL will assist in program strategies that can improve upon learning opportunities for students. It is critical to understand methods that will increase the productive learning gained during ISL and how to ensure a positive outcome is obtained. As the world continues to become a global community it is important that students are able to use ISL experiences to enhance their world view. To make this possible, many questions must be addressed surrounding the purpose and goals of sending students abroad.

The next four chapters will review literature related to ISL, describe the methodology that will be used in this study, illustrate the themes and data, and conclude the research study. The literature review will focus on three main themes: Perceptions of ISL, Transformation Learning through Experience, and how to Foster Transformational Learning. Chapter three will describe the methodology being used by outlining the research design, participant selection, introduction of participants, the method for data collection, data analysis, limitations to research, and ethical considerations. Chapter four will describe the data related to the themes illustrated in the literature review.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction to Literature Review and Background

This chapter provides a literature review that will discuss the relevant literature in the field as it relates to my topic and is organized around three main themes: Perspective of ISL, Transformational Learning through Experience, and Fostering Transformational Learning. The purpose of the review is to provide knowledge and understanding of the relevant ISL literature and to locate my study within the broader context of the field.

Study abroad programs in Canadian Universities have continued intensification. With this "Canada attempted to emulate the European model of exchange — albeit with fewer resources and less governmental oversight — while the US put more resources into group study abroad programs" (Humphries, et al., 2013, p. 41). As interest in studying abroad began to increase and institutions began to notice an absence of policies and risk management procedures associated with international learning. In response to this, each institution established their own policies and procedures that coincided with their institutional philosophy and existing processes. The results illustrated similarities and differences towards exchange programs (Humphries, et al., 2013, p. 41).

The exchange programs offered by American institutions were seen as the ideal model for other parts of the world. Higher education continued to grow and with this so did mobility. There has not been a time in history when higher education has been more international than the 21st century (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 11). Altback & Teichler referred this era as the new "international era." Altbach and Teichler claimed that internationalization of education was inevitable. The 21st century is expected to be titled the century of education and with the increase of mobility students are able to study abroad at a higher rate. UNESCO statistics (as stated in Altback & Teichler, 2001) reported that 1.6 million students were studying abroad during the years 1993 – 1995. In 2000 this increased and it was estimated that two million students were studying abroad (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 5-7).

International mobility has become a normal part of life for many students and staff. Exchange agencies have also played an important role in increasing the rate of international exchange. Exchange agencies assist in making institutions and individuals more aware of the importance of international education and being mobile. The increase of international education has encouraged further research regarding study exchanges and study abroad experiences (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 5-7). Experiences in international education were thought to promote an international understanding and support the ideology of world peace. Initially, international experiences were primarily one year and enjoyed by more affluent students. Currently, international education experiences have proliferated and the duration of the experience is often a semester or less (Crabtree, 2008, p 19).

2.2 Perspective of International Service-Learning

Globalization has transformed the way the world functions in almost every aspect. It has enabled international integration through the interchange of culture, information, products, politics, global networking, and intercommunications. It has introduced the world to a new era of unprecedented potential and possibilities, both publicly and privately. The impact of globalization has forced institutions to restructure the framework in which they were designed (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 5).

To be successful in an ever expanding global community, institutions actively seek out global prospects. Institutions that do not address international demand and global connectedness may not achieve comparable success to their counterparts. More effective methods of teaching and access to equitable education are an international priority. Institutions need to find a way to adapt to the rapid transformation of the world while the needs of all students are met (Sahlberg, 2011).

The arrival of the new millennium globalized academic systems abroad (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 6). Globalization has continued to change the original context of study abroad programs. Multinational businesses have contributed to the reduction of authenticity in various countries. When students are abroad, they are able to meet in familiar food restaurants and stores. As a consequence, globalization has removed some of the authenticity and immersion of an international education experience (Crabtree, 2008, p. 19). Although this will alter the authenticity of the experience, it will also provide the opportunity to standardize expectations within ISL and how to achieve program goals.

The 21st century has provided opportunities for educators to use the global village as their classroom. Higher educational institutes are faced with positioning themselves to meet the demand of international connectedness and growing expectations of prospective students. Increased quality of learning experiences and outcomes have taken precedence in education (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004, p. 95). International interconnectedness has had a large impact on demographics and has brought cultural complexity and diversity (Mbuga, 2010, p. 87). To increase cultural understanding, educational institutions have been taking a service-learning approach internationally.

Culturally relevant teaching was described by Ladson-Billing (as cited in Mbuga, 2010) as "a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 88). The internationalization of programs within institutions is driven by the need to cope with international demands. During the past two decades, the international activities of higher educational institutions have increased drastically:

> These activities range from traditional study-abroad program, allowing students to learning about other cultures, to providing access to higher education in countries where local institutions cannot meet the demand. Other activities stress upgrading the international perspective and skills of students enhancing foreign language programs, and providing cross-cultural understanding (Altbach &Knight, 2007, p. 290).

Many Universities have implemented internationalized programs which aim to improve and develop a cross-cultural perspective for students. The traditional method of internationalization is not driven by financial gain. International education can increase the prestigious status of the College or University (Altbach &Knight, 2007, p.293). International education has required Universities and Colleges to promote civic engagement, enhance intercultural development, expand global awareness, and increase human value (Crabtree, 2008, p. 18).

SL has been described as pedagogy (Deeley, 2010, p. 43). It has been linked to philosophers such as John Dewey and Jean Piaget who believed that students will learn the best when they are involved and active in learning, when learning seems to serve a direct purpose (Billing, 2000, p. 659). SL generally involves three phases: planning of how to fulfill the needs in the community, the action taken, and the reflection process (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010, p. 67). Mbugua (2010) states, "the National Service Learning Clearinghouse defines service-learning as a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (p. 89). For SL to occur, both the service and learning must mutually be emphasized (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010, p. 67). It is essential that SL be connected to academics. Critical reflection

assists students in making connections to coursework and experiences they have had in the field (Deeley, 2010 p. 41).

Kiely (2005) explains that SL education has been criticized for its lack of research methods that define the process, agenda, and how to improve upon practices. Once a student has become motivated to participate in the SL experience, many questions are brought forward. The integration of service and learning is more challenging than the concept itself (Howard, 1998, p. 21). Understanding the immersion of service and learning has become a priority for many institutions (Kiely, 2005, p. 5).

SL applies experiential learning by allowing student the opportunity to implement their knowledge and skills within communities:

> Eyler and Giles (1999) [stated], service-learning is a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection as students work with others through a process of applying what they are learning to community problems and, at the same time, reflecting upon their experience as they see to achieve real objective for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves. (Mbugua, 2010, p. 89)

There have been many claims that SL enhances a student's intellectual skills by developing their ability to think critically. By developing the ability to think critically, students are furthering their personal growth (Deeley, 2010, p. 44). Wurdinger & Carlson (2010) suggest that the learning that occurs is equally or sometimes more important than the actual service being conducted (p. 67). SL aims at benefiting students, the recipients of the service, and the community (Deeley, 2010, p. 43).

As research in SL expands, it continues to be an effective avenue of learning for students. SL provides the opportunity for students to:

1) Actively participate in a service experience and civic engagement
2) Provides an opportunity for reflection and discussion
3) Provides an environment for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom
4) Support an opportunity to learn outside the classroom (Mbugua, 2010, p. 90).

Preparing students for a global community is vitally important with the continuous and rapid changes in global demographics. It is imperative that students are responsive to advanced levels of advanced human interaction (Mbugua, 2010, p. 87). By implementing programs, such as ISL, students are given an opportunity to become world citizens. Crabtree (2008) explains how, "international service-learning (ISL) combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context" (p. 18). It is essential that students are engaged in learning that supports their development of socio-political and critical thinking skills. It is also important that these skills can be used to address social inequalities (Mbugua, 2010, p. 87).

Kiely (2004) reports that ISL has proven to improve intercultural competence, language ability, increase appreciation for different cultures, and intensify a deeper understanding of global issues that are relevant to their academic studies (p 5). Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones (2011) conceptualize ISL as involving 3 main components. They describe ISL as the intersection between SL, studying abroad, and international education. Each domain borrows elements from the other which creates a unique pedagogy (p. 4). Mbugua (2010) supports this idea by stating that service-learning is a "multi-tiered pedagogy" (p. 89).

Another impetus for the increase in ISL programs has been the escalation of institutional support and encouragement of students' civic engagement. The goal of ISL programs is to connect international travel to education and community service. It is hoped that this will raise students' global awareness, their ability to develop an intercultural understanding, and their humane values. ISL should also teach students valuable leadership skills (Crabtree, 2008, p.18).

There are several factors that have influenced the direction of ISL and study abroad programs. The development of institutional programs, such as internships and placements, has attracted undergraduate students from various areas of study (Zachrisson, 2004, p. 29). Internationalization in the academic world has also attracted the interest of community colleges. It is important to understand what motives a student has for participating in ISL.

Students travelling abroad may have unrealistic expectations of what they will experience. Chambers & Chambers (2008) discuss an ethnographic study in a Siena study abroad program. The students were asked about their goals and perspectives of travelling to Siena. The motivation behind the answers to these questions are often complex and changed over time.

Students generally displayed a personal narrative connecting all of their expectation to their needs, desires, fears, and objectives. Chambers & Chambers (2008) explain how students were minimally interested in political or economic issues and were not motivated by understanding sociocultural differences or Italian life (p. 146). The students believed that the study abroad program would give them a cultural experience, meet new people, develop independence and self-confidence, provide them with learning opportunities and personal challenges, and support their self-growth (Chambers & Chambers, 2008, p. 140-150).

Many of the expectations and motivations that the students had about participating in a study abroad program were generally centered on achieving a personal transformation which has been considered to be an aspect of American culture (Chambers & Chambers, 2008, p.140-150). The highly personalized orientation to going abroad and the idea of investing time and energy into personal development seems to coincide with individualism and the American culture. This illustrates a need for further research and development in this area if students are going to have an optimal learning opportunity during an ISL experience that goes beyond self-serving motives.

Students' studying abroad expands to almost all regions of the world. The participants in Chambers and Chambers' (2008) research study resided in East Africa for the duration of their ISL experience. "Africa (3,672) is the fifth most frequented world region, having more than doubled its portion of U.S. study abroad students in the past decade. Its numbers of study abroad students grew by 19.6% over the previous year, and 149% since 1993-94" (Zachrisson, 2004, p. 29). International programs are often driven by the increase of student interest and the international opportunities that are now available to them. Many students have developed a strong interest in understanding their personal roots and have demonstrated an interest towards exploring places like Latin America or Africa over Western European countries. To learn about a country and culture, experience outside of the classroom is irreplaceable. Knowledge gained through experience has the ability to create a perspective transformation.

2.3 Transformational Learning through Experience

Continuing education has promoted transformational learning for the past twenty-five years and has become a widely researched and discussed topic (Taylor, 2007, p. 173). Transformational

learning is a large area of focus for researchers interested in ISL. The challenge that researchers need to address is how to promote students' ability to find purpose and meaning from the experience (Howard, 1998, p. 22).

Crabtree (2008) explains how ISL was designed to promote an international understanding and enhance the possibility of having world peace. After WWII, the interest in international education began to grow and many students participated in a year abroad as a learning experience. Although the average duration of an abroad experience has decreased, international experiences have continued to gain popularity (pg. 19). Educators are still encouraged to support students in ISL, promoting the potential of global citizenship and inspiring individuals to appreciate cultures, differences, ethnicity, and religion (Crabtree, 2008, p. 19). ISL programs promote global citizenship through experiential learning activities in the hope of enhancing international understanding and connectedness (p. 29).

Many qualitative research designs have combined creative elements to understand transformational learning associated with ISL (Taylor, 2007, p. 173). Kiely (2004) conducted a longitudinal investigation to explore how students transform through participating in ISL. Kiely facilitated a ten yearlong ISL program that sent students to Nicaragua. Kiely explained witnessing the transformative impact that it had on the US undergraduate students. Kiely reported that every student was "deeply transformed" by the learning experience and the "findings indicate that each student experienced profound changes in their world-view in at least one of six dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural" (p. 5). Kiely describes SL as a transformational process that is not about obtaining knowledge but about seeing the world in a different way.

Sutton and Rubin (2004) looked at the difference between students who had studied abroad compared to a control group who did not go abroad. They discovered that "in four of the factors, functional knowledge, knowledge of global interdependence, knowledge of cultural relativism, and knowledge of world geography, there was a statistical difference in favour of the study abroad participants" (Hoff, 2008, p.58). The study also showed significant correlations between personal and intellectual growth, career development, language skills, and academic performance and the students who had an abroad experience (p.59).

Mezirow (1997) explains four processes of learning through experience that lead to transformation. The first process is when an individual is able to elaborate upon their existing point of view. This can often lead to an individual seeking out further information to support their initial biases. Secondly, through transformation from an experience, an individual can establish a new point of view. Consequently, this could create a negative meaning scheme that further supports their pre-existing conceptions. The third way of learning is to transform our point of view. This is explained by an experience in another culture that promotes the individual to critically reflect upon their own misperceptions. This may lead to a changed point of view. An individual may become more accepting and transform the overall habit of the mind. Finally, Mezirow explains the transformation of our ethnocentric habit of the mind. This happens when an individual expands their critical reflection and biases. This has been defined as an "epochal transformation" and seems to be less common because the transformative learning might already fit within our frame of reference (p. 7). For a student to achieve perspective transformation, it is important to understand the role program leaders and organization play in fostering the transformation.

2.4 Fostering Transformational Learning

This research study attempts to understand the experience of students who participate in ISL and how they are transformed through their experience. With the knowledge gained from this study, it is important to identify how to foster and facilitate transformational learning. Crabtree (2008) believes that we must fully understand the potential of international education and design methods within ISL that will promote optimal learning.

There are three critical elements that need to be taken into consideration when designing an ISL program to help students succeed. The initial element is the pre-departure preparation that should be applied to all students. As this research will show, providing students with formal information sessions and orientation regarding their program, country, culture, and expectations upon arrival will increase their success. Students need to know exactly what to expect and organizations need to know what the students' expectations are. For this to occur, Crabtree (2008) believes that a proficiency in cross-cultural psychology and communication is needed. To support students it is important that they are equipped with language skills, cross-cultural

awareness, and intercultural communication skills. These are important elements that will enhance the experience of an individual which could foster transformational learning.

Not only is the pre-departure process important, support throughout the entire duration of the program should be practiced. Culture shock, reverse culture shock, and intercultural adjustment were first described by Lysgaard (1955), Oberg (1960), and Gullahorn and Gullahorn (1963) (Gaw, 2000, p.85). Understanding the U- Curve Adjustment Model and the W-Curve Theory of Adjustment related to cross-cultural adaptation is important when sending students on an ISL program. The U-Curve Adjustment Model was originally theorized by Lysgaard in 1955. This model can be used to describe the experience an individual has during ISL. There are four stages in this model that attempt to depict how adjustment to a new environment and culture occurs.

The stages of the U-Curve Adjustment Model are as followed:

1. *Honeymoon Stage:* A euphoric state, an individual is excited by the new environment and culture
2. *Culture Shock/Crisis*: Unsure of the new cultural environment, they may try various coping skills. This stage usually displays home sickness, frustration, and loneliness
3. *Adjustment:* Begin to understand the new culture and environment and attempts to adopt to the values, beliefs, and culture of those in the local community
4. *Mastery:* Stable, adjusted, and master of new environment

(Gautam & Vishwakarma, 2012, p. 3-4)

The U-Curve Adjustment Model is a tool that can be used to understand the experience of a student during an ISL experience and to develop strategies for providing support during each stage of the process. The W-Curve Theory Adjustment is similar to the U-Curve Adaptation Model. The W-Curve further developed the U-Curve by adding the re-entry process in which Gullahorn and Gullahorn (as cited in Gaw, 2000) "theoretically accounted for reverse culture shock, the experience of returning to one's home culture. The cognitive dissonance experienced at reentry was perceived as the primary root to the syndrome of reverse culture shock, causing structural imbalance (cognitive schema disequilibrium)" (p. 86).

Understanding both models and being aware of the stages students may be experiencing when in a new environment is essential for providing support. The models can be used as a tool but cannot be generalized to every ISL experience and person. The two models include stages that illustrate the psychological disruption, gradual adjustment, and adaptation that takes place over a period of time (Gaw, 2000, p. 86). These models explain how an individual can recover from the initial culture shock and become normalized within their new environment.

Supporting a student through every phase they are experiencing during an ISL placement will help them process the experience more effectively. This involves regular communication with the individuals during the entire duration of their stay. Having students critically reflect upon their experience and supporting them through the challenges will assist them in overcoming obstacles more effectively and encourage them to think critically without increasing their stereotypes or biases.

When considering education as it moves forward in an international community, educators should "foster critically reflective thought, imaginative problem posing", and discourse should be "learner-centered, participatory, and interactive, and it involves group deliberation and group problem solving" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10). Even though the student may be in a foreign environment, the educators or program organizers can continue to encourage critical thought and problem-solving strategies to adapt and accommodate students in their new roles.

The University of Scranton is an example of an institution that issues a "travel" credit-bearing course. In the summer of 2010, pre-service teachers were taught a course in Kenya. The teacher candidates were immersed in the community by interacting with Kenyan teachers and students. Kenya was chosen as a means to necessitate concerns regarding limited knowledge about the African continent (Mbugua, 2010, p. 91). Mbugua (2010) outlines the important course objectives that supported the learning needs of students. One of the first objects was for students to examine how teachers and schools prepare students to participate in a culturally diverse environment. Secondly, students investigate cultural similarities and differences, human needs, and social injustices. Third, they interpret patterns of behaviour by reflecting on attitudes and values that create challenges towards a cross-cultural understanding. Fourth, students apply concepts learned in courses. Fifth, students demonstrate an understanding of intercultural

communication while interacting with diverse individuals. Finally, students must demonstrate cultural competence in basic Swahili while engaging in services (p. 91).

These objects are an example of important elements that should merge into ISL programs to support learning success. Following clear objectives and relating it to social justice, global awareness, and course content is pivotal for a successful learning experience. The learning experienced in the "travel" credit- bearing course enhanced the world view of the students and they were able to transform their perspectives personally and professionally (Mbugua, 2010, p. 91).

Not only should the support be prevalent for the entire duration, programs also need to implement a re-entry process so students are able to use and apply what they have learned. Effective strategies for this could be: "follow-up research and advocacy projects, identifying alternative study-abroad options or post-graduation service placement." [In addition to this, institutions should be involved in] "creating campus and community speaking opportunities about the ISL experience and context, and assisting students' exploration of complex intellectual and ethical issues that are bound to emerge after an ISL experience" (Kiely, 2004; Crabtree, 2008, pg. 22). Addressing these issues will help students process what they have learned.

All elements of the ISL experience are important for a student to reach the highest potential of learning. Commitment to the program must be ensured from all parties involved. If a student is "integrated into a well-developed program, international service-learning can fulfill its potential as a transformational learning experience for students informing subsequent study and career choices" (Grusky, 2000, abstract; Kiley, 2004, pg. 6). Considering the potential an ISL experience can provide, researchers and educators must design methods that support student success.

2.5 Synthesis of Literature

Creating an international learning experience that enriches the perspective and world view of students can be pivotal to enhancing and transforming a cultural understanding that can be used at home and abroad. Reviewing literature related to ISL demonstrates that there are many areas that should be developed further to understand how effective and sustainable the learning

associated with ISL is. Researchers believe that the irreplaceable field experience, while participating in ISL, provides an opportunity for learning that is incomparable to a classroom. ISL is experiential, reflective, and multicultural (Brown, 2011, p. 57). It also provides a space and opportunity for students to construct meaning through reflecting upon their experience. Brown (2011) explains how ISL has the ability to expose students to transformative ways of understanding various cultures and nations, and enriches their understanding of how engaged citizenship should be carried out (p. 57).

Educators have found that when students are learning cross-culturally, the confines of the classroom are not always serving as an adequate learning environment. Mbugua (2010) states that regardless of guest speakers, simulations, and course engaged discussion, students still feel confined to the walls of their classroom (p. 90). If researchers learn how to foster the transformational learning process through looking at the experiences and programs in ISL critically, an opportunity for higher quality learning may arise.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the relevant research that relates to my focus on ISL. The review was organized around three major themes: Perspective of ISL, Transformational Learning through Experience, and Fostering Transformational Learning and draws attention to the significance of the need for research that focuses on the perspectives of students who have participated in an ISL experience. Such research is important so that future methods of optimizing the learning potential can be derived from the information gathered and the knowledge generated. This sort of research has the potential to assist students to meet challenges, learn from the experiences of others, and to develop an understanding of reciprocal learning. This research will also assist ISL programs by providing knowledge regarding how to transform ISL so that it can be more a more effective learning opportunity for both students and the communities.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

In this chapter, the methodology used to answer the research questions is explained. It outlines the research design and describes the selection of participants, the method of data collection, data analysis procedures, limitations of the study, and ethical considerations. The purpose of this study was to investigate (1) how international learning experiences transform the lives of students who go abroad and participate in an ISL program, (2) what the participants learned from the experience and how they plan on applying what they have learned, and (3) what recommendations can be made to increase the learning potential of an ISL experience for students in the future.

3.1 Research Design

This is a qualitative case study that investigated the perspective of students who went abroad and participated in an ISL experience in East Africa for a duration of seven weeks to two months. The question of the quality of international experiences is becoming more credible. It is no longer appropriate to solely focus on the quantitative dimension of studying abroad (Mitchell, 2013, p. 43). There are three main reasons for using a qualitative approach in this study. First, qualitative research is often used in education because it concentrates on the social life and natural setting of human behaviours (Punch, 2009, p. 170). Secondly, Creswell (1998) explains how a qualitative study focuses on an issue or problem instead of making a hypothesis (p. 20-22). Finally, qualitative research is used to understand human perspectives and world views which are essential for this research study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 219).

Considering that I am looking at the perspective of people and how they have been transformed through experiential learning, a qualitative approach is the most effective measure for this study. Qualitative research gives an in-depth and detailed understanding of actions, meaning, phenomenon, and behaviour (Gonzales et al., 2008, p. 3). A qualitative method was used in this study to understand the individual experiences of ISL program participants and how meaning was drawn from those experiences. By conducting a qualitative study, an increased understanding of how experiential learning can transform lives of students will be understood.

A case study method is applied to this research. Five students were selected to participate in this study. The participants were selected based on their experience in an ISL program in East Africa. Punch (2009) explains how a case study aims at gaining an understanding of a natural setting and recognizing complexities of situations in depth (p.119). The intention of case studies is to gain an understanding of a particular situation through the description of what participants have experienced in their thoughts and feelings (Geertz, 1973). A case study looks at the phenomenon of a real-life context (Robson, 2002, p. 178). It is used in this study to understand the thoughts and feelings of the participants by reflecting upon their experience in three phases: before they travelled abroad, during their abroad experience, and their current application of what they learned.

For the purpose of this research, an instrumental case study was utilized to investigate ISL in detail and answer the research question and sub-questions. The instrumental case study tries to gain insight into an issue or theory (Punch, 2009, p. 119). This research attempts to gain insight into the paradigms of transformative and experiential learning within an ISL experience. To achieve this, a sample of participants who completed an ISL program were interviewed.

The interviews utilized both the ELT and TLT because students critically reflected upon their concrete experience, learning gained, and application of what was learned. They were able to make sense of situations by answering semi-structured interview questions which contributed to making personal and social connections. Once students make connections to their experience, the overall learning is more effective (Akella, 2010, p. 101). The interview questions directed the students to discuss and reflect upon the four stages of Kolb's ELT. The questions focused on the Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE) (Akella, 2010, p. 101). Through the analysis of data, perceptions of ISL, transformational learning, and program recommendations for transformational learning were identified.

3.2 Participant Selection

Participants for this study are all University or College undergraduate students who took part in an ISL program in East Africa for the duration of seven weeks to four months. Five participants

were selected. Each participant was asked a series of semi-structured interview questions that engaged them to critically reflect upon the entire experience. This enabled them to reflect upon the ISL before departing, while on the ground, and once they returned to Canada. All of the participants that were chosen to take part in the study were selected because of the experience they had abroad. As mentioned by Punch (2009), qualitative research rarely uses the method of probability sampling. Instead qualitative research samples deliberately with a primary focus (Punch, 2009, p. 162).

The interviewer informed all of the participants that the purpose of the interview was to understand transformational learning experiences through ISL. The interviewer also explained that an analysis of their experience will be conducted to support transformational learning within ISL for students and programs in the future. Information given to the participants was non-directive and would not create biased responses (Cohen, 2011, p. 421). The participants were given a letter of information explaining the details of the research and their participation in it, and a letter of consent which they were requested to sign (See Appendix C-D).

3.3 Introduction of Participants

Each participant in this study belonged to a recognized College or University in Ontario, Canada and participated in an ISL program in East Africa. All of the names of the participants have been changed to protect the confidentiality agreement of this research study. The gender, age, program of study, participant ethnicity, country visited, and duration of visit for each participant is listed below.

Table 3.1

Participant Introduction

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age	Program of Study	Ethnicity	Country visit	Duration of visit
Linda	F	22	Honours Specialization in Political Science	Canadian	Rwanda	2 months
Andrea	F	27	BSC Psychology	African-Canadian	Kenya	4 months
Julie	F	20	Science	Korean-Canadian	Tanzania	2.5 months
Frank	M	50	Global Studies	African-Canadian	Kenya	4 months
Cindy	F	22	Media and Business	Canadian	Rwanda	7 weeks

Linda is a twenty-two year old female from ON, Canada. Linda participated in an ISL experience through her academic institution for 2 months in Rwanda. During the time of her ISL experience Linda was in her 4th year of study in an Honours specialized program in Political Science. Linda had previously travelled to Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Syria. She had visited the middle east several times to visit her family but she had not travelled for any other reason or anywhere else. She had never participated in an ISL program before. Linda also explained that her parents had immigrated to Canada so she had a lot of exposure to other cultures.

Andrea is a twenty-seven year old female from ON, Canada. Andrea was in the final year of her four year program. She was earning her Bachelors of Science in Psychology when she

participated in the ISL experience at her institution. Andrea visited Kenya for four months during her ISL experience. Andrea explained that she was originally from Ghana and moved to Canada six years ago. Andrea believed that her experience living in a developing country was very different than visiting. Andrea had never participated in an international academic program and stated that this was her first ISL experience.

Julie is a twenty year old Bachelor of Science student from ON, Canada. Julie was in her second year of study when she decided to participate in an ISL program with her institution. Julie travelled to Tanzania for her experience and resided there for 2.5 months. Julie did not have extensive travel experience before participating in ISL. She was originally born in South Korea and moved to Canada at the age of six. She went back to visit Korea when she was ten years old and stayed for one month. She went on vacation to the Dominican Republican when she was eighteen. Julie's experience in Tanzania was her first time visiting Africa and participating in ISL.

Frank is a fifty year old male from ON, Canada. Frank was in a Global Studies program during his ISL experience. Frank visited Kenya for four months during his ISL placement. Frank was born in Ghana and immigrated to Canada. Frank had an ISL experience for six months in Tanzania before travelling to Kenya. The first diploma Frank received after immigrating to Canada was International Business and he described always having an interest in interacting internationally.

Cindy is a 22 year old female Media and Business student from ON, Canada. Cindy was in her fifth year of study when she participated in her ISL program. Cindy visited Rwanda for seven weeks. She had travelled extensively before visiting Rwanda. Cindy taught English in Italy for two months during her second year of post-secondary school, then in her third year she was involved in a program where she taught an entrepreneurship course in Russia and in Ukraine for three weeks each. The year before leaving for Rwanda she was in East Africa conducting research for a professor and taught an entrepreneurship course in Tanzania.

3.4 Method of Data Collection

The participants had either participated in the same ISL program as the researcher or were affiliated through similar ISL programs. An email was sent requesting their participation in the research study (See Appendix A). Within the email a brief description of the study was given and the participants were asked to schedule a time with the researcher based on their availability. Once participants confirmed their interest in interviewing, a time and place to meet was scheduled.

Each interview was approximately one hour in length. The data was collected in line with Western University's Research Ethics approval notice. Before the interviews began, participants were given a letter of information and a consent form. They were asked to read the letter of information (Appendix C) and sign the consent form (Appendix D) once they had read all of the information. The participants were able to keep a copy of the letter of information for their records. Once the letter of consent was signed it was placed back into a sealed envelope. Consent forms were scanned and saved to my personal USB and original copies were discarded. The USB was kept in a secure location. Before the interviews began the participants were reminded that it was voluntary and they could withdraw at any time. The interviews were recorded on a digital audio recorder and were saved on my personal USB until transcription was complete. Once a transcription was complete the audio file was permanently deleted.

Using semi-structured interviews to collect data was an effective method for this qualitative research approach. It aims to gain perspectives, meaning, and knowledge of how reality has been constructed and is a very effective way of gaining an understanding of other people and their mind-set (Punch, 2009, p. 144). The open-ended questions allowed participants the opportunity to express their perspectives and how participants construct meaning from their experience. Although, there are several ways of constructing the interview, a semi-structured interview was chosen because it involved more openness and emotional involvement. Punch (2009) explains that "sharing some of the same concerns as feminists, postmodern ethnographers have been concerned with moral aspects of the traditional researcher-subject interview, with the controlling role of the interviewer, and with influences of the interviewer on data and reporting"

(p. 149). For the purpose of this study, the semi-structured interview enabled participants to explore and express their perspectives and emotions.

The semi-structured interview took place in a location which was convenient to each participant. The interview began by asking brief demographic questions and then addressed the research questions. The interview used a non-directive technique which provided minimal direction or control from the interviewer (Cohen, et al. 2011, p. 415). The interview questions were divided into three sections: Pre-departure Reflection, Reflection Abroad, and Current Application. The three sections equaled a total of ten questions during the interview (See Appendix B).

3.5 Data Analysis

As discussed by Yin (2011), qualitative research involves several features. Yin categorized these features into five sections. Yin (2011) describes the first feature of qualitative research as the study of the lives of individuals in the real world. Secondly, Yin (2011) explains how qualitative research should use the views and perspectives of the participants in the study. Thirdly, Yin (2011) outlines how qualitative research should cover and consider the contextual situation of each individual. In addition, Yin (2011) suggests findings also contribute to existing concepts that will aid in the understanding of social behaviour. Finally, Yin (2011) describes how good qualitative research should use multiple sources to strengthen the findings (p. 7-8). Considering the various perspective and real-life situations that qualitative research involves, analyzing data can be complex.

In qualitative research there are many ways of analyzing data because of the various perspectives that it involves. Cohen et. al. (2011) explains that qualitative data is distinguished by the interpretation of the data and must have extensive organization (p. 537). Punch describes coding as the activity done during the qualitative analysis and is the foundation of what will be found (p. 175). Coding is the activity that labels the data and begins the analysis. After the interviews had been conducted and recorded, they were transcribed and coded. The coding that was used was related to the purpose of addressing the research question. In the beginning, coding creates low-inferences whereas coding later on in the analysis creates higher-inference patterns and concepts (Punch, 2009, p. 179).

Coding in this study looked for common themes expressed throughout the interviews and important details that might not have been expected. Colour coding was used to organize and display the data. Each participant was given a colour and the information was collected based on similarities drawn from the interview responses. The colour coded answers were placed in groups that would form three themes. Once the data was coded, predominate themes arose that provided support in answering the research questions.

The themes emerging through the data analysis were used to understand the transformative learning that took place during and after the ISL experience. In order for this to occur an inductive analysis was applied. Punch (2009) describes inductive analysis as a way to systematically compare and contrast between cases in an attempt to develop ideas and concepts (p. 173). Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) describe inductive analysis as the attempt at defining and investigating a phenomenon and constructing a hypothetical explanation based on the common factors found in the data (p. 234-5). Both of these approaches were applied between the five individuals in this study. Using an analytic induction approach was important to the qualitative data analysis, as it allowed concepts to be drawn from the data and raised to larger abstractions and themes (Punch, 2009 pg. 172).

Punch (2009) outlines three main stages to data analysis that were useful for this study; data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. Data reduction is doing the summarization and editing of data. Themes and patterns were looked for which assisted in developing concepts and abstract thoughts (p. 174). Data displays were used to organize the information gained during data collection (p. 175). Finally, "conclusion drawing and verifying is the third part of this analysis. It involves developing propositions, and is conceptually distinct from the other stages, but again is likely to happen concurrently with them" (p. 175). All of these stages were done through the data analysis process. The coding associated with the data analysis assisted in drawing out abstract concepts and themes from specific concrete examples. The themes that were uncovered were: Perception of ISL, Transformational Learning through Experience, and Fostering Transformational Learning.

3.6 Limitations of Study

The limitations to the study involved the duration of the ISL experience, the sequential time of data collection, and the success of the experience. Considering the participants in this study stayed in East Africa for various durations, this could have made an impact on their perception of the experience. An extended duration of the experience enables students to work through the initial adaptation phase. This could have been a factor in the perspectives that were constructed. The duration of the time spent in an ISL has the ability to influence individuals in various ways.

In addition, the data was collected once the participants had returned from their experience. Collecting data after the participants had their international experience gave them time to critically reflect and construct meaning from a different perspective. Although critical reflection was an important element in this study, gathering information from the participants during their time in East Africa could have added another element to the data. The participants had time to reflect before interviewing and this could have had an impact on some of the responses that were given.

The data collected from the five participants cannot be generalized to represent the opinions and experiences of all students who participate in and ISL experience, nor does it represent the structure of the organizations that the students worked with or other institutions that operate ISL programs. The information gathered from the participants was their perspective of the experience that they had and cannot be generalized to any other ISL programs or students. The information gained can be helpful to assist and support students and programs that are looking to further their understanding of ISL. The information only gives recommendations from individual perspectives related to their experience.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Considering that the qualitative data that was collected was generated from individual responses, it is important to consider the confidentially and privacy of each participant (Cohen, 2011, p. 542). Cohen suggests that, “a major ethical dilemma is that which requires researchers to strike a balance between the demands placed on them as a professional scientist in pursuit of truth, and their subjects’ rights and values potentially threatened by the research” (p. 75). In the interest of

ensuring the confidentiality of each participant, pseudonyms have been used, ISL program names have not been revealed, and the names of the Colleges and/or Universities attended have been withheld.

Participants were not coerced into participating in the research and were able to withdraw from the study at any time. Consent was given because "much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and cooperation of subjects who are to assist in investigation and of significant others in the institutions or organizations providing the research facilities" (Cohen, 2011, p. 77). The informed consent outlined the procedures, description of benefits and risks, an offer to answer questions regarding the procedures of the study, and written instructions that participants are welcome to withdraw at any time (Cohen, 2011, p. 78). Each participant was informed that every attempt would be made to ensure confidentiality.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter I explained the reason for choosing a qualitative research methodology to answer the research question, and discussed using a case study as the research design. The chapter described how the data from five semi-structured interviews was collected and analyzed by comparing and contrasting in order to recognize important themes and concepts. I introduced the participants, discussed the participant selection, and limitations to the research. In addition, I outlined the ethical considerations including requesting informed consent.

CHAPTER FOUR

Introduction to Research Findings

This chapter provides an analysis of the semi-structured interviews. The interview data was generated from the five participants who took part in this research study. Three themes emerged from the analysis and each theme aims to provide information that will answer the research question: (1) how international learning experiences transform the lives of students who participated in an ISL program, (2) what the participants learned from the experience and how

they plan on applying what they have learned, and (3) what recommendations can be made to increase the learning potential of an ISL experience for students in the future. The themes are as follows:

1) Perspective of International Service-Learning
2) Transformational Learning through Experience
3) Fostering Transformational Learning

The purpose of addressing these three themes is to understand the participants' perspective of ISL, evaluate how or if they have transformed their perspective through the learning experience, and to address the recommendations that they believe will assists student and ISL programs to induce learning. Each theme is chosen for the specific purpose of gaining a better understanding of ISL experiences. The knowledge gained from this study can be used by programs and institutions to provide a more effective transformational learning experience.

4.1 Theme 1: Perspective of ISL

Within adult education, reflection has been defined as the analytical process in which knowledge is extracted from experience. In the experimental learning discourse, reflection is an important element of perspective transformation (Hopkins, 1993, p. 46). As mentioned earlier, SL is a form of experiential education. It creates the ability to learn through a cycle of action and reflection. As students engage with others, they are able to apply what they have learned in the classroom and in the community. While reflecting upon the experience, students gain a deeper understanding of what they experienced and the skills they developed (Mbugua, 2010, p. 89). Since participants were interviewed after their ISL experience, they were able to critically reflect upon the entire experience in a way that illustrated the transformational learning that took place.

4.1.1 *Motivations and Expectations*

Understanding how a student views ISL and what their motives and expectations are before participating in ISL is imperative for success in the field. Analyzing the motives of why a student would choose to participate in such programs will better support the goals and purpose of the organizations, institutions, and the student. Motives for participating in an ISL are variable and the experience students have on the ground can contribute to the expectations and purpose behind their involvement. For this research, most of the participants had experience in

international communities. Three out of the five participants interviewed were born in a country other than Canada:

> I wasn't born in Canada, I was born in Ghana so I have an understanding of how it is to live in a developing country but I was living there as opposed to being there to experience how people live there and their way of life, so it's probably not the same I would say. I've lived in another country before Canada, before living in Canada. But for learning experience, no, Kenya was my first time. (Andrea)

Frank and Andrea had a different perspective than several of the other participants in terms of their desires and expectations because they were originally from Africa. Although there was a difference in some of their motives for participating in an ISL experience, there were also common intentions:

> I've always wanted to give back to the continent of birth, to Africa and I thought that this is the first opportunity for me to start something. I was excited because it was not my country of birth so I thought apart from me going to give something I could also learn something from them as for a new culture a new environment, so I think the main reason was that I wanted to give back and go do volunteer, do research, learn something and to help in any way that I can with development so that was the motivation. (Andrea)

Both Andrea and Frank expressed a desire to give back to African communities as well as furthering their understanding of various African cultures. As Frank expresses below, using the previous experience of being born in an African country only furthered his desire to learn more using a different lens:

> My motive for wanting to go was to see, get a chance to experience Africa in a different way. Like I mentioned earlier on, visiting Africa on personal business is a little different than going on an educational experience where you actually go, you meet people in the area, and learn a little bit about the culture. East Africa is different from West Africa, where I am from originally. So East

> African culture or even African culture is not one culture. It's a myriad of all cultures. The chance for me to go and learn cultures in East Africa and even the language was a big part of it because I wanted to learn Swahili that bad.

While each student who participates in an ISL may have different motives, developing a further understanding of various cultures and environments seemed to be a factor that contributed to the initial interest in participating. For example, Linda "wanted to go somewhere that [she had] not been to before. Somewhere that is completely foreign to [her]." Linda expressed her interest in exploring a culture and country different from what she had previously been exposed to.

Students who participate in ISL are attracted to the opportunity for many reasons. These reasons may include "yearnings for travel, adventure and romance, or perhaps altruistic sentiments, cultural curiosity, desires to improve language skills, broaden their world perspective, prepare for a career in foreign service or international development organizations, or any combination of these reasons" (Grusky, n.d., para. 7). These motives are important but students need to understand the reciprocal aspect of ISL and examine their ethnocentric motives before engaging in a program.

Students should recognize the reciprocal aspect of ISL. ISL and SL "programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring" (Furco, 1996, p. 75). Participants in ISL programs must be educated about the concept of the reciprocal learning process related to these experiences.

Linda was raised by parents who were immigrants to Canada and she understood the importance of a cross-cultural experience. Julie explained her passion for experiencing a new culture. Julie originally believed her "good intentions" would be enough. Julie explained that she "really just wanted to go to a third world country and see what it was like to see how they live and how [her] presence could benefit them." Julie's motivation, however, may not be suitable for participating in an ISL experience. This type of motivation should be recognized by program leaders to either educate the student about ISL or to disqualify students who do not seem to possess the appropriate motives for participating.

Motivations for participating in an ISL experience can often be self-serving and students often consider what the program can do to meet their personal needs. Linda understood that exploring a new culture and environment could provide her with the tools she needed to transform her perspective:

> I think because my parents are immigrants so I already have that exposure to different cultures, like cross-cultural experiences. I think it was exploring the different culture, like Africa is completely different to me and it was mostly about the position that was for this experience. I didn't know about the country firsthand.

Linda's motivation also seems to represent a self-serving motive and should be examined before departing for an ISL experience. Although she believes she will be able to immerse herself in a cross-cultural experience she does not seem to understand the purpose of ISL and the reciprocal aspect of the experience.

Julie was born in a country other than Canada. Her parents immigrated when she was young. Julie understood the importance of gaining a new cultural perspective and was interested is the opportunities that the ISL program could provide. She believed that "it seemed like a very good opportunity to go abroad and meet new people. I think that was one of my original incentives and to maybe gain a new cultural perspective." Once again, Julie is illustrating her self-serving motives which place limitations on the learning opportunity. We see with both participants, Julie and Linda, that their motives illustrated a desire to meet self-serving needs. Increased preparation before departing could have exposed them to other possibilities of the learning opportunities available.

Students who choose to participate in ISL bring different motives and perspectives. Handy Handy, Hustinx, & Cnaan, (2009) conducted an investigation that examined the motivations to volunteer (MTV) for student participating in cross-cultural volunteer programs. The hypothesis for this study claimed that students were participating as a tool for building their social network, personal portfolio, and résumé. The study questioned students in numerous countries who had participated in ISL. The findings proved that résumé building and social networking were not the primary motive for many students.

Most students were participating for altruistic reasons and commonly believed that they should be helping others. Although altruistic motives seemed to prevail, the findings did not eliminate the personal investment and self-servicing motives. Handy et. al., (2009) stated, "it is socially accepted that volunteering is an altruistic behavior, and that private benefits to the volunteer are inappropriate. It is possible that many students, who may have strong self-serving motives (résumé building or social), over-emphasize their altruistic MTV along with downgrading their résumé building and social MTV" (p. 517). In addition to developing an understanding of a different culture and environment, some of the participants in this study did express education as being their primary motive.

Cindy felt that having a funded program provided her with an experience that she may not have otherwise considered. She stated, "what attracted me was that it was funded so I wouldn't have to worry about that." An ISL experience does have the ability to promote a unique learning experience that potentially could transform an individual's frame of reference as well as expand their educational knowledge that goes beyond the classroom. Once again, the motives for participating must be justified and represent the purpose of ISL. Considering funding was one of Cindy's motives, this could potentially limit the learning she could gain from the experience.

Cindy believed that this experience would enhance her entrepreneurial desire, her academics, and her personal self-driven tendency. Cindy claimed, " I knew it would be very self-driven so I knew I would get an experience, like to try and start something up I guess, something a little more entrepreneurial, something more self-driven and I also wanted, I thought I would want more experience working in developing countries so that fit the bill." Cindy illustrates here that her desire to implement her academic knowledge was also a motive associated with participating in ISL. Applying academic knowledge through an ISL program is essential but there must be a balance between a self-serving need and a reciprocal experience with the local communities.

In the past decade, higher education has transformed due to the increase of adult learners. Adult learners are able to bring unique experiences and prior knowledge into institutions. Drawing from past academic and professional experiences and using that knowledge to enhance the current academic application adult learners have changed the traditional environment of learning (Lewis & William, 1994, p. 5). While developing and expanding cultural perceptions seemed to

be a common motive for many of the participants, like Cindy, Frank also described the desire to apply his academic skills gained in the classroom. Frank explained that "the first diploma [he] got in Canada was International Business. [He] always had an interest in travelling overseas and interacting internationally and the school offers a unique program known as Global Studies so [he] thought it was only fitting to immerse [himself] in the academic program." Having a desire to build upon academic knowledge is an important motive for participating in an ISL program.

Linda believed that learning in the field would help her apply what she had learned academically and enable her to contribute in the classroom upon returning. Being able to share the knowledge gained during an ISL experience is imperative for both the students who participate and the community:

> I applied very quickly, I didn't see the countries that were specific, I thought and then when I read more I was like this is in Africa this is super cool. It was more intriguing and more exciting for me to explore something that was completely different or go somewhere that I've learned about, especially in my degree in terms of history and politics, just different human rights related issues in the regions I visited. It was cool to visit the place because it is different when you read about it.

Julie intended to use academic knowledge she gained and apply it to the field. Being able to apply skills that have been taught in the classroom provides the learner with a new perspective on the material that they have studied. Julie explained that "there was a position for a science student to go and help in the laboratory and I think it was a good way to use my skills that I used in class in the real world." ISL experiences generate questions from students and irreplaceable teaching moments for educators. Educators must be prepared to use student inquiries and teachable moments to enhance the potential learning opportunity gained from the experience (Grusky, n.d., para. 4). In addition to understanding the motives and expectations of students who participate in ISL, how they prepare and how the preparation for the experience is supported is critical.

4.1.2 *Preparation for International Service-Learning*

Preparing for an ISL experience is one of the key elements to enhancing the learning experience. The participants in the research study were asked to explain how they prepared before departing for their international destination socially, culturally, professionally, and personally. Understanding how students prepare can assist in program development by aiding the transition into the field. Socially, most of the participants networked within their communities and institutions.

The expectations that students may have prior to the experience may not always be realistic. Having expectations that closely relate to what will be experienced can eliminate culture shock and disappointment. This can be accomplished through extensive preparation before departure. Andrea was proactive in seeking out colleagues that were able to assist in providing information regarding expectations:

> I had one other lady who was also coming to Kenya and I knew she had been to East Africa before so we got into talking about what I should expect. I also had the… chance to visit the International Development Center and I had an orientation of the do's and don'ts in a different country. I was reading on the internet and all the stuff so not too much, but I had some expectation.

The little that Andrea did to prepare herself for the experience was beneficial but it could have been enhanced by the support of program leaders.

Frank was also able to use the networks within the community and institution to prepare for the experience. He stated, "I met a lot of people on campus that were from East Africa so that socially, that wasn't a problem at all. I belonged to the African Students Association." Seeking information from community resources can provide the information a student might need to develop a realistic perspective of what they should expect:

> We met with a previous intern; he shared all of the books. Another thing was language, the language that they spoke. He shared with us a language thing to train. I mostly just talked to people that I knew that had visited the country. One of my friends did so he gave me a lot of books, I tried to read everything

> as much before I left then I ended bringing some of the things over. So I think books and talking to people was the biggest thing (Linda).

Using the resources within the institution and community is an effective method for preparing for an ISL experience. These resources can also provide an opportunity for networking. Cindy networked around her campus and community to feel more prepared about what to expect when she reached Rwanda:

> I guess I probably didn't do too much this time because I knew I would be familiar with the area. I guess you could say I talked to a person who went to the same place last year to get his take on what happened with the project, maybe met up with him once or twice so I guess that was an attempt at feeling more prepared.

Although the rest of the participants expressed their effort to prepare their preparation strategies were not as adequate as they could have been. The assistance of program leaders would have been beneficial to direct the students on how to prepare before departing.

For some of the participants preparing for their ISL, it did not require seeking out information but getting the support they needed from family and friends. When students participate in an ISL experience it is important that families and friends are comfortable with the idea so they are able to provide the proper support to the students. The students must also provide friends and family with information, "it's notifying all of my friends I'm going to be gone and trying to put the intention there that I would stay in touch, I would see them again when I come back" (Cindy). Explaining the program and purpose of participating in an ISL program may be necessary to clarify to families especially for students who have limited international experiences:

> I prepared for this by talking about my pre-departure plans with my family and friends. First I had to convince my parents to let me go to Africa and once they got their mind around it I booked my flight ticket and my friends encouraged me to go because they felt that it would be a good experience for me and to get out of my comfort zone and to be somewhere that I wasn't used to. (Julie)

Families of students who participate in ISL should be given information from the organization, program, and institution that describe, in detail, what the goals of the program are, all of the contact information, and what to expect regarding cross-cultural adjustment.

The participants also discussed how they prepared for the experience culturally. Understanding the culture in which the student will be immersed will assist in adapting and transitioning to the new environment. Seeking out information regarding the new culture that will be introduced will prepare a student and enhance the potential of having a successful learning experience:

> Culturally, I would say that it was reading about the culture of the country, the kind of clothing, the town I was going to live in, the basic food and, culturally, I read a lot because I couldn't get much here in Canada. It was more about reading, listening to a bit of news about them, and researching I would say. (Andrea)

Seeking out resources can prepare a student by putting perceptions of the new environment and culture they will be entering into context. It also enables them to make connections to what they have learned and what they will experience when in the field:

> I know when I first found out I was going to be going to Rwanda the first thing that I did was get books because I knew that I needed books before visiting the country. I knew that it would be really invaluable to go visit Rwanda knowing nothing about its previous history or things that have happened in the past because it puts things in context when you're visiting…it is if you know a little bit about the history in the past it you can make connections and understand things rather than just be completely like, just don't know what's happening. So I think I got books. (Linda)

Although participants seek out the information before departing for ISL, it is difficult to eliminate culture shock or ethnocentrism. Culture shock "is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. The signs or cues include the thousand and one ways in which we orientate ourselves to the situations in daily life" (Oberg, 2006 p. 142). Frank discusses the ethnocentric frame of reference and cultural biases

that can occur from the students who visit a new place during an ISL program. He believes "of course I come from a different culture background then the other guys but one thing I've noticed about culture, it doesn't matter if you live in one different of somebody, everybody has a culture bias." Having a cultural bias before departing for an ISL could limit the learning potential of the program.

Cindy felt that because she had been to East Africa before she knew what to expect and did not need to prepare excessively for her experience. Cindy stated that "this was [her] second time going there. [She] didn't really do any prep because [she] thought it would be pretty similar to going to Tanzania, which it was, and then [she] thought [she] would learn more about Rwanda when [she] got there so [she] didn't really do anything." Although, the students may not feel they need to prepare for the experience, it should be the responsibility of the program organizer/director and the student to design an effective method of preparation. Not preparing for the experience is detrimental to the learning success of the student and the outcome of the experience.

In addition to students seeking out information to prepare for the experience, it is also key that orientation sessions are held to inform students of what to expect. Students should be provided with cultural information and resources to assist them in acquiring an accurate perception of what to assume. Significant information that will support the success of the student when they are in the field is necessary:

> To prepare culturally for a different country, I think I did some orientation sessions before I left…I think that the most important thing I got out of it was just to make sure you don't leave your apartment at night or if you do plan to do that make sure you are leaving or coming back with a group of people or taking cabs everywhere and also to make sure you dress conservatively…But it wasn't too helpful because we were trying to figure out finances and they weren't being very clear and we had a lot of discussion topics that we wanted to discuss but our questions weren't getting answered and I felt that a lot of things were very repetitive, really the only thing I got out of it was just make

> sure you dress conservatively and that you were respectful of other people and the other thing that I mentioned, don't go out at night. (Julie)

Preparing for an ISL program occurs in many different ways for various reasons. To understand how students prepare can help in evaluating the learning experience when they reach their destination. Nickols, Rothenberg, Moshi, & Tetloff (2013) discussed a research study that observed the coping process and development of competency acquired for nine students who participated in a four week ISL program in Tanzania. To prepare, "the students and faculty members met monthly during the academic year to discuss goals, activities, logistics, and local culture" (p. 103). In addition, "the students and faculty members shared a mutual commitment to the program goals and objectives that included working with local community groups on their priorities for improving the quality of their living conditions" (p. 98). The preparation that the students partake in with the institution and program leaders is important for a successful learning experience.

Julie explained that she did not do very much preparation before leaving for Tanzania due to the time constraints she had before the leaving. Julie stated, "I probably just went on Google and typed in Tanzania to see what it was like. I was just so busy I didn't really have time to prepare so I just booked my ticket and went which is probably the most preparation that I did." Once again, this illustrates insufficient preparation and can have an impact on learning outcomes.

Although participants prepared for the experiences differently, understanding what they value to be important before departing can support programs in organizing an orientation that meets their personal needs. Frank's response to personal preparation was similar to Julie's. He did not feel that he needed to prepare extensively. His reason for this was because he had been to East Africa before and thought that he knew what to expect:

> I knew where I was going, so personally I was prepared in a way because I was going [to] quote-on-quote if I can use it this way 'my people' so I knew I was going to fit in. So I didn't go to the extra length of trying to adjust myself in a way that I was going to go and try differently. When I go to East Africa, Tanzania, these kinds of things, I become like them, I was like them, I just fit in right there. So personally it wasn't a challenge for me to adjust.

Even if a student does not feel the need to prepare for the experience they are about to embark on, it is critical that they realize how important preparation is regardless of past travelling experiences. Andrea took a different approach in how she prioritized her preparation. For a student to be involved in a program such as ISL they need to consider all essential elements that will depict how they experience ISL. Andrea explained some important considerations that should not be overlooked:

> I made sure that I knew where I'll be living, the guest house, I phoned them, I talked to them on the phone a couple times. So it was the basic things, making sure that the basic things have been established before, you know, even sitting on the plane, you are sure that you are going to this place, you will be sleeping in this room, you know that stuff, apart from getting prepared and packing your things and saying bye to family.

Andrea's efforts represented her understanding of how important preparation is. The students must be responsible for developing an effective system that will support their overall success during the ISL experience.

Linda decided to use a reflective practice before departing for her ISL experience. Reflecting before leaving enables a student to consider their own frame of reference and position before departing. Reflecting is an essential part of preparing for an ISL if the student is able to articulate their position and be accepting of a new experience. This could also initiate critical reflective journaling throughout the duration of the experience and once the student returns to their home country:

> I'm trying to think about personal alone time because I like was going to get a lot of alone time so things that were on my mind that I wanted to reflect more on I kind of thought about them before I went, because I knew I would have the opportunity there to reflect, either if we went for a weekend away or things to think about in my life in terms of my faith, the ways that I view fitness, the way that I see everything around me and my family dynamics.

Kiely (2004) noticed during his research regarding perspective transformation and ISL that effective journaling was as a tool to observe the perspective transformation of students (Kiely, 2004, p. 5). This method supports the transformative process by confronting an individual's personal perspective and viewing it objectively.

Although participants were asked how they prepared for ISL, it became evident that much of the preparation that occurred was limited. Students need to take more initiative and prove that they are ready for the experience. Andrea gives another example of effective preparation. She recalled how she strategically prepared by ensuring that personally and professionally she was equipped for her experience:

> It was just making sure that I contact people, I think it still falls into the professional factor too, making sure that I had people picking me up from the airport, the person that would take me into the town, Nairobi to Nakuru, they were all on the same page as me, that we all know what we are doing it's not like I'm at the airport and three hours I've not seen anyone. I had a mind-set that I'm doing this, I'm going to a country that I don't know anyone there, I haven't been there before, but I knew that some people had been there before and they survived, they came back so I had to stick to recommendations that had been given to me from students, I have to be careful, I have to learn how to protect myself there. So I think professionally it was just about a mind-set, changing of mind-set, just trying to accommodate some things and being prepared mentally more than anything else.

Since the participants would be working on the ground for organizations and foundations where they could apply their academic knowledge, they had to consider how they would prepare for the professional environment that they would be entering. Working in East Africa can be a very different experience for many students. It is vital that students understand the professional culture and how to adapt to the culture. Andrea stated, "I know a professor, the person in charge of our program had sent documents about power relations and things that we needed to keep in mind as we were working with business and the dynamics of the people there." This information is critical for success.

Julie was able to prepare professionally before leaving for her ISL experience. She prepared by spending time learning from other students who had already had the ISL experience and applying her academic knowledge and skills to gain a better insight as to how she would be able to accomplish the work that she intended to do when on the ground:

> Professionally, I did several lab sessions with one of the Masters students, she went a couple months before I did. So I went into the lab about three times. Each time was about three hours. Basically she told me how to cultivate bacteria and make sure that if you were using an aseptic technique and basically everything I would be doing in Tanzania she showed me how to do step-by-step. She showed me how to do a protocol that I should follow so I think that I practiced a lot professionally and it helped when I went to Tanzania to kind of know what to expect but at the same time the lab equipment in Canada is very different then the lab equipment in Tanzania.

Learning from students who have already had an ISL experience is extremely beneficial. This will help students develop realistic expectations and build upon the knowledge they are seeking to find.

Several of the participants did actively prepare for their experience yet, they still felt underprepared and were not sure what to expect in the field. Julie explained that she wished she knew more before going abroad and that she had a more realistic perspective of expectations. She explained that her ISL program did not provide her with the information she felt would have helped her while in Tanzania:

> They didn't really help us prepare, we didn't do any language sessions together. They didn't even talk about what languages where we were going. I think that if the orientation session was there I would have known what I was getting myself into. One thing I do remember is just, they were telling us make sure your expectations aren't too high because things are a different pace there and things that you thought you would get done in a three month period probably won't happen. They said that the other interns had such high expectations for themselves but I thought that I would be the exception that I

> would want to make sure that I would get all of my goals done by the time the three months was up, so I think I went in with a very high expectation, and I didn't expect for there to be a lot of obstacles, which wasn't very realistic.

Once Cindy was on the ground she realized that the she would have to be in control of her situation and design her own agenda for reaching her desired goals. This delayed her learning progress. This realization could have been prevented if proper preparation and an understanding of expectations were developed before departing. Cindy explains when she realized her experience was not going to be as planned and started to take an alternative plan of action:

> I guess you can say, I might have done a little bit of research on other NGO's and social enterprises that were working in Rwanda that I might want to get in touch with before I got there. Once I got there it was really ad hoc. I just started googling stuff; I found the film festival I think and yeah, just seeing if there would be other things that I could get involved with before I left. Just so I could find somewhere else to volunteer with. (Cindy)

The participants all explained having expectations that were challenged when on the ground. Many of the participants did mention that they wished they had acquired more information from the organization in which they decided to have the experience with. Several participants mentioned that the lack of education and orientations before departing for the ISL experience was critical and without it they did not understand what to expect.

Motivation, expectations, and preparation for an ISL experience are imperative for a student's success. It is important that a student is honest about their intentions. It is also important that a student expresses their expectations. The proper information should be given by the organization or program leaders to introduce realistic expectations. This will help the student prepare more effectively. In addition, as mentioned by Julie, addressing motives, expectations, and providing sufficient resources and information to support a positive experience will assist the student and enable them to be more confident and assured once on the ground.

The participants in this study did not exhibit an understanding of the experience they would encounter. For the most part, the participants seemed underprepared and unaware of what the

expectations were. Several of the motivations for participating illustrated that the participants did not understand the reciprocal learning process with the local community and instead seemed to demonstrate a self-serving ideology that could potentially limit the learning outcome.

4.2 Transformational Learning through Experience

Transformational learning does not always occur through experience. Kiely (2005) explains how important all steps within the transformative learning model are in creating a transformative learning experience. Mezirow (2000) believes that transformative learning is acquired by experiencing one or more of his ten phases of transformation (p. 22). Transformational learning theory uses constructivism. Each learner constructs his or her own meaning through engagement in an experience followed by critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990, p.1).

This research study looks at student perceptions of their transformation and how they were able to make sense of what they learned from the experience psychological, convictional, and behavioral dimensions. To understand the process and how a student is or is not transformed from the experience will assist in future program development that aims to support transformational learning from students who participate in ISL programs.

It is important that educators learn how to foster transformational learning so students are able to become critical thinkers and remove themselves from an ethnocentric frame of reference. In doing so, students are able to limit misconception and expand their world view. This is significant as the global community continues to expand. Educators play a pivotal role in how a student understands the world around them. Educators must explicitly promote autonomous thinking and recognize that experiences that support critical reflection support transformational learning as well:

> To become meaningful, learning requires that new information be incorporated by the learner into an already well-developed symbolic frame of reference, and active process involving thought, feeling, and disposition. The learner may also have to be helped to transform his or her frame of reference to fully understand the experience. (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10)

The participants in the research study exhibited that personal transformational learning can occur in ISL. Each student identified feeling a change in self, beliefs, and lifestyle. Although the participants spoke of personal transformation, they also felt that further development could have occurred with extended support of the programs and institutions they were involved with. By expanding an understanding of how to support transformational learning the ISL experience will be optimized.

4.2.1 *Psychological Transformation*

For the purpose of this study, three out of the ten phases associated with Mezirow's (1978a, 1978b) TLT were applied to understand how the participants in this study expressed psychological transformation . The 3 phases chosen to represent the psychological transformation expressed by the participants during critical reflection are listed below:

1) Disorienting Dilemma
2) Self-examination with feeling of fear, anger, guilt, or shame
3) A critical assessment of assumptions

(Mezirow, 2000, p. 22)

Through the analysis of the data that was provided from the semi-structured interviews, many of the participants' described incidents where they were challenged with one of the above phases.

All of the participants were asked to describe an incident where they felt confused about their position. The participants were able to critically reflect on their experience socially, culturally, personally, and professionally. Each participant had a different frame of reference and level of ethnocentric mind-set before departing for East Africa which may have had an impact on how they addressed challenges. The challenging situations will be illustrated as they forced many participants' to self-examine and critically assess assumptions. The responses regarding positions varied depending on these factors. Andrea, who was born in Africa before immigrating to Canada, believed that she would be socially accepted once she arrived in Kenya. She assumed that her ethnicity would enable her to transition effectively. Andrea was challenged a situation that made her question her assumptions:

> I thought that I would fit in because I'm like everybody there, physical appearance wise, but that wasn't the case. When I visited my Canadian friends in Nairobi…local people talk to me in Swahili…because they think that I'm like them and I'm like, no I'm not a Kenyan. I think I thought that this is me going to Africa and I will be like everybody and it's going to be great but maybe, physical appearance wise, I, couldn't and I didn't' really know the culture, it was different lifestyle, not knowing the language. I would say it was probably me saying it 'I'm not a Kenyan I don't understand Swahili' all the four months. People are probably looking at you and thinking you are pretending not to understand it and I was like why would I pretend not to understand the language if I'm Kenyan? So it was a little bit annoying.

This describes a culture shock experience. The dilemma she faced challenged her assumptions of being socially accepted in a new culture. Even when she felt confident in the assumed position she would be in, she realized that her assumptions were inaccurate. The culture shock and confusion initiated a shift in Andrea's original convictions.

Linda described feeling confused related to the expectations as a foreigner in the local community. Linda's disordering dilemma was connected to social customs, expectations, and how to proceed in the new social environment:

> I guess because I was viewed, obviously as a Westerner and I had money. I think there was this expectation that I had to pay for things, but even though for them there they had this thing like if you were out with someone, like the man always pays regardless, kind of thing. It was just this thing that I was expected to pay when I would go out with the translator, like when we would go grab lunch or something, I remember that was during the first week. So I was pretty confused like, I was like is he not going to pay?

Linda's confusion inspired her to start reflecting on her cultural assumptions, world view, and expectations. Julie also described a moment when she felt her social values had been compromised. She would have liked to take a pro-active approach to the incident described below, yet she realized that her position in East Africa was different from Canada. Julie was

challenged with a disorienting dilemma that forced her to self-exam her feeling of guilt, anger, and shame. She started to question her understanding of self, beliefs, and social values:

> One night we were sitting in the apartment and we heard a women yell outside of the apartment, it was just like a shriek it was very loud, she obviously needed help, we didn't know what to do, the three girls in our apartment, we didn't know what to do so we all looked at each other. The women outside sounded like she was almost dying, I wanted to go out and help her. Obviously that wasn't feasible because it was really dark outside. We didn't want to put ourselves in a position of danger…I think socially; I just didn't know what to do in that situation. We were kind of like sitting ducks in our apartment. I felt so guilty because we weren't doing anything to help this lady but I really just think that there was no other way to go about it…That was a situation where my social values were compromised because I was conflicted between helping this lady and helping ourselves. In the end, you have to justify your actions and I think it was justified. We did the only thing that we could.

Julie's feeling of guilt is common when faced with a challenging situation that forces an individual to confront issues that they may not have had to experience before.

Linda also described feeling confused about her position and was challenged with a disorienting dilemma regarding cultural expectations and gender dynamics. She recalls a moment where she examined her own frame of reference related to her cultural customs and the customs in the community in which she resided for her experience:

> I think I met a lot of males when we would visit or they would visit, I thought it was very innocent at the beginning, but there were these expectations from their parents or the people around them would be like "oh is she your girlfriend?" They would automatically assume that it was a date or some type of, you know? I remember washing hands, they would pass around this bucket of water and I was about to wash my hands and she was like "no, no, he has to wash your hands for you" and I was like "but he's my friend" but they

> understood the dynamic differently between us. I guess maybe they don't understand that boys and girls can be friends. ..I was really confused.

This describes Linda's dilemma in regards to understanding cultural variances and her personal convictions. Cindy explained that her experience also challenged her to self-examine her feelings of guilt and anger. Being challenged with a racial "social hierarchy" left her critical of her own position and presence as a foreigner in East Africa:

> Like once you're there you start talking a bit to people you realize how…there were certain things that we could do because we were foreigners. You realize that the colour of your skin makes such a difference in terms of social hierarchy and whether or not people will listen to you. Like regardless of them knowing anything about you, just the fact that we're foreigners but we're also not black foreigners, that makes a huge difference.

Students often experience "…the real educational service being offered is by the community or program that exposes the student to social realities and organizational challenges that may be invisible in his/her daily life" (Grusky, n.d., para. 9). Cindy questioned her position and the social hierarchy that penetrated many of her experiences. She began to recognize the different ways that foreigners were treated compared to the locals in the community.

Julie discussed confusion around her position as a female, her understanding of self, and her challenged beliefs. She explained an incident that steered her to question gender equity and her cultural frame of reference.

> One day our power box was broken so we weren't getting power in the apartment so my friend went down to look at the power box. I offered to go down with her because it was dark and it wasn't safe for us to just be outside. I went outside in shorts thinking that the fuse box was inside, but we ended up being outside and people just stopped to look at me and they were pointing at me. I knew they were talking about my shorts and I honestly would have covered myself up if I knew I was going outside but I just thought the power box was inside. I felt so uncomfortable in that situation because people noticed

> it immediately. I didn't think it would be such a severe and immediate reaction, if I wore those kinds of clothes in Ontario nobody would have said anything. So I guess, I lost or I didn't know my position culturally or I didn't know that it would instigate such a negative behaviour in such a community and I wouldn't have done such a thing to upset the people around me if I had known that the power box was outside.

Julie's understanding of herself, her convictions, and behaviours were questioned as she reflected upon her experience. Julie also described feeling unsure about the cultural differences related to being a foreigner in a new environment. She felt a sense a fear and anger which challenged her understanding of self:

> I was also very frustrated because people on the street they give you a lot of attention for not being dark skinned. I think that was very concerning because in Canada nobody ever discriminates against you or people don't usually point out whether you're Asian you're white or you're black. Here in Tanzania I was always being told I was "muzungu" which means I was white skin or foreigner. I didn't like the attention I was getting, people were, men mostly, were whistling at me, people would laugh at me when I would tried and speak Swahili, that I wasn't very good at.

In addition to fear and anger, Mezriow (1978a, 1978b) integrates guilt and shame within the self-examination phases (Kitchenham, 2010, p. 105). Linda described an event where she was able to self-examine her feelings of guilt and shame. Linda's guilt stemmed from experiencing a situation that she felt went against her world view and her own personal morals. This experience left Linda questioning herself and her convictions.

> I remember once we were at this buffet and it was time to eat and it was the huge festival and it was like a buffet and there was a line and there wasn't a line because everyone was trying to squish in to go get this food. I remember there were these black people and they like literally just pushed them back and they got all of white skinned people. We all got first dibs in line and I

> remember this guy pushing us he's like 'here go up there'…I remember, I still feel guilt…

Linda also started to question her role in her new environment and the impact that it might be having on local citizens. She describes an incident where she felt uncomfortable with her position and began to question her moral values and how she could apply them within her new environment.

> I remember our bus we were going on this tour and kids that were literally being hit with a stick because they were getting close to our bus…I remember being like, why were they being hit, why was this happening? I don't know why, it was like respect for people visiting…I don't know, maybe because they were school children, and they weren't dressed very well, I don't know what they were trying to do or just keep us contained… I think at this moment I was just sad, I wish I could do things. I think I felt more helpless there because I always have this desire to change things and wanting to do good but when you see things you actually can't do much. Maybe I could have gone out and talked to them but at the same time I didn't want to break any cultural constructs they had because who am to break into that?

Linda described feeling confused about her position. She also described frustration, anger, guilt, and shame for not being able react as she would have liked to at that moment. She believed her morals were being jeopardized. This experience that Linda illustrated emphasized the phase of self-examination.

Julie began to enquire about her assumptions and expectations of how the experience would be as a foreigner. Julie became more critical of her assumptions through self-examination and disorienting dilemmas. The social and cultural dynamics that the participants experienced in East Africa directed them to examine their own cultural customs and their ability to adapt to the new environment. Julie pondered her purpose of being in East Africa and her sense of frustration with her professional position. She wondered why she had travelled so far if she was not able to accomplish what she had desired.

The participants were expressing transformational learning. They had disorientating dilemmas which led them to self-examine their understanding of self and their convictions. For some of the participants, their purpose of being in East Africa became unclear.

> When I was working at the lab I didn't have tools for three weeks, like I mentioned, so I had no idea what my purpose of being there was for a long time… it was frustrating because that wasn't my goal of being there and they just kept throwing menial jobs that I wasn't meant to do because they also didn't know what they were doing because the whole program was so…that was such a demotion of my abilities and capabilities and the reason why I was going there so I was confused about my purpose in general. (Julie)

Even though Julie did not seem to fully understand the reciprocal learning aspect of ISL, she explained how she was beginning to adjust her convictions and explore new roles and actions. She did not feel that she was able to fully exercise her academic knowledge and skills so she tried to find an alternative method for accomplishing her goals even though this brought her a sense of disempowerment:

> I knew that I had power coming as a foreigner to help them and I didn't want to abuse that power just by telling them what to do because I knew that as soon as I left they would just go back to the way that they were doing things, the way that they were doing things before, so it was a really delicate process to try and get them to like me.

In the description above, Julie continues to misunderstand the reciprocal learning aspect of ISL. Instead of gaining more knowledge of how to work together equally, Julie decided to adjust her behaviour and explore a new role to improve the relationships in the work environment. If Julie had the proper support during the challenges she was exposed to she could have moved forward from her ethnocentric view. Instead, Julie's ethnocentric ideologies seemed to be reinforced by her interpretation of the experience.

Cindy described feeling a sense of the "white saviour complex." Although Cindy intended to work with the local community, she felt that the reciprocal process of working and learning

together was not occurring. She began to question her position professionally and how to create an environment that was equally inclusive to all.

> Yes, there was one, it was actually a lot because we were training a group about business, just about life, basic business skills how to write a proposal, how to start up a business co-operative, a lot of the things, we were working with them not working for them, you could say. So we weren't going to do all the work but they felt like they were so dependent on us so that's where I saw this bigger aid dependency big circle, maybe this is not it but from what I know about aid and giving aid it was just this dependency, white saviour complex, all these really complex theories that I had known. I could kind of see the way that was working with them. If we were to say we would give two minutes to brainstorm about this, they would just look at you and say 'okay, what can you give us' it was almost like give me, give me, and we were like, okay we are working with you.

Cindy's frustration and assessment of assumptions did not help her learn; instead it seemed to reinforce stereotypes and misunderstanding. Mezirow (1997) explains that "we become critically reflective by challenging the established definition of a problem being addressed, perhaps by finding a new metaphor that reorients problem-solving efforts in a more effective way" (p. 12). If Cindy had the support to address her concerns she could have critically assessed her perspective and elaborated on her existing point of view.

The analysis of the participant's view illustrated that these situations directed the participants to critically reflect upon their position, cultural values, and their understanding of self. They began to realize that their frame of reference was not applicable in their new environment and that they would have to adapt in order to immerse themselves in East Africa.

By looking at the perceptions of the students expectations before departing, during their experience, and departure, it becomes evident that many of the expectations that the students had were not what they experienced upon arrival in East Africa. The experience challenged their world view and ideologies regarding ISL and international development. Many of the participants were able to describe consistent feelings that they experienced throughout the entire

duration of the program. Andrea described how she felt once she arrived in Kenya and how it challenged her to critically assess her assumptions:

> I would say that it was different; I wasn't expecting that much of a culture shock because again I lived in a country that is similar to Kenya. I was surprised at myself how much I've changed as a person now living in Canada. I was surprised to see, like getting out of the airport and sitting in those people who picked me up like the kind of driving. I was a little bit scared to begin with but also surprised that I cannot relate to it anymore. It was a nice experience. I had a very welcoming start I would say…I was excited to start my work; I wanted to get into the work right away. I was looking forward to seeing my supervisor the day before and getting into the reason why I was there, so it was excitement, it was me looking forward to getting this done and feeling that I was here to do something.

Although Andrea's experience initially seemed positive, she expressed that she also experienced mixed emotions as her time in Kenya progressed. The change Andrea experienced was related to the "culture shock/crisis" phase in the U-Curve Adjustment Model and brought her to the self-examination phase:

> Two months into the experience it was a little frustrating I would say, that's all I remember because a lot, from I think the time that I, from the first you know first week, I was asked to relax and see the town, you know do this do that, that's what my local supervisor told me but you know it was dragging on because I couldn't get the necessary, what is it called, the proposal. (Andrea)

During Andrea's stay in Kenya she had been waiting for ethics approval to conduct field work for her research before coming back to Canada. As Andrea was leaving Kenya she described feeling stressed. With only a month left in her placement she felt as if she had wasted a lot of time. Andrea stated, "I think I spent so much time doing nothing. So I was rushing things, I was working too much, I was not resting, again it was not frustrating but it was stressful." This can occur if a student has not planned and organized before departing. The stress associated with being in a new environment can make focusing on academics difficult. Andrea had become so

frustrated with the process of waiting for her ethics approval from Canada that her original excitement about the opportunity of experiencing ISL began to decrease over time. Nickols et. al., (2013) explain how personal issues and stressors in an ISL environment can have the potential to decrease the importance of academic learning (p. 100). Andrea's intentions and the work she had planned on completing was jeopardized and she found it difficult not completing the tasks that she had set out to accomplish. The stress she was experiencing limited her learning potential in ISL and she began to feel home sickness. This is an example of how Andrea experienced the "crisis" or "culture shock" phase of the U-Curve Adjustment Model.

> I think the only consistent feeling was that I was missing home. I thought that it was going to be smooth, everything was going to get going, I come in I get my ethics approval, I come into the work, I'm excited, I get my data, I have enough time to enter them all and enough time to rest before coming back to Canada but no. It was a nice few days but then it got into me waiting, me in a waiting mood. I got very frustrated in the middle then at the end it was me rushing. I was stressed out…I wanted to come home, you miss home.

Andrea had to wait for the majority of her time in Kenya for ethics approval from Canada. Her consistent feelings when on the ground were described as stressful and frustrating.

Julie described feeling overwhelmed from the very beginning of her experience. Her expectations were very different than what she experienced. Julie should have been more prepared and aware of what she would be experiencing when she arrived in East Africa. Her limited knowledge of her new environment and culture made the adjustment period even more difficult to achieve. Julie explained:

> I think one of the things that confused me is that they drive on the opposite side of the road so instead of driving in the left they are driving in the right. I think when I was going there it was very rural, I thought there would be more, it would be more populated but it was almost like a desert area from the ride from the airplane station to the apartment [where] we were staying. I think I was overwhelmed…and then when I got into the city, it was just really overwhelming, it was hot, there was just so many people just walking around

> just sitting on the sidewalk. A lot of poverty…there was a lot of houses that were built with metal sheets for roofs and the houses were just like mud and brick kind of thrown together. So, I don't know what I was expecting but I guess I wasn't expecting that.

Julie's initial culture shock and limited knowledge of the environment and culture potentially decreased her ability to recover and adjust. At this point, it seemed that Julie may not have elevated to the "recovery" and "adjustment" phase in the U-Curve Model.

The participants were asked to explain a moment or moments where they felt that their world view had been challenged. Andrea explained, in detail, a disorienting dilemma that she was faced with during the time she spent in Kenya. During ISL experiences, students "…may feel harassed and irritated by the beggars and street peddlers constantly asking for money or showing their wares, or they may feel saddened and overwhelmed, particularly by the children in these situations" (Grusky, n.d., para. 12). For Andrea, a woman had confronted her regarding a permit to conduct work in a certain area. Andrea claimed that she had the permit and that the woman was interrogating her to receive a bribe. Andrea felt very conflicted with her inner feeling about what she trying to do and how she was being treated. Andrea believed that she was treated this way because she is African-Canadian. Andrea explained the incident when she felt that she was being harassed by a local woman.

> Eventually she told me you know 'don't be that hard, you are an African, you understand?' So I was like 'excuse me?' I am a Canadian but I am a black person so you think that I should understand what you are saying, what do you want? And she said, well in this country, bribe is whatever, and I was like excuse me, I don't have anything to give you, I don't have anything to give you…So, again, it was, it just reinforced my idea about do these people want help in anyway or do they want to take advantage of people coming in? So yeah, I don't think it would ever happen to any person whose colour is not mine because she probably thought that I could understand her because it is the norm in Africa to harass people and just to get money.

Andrea originally believed that her good intentions would be appreciated from local community members. Over time her beliefs and convictions began to change and her experiences began to reinforce her biases and stereotypes. Grusky writes (n.d.), "thoughtful preparation, orientation, program development and the encouragement of study, critical analysis and reflection, the programs can easily become small theaters that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes and replay on a more intimate scale the huge disparities in income and opportunity that characterize North-South relations today" (Grusky, n.d., para. 10). Considering many of the participants described experiencing minimal support from the Canadian organizations, some of the programs became an avenue for misunderstandings and misperceptions.

Julie described feeling home sick. She explained that she was not used to being away from home and felt isolated in her new environment. This was an example of how Julie was experiencing the effect of the U-Cure Adaptation Model and was experiencing the phase of "culture shock" and "crisis". Julie explained her frustration when her expectations were not met regarding the experience and the program:

> Mid-way, I think I was getting stressed a lot because I missed my family, there was so much home sickness, I just wasn't used to being so far away cause even if I had some problems I couldn't just take a cab home, I couldn't just take a train home, they were really far so I was really homesick….not having a purpose and feelings of being overwhelmed all the time… I was overwhelmed and just a feeling of a lack of purpose because I really didn't know my role. Nothing was organized, so I was just trying to put projects together but they always kept falling through, so just frustration and not knowing why I was there.

In addition to Julie feeling a sense of home sickness, she also describes having an existential crisis that led her to question her frame of reference and ethnocentrism. Julie's critical reflection illustrated her experiencing transformational learning. Julie critically assessed her assumptions and world view:

> I also had a huge existential crisis, I didn't know what life was about anymore because people there they move so slowly, they value family a lot and in Canada I'm always like running, running to get somewhere but I don't know where so I think that was a huge cultural shock for me. People here seem to be happy with where they are but I feel like everyone in Canada strives to be the best person that they can be and strives, and like they want so much. Whereas people in Tanzania were minimalist and I felt like I had so much like I was living in so much excess. Like I was bringing so many clothes that I didn't need, I brought my laptop, my iPhone because I want to take pictures. People here, they barely have any clothes, so I just like didn't know what the whole point of life was anymore. What's the whole point of getting a job if some people are just sitting out on the street and just as happy if not happier than I was?

The experience that Julie describes is common for students who participate in ISL. As she reflected upon her experience, she realized that she had the wrong mind-set when she initially began considering ISL. She admits that what she initially thought the experience would be like before was not what she was learning when in East Africa. Julie described how her experiential learning began to change her frame of reference and her ethnocentric ideologies. Originally Julie entered the experience with a very stereotypical world view but was able to identify her "wrong mind-set" and critically assess her assumptions:

> I thought, I really believed in the project because I said to myself, I'm going for three months, I'm going to make a difference, I'm not just, I'm going to make a permanent difference because I'm not just there to hold children, or whatever, I'm there to better people's health. I thought my project was so much different than theirs. I also had the mind-set, it was the wrong mind-set, I thought I was better than these people because I had better education because I came from a better economic background than they were and I think that when I was ready to leave all of these values, all of the beliefs that I had, they were so wrong. The people in Tanzania, they might get a lower level of education but it doesn't depreciate their self-value and I really don't think I saw that until the end. I

> thought that I was so much better because I was going to help the poor people in Africa….I want them to know that we're equal people and that Westerner's don't have free money to give away. I'm a poor student, so I think those views changed for me.

The participants described having some consistent feeling through the entire experience. Frequently they would describe feelings of not having a purpose or not knowing their role. Like several other participants, Julie changed her frame of reference because her lack of knowledge and preparation before departing to East Africa placed her in a challenging position.

4.2.2 *Convictional Transformation*

Convictional transformation is an important element of transformational learning. Convictional transformation occurs when a student revises their belief system through an experience that they encounter. The following data will illustrate how the participants in this study revised their belief system when confronted with two of Mezirow's (2000) ten phases associated with transformational learning. The two phases that will be illustrated in this section are:

1) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
2) Planning a course of action (Mezirow, 2000, p. 22)

Even though the experience for most of the participants' did not meet their expectations, they still had an opportunity to explore new roles and plan a course of action. Frank's experience with the program was very different than what he expected once he was in East Africa. He still committed to having a positive impact on the local community throughout his time in Kenya. Once Frank's original disappointment subsided he realized he could still be productive in the new environment; "I only felt good with the people I met on the ground who understood that there was a problem and I was able to make a difference…by getting those people motivated. I would do the best I could." Even though Frank made the best out of his experience, he did mention his disappointment with the program. Frank admits that "the people who sent me, the messenger, the guys, the people who sent me to come, I can say I was very disappointed in them." Frank described consistently feeling "up and down," yet he remained optimistic and stayed dedicated to the purpose of why he was there:

> The feeling was up and down, like I said I set the mood that the mood was I'm going to make sure I end on a good note, like I mentioned earlier on. The people, the people at the foundation, the teachers, the kids, special needs kids. Those kids with autism, epilepsy, those are the people who kept me going because when I saw in their eyes, and I saw the people that were willing to help, the teachers, the community people who were all willing to help, I felt good from that point.

Frank was able to work in the new environment and culture even though he was challenged with many obstacles. The reason for this is attributed to Frank's ability to explore a new role and plan a course of action.

In addition to the disorienting dilemma and self-examination of feelings of anger and frustration that Andrea expressed earlier, she began to reflect upon her experience and question her world view:

> I guess I question myself everyday how the developing world can one day be called developed because the fundamental issues seem unlikely that they can be solved... You know, we send people to developing countries to learn and help; we learn I think but the most important thing besides learning is that we do something positive to that place that we are visiting. I just wonder whether it is good enough, or if it's effective?

Andrea's belief system had been challenged. Without the proper support to learn from the experience, she began to feel hopelessness.

Cindy experienced a moment when she began to question her convictions regarding ISL and international development. Her experiences led her to inquire about the integration of institutions into international development and the mixed messages that get relayed across continents. Cindy described herself as becoming disillusioned from the experience. She shared her discontent and her process of transformation by describing her exploration of options for new action.

> The first time we met up with the youth group and we saw just how ad hoc this whole thing was and the youth couldn't speak any English, so we were working through a volunteer translator, who was the project coordinator, but she was doing the translating so she wasn't doing very much project coordinating,. That was sort of the beginning of 'oh my god' how can anything be accomplished if these people don't even speak the language and there's no way for the [University] to communicate with them. We could see sort of that this was one of the roots of a lot of the problems. So then that sort of revealed how easy it is to fake doing good work in Africa. Because it was an example of how easy it is to disguise when things go wrong or when things have been mismanaged because if you read about the organization it sounds like it's doing really good and it's doing all this work. So I guess that maybe, it made me disillusioned because I feel that you can't really trust any of those projects unless you do your homework unless they have a big enough presence and you can tell it's there or you have to do a lot of homework to figure out how they actually operate. It's pretty easy to disguise what is actually going on when people speak a different language and [have] a completely different culture.

Cindy described becoming disillusioned once she was on the ground. She started to infer that international development could be misleading from how it is represented at home. This disillusionment led Cindy to explore new options for roles and relationships. She also began to question the reliability of aid programs and international service organizations, and consider a plan of new action. Although Cindy had some very positive international experiences in her past, the current experience forced her to examine feelings of anger and question her role and actions within the international environment.

Julie started to self-exam her approach to how she had been living in her home country. She began to question her role in how she should be treating the environment. She also started to understand how she may have taken her home country for granted before leaving from the experience. Julie felt, "it's just like going back to my beliefs as a whole. I felt like I was living in so much excess. In Canada I didn't really believe in recycling and trying to reduce waste but

after I saw people living with so little in Tanzania." This illustrated that Julie was able to learn from her experience and began to consider a new course of action in her lifestyle.

The participants were faced with situations that challenged their world views. It enabled them to question their own actions and feelings toward issues that they had never addressed before. As Linda mentioned, applying her Canadian values of social justice were not as easily applicable when she faced a situation that did not match her values. Andrea and Cindy questioned their intentions and the intentions of programs and institutions in their home country. Linda began to appreciate the things that she regularly took for granted when in Canada. All of the challenges enabled the participants to critically reflect and consider lifestyle changes.

4.2.3 *Behavioural Transformation*

When participants engage in an ISL experience, learning can be accomplished through critical reflection. This section of Chapter 4 looks at how the students transformed their behaviour from acquiring the new skills and knowledge they gained in East Africa. In this study behvioural transformation and changes in lifestyle were looked at through four of Mezirow's ten phases (Mezirow, 2000, p.22). There are four phases associated with the behavioural aspect of transformational learning for this study:

1) Acquiring skills and knowledge that will be implemented in an individual's plan
2) Trying new roles
3) Reintegration into one's life using new perspective gained from the experience
4) Increasing confidence and competence in a new role

Both Linda and Julie described similar transformations related to how they view living in excess, the environment, and their family. Linda felt "it forced [her] to be a better person; it's forced [her] to not take for granted what [she] has here." Julie described developing an appreciation for things in her life that she might have taken for granted before embarking on her ISL experience:

> I think something that I'm trying to do is cut down on electronics, clothes; I'm not doing a very good job. Just minimize everything because we are not here forever and in the end materialistic things just don't matter as much. I think I

> learned, I valued my family but I value them so much more now. I value some personal struggles that I went with, with like, I didn't value living in Canada. I took so many things for granted and when I was there I had a lot of these things taken away from me, things that I had taken for granted and I had to re-evaluate how lucky I was to live in a country like Canada, just my personal struggles.

Linda also describes becoming more aware and active about taking care of the environment and valuing family and friends. She felt that she lived in a society that constantly strives to meet goals and that this minimizes the appreciation for other things in her life. She decided to actively change her lifestyle based on what she learned in East Africa.

Julie also decided to adjust her lifestyle and reintegrated into her life on the basis of implementing her new perspective:

> Daily life, like I said just recycling more and making sure I'm, I don't know, leaving less of a carbon footprint. For the future, I really just want to slow down my pace of life and enjoy the moment. It sounds really cliché but I think it's so important. We lose the value of family and friends because we're trying to reach all these goals for what? Make more money is that going to make you happier? I don't think so because I've seen in Tanzania even if you have more money it doesn't necessarily make you happier. Just to really value the time that we have on this earth, it's really deep but yeah.

This theme highlights how the participants experienced behavioural changes from their involvement. They were asked to reflect upon their feeling before, during, and after their ISL program. They were also asked how they believe the transformation has had an impact on their daily life, community, and foreseeable future. Most of the participants were able to explain, in detail, how they have transformed to some extent from the experience.

Julie described how the experience increased her awareness of her own country and how she learned to value it more than before she left for her ISL experience. Julie stated, "a deeper meaning that I gained is Canada is probably the best country in the world. I love living here, I

value it so much." She also discussed how she learned more about empathy and understanding: "I think I learned to value human life so much more. I think I learned how to empathize more with people." Julie illustrates through her responses that she did learn to be more altruistic yet it increased her patriotism towards her own country.

Linda explained how the experience enabled her to expand her frame of reference and improve academically. Linda believed that her lens had changed when looking at political science issues and how she was able to use what she learned in the classroom once she returned to Canada. This demonstrates her competence and self-confidence with the knowledge she gained and her new role in the classroom:

> With having this experience it was one more extra lens almost, so before it was my Arab Muslim lens and now it's this African lens because it's very dominant in political science, Africa is rarely talked about. Even jokes that they make in class, they're like, one of my class professors was like 'who cares about Africa anyway?' We don't even talk about it. It's just this constant, we're feeding it, and because I went there I don't feel like I'm entitled to speak but sometimes I do. I feel like if we are talking about something I have to offer the view. …I think it gave me a big lens to look at things through, especially with aid and poverty and the way we lead our lives, like giving back, charities was a big one…I had so much of a different lens that I could give to this discussion where before it wouldn't have been valuable so it really enriched, I think my ability to use examples when I talk in classes, and things like that which is really useful because all my classes are seminars.

Applying the knowledge and skills gained from the experience is a significant way of sharing with the community and institution. It also helps the student process their experience and reflect through discussion.

Since returning from their ISL experience the participants were asked to describe how they have used what they learned in their community and how they will use their new knowledge in the foreseeable future. Julie and Linda described having a desire to give back locally. This is an

important aspect of transformational learning because it demonstrates that the learning and new perspective can be integrated into their daily life:

> I joined this charity committee recently so when I came back my friend was raising money for the children's museum by running, he wanted to run eighty km's so when I came in I just wanted to give back locally…It was just this understanding of giving. I definitely wanted to get involved in my community.

Giving back to the community is a significant aspect of the reciprocal learning associated with ISL. Becoming involved and sharing though experience will provide the student with confidence in what they learned. Personally, Linda began to re-evaluate what she valued in her life, reflected on what she had learned from her experience, and began making adjustments that represented her new frame of reference. This demonstrates her desire to try a new role by integrating what she learned after the ISL experience:

> …when I came back I went on this thing where I wanted to be a minimalist. So I wanted to lead this lifestyle, where I still kind of do, where I would spend less on things that I didn't' need. Like, for example like lattes from Starbucks I will limit that to once a week, cause there's people, like I used to do that a lot. Like separation between needs and wants. I survived for two months without a cheese cake or a cookie or anything… I felt like we feed things into our head that we need all these things that we don't need. Seeing people live with less makes me realize I can live with just as less. I honestly see myself living a more ethically or friendly lifestyle and I see myself going into this more social entrepreneurship lifestyle, where before I wanted to go more into law, more into the legal world. I could see myself working for a big corporation but that completely changed. I can't see myself doing something huge that would just neglect so many of my principles…

Linda demonstrated how accruing the knowledge she gained in Rwanda encouraged her to re-organize her priorities and implement her new knowledge into her life plan. Cindy also demonstrated the desire to implement her knowledge gained during the experience into her new plan of action.

Cindy learned something different from her experience and has changed her frame of reference in a different way. Cindy had a lot of international experience before her current ISL involvement and she learned a valuable lesson that will also potentially shape her future choices differently from what she might have thought before going to Rwanda:

> I don't want to work in International development. I think after my first summer I thought it was pretty cool, I met people that worked in the UN and I also learned about sustainable travel and people that worked in that so I liked that whole idea so I was like, oh, maybe I'll work in the UN or like maybe I'll work in sustainable tourism but after this summer I was like no. Like no I feel like I want to work somewhere where I feel like I can function. As a young person trying to establish yourself and establish a career. The second thing that I think I got out if the most, because I was very self-driven, we were given the opportunity to basically create our jobs on a day-to- day basis, we decided what we did and we could see, like even after a couple days of trying to push things along, that as long as you actually have meetings and you sit down and write stuff and try to move things forward, stuff can actually happen. So for me personally, that was sort of the most entrepreneurial experience I had gotten…I really enjoyed the experience of trying to create my job myself. So then, that's something that I really took away and I realized that if you really put your head to something and you put in a couple hours a day for a consistent period of time you could actually make something happen.

Cindy also confessed that the most learning she gained from the experience was related to her desire to further her entrepreneurship drive. She stated, "the biggest learning I gained was sort of having that entrepreneurship drive and seeing that is actually materializes into something if you actually keep at it." Cindy explained how she was able to learn valuable tools that she can use towards her academic and professional pursuits. She affirmed, "what I've learned, it's time management and project management, these are all skills that I'm continually improving on. I probably want to start my own business in the future. I know that these are the things; this is sort of the ground work for how you operate as a human being in the world." The experience for Cindy did not seem to increase her altruistic attitude as it did for Julie and Linda. Instead Cindy

took a very critical look and decided to use the knowledge gained to change the direction of her life plan.

Frank discussed how he continues to be in constant contact with the local community in Kenya. His experience provided him with the mind-set to acquire additional knowledge, skills and expand upon what he has learned to accomplish his plan. This experience has led him to increase his involvement and desire to increase his work in Africa:

> I am in the process of organizing a shipment load of goods to Africa and this is a fact this is going to be a life changing career for me. I am going to organizing a container load of educational materials, books, computers, printers, you name it once a year at least to Africa and these will be mostly donated items from the University and then I'm going to set up, like I mentioned earlier on, a vocational school, an IT center. So this is my job, this is my career, this is my future. And this it is something that I'm looking forward to…I'm actually going to be travelling, not as an intern but as somebody who has got a lot of knowledge on an internship, via the school sending me down.

Frank demonstrates a commitment and motivation that should be shared with students who decide to take part in an ISL experience.

Although Andrea faced many challenges during ISL, she concluded with a positive outlook as well, and illustrated how her mind-set had changed from her original motives and expectations. Andrea explained that she learned a lot about herself and how ISL should be approached. She believes that connecting with the people in the local community was very rewarding for her:

> I think I learned a lot about myself, about how to professionally deal with unexpected issues. I realized that I might not be able to do a lot at any given time to help a situation but I think that although sometimes, I've told you already, it feels like it's hard, it's extremely difficult to go in and help, sometimes it also feels like the little things that we do help individuals. Like you might not be able to change the entire society, it might never happen, but

> you change the life of individuals, and maybe one day it will be a collective something, but you know you touch lives. You make, you meet new people, you talk to them…looking back when I think about my Kenyan experience I don't think about the data that I brought to my supervisor, I don't think about the big people that I met. I think about those women that I visited in the slums, the communication that went on, the reassurance about doing something for themselves that might help them in the future, those little things you know, one-to-one, heart-to-heart talk, I think for me, it's fulfilling.

Andrea also explained how her knowledge gained during her ISL experience and shared it with communities in Canada. Sharing the experience can be a very important element of ISL. It enables the student to reflect. Andrea stated, "we had a conference in Ottawa that we talked about our experience in Kenya, our international experience, and how we impacted the community and all that, so I've shared my story." Andrea also described her future plans and her desire to do more in African countries and focus on supporting education:

> So living in Kenya, I had this desire in me to one day go back, to any developing country, should [it] be my country of origin or should it be Kenya, and help kids with their basic education because…It has been a burning desire in me that I really want to do in the future…I think that education is the key to a lot of changes, mind-set, everything. So the little that we can do for kids, get them to think in the right way…give them the things that they need will probably go a long way to help build a stronger society and a better future for everyone.

All of the participants in this research study described ways that they experienced transformational learning through the ISL experience. Although the learning was different for many of the participants, each gained information through a critical reflective practice. Some of the knowledge gained from the experience was not always positive, yet the participants still learned valuable lessons that they will apply to their daily life, the community, and in their future. Table 4.1 illustrates how the participant experience related to Mezirow's TLT.

If the program leaders and organizations had initiated more involvement and educational practices it is possible that the experience could have been different for the participants and may have increased the learning potential for all of the experiences. As the data was analyzed, it became evident that the limited support from programs the students were involved in played a role in misunderstandings, simplistic stereotypes, and reinforced biases (Grusky, n.d., para. 10).

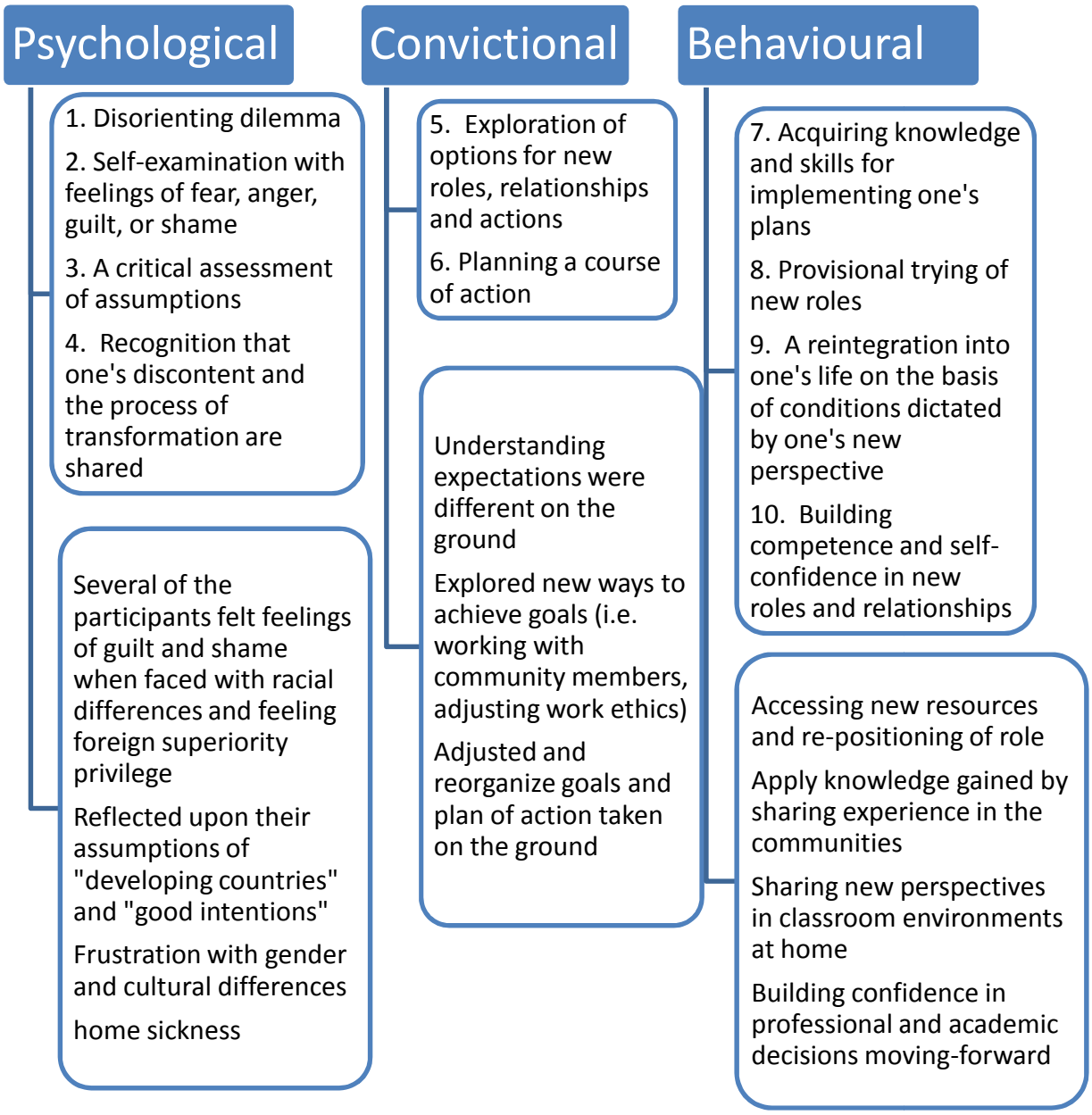
4.3 Fostering Transformational Learning

When students participate in an ISL program it is very important that the expectations and purpose of travel is very clear before leaving their home country. Although things may be different once on the ground, at least they will be able to remind themselves of the purpose of the experience, in addition to having the proper support from the ISL organization during all stages of the experience; before, during, and after. Andrea explains that organization and communication with the program leaders and institution is an important element for student success during and ISL experience:

> One person told me that she heard that when we are outside Canada we are over sensitive about issues. Well you have to be because you are in a different country and you don't know what is coming. So a lot of checking on those people to really know what is going on, responding to them in a timely fashion, and not taking for granted their concerns would be very helpful.

Table 4.1

Transformational Learning Model Applied



(Mezirow, 2000, p.22)

Knowing that a student is supported from the beginning until the end of the program will assist them during the challenging situations that might arise.

While both negative and positive experiences have the possibility to create transformational learning, organizations should attempt to provide a positive learning experience for students to eliminate misunderstanding and simplest stereotypes. If a student does not have a positive experience, it could skew their view on ISL in the future. Julie describes her experience as not being as positive as she planned and is currently trying to encourage students not to take part in an ISL program:

> Basically I'm trying to promote students to not go on these trips because I don't believe in them anymore so that's how I'm trying to help the community. I'm trying to raise awareness that these trips, they're not really benefitting anyone…They didn't really care, or they weren't very concerned for the welfare of their students. I think that there are so many organizations that are similar. I don't think volunteering abroad should be stopped as a whole but I think that it should be minimized and there should be better programs to implement it.

Julie`s recommendation highlights the importance of educators and researchers to further understand the experience that students encounter. Developing an increased awareness of the challenges that students face on the ground, the adaptation process, and how to support transformational learning can improve upon the experience that students have.

Julie discussed how important it is to have frequent communication with the program leaders back in Canada. She also explained that the expectations from the organization should be clear for students to feel a sense of purpose during the duration of their ISL experience. Julie believes that "if they had high expectations, students do whatever you tell them to do. You know, if you are really serious about this, a student will take it serious." Andrea also discusses the importance of communication with the institution in Canada when a student is in a foreign country.

> Especially when you are leaving with a University that is supplementing this program they need to have way more contact with you because it is ultimately their responsibility for whatever happens. So I think communication that is facilitated or initiated by them not, I was communicating a lot because there were so many issues…I think just having a system of how they organize what

> they do. Archiving everything and making it accessible to people who are going on ISL experiences so they can see what these people went through and keep these things in mind because they are people that have done it. You can learn so much from them.

In addition to ISL programs being held accountable students must take an active role in how they contribute to their experience.

Frank discussed the importance of being equipped with the proper tools before participating in an ISL experience. Frank believes that education is one of the most important tools a student can have. If a program educates the student before departing a student will be better prepared and will be able to service the communities and learn more effectively and efficiently.

> Going abroad meant a lot to me…looking back, there's a few little things that I've noticed that if I had a chance to go back again I know what I would do. Our approach right now is that when we go into Africa or any developing country we are limited by what we can do or what we can tell them or what we are supposed to tell them. I'm of the conviction that it is imperative that any intern that goes to Africa must be prepared or must be fashioned with tools.

Several of the participants in this research study illustrated that they were not prepared for the experience before going and did not take an active role in preparing themselves with the knowledge they would need once on the ground. Misconceptions and expectations will alter the experience. It should be paramount that all students who engage in ISL have realistic expectations and motivations that go beyond self-serving tendencies.

To foster a positive ISL and provide students with accurate expectations, program leaders should introduce students to participants who have had ISL experiences. Andrea expressed how she believes that inviting students that have already been though the ISL experience would be helpful to provide the new students with the knowledge that they gained during their program. Obtaining this information from fellow students will assist in providing information that will explain what should be expected and what has been accomplished previously:

> I think even bringing in past interns, bringing in past people that have gone and done our work need to come telling us, I don't know, just way more intensive, I think it should have been. For example, I thought that they were responsible for our housing and things like that but apparently they weren't…they need to work on their, their responsibilities and our responsibilities so you don't have these areas of vagueness that we don't know who's doing what, it just fails.

Cindy suggested areas that could be developed to improve the success of the experience for students and that sharing information from previous work that has been done by other students would provide direction and insight for future work. It is also imperative so students are able to expand upon what has been accomplished previously. Cindy suggests that "having some kind of system that blogs everyone's things. If these interns did reports this summer the next summer these people have access to the system. Even like a Google document. It's not that hard to create one, just having everything there so people can have access to it." Having information documented and shared between students will support them in achieving their purpose and goals.

Julie believes that it is important for all students participating in and ISL program to establish smaller goals to assist them when they are situated locally. This way the students will feel better about their purpose and satisfaction with what they accomplish even if the larger goals are not met due to uncontrollable circumstances:

> The first thing I would do is establish goals, like very clear goals. For the first week and I am going to do this, for the second week I am going to do this because I had a goal for the whole project but I didn't have small goals. So when I didn't accomplish any of those goals I felt like I didn't have a purpose there and I think that by having step-by-step initiatives or goals it will really help you feel that sense of accomplishment and it will help you make more of a difference then accomplishing a whole goal. Making sure you have an understanding with your host organization, making sure there is clear communication, there was a lot of lost communication between me and my host organization, like I mentioned, I didn't have any of the tools that I needed and that was because nobody told me that I needed to bring these things, or

> nobody told me that I had to email the people in Tanzania to get these tools for me, so communication between the host organization, you, and the host organization in the international community that you are going to.

Sharing information, experiences, and goals is a significant way for students' to expand their learning and build upon what has been accomplished in the past.

Andrea also believes that orientation sessions before students leave should be detailed and address realistic expectations for when carrying out the ISL. Although many programs do offer orientation sessions, it is imperative that all the needs of the students are met and clear expectations are identified.

> I think that the organizers need to have a very informed and detailed informational session about expectations. My orientation was like ten minutes going, how to get your Visa and immunization, all that is great but I think that people do that regardless, when people travel for vacation they get their immunizations and vaccinations and all that. They should probably tell people the experiences of other people. That should be in the pre-departure information session.

Andrea also felt that during the orientation session, expectation and information should be very clear before a student departs for their experience. Once a student has left it is difficult to communicate as effectively. Clear objectives to the program need to be addressed before a student leaves for ISL:

> They should probably explicitly spell everything out. How many funds you are getting, who is supposed to give it to you and when because it is very, very difficult living in a different part of the world and trying to get other people living in a different parts of the world to get things going. The second area that I would probably say that, it looks like when, especially students, when students go out there, it feels like that the people that send us there don't really care. They tell you to contact the nearest embassy when you have any problems or whatever but it's not that easy…Some personal experiences I can

> control it by moving from here to here or maybe not going here or not going there but when there is issues with the project itself you cannot control it, it is frustrating. So, I will definitely want to do something like that again if I know it is well organized and resources are at the right place and can be reached when you need it.

Orientation sessions have the potential to provide the information that students need to be successful. A successful orientation will eliminate stress that could prevent them from experiencing positive transformational learning.

Cindy felt that preparing students for an ISL experience before they depart is imperative for student success. She also believes that it is important for an organization to have a mediator, someone on the ground who can assist students and orientate them once they arrive. Having someone on the ground who is familiar with the environment, culture, and program needs will provide students with a secure position when arriving. The support during the transition stage will also foster transformational learning as the students will be able to reflect and discuss their transition with a mediator:

> I would say sufficiently preparing, sufficiently preparing your interns or students whoever it is for what they're going to experience. I think you can't really over prepare them because when they go there they'll be shocked…a big one, this could be my two and three, managing the project, sort of like managing each group of interns and managing the project when interns aren't there…especially having younger people's first time going to, going to a developing country, it's almost better to have more of that type of stuff…an organization should have someone on the ground, I would say more legitimate organizations do but sort of someone who's going to mediate the foreigners entry or transition into the project…I would say, that's crucial to the students having a good experience, especially the first couple days and getting settled in. So having some sort of link between student's arrival and whatever it is they are going to work on. That's why a lot of other things will have trip leaders or something like that.

Trip leaders and mediators who understand the goals and purpose of the experience can support students when they become overwhelmed from the culture shock they may experience.

Not only is the preparation and expectation important, the duration of the experience is also an important element to consider. As illustrated in the data provided, several of the participants' did not reach the "recovery" and "adaptation" stage of the U-Curve Adjustment Model. A longer experience may have provided them with an opportunity to overcome their dilemmas, but without the support students become stuck in the "culture shock" and "crisis" phases. Julie felt that the duration of the ISL program is essential, as well as an understanding that in order for goals to be accomplished and sustainable progress to be made, it is imperative that there is a commitment over an extended period of time:

> I guess one of the reasons why I'm doing this interview is so that I can explain these feelings because so many people go on with the idea that they are going to go for one week and make a difference, being there for two months, two and a half months, wasn't enough to make a difference. Change doesn't happen over a short period of time. It is something that you have to stick with and see through for a long period of time and you can't do it internationally, you can't just be puppeteers from Canada and pull the strings and be involved only whenever you want to, you have to commit to it, so I think that's something that I would want to tell to the community.

In addition to this, Julie believes that future students that become involved in ISL programs should become more educated about the country and culture that they will be visiting. As mentioned above, limited preparation and education regarding the new environment and culture they will be experience is detrimental to the learning process. Julie describes the importance of students reflecting upon their frame of reference and understanding the imperatives of being open to a new environment and being open to learning without using an ethnocentric lens in every situation:

> I think another thing is, just to like, maybe find out, maybe just learn how to really immerse yourself in other peoples culture, I wish that someone had told me the respectful greetings when addressing an elder in Tanzania because that

> way I think I would have integrated into the community more faster and this is something really difficult to do but get rid of all your preconceived notions, just really know that you're not better than anybody, you are all equal, you are all humans. Just because you have more money or more education it doesn't' mean anything. Never try to impose any of your beliefs because how do you know that your Western beliefs are more right than their beliefs that they have in a foreign country. I think we all do it naturally and it's really hard to stop that but it's something we need to improve on, just getting rid of everything you believe and trying to immerse yourself into their culture instead of trying to impose your culture on them. Those are the recommendations that I would have.

Julie further explains that good intentions are not enough when a student embarks on an ISL experience. It is important that connections are made and reciprocal learning is taking place between the student and the host organization. Frank discusses that importance of knowledge. Learning and applying knowledge is a sustainable resource that will accomplish long term progress. Frank emphasized that before students are sent to a foreign country, they need to have all the knowledge that they can acquire to enhance the experience and the learning opportunities that are available to them once they arrive:

> Well, for me the first one, one area that would be of benefit for these kinds of programs would be to synthesize the population with knowledge. Knowledge is a key. I don't care what you go into an African environment and start doing what you have to do, knowledge is the key. Overall, internship is something good. Any Canadian that has a chance to do an internship should go. Everybody has their worldview, the way they see things but before they set out to send students overseas they should tell them the truth, let them know.

Knowledge seems to be a common factor to a successful experience. Although each participant had a different background of knowledge before their ISL encounter, they treated every experience as a new experience.

4.3.1 *Recommendations*

The recommendations for ISL programs are an important area to explore. Considering institutions continue to increase the amount of students that will engage in ISL and international exchanges, it is imperative the programs are prepared to provide a student with the best opportunity that they can. In addition to developing a regimented strategy to increase the learning opportunities for students, it is also important that they are able to foster perspective transformation for students.

As the expansion of globalization continues it is critical that a cultural understanding is gained. For this to be achieved it is ISL programs that continue to send students abroad to increase their understanding of cultural similarities and differences, examine multiple perspectives, and to further their understanding of intercultural communication (Mbugua, 2010, pg. 91). It is very important that the objectives of an ISL program are clearly outlined. It is imperative that SL challenges administrator and faculty to "…reflect on educational pedagogy and broaden, in concrete practice, the educational mission of the institution" (Grusky, n.d., para. 5). Although the student ultimately defines their success, the platform in which they begin their experience on should support to all student needs.

Below are the recommendations that the participants of this research study believe are important for success when involved with an ISL experience. If ISL programs continue to advance it is imperative to listen to the comments and concerns of students. The information gathered from students who have had an ISL will increase the construction of a strategic model for ISL learning experiences. The following are recommendations for ISL programs and students:

1) **Preparation:**

- Students should be provided: intercultural education, information about the country they will be visiting such as medical systems, political situations, geography, housing and other facilities, cultural and social norms and customs
- Language sessions
- Clear objectives of the goals and purposes

- Understanding of the project and projection of future intentions of project
- Developed short and long term goals
- Contact information regarding the organization they will be working with and where they will be staying
- Expectations and motivations should be addressed
- Defining responsibilities
- Emergency procedures

2) **Communication:**

- Constant communication via telephone, email, Skype, etc. with program leaders and institution
- Program leaders need to answer student inquires in a timely fashion
- Daily feedback and check-ins from program leaders
- Weekly goals of program and students should be outlined

3) **Organization**:

- Organized goals and motives for both the student and the program should be clearly defined
- Person on the ground to mediate the student's entry and transition into the project
- Transparent operations to increase accountability
- Tools and resources prepared and explained clearly before student departs (i.e. housing, transportation from airport, funds thoroughly explained, contact information and addresses on the ground)
- Information acquired by previous ISL students should be shared in advance of departing.
- Transparency of information
- Blogs, Google documents, etc. of all past work and experiences from students
- Archiving all information gained during ISL related to the program and making it accessible

These recommendations were collected from the data obtained from the five participants in this study. Improving upon ISL programs is imperative as more students will continue to participate in international education. Pre-departure preparation must be strategically arranged to set a student up for success. Educators and program leaders must understand "participation in certain

service-learning programs can sometimes have a transformative impact on students' moral, political, intellectual, personal, cultural, and spiritual perspective; but how or why doesn't it happen more often" (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Feinstein, 2004; Rhoads, 1997). Understanding how perspective transformation occurs will assist in program development and ISL experiences.

4.4 Chapter Summary

The data that was acquired for the purpose of addressing the research question was illustrated throughout this chapter. The data took an in-depth look at three major categories: Perspective of ISL, Transformational Learning through Experience, and Fostering Transformational Learning. By researching the perspectives of students who have participated in an ISL experience, future methods can be derived from the information gathered that will aid in preparing upcoming students on how to meet challenges, learn from the experience of others, and assist ISL programs. This information will promote transformational learning through effective program structuring. By examining these three themes, a greater understanding of how experiential learning can lead to transformational learning has been gained.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

This Chapter will discuss the implications and recommendations that were found through the data that was collected and reviewed. The first part of this chapter will describe how the findings addressed the research question. The second section will identify how the findings connected to the conceptual frameworks of experiential learning and transformational learning. The third section will summarize the themes from the findings. The fourth will conclude the research study.

5.1 The Research Question

The purpose of this research was to understand the benefits of ISL and how students learn through the experience. The research question for this study was (1) How do international learning experiences transform the lives of students who participated in an ISL program. In addition, the research will address two sub-questions, (2) What have participants learned from the experience and how do they plan on applying what they have learned, and (3) What recommendations can be made to increase the learning potential of an ISL experience for students in the future?

The importance of understanding how ISL experiences transform the lives of students is an important question to address. As mentioned earlier, research in this area has been limited. Since the increase of international mobility and global education, the importance of these experiences has increased to meet the demands of the global community. Understanding how students can learn the most from their experience is essential to increasing the potential of ISL programs. International mobility in higher education has ranged from three to five million staff and students who travel internationally annually for academic related reasons (Altbach & Teichler, 2001, p. 8-10). Understanding international experiences and how they are able to transform the way that students view the world, themselves, and their position is imperative to developing methods which support the experiences and the transformational learning that takes place.

As Kiely (2005) mentioned, transformational learning does not always occur for all students when they participate in ISL programs, but it is an essential aspect of these experiences that cannot be overlooked. Critical Reflection is a cognitive process that enables the individual to reflect upon their own beliefs and assumptions that impact how they make sense of an experience. The questions the participants were asked during the interview enabled them to reflect upon their beliefs and frame of reference.

It was evident through the data gained from the interviews of the five participants that the experiences they had in East Africa did lead to critical reflection and transformational learning, yet with increased support from the institutions and programs they were involved in the learning gained could have eliminated stereotypes, misunderstandings, and increased transformational learning. The students explained situations and moments when they felt their world view had been challenged, their expectations were not met, and their motives were questionable. This forced many of the participants to re-evaluate their understanding of self, their convictions, and their behaviours.

The research question also looked at what the participants learned from the experience and how they plan on applying what they have learned. The students explained in detail how they believed they had been transformed from the experience and how they plan to use what they have learned. Many of the participants related their personal transformation to how they choose to live their lives currently and in the foreseeable future. Other participants described changing the way they view their professional future and how they plan on applying what they learned to their academic and professional agenda. Understanding how participants in an ISL plan on applying what they have learned will address the sustainability aspect of ISL. Transforming an individual's frame of reference based on critical reflection will enable students to implement a new lens on their understanding of self, beliefs, and behaviours through the development of a transformative mind-set.

The final element of the research question addressed recommendations which can be made to increase the learning potential of an ISL experience for students in the future. All of the participants in this research study were able to provide recommendations that they believe will benefit both students and ISL programs based on their experiences in East Africa. Acquiring

recommendations from students who participate in ISL programs is necessary to improving and building upon ISL programs that currently exist. Learning more about the programs and how they can be improved is an area of research that should be addressed during all of the experiences students have. Ultimately, obtaining the highest potential of learning during these experiences should be something that all institutions and organizations strive towards and this can only be achieved through extensive support from program leaders.

5.2 Connecting Data to the Conceptual Frameworks

As discussed earlier, the conceptual frameworks used for this research study were David Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) and Jack Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory (TLT). First the data will be connected to the ELT. Each participant went through the four stages of the Experiential Learning cycle: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observational, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. Each participant had a concrete experience in East Africa for a duration of seven weeks to four months. This concrete experience enabled them to reflect upon their experience in the new environment once they returned to their home country.

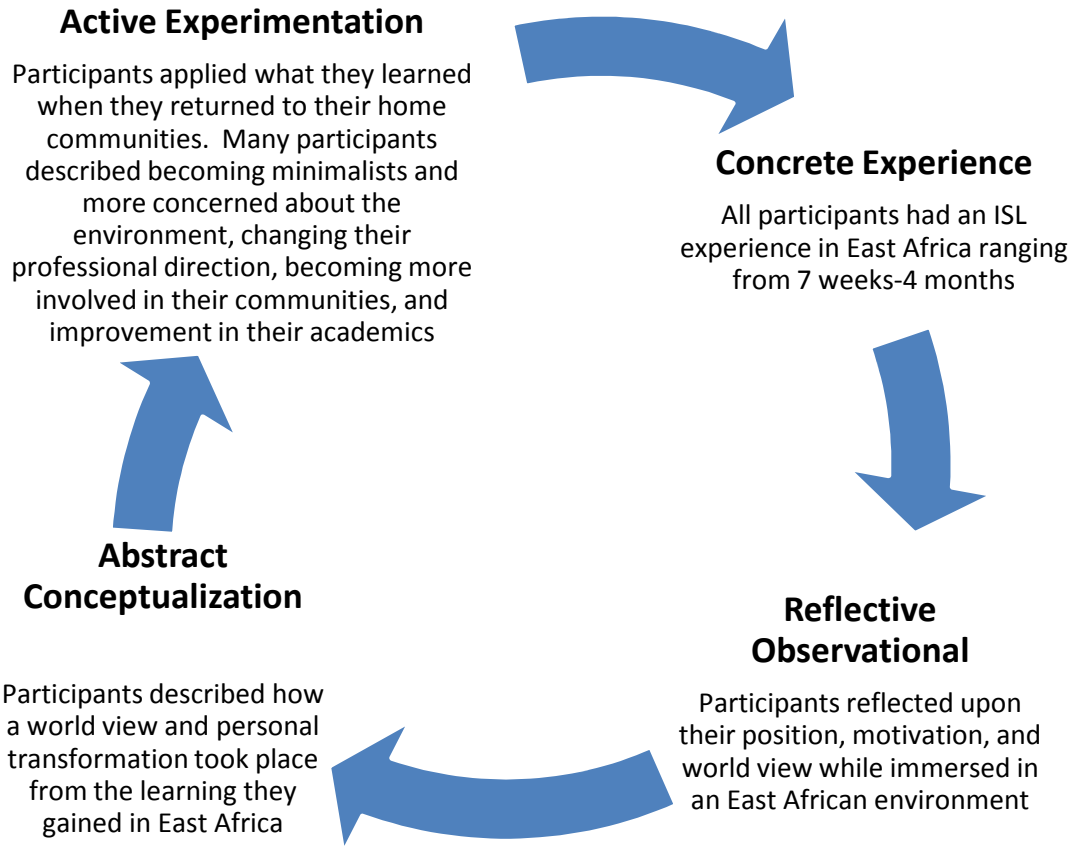
The reflection associated with the ELT was linked to Mezirow's TLT because the participants began to critically reflect upon their experience. This involved changing their mind-set regarding ISL work, international development, and having good intentions. They began to transform their world view and personal ideologies and began to re-evaluate their motives and the motives for programs that engage in international endeavors. Some of the participants described learning very quickly upon their arrival that the goals they had before departing for East Africa were very different once they arrived. They learned that they would have to adapt their work methods and socio-cultural beliefs in order to achieve success. Many of the participants described being able to use what was learned in the classroom and apply a different lens to the position held by classmates regarding East African and international development. In addition, some students also spoke about sharing what they learned with their communities in Canada. One participant even described that sharing with communities was her responsibility.

Several participants explained how they were able to apply what they learned in their daily life by placing less value on material objects and caring more for the environment. Other participants described feeling more appreciative towards their country, family, and friends. The experience also caused two participants to conclude that they were no longer interested in doing ISL work and began to re-evaluate their future academic and professional direction.

In this study, ISL proved to follow Kolb's ELT accurately. The concrete experience the students had in East Africa brought awareness and reflection that provided them with a learning opportunity that they would not have had otherwise. They were able to actively apply what they learned and explain how they would like to continue to use what they learned in East Africa. Table 5.1 illustrates how David Kolb's ELT was applied to this research study.

Table 5.1

Experiential Learning Theory Applied



In addition to Kolb's ETL, this research used Jack Mezirow's TLT. This theory was used to understand the experience of the participants on a more critical level that looks at cognitive and behaviour transformation. Mezirow's TLT is also known as "Perspective Transformation". It attempts to understand how learning though experience transforms the mind-set of individuals. This often occurs through critical reflection of an experience, such as ISL and SL. The reason this conceptual framework was chosen was because it explores how learning is linked to experience.

Table 4.1 illustrates how the findings from this study were applied to Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory. It outlines three important categories and ten critical phases that are associated with perspective transformation. The participants for this research described many moments throughout their experience when they were faced with many of the learning elements mentioned in Mezirow's model.

By reflecting upon the experience, students were able to describe how their prior frame of reference transformed through the experiences they had in East Africa. They were able to explain how their prior understanding of the experience was different than what occurred. Several of the participants mentioned how their political, cultural, and social views were transformed through the experience.

5.3 Summary of the Themes

Through the analysis of the data collected from the five participants for this qualitative study, three themes arose. These themes were helpful in identifying how the findings answered the research question. The primary question was to identify how the ISL experience transformed the lives of students who participated in this type of program. The three themes identified were: Perspective of International Service-Learning, Transformational Learning through Experience, and Fostering Transformational Learning.

The first theme illustrated what motivated the student to participate in the experience and what they did to prepare for the experience. When analyzing the data collected regarding these two areas, it was evident that many of the students had unrealistic expectations and some of the

participants did not prepare for the experience. The lack of preparation was often attributed to the program or institution.

Several participants believed that it is the responsibility of the institution and the program to prepare them for what to expect upon arrival. Some students felt very confused about their position and underprepared about the purpose of the organization. A few of the participants' expressed that they had travelled to East Africa before and did not feel the need to have to prepare for the experience. The lack of preparation created issues for the participants once in East Africa. The participants wished that they were more prepared before leaving Canada.

The participants for this research study discussed their motives for participating in the ISL program. Understanding the motives of a student is vital for an organization or program before a student leaves for their ISL experience. Learning about what motivates a student who participates in ISL will assist program leaders in addressing pre-departure assumptions and expectations that may not be accurate. It also enables the program to gain information that will help support a student obtain their goals for the duration of the program.

Most of the participants mentioned that they were motivated by the idea of learning about a new culture, learning a new language, meeting new people, and applying their academic skills and knowledge. Although the transformation came through in many of the responses, the second theme, Transformational Learning through Experience, identified the critical reflection process. This enabled the participants to critically evaluate their position in several areas. In order to make sense of an experience it is important for an individual to create an interpretation of the experience. Mezirow (1997) believes that we transform our frame of reference through critical reflection. This reflection is based off of assumptions which have become interpretations and habits of the mind. Critical reflection challenges our frame of references and transforms our belief and point of view (p. 7).

When the participants were able to critically reflect upon their position it became evident that many of the expectations that existed before departing for the program were identified by the participants as being incorrect when they arrived to commence their ISL. Being placed in a new position fostered questions that challenged their frame of reference regarding expectation and motives. This theme brought forward questions of social positioning in a new environment and

it also led the participants to question social hierarchies. Conforming to the new culture, and understanding how to adapt, proved to be a challenge for the participants and it led them to critically reflect upon themselves and their overall position in the new environment and in the world. During this confusion the participants did not feel supported from the organizations and programs that sent them. Increased support during this time would have been beneficial to the transformational learning process.

The participants also looked at incidents that led them to question their world view and challenged their frame of reference. The students began to critically reflect and question larger issues related to how they perceived the world. Through critically reflecting upon their position and world view in the new environment, the participants were able to explain a personal transformation that occurred. The participants began to re-consider how they have perceived "developing" countries and how they viewed ISL opportunities.

Several of the participants believed that the good intentions they had before departing were not good enough once they arrived. They began to understand that it was impossible to implement their larger goals over a short period of time and realized that ISL and international development is a long term commitment. They realized that adapting to the new environment, culture, and language was pivotal to having a positive experience and they also understood that there was a power imbalance between foreigners and locals that was difficult to overcome. One student even described having an existential crisis because she could not understand life anymore. All of these challenges forced the participants to re-consider their assumptions and world view that had created their mind-set.

The participants reflected upon the feelings from arrival to departure. Many of the participants were able to explain how they had changed their mind-set through what they learned during their ISL. They critically looked at their expectations from the program and from themselves. Issues such as, the "white saviour complex", feelings of disempowerment, and difficulty dealing with the gender dynamics were often raised throughout the interviews. The participants were able to recognize that their moral beliefs may not always apply or be taken into consideration. In order for them to have a positive experience they needed to eliminate their ethnocentrism and adapt as efficiently as possible. This could have occurred if the proper supports had been in place. They

were also able to describe how they prepared for the experience and recommendations that assist ISL programs and students in the future.

5.4 Summary

As mentioned by Crabtree (2008), to understand ISL programs a proficiency in developing a cross-cultural psychology and communication must be enhanced. This will support students in having an optimal learning experience. Crabtree (2008) mentions that assumptions which suggest intercultural immersion is enough to alter a student's ethnocentrism are insufficient. Several factors contribute to the outcome of an ISL experience. These factors include country of origin, predispositions, attitude, and characteristics of the host country. All elements pay a pivotal role in the outcome of ISL. In addition, cross-cultural awareness, knowledge of language, and global world views are also elements that contribute to a positive intercultural experience (Crabtree, 2008, p. 22).

When looking at the experience of the participants in this research study, it became evident that the participants did experience areas of transformational learning yet they frequently expressed not having the support they needed to fully obtain success on the ground. A consequence to this, is that some of the participants no longer believe in the importance of ISL and questioned their involvement. This outcome highlights the significance for institutions, programs, and organization to take an active role in supporting students throughout the entire ISL process.

This chapter answered the research question, explained how the findings connect to the conceptual frameworks used, and how the data defined the three main themes. Further research in this area is needed that will assist in program design. In addition to this, understanding the cross-cultural psychology from the host country would be an area of interest to research. The reciprocal learning process will not be understood until the views from the local communities are heard. Expanding research in this area is imperative if institutions and organizations choose to continue to thrive in the globalized world.

It is my hope the information generated from this research will enhance and contribute to the dialogue of ISL experiences and how supportive designs from institution and organization can increase the transformational learning that can be gained from these learning opportunities. ISL

and the transformational impact it can have on students is an area that needs further research if the desired learning goals are to be met.

When looking critically at ISL programs, it is imperative to focus on the experiential and transformational learning process, and enhancing the learning ability of students participating in ISL is essential. It is also important to develop strong methods that foster the transformational learning process. Having students reorganize their interpretation of the world will aid in preparing them for a globalized community. Preparing students for a global community is vitally important with the continuous and rapid changes in global demographics. Students need to be able to engage in advanced levels of human interaction and interconnectedness (Mbugua, 2010, p. 87). By implementing programs, such as ISL, students are given an opportunity to become world citizens. Learning to critically reflect during and after an ISL will help students construct meaning from their experience. Perceiving the self, convictions, and behaviours with a new lens prepares an individual for a globalized world.

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Appendix A

Advertisement and Recruitment

Subject Line: *Participants Needed for Research Study*

You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Shannan Crowder and Dr. Goli Rezai Rashti. The study involves discussing your experience in an International Service-Learning program. It will be approximately one hour and will be conducted in a location convenient to you.

Please express your interest by sending an email to scrowde@xxxxx. Once your email has been received you will be provided with a letter of information regarding the study. We look forward to hearing from you

Thank you for your time,

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Appendix B

Interview Questions

Demographic/Background Information

a) Age

b) Gender

c) Program of Study

d) Year of Study

e) Country visited for International Service-Learning experience

f) Duration of visit

Pre-departure Reflection

1. Please describe any previous experiences abroad including ISL, travel, study, etc.

2. What attracted the participant in the ISL opportunity and what were the original motives for participating in the program?
3. How did you think you would apply your academic skills and knowledge in East Africa?
4. What were the preparations to prepare for the experience (1) socially (2) culturally (3) professionally (4) personally

Reflection Abroad

1. Please describe a three point time line of feelings experienced from the time of (1) arrival (2) mid-way (3) departure. Were there any consistent feelings?
2. Please explain a moment (s) when you felt your worldview was being challenged.
3. Explain an incident for each of the following where you may have felt confused of your position (1) socially (2) culturally (3) professionally (4) personally

Current Application

1. Since returning and reflecting upon the experience was there a deeper meaning gained from having gone abroad? If so how did you come to realize it?
2. How have you implemented the learning you gained from the experience into the (1) community (2) daily life (3) foreseeable future?
3. For students and ISL programs to be successful it important to critically evaluate the experiences of individuals who go abroad. Please describe three main areas that should be focused on and developed for ISL to be successful in the future and why.

Appendix C

Project Title: International Service-Learning – Transformational through Experience

Principal Investigator:

Goli Rezai-Rashti, Ph.D
Professor
Faculty of Education

The University of Western Ontario
xxx-xxx-xxxx ext. xxxxx

Letter of Information

Invitation to Participate

My name is Shannan Crowder and I am a Master of Education student focusing on International and Comparative Education at the Faculty of Education at The University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting research for the completion of my Master's thesis that is looking at the experience of students who have participated in an International Service-Learning (ISL) program abroad. I am presently inviting students who have recently completed an ISL experience to participate in this research.

Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to identify how international learning experiences transform the lives of students who go abroad and what can be done to improve ISL programs to ensure greater learning opportunities are obtained.

Inclusion Criteria

Individuals who are eligible to participate in this study must have been students who participated in an International Service-Learning experience through recognized University.

Exclusion Criteria

Individuals who have participated as a student through a recognized University in an International Service-Learning program abroad are not eligible to participate in this study.

Study Procedures

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in a one-on-one semi-structured interview. It is anticipated that the entire task will take will be approx. one-hour, over one sessions. The task(s) will be conducted in location convenient for you. The interview will request your reflection on the pre-departure, abroad, and current application of the learning experience. The interview will be recorded on an audio-recorder and later transcribed into written form. After transcription you will be able to review the transcript and edit as you see fit.

Possible Risks and Harms

There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participating in this study.

Possible Benefits

The possible benefits to society may be that recommendations for International Service-Learning programs are given which enhance the learning opportunities for communities at home and abroad.

Compensation

You will not be compensated for your participation in this research.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future academic status.

Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. While we will do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Health Sciences Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact Principle Investigator: Goli Rezai-Rashti, xxx-

xxx-xxxx ext. xxxxx, grezaira@xxxxx, and student researcher: Shannan Crowder, xxx-xxx-xxxx, scrowde@xxxxx. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics (xxx) xxx-xxxx, email: ethics@xxxxx.

Publication

The information collected during the interview will be for the purpose of this research. All of the data will be a locked my personal laptop computer that is password protected and the audio-recorder will be locked in a secure location. All of the data will be destroyed after the duration of five years. Only your age, gender, academic year, and area of study will be identified. Your name and the name of the International Service-Learning program you were involved in will be kept anonymous. The results generated from this study may be used for publication and presented. Quotations given from your interview may be also be used.

This letter is yours to keep for future reference.

Appendix D

Consent Form

Project Title: *International Service-Learning – Transformation through Experience*

Dr. Goli Rezai-Rashti, University of Western Ontario; Dr. Wayne Martino, University of Western Ontario; Shannan Crowder, University of Western Ontario

- I consent to having anonymous direct quotations from my interview used in any future published work of the final research study.
- I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Curriculum Vitae

Name:	Shannan Crowder
Post-secondary Education and Degrees:	Carleton University Ottawa, Ontario, Canada 2000-2004 B.A. Hons. George Brown College Toronto, Ontario, Canada 2008-2009 Post-Graduate Certificate. The University of Windsor Windsor, Ontario, Canada 2011-2012 B.Ed. The University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2012-2014 M.Ed.
Honours and Awards:	Ewen MacDonald Memorial Award 2009 Dean's Honour List 2008-2009 Presidential Honour Role 2011-2012
Related Work Experience	Team Leader – Residential Counsellor 3 Provincial Schools Branch 2013-2014 International ESL Teacher 2005-2008