JOURNAL OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING
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# Preface to the International Experiences Special Issue

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The theory and practice of transformative learning has been embedded in higher education in significant and impactful ways over the past four decades. The *Journal of Transformative Learning* has focused on providing substantive review and dissemination of quality approaches and scholarly work, which continues to inform our understanding and effectiveness in providing transformative learning and experiences for students. One area where significant research and focus is continuously needed, is in our assessment of transformative learning in the international diaspora. Our goal with this special issue is to provide much needed illumination on the best practices and current examinations on transformative learning with an emphasis on global learning and engagement.

We live and work in a global environment which requires our students to be prepared to operate professionally and personally in the most connected world in human history. It is imperative we continue to develop and offer programs which encourage students to advance their cultural competence and understanding of the diverse perspectives and experiences of individuals throughout the world.

While international study and student exchanges have been present in higher education opportunities and curricula for some time, a deep understanding of the impacts these programs maintain on a participant's personal growth and transformation is limited. Many of these experiences are individual in nature, preventing robust application to broader populations. Location of these programs also impacts learning, as context and culture can have strong impacts on a participant's understanding and interaction. These are just two realities which challenge research and findings when considering international learning and student transformation.

The goal of this special issue is to broaden our understanding and application of research and experiences to remedy some of the longstanding issues with transformative learning and international experiences. This special issue provides essays and original research, covering several courses and projects which assess student learning, outcomes, and research methods related to short- and long-term study abroad programs, development of cultural competence in participants, and the role of collaboration and partnership in creating meaningful experiences. The research and essays cover multiple contexts and locations, providing our readers with approaches and practices we hope inform your current work, and future plans in providing international learning opportunities for students.

Essays in our special summer issue include Chiang and Yao's perspectives on combining short-term study abroad experiences with undergraduate research. Barker communicates the need for universities and colleges to examine transformative learning, global learning, and indigenization holistically, providing more opportunities to provide learning outcomes related to inclusiveness and cultural sensitivity. Norton, Mora, Boden, and Ambriz provide a case-study approach which focuses on partnerships developed between the U.S. and Colombia through the Women4Peace program. Continuing the emphasis on partnerships and student learning outcomes, Carr and Vaughn provide assessment of a US – Dominican Republic partnership, connecting cultural humility with substantive growth in student learning.

Raven, Singleton, and Scaramuzzo provide our first research-centered article, examining international based in-service training in Costa Rica and its impact on teachers. Their research includes a focus on the impact this involvement maintains on participants implementing place-based learning experiences. Kennedy-Reid focuses on the cultural intelligence quotient (CQ) and its influence on

transformative learning, particularly how it can inform an individual's transformative learning. Newell, Antola Crowe, Erickson, Pratt, and Davison Aviles study the impact intentional course design has on students and their cultural intelligence. This course includes international immersion, focused curriculum, and student reflection as vital pieces to the student learning. Wood and Jobe examine student transformative learning related to global competencies, leadership, and service learning through courses which included international locations as their primary learning space.

The challenges we face in today's world are global in nature and will remain this way. The included essays and research further concentrate our understanding on global learning and education. Let us continue to examine these efforts to ensure we are providing the most effective and impactful opportunities for our students to engage across their communities and the world. We hope you enjoy reading and learning this special edition of the *Journal of Transformative Learning* as it informs your work.

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# Transformative Learning through Short-term Study Abroad Programs

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**Abstract**

*As the world becomes increasingly interconnected in the 21st century, it is crucial to teach college students how to acquire cultural competence as global citizens. Learning through study abroad involves total immersion and active engagement in understanding other cultures and people. It challenges individuals' ethnocentric beliefs and habitual frames of reference to foster inclusive and global perspectives as transformative learners. Furthermore, even in short-term study abroad programs, through intentional planning, faculty may embed multiple high impact educational learning experiences in their courses. Collaboration with a foreign university can further enhance students' cultural knowledge by creating peer interactions in and outside of classes. The specifics of peer interactions are described later in this paper. This teaching note introduces a teaching pedagogy as well as strategies of mentoring undergraduate research through study abroad classes. Students gain both research skills and cultural competence as learning outcomes which are two of the ultimate goals in higher education. Key areas include:*

- *Teaching pedagogy through designing faculty-led short-term study abroad programs*
- *Combine multiple high impact practices in undergraduate research, study abroad and peer-mentoring.*
- *Transformation through the impacts on faculty and students.*

*Keywords:* study abroad, undergraduate research, transformative learning, high-impact practice, teaching pedagogy

As the world becomes increasingly interconnected in the 21st century, it is crucial to teach college students how to acquire cultural competence as global citizens. Learning through study abroad involves total immersion and active engagement in understanding other cultures and people. It challenges individuals' ethnocentric beliefs and habitual frames of reference to foster inclusive and global perspectives as transformative learners (Mezirow, 1997). Furthermore, even in short-term study abroad programs, through intentional planning, faculty may embed multiple high impact educational learning experiences in their courses. Collaboration with a foreign university can further enhance students' cultural knowledge by creating peer interactions in and outside of classes. We describe specifics of peer interactions later in this paper. This teaching note introduces a teaching pedagogy and strategies of mentoring undergraduate research through study abroad classes.

A growing student population from diverse backgrounds requires skills for intercultural competence for effective communication and collaboration (He, Lundgren & Pynes, 2017). Understanding and appreciating other cultures are essential in developing intercultural competence (Schmidmeier, et al. 2020). The key to effective communication and interactions is understanding other

cultures. The concept of culture is complex. In this paper, the authors referred to culture as the "values, customs, beliefs, and symbolic practices by which men and women live or the whole way of life" (Eagleton, 2016, p. 1). They are also "patterns of shared values and beliefs that over time produce behavioral norms" (Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, culture is a set of beliefs and assumptions that people share to interpret the world around them and decide how to behave and interact with others. In higher education, bringing students from different cultures together to interact with each other is the best process for developing intercultural competence (Deardroff, 2011). More than ever, the world requires its citizens and leaders to look beyond their national borders to cooperate and collaborate on solving global issues. Students who participated in study abroad programs and other high impact practices have reported significantly higher multicultural competence (Soria & Johnson, 2017, Earnest, Rosenbusch, Wallace-Williams, & Keim 2016). Exposure to cross-cultural knowledge enables learners to be global citizens who appreciate different cultures with a high level of understanding and sensitivity. Sanchez (2012) suggests combining international travel, undergraduate research, and intense interactions between faculty and student researchers to create a high impact learning experience of lifetime. The exciting news for educators is that the acquisition of cultural competence is sustained beyond the conclusion of the study abroad program (Roller & Ballestas, 2017). Therefore, the teaching pedagogy that supports study abroad is also supported by the Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1997, Laros, Fuhr, & Taylor, 2017, Cranton, 2006, Dirkx, 1998; Landry-Meyer, Bae, Zibbel, Peet, & Wooldridge, 2019) and further empirical literature (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger 2015; Gambino & Hashim, 2016; Coker, Heiser, Taylor, & Book, 2017; Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017; Strange & Gibson, 2017; Valera, 2017; Walsh & Walsh, 2018).

To create transformative learning experiences, course selection is the first step when planning for a meaningful short-term, summer study abroad program with an undergraduate research component. Faculty leading the programs should also be mindful of the integrity of the academic work. Not all courses are deliverable in a short-term study abroad tour of four to five weeks. It is especially challenging for the courses that require a longer and more gradual skill-building process. Therefore, in our study abroad program, the courses are topic-driven with cultural learning as an emphasis. For example, two courses offered in psychology are Cultural Influences on Developing Individuals and Interpersonal Relations across Cultures. In Computer Science, a course Global Perspective in Big Data and Technology allows students from various disciplines to look into how to use big data in their respective fields in different countries. Consider how to infuse cultural learning through faculty's expertise and research areas in course building is a good start.

The next step is to determine how to integrate potential research skills and knowledge in course contents and requirements. Students can collect data through field trips or lab site visits as they completing their research assignments. To expand transformative learning opportunities, it is essential to balance the classroom time abroad in preparing learners to connect contents with cultural knowledge, and in collecting research data with field trips or site visits. It is highly recommended to reach out to universities near the study abroad site as resources. In our faculty-led short-term summer study abroad program, a strong collaboration with a university was first established. American students were each paired with a local university student as their learning buddies. It brings students from two countries in discussing and exchanging cultural perspectives. In one class, the American students joined a similar topic course in discussing elderly care in the respective country. They were able to receive immediate feedback and clarification to foster deeper cultural knowledge and experiences. The benefit was mutual for students from both countries. This peer interaction is unique to our study abroad program. Before designing a self-led study abroad program, the authors have participated in many other collaborative study abroad programs hosted by multiple universities. We found many students often continue holding ethnocentric perspectives despite they have cultural learning from readings and field trips in those collaborative study abroad programs without peer interactions. Personal contacts in exposure to peers and close examination of cultural influences through the research process are critical in building cultural competence. Without them, students often learn from instructors and continue to use the ethnocentric lens to process cultural information. Therefore, to provide transformative learning, it is essential to challenge

students through critical thinking, data analyses, peer interactions, and continuous self-reflection. This process further facilitates self-reflective learning through "*meaning transformation*" which is where the transformative learning occurs (Kitchenham, 2008).

In designing a short-term (four to six weeks) study abroad program, frontloading readings before departure also helps to prepare learners in thinking and to design their research projects. Before embarking on the study abroad trip, students can finish reading and decide on a topic and complete literature research. Therefore, during the study abroad classes, faculty can spend more time in relating the contents to student research and how to collect the cultural data to examine the topics.

The steps in creating transformative learning in study abroad are summarized below.

- Course selection and planning – in a short-term study abroad program, the courses should not be content-heavy in a way that requires a long process in building basic skills. Students should have acquired basic research skills as pre-requisite.
- Clear learning outcomes and objectives – integrate research components in course requirements that include a final paper and presentation. A journal entry or self-reflection assignments to document cultural challenges and experiences are good to include. It enables students to reflect on their individual growth and to facilitate meaning transformation.
- Front-load course readings when possible and allow closure (e.g., final paper and reflection) when returning to home campus through digital submissions.
- Field trip design – embed data collection in each field trip, such as note-taking or similar forms. It allows students to actively engage in searching and analyzing cultural information in an intentional process, instead of simply a cultural tour.
- Closure – the final part of the study abroad program consists of students presenting their research results and sharing their findings with the class.

In summary, it is valuable to combine two transformative learning experiences by embedding undergraduate research in the study abroad programs as a teaching pedagogy. Infusing undergraduate research pedagogy into study abroad courses also involves two high impact educational practices as outlined by Associations of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U, 2008). Students gain both research skills and cultural competence as learning outcomes. With meticulous planning and collaboration with universities abroad, faculty members can embed undergraduate research experiences into field trips and site visits with a guided set of scientific inquiries. Pairing students in two countries in peer interactions adds further cultural benefits. The authors have successfully practiced this teaching method in seven different countries for four- to five-week summer study abroad programs in the past ten years. Students who participated in these programs have taken these undergraduate research skills and cultural competence into their further education and careers, which is the ultimate goal in higher education.

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# Moving Toward the Centre: Transformative Learning, Global Learning, and Indigenization

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**Abstract**

*Transformational learning, global learning, and indigenization are three synergistic trends in higher education today. The shared characteristics and challenges among these three trends are illustrated using transformational learning as a lens. This analysis helps identify strategies to support the mutual goals of transformational learning, global learning and indigenization. The article concludes with a proposal for a five-stage (inclusive, reflective, connected, and powerful) transformational learning maturity model that may serve to measure an organization's readiness to implement transformational learning.*

*Keywords:* transformative learning, global learning, indigenization, pedagogy, higher education

## Introduction

As universities begin to address global concerns, and while enrollments and strategic partnerships continue to reflect global situations, curriculum administrators look for pedagogical theories and models to achieve educational outcomes in services like cultural sensitivity programs, immersion language instruction, study-abroad programs, and international internships. Some universities, like the University of Central Oklahoma, have met the challenge by adopting *transformational learning* as a central educational paradigm. Transformational learning is often the pedagogy of choice for cultural awareness programs in education, native studies, language arts, and increasingly in business and finance. Transformational learning is a broad theory with roots in the writings of educational theorist Paulo Freire (Freire, 2014) and psychologist Jack Mezirow (Kuiper, 2017; Mezirow, 1997). Among these and other scholars, transformational learning means that the learner develops a new perspective. The term often used is a "shift" in thinking. For some learners, the primary transformational shift in thinking requires them to see how local outcomes are embedded in or connected to global concerns and vice versa. For other learners, transformational learning means setting the "deep needs of the planet over the needs and priorities of the competitive marketplace" (*Global Education for Canadians*, n.d.; O'Sullivan, 2003, p. 327). Colleges and universities rely on a transformational teaching model as a framework to support learning about climate change and sustainability. According to O'Sullivan, the perspective engendered by transformative learning is "the fundamental educational task of our times" (O'Sullivan, 2003, p. 327). Although transformation learning is recognized as the more foundational learning paradigm, is not the only theoretical model available to program planners and administrators at universities, and, as we will see, the interrelationships among competing paradigms remain unexplored.

In scholarly discussions of directions in higher education, one also encounters a related trend in higher educational pedagogy: *global learning*. Because developments in climate, communication technologies, and media platforms have kept global issues at the forefront of social and political life, leaders in higher education have been seeking ways to refocus colleges' and universities' missions around such global themes (Anderberg, 2009; Donnelly-Smith, 2009). This trend is called *global learning* or *global citizenship* (Banks, 2014; Cherkowski, 2010; Robbins, Francis, & Elliott, 2003). Global learning initiatives can be seen in international culture programs, collaborative research paradigms, and programs that introduce students to the global interconnectedness of societies and businesses (Kahn & Agnew,

2017; O'Hara, 2007; Cronjé, 2011). For some, global learning is associated with diversity and inclusion initiatives (Farndale, Biron, Briscoe, & Raghuram, 2015; Syed & Ozbilgin, 2015), while for others it is associated with programs in sustainability and the environment (Anderberg, 2009; Cherkowski, 2010; Siemieniuch, Sinclair, & Henshaw, 2015).

Along with these two trends, a third trend, more like a movement, in higher education, especially in Canada, known as *indigenization*, is growing in response to the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* report of 2014 (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018; Joseph, 2017). Indigenization "is about incorporating indigenous worldviews, knowledge, and perspectives into the educational system, right from primary grades to universities" (Joseph, 2017). At the University of Saskatchewan, the inclusive notion of "Indigenous humanities" can be seen, for example, in the STEM mentorship program for Indigenous women, or in its study-abroad program (*Indigenous Engagement - Office of the Vice-Provost Indigenous Engagement - University of Saskatchewan*, n.d.). While such initiatives may raise concerns about inauthenticity or the "perfunctory reinscription of cultural traditions" (Kuokkanen, 2011, p. 143), indigenization promises a "deeper, fuller, and more accurate understanding of the world (ontology) and beliefs about knowledge (epistemology)" (*Indigenization - Teaching and Learning - University of Saskatchewan*, 2015). Indigenization is a step toward inclusivity and an appropriate response to the directives of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. If allowed to fulfill its promise, indigenization could assist in the on-going struggle for Indigenous rights to self-determination, sometimes characterized as "decolonization." To the extent that indigenization demands that we fundamentally revise theories of knowledge and learning, it is appropriately considered a trend to be pursued by university planners.

*A core interest of this scholarly exploration is to analyze these three trends in higher education to derive a unified concept for study-abroad and cultural sensitivity programs, of use to planners and administrators at universities.*

## Research Questions

These three large-scale trends—transformational learning, global learning, and indigenization—pose a number of questions for study-abroad and cultural sensitivity program planners and administrators. For example, university curriculum administrators might start by asking how one or all of these initiatives could help frame proposals for programs, activities, or courses. Are these three trends all versions of a larger pedagogical shift in higher education planning, similar to competence orientation in European education (Grollmann, 2008)? Will continuing education, adult education, life-long learning, and internships become the norm? Will cultural sensitivity courses replace first-year composition as the central starting place for student discovery? How can program planners and administrators see unity or alignment in a variety of new approaches?

These are interesting implementation questions, but for those interested in higher education theory, we might take the inquiry a step further. There is an abundance of scholarly writing on the theories of transformational learning and the related concept of experiential learning (Brock et al., 2012; Mezirow, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). Assuming that transformational learning is offered as a contrast to domain- and corpus-based education, and that it is a foundational movement underway now in higher-education, could its characteristics, its underlying challenges, be applied to global learning and indigenization as a critique? Furthermore, if that approach seems reasonable, might such a critique be used to reveal overlapping programming ideas and measures for success: an analysis that could be useful to the program administrators and designers mentioned earlier.

Critiques also exist among the working definitions of *transformational learning, global learning,* and *indigenization.* What characteristics overlap in these definitions? In the pushy competition for top of mind among higher-education planners, might they all three be pushing in the same direction? A second question is: In what kinds of programs and educational services, like university or undergraduate research, might we find examples of these trends? I have uncovered the practice of global learning in the student experiences of study-abroad programs, while education on indigenous perspectives is sometimes situated in cultural-sensitivity classes. From a practical standpoint, how can theory and programming connect

more ontologically? Carrying that point forward, a third question connects to the project of discourse analysis of transformational learning scholarship. How can scholars enhance our understanding of transformational learning theory and the experience of human understanding by seeing its relevance to these other approaches?

In this paper I suggest that answers to these questions may be found, first, by analyzing these three pedagogical approaches. I propose to critique the rationales for them put forward by scholars in educational theory, and then to compare these rationales point by point. In doing so, we will also see not just the arguments in their favor, but the challenges they face. From this challenge perspective, administrators can more easily assess institutional readiness for these changes, and identify next steps to achieve transformational learning outcomes. This analysis can lead to insights into the complexity, usability, and adaptability of a model of institutional transformational learning capacity. So to begin, what are the pedagogical dynamics of transformational learning?

## Transformational Learning

Transformational learning is an approach to education that recognizes changes in the learner's perspective and not just the acquisition of facts. This kind of education is often found in liberal arts and it involves a holistic, learner-centred way of knowing. It's roots lie in psychological theories of personal change and development (Kuiper, 2017; Mezirow, 1997). According to Baumgartner, transformational learning is characterized by four principal elements. It is: 1) *emancipatory* in that it redefines the learner's perspective on the self, 2) *interpretive* because it uses cognitive-rational processes to achieve understanding, 3) *developmental* in that it uses life narratives and mentorship to embed learning in personal transformational contexts, and 4) *spiritual*, in that it evokes extra-rational ways of knowing (Baumgartner, 2001).

On the one hand, these characteristics describe desirable transformational outcomes, but on the other hand, many universities struggle to achieve these outcomes (Banks, 2014; O'Sullivan, 2003; Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2015). If we briefly examine the analysis of these four characteristics closely, with the help of discussions by higher-education scholars, we can see corresponding challenges to the promise of transformative learning. The four corresponding challenges are as follows:

1. Overcoming disciplinary silos. Universities are founded on lines of demarcation among scientific and social disciplines, and boundary-crossing or "cross-cutting" often results in turf conflicts. Transformational approaches face challenges because of the need to inform the learner about seemingly unrelated disciplines, cultures, and epistemological approaches (Mutz, 2002; van Winkel et al., 2018).
2. Countering positivist perspectives. Transformational learning often means questioning received scientific/rational perspectives. Durie (2005), for example, notes that, for scientific understanding, "method is all important and objective measurement is the final arbiter" (p. 305). Such positivist-style approaches, based on observation and ever-smaller analysis, are often antithetical to resistance from transformational knowledge systems built on models of multiplicity and complex reciprocal interactions.
3. Overcoming psychological disorientation. For some, the very idea of destabilizing one's knowledge base is threatening. Kirkness and Bearnhardt (1991) quote an Indigenous student as saying, "I would like to tell them (at the university) that education shouldn't try and make me into something I'm not" (p. 5). Unless transformative learning is clearly focused, such student resistance is understandable given the history of residential school education in Canada.
4. Overcoming institutional resistance. Robert Diamond, writing for *Inside Higher ED* cites no less than 12 reasons why curriculum (and other) changes take so long: among them "traidition," leadership weakness, loss of support, and the learning culture itself, indicate resistance to change and maintenance of the status quo (*Why Colleges Are So Hard to Change | Inside Higher Ed*,

> n.d.). Powel points out a number of teacher and staff resistance vectors that point to this institutional resistance (Powell & Kusuma-Powell, 2015).

These challenges to transformative learning are outlined in Table 1: Learning Model Chart.

Table 1

*Learning Model Chart*

| Ontological Level | Transformative Learning | TL Challenges | Global Learning | Indigenization |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Emancipatory*** | Redefines the learner's perspective on the self | Overcoming disciplinary silos | Individual in a global context | Individual in a land context |
| ***Interpretive*** | Uses cognitive-rational processes to achieve understanding | Countering positivist perspectives | Reflection as an alternative to science | Reciprocity |
| ***Developmental*** | Narratives and mentorship to embed learning | Overcoming psychological disorientation | Connections across cultures | Storytelling |
| ***Spiritual*** | Extra-rational ways of knowing | Overcoming institutional resistance | "Citizen" perspective | Decolonized relationships, Resurgence |

Transformative learning holds power as a foundational movement, but as we have seen, it also faces implementation challenges from students, researchers, and instructors because of that very foundational quality. For the argument put forward in this article—that transformational learning is ontological to curriculum initiatives—it is important that we see that the four elements in the definition illuminate stages of a learning process. Transformative learning follows four stages of the learning process: 1) the learner is first "challenged," then 2) led to interpret and act across boundaries to solidify new knowledge, and then 3) motivated to move ahead in new understanding and 4) able to reflect and connect to larger meanings (Baumgartner, 2001; Clark, 1993). If we accept these elements as both stages (ontological) and concepts (understandings), we can see that specific instances of transformational learning opportunities (such as might fall under the rubric of global learning and indigenization) would also, in their characteristic ways, reflect similar institutional challenges. The next section, therefore, explores how these institutional challenges to a transformational learning paradigm constitute an expanded lens on global learning and indigenization. We begin by defining global learning.

## Global Learning

Global learning is an approach to teaching that situates local experience into the context of global concerns: international relationships, diversity of cultures and societies, diverse political realities, and sustainability of resources (Liao et al., 2019; O'Hara, 2007; Slimbach, 2012). The foundations of global learning, as Kahn and Agnew suggest, lie in the following areas:

> an emphasis on the processes of learning, the importance of digging deep into the complexity of the subject matter, thinking about the world relationally through plurality and multiplicity, and the significant roles of self-reflection and recognition of interconnected lives. (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 57)

This definition makes the term sound like a recipe for good learning in general. It is akin to the concept of intercultural learning, and is the basis for cultural simulation games and other forms of cross-cultural learning (Cronjé, 2011; Kuiper, 2017). Like intercutural learning, global learning is a widely accepted model for academic programs. It is natural in that way, as a matter of perspective: seeing the big, cross-cultural, "global," perspective as a meaningful thought context for all educational experiences. In this way, global learning is not just accumulative (of cultural facts) but is transformative, bringing a jolting expansion in the learner's scope beyond limited national or regional solutions. Assuming a global perspective is a matter of making connections between the "nearby" and the "worldwide." Brunold (2005), for example, observes that global learning mediates "a perspective, which assembles connections of nearby, observable problems to worldwide processes and lines of conflicts" (p. 297).

Global learning is not, as some might think, learning in physically remote, global settings, or investigating worldwide concerns, although this technique is sometimes used in teaching (Kahn & Agnew, 2017). Studies on learning in global settings (Anderberg, 2009; Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Liao et al., 2019; O'Hara, 2007) indicate that global learning models are guiding the development of instructional engagement, such as field trips, study-abroad programs, and cultural-diversity programs (Liao et al., 2019). Anderberg (2009) covers a number of existing models of global learning from the perspective of sustainability. However, for my argument, global learning pertains to the educator's capacity to disorient the learner, and expand and contextualize local events and experiences in the meaning context of global systems of politics, biology, and commerce.

Global learning in this context is a matter of kick-starting a learner's capacity to "learn globally." To *learn globally* refers, at one level, to knowledge areas (topics), but also skills, and attitudes. For example, the capacity for or competence in global learning, is, as Baartman observes, a matter of *integrating* topics so the learner may then apply them to a professional task or educational outcome (Baartman & de Bruijn, 2011). Global learning integrates knowledge about culture itself, one's own culture, and other cultures (their histories, values and practices), skills in listening, self-assessment, and reflection, as well as attitudes of reciprocity, trust, and inclusivity (Banks, 2014; Kahn & Agnew, 2017). The learning *outcome* of global learning is, as Brunold points out, "competence," or *global learning* itself.

Above all, however, global learning feeds on the physical, concrete reality of Earth and world-wide interconnectedness (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 56). The term "global" suggests that the transformative realities of planetary sharing of resources and risks, distinguishes this way of learning from visual, textual, or other taxonomies of learning (McFarland, 2017; Puzziferro & Shelton, 2008). Global learning is distinct from other models because of the finite, planetary constraint (Lipschutz & Mayer, 1996; Wenger, 2004).

Global learning has the advantages we have been discussing, but also its drawbacks or challenges. O'Hara, for example, asserts that university learners "are ill prepared for the actual challenges of contemporary life, often feeling bewildered and overwhelmed and like 'strangers in a strange land'" (O'Hara, 2007). Kahn and Agnew lament that, "Although the focus of [global] learning has broadened and shifted to the process of learning, institutions of higher education have been slow to respond to this new reality" (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 53). That slow response may be because of the challenge of integrating a distant, global perspective within a concrete, local sensitivity or experience.

**Challenges to the Global Learning Framework**

It is one thing to define global learning, but quite another to identify how it can be taught. Students in business programs are increasingly interested in local problem solving: applying expertise-based-practice to local domains in the social and political economy. In contrast, the boutique-oriented, adult students want nothing but mind-expanding cultural experiences. These student models constitute contrasting personae that can confound administrators wanting to shape transformational pedagogical techniques to achieve global learning outcomes (Erickson, 2007).

Operationally, global learning is often implemented in far-away regions through study-abroad programs that themselves pose questions about the equitable reach. Despite the claims that global perspectives can be taught using active or immersive experiential learning in classrooms that "mirror the

world" (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 56), it is difficult to engender a global perspective without the experience of other cultures and regions. Some students may lose out. As one call for papers by the AAC&U reads, how can global learning models "work for all or many students" (*Global Citizenship for Campus, Community, and Careers*, 2019)? Among the problems inherent in any change in higher education (calcified disciplines, communication challenges and funding constraints) global learning has yet to achieve a "strategy that sets clear targets and responsibilities" (*Global Education for Canadians*, n.d.).

If we accept that global learning seeks to evoke a new, global perspective among students, we might, as a thought experiment, plot its characteristics along the same lines as those of transformative learning. In this way, the challenges to transformational learning (Table 1) can be used to articulate challenges to global learning.

As a starting point, we might assume the following challenges to global learning:

1. Emancipatory. Global learning places the learner in a much larger context than that of local problem solving. As O'Hara (2007) puts it, the challenge is to break out of "the habits of mind and frames of reference of an Industrial Age." Global learning acknowledges the world-level systems at work in all endeavors. Such a global perspective could be industrial, social, economic or political.
2. Interpretive. Global learning need not just be a body of content, but an interpretive, sometimes non-scientific, *way of seeing* current and historical events. Kahn and Agnew (2017) assert that global learning has promise, even to change the ways "in which knowledge is produced and taught through difference in the 21st century" (p. 54).
3. Developmental. Global learners need to uncover meaningful similarities, connections and common threads among concerns and issues. The nature of these connections is often personal and highly experiential. Despite the claim that global learning can be accomplished "without leaving home" (Liao et al., 2019), the connections one needs to make, like points on a map, mean that students require guidance and mentoring to establish their new networks (O'Hara, 2007).
4. Spiritual. Global learning needs to lay the foundation for active and productive interaction with like-minded individuals and groups. The term often used for the resulting impulse to social action is summed up in the words "global citizenship." Banks's (2014) analysis of global citizenship, identifies three conceptions of the term: "assimilationist, liberal, and universal." In doing so, Banks moves the discussion into civil rights and social justice issues, claiming that, "citizenship education should be expanded to include cultural rights for citizens from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic, and language groups" (p. 1) This conception of citizenship, among kindred spirits, aligns with ideas of action and the pursuit of a transformative global vision.

The challenges posed in global learning are summarized in Table 1.

Global learning, cast in this way, shows it to be a learning approach that is synergistic with those of transformational learning. One might even assert that the learning outcomes of one contribute to the learning outcomes of the other. The overlap of defining elements and challenges in Table 1 suggest that transformational learning concepts illuminate global learning concepts and *vice versa*.

To carry the parallels further, course administrators wishing to implement transformational and/or global learning models might want to consider yet a third trend in higher education: *Indigenization*. As the following discussion will demonstrate, these three approaches share some of the same dynamics of thinking: 1) the existential, epistemological, and ontological starting place (land/planet systems), 2) an emphasis on universal connectedness, and 3) a social-justice agenda (Kaukko & Fertig, 2016). These shared dynamics, as shown in Table 1, map to the elements of transformational learning. Teasing out the shared dynamics of these related transformational approaches with Indigenization can help us understand it, as an educational trend, and also lead to insights into institutionalized transformational learning capacity.

## Indigenization

While some universities are gearing up for stronger global learning initiatives, others, especially in Canada, are gearing up for *Indigenization*. Based on Indigenous frameworks for knowledge and learning, Indigenization (sometimes with a lower-case "I") is receiving attention as a major trend in higher education in Canada. According to Gaudry and Lorenz, "Canadian post-secondary institutions are now struggling with how to ethically engage Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge systems" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018). This motivation is strong, but might be stronger if it is seen in tandem with mutually reinforcing trends in transformational and global learning.

### Examples of Indigenization

According to Lewis Cardinal (2001), the walk with Indigenous people brings not one Indigenous perspective but many; all of which reflect the born-of-the-land foundation on which Indigenous culture and life experiences derive. Cardinal continues,

> When you create something from an Indigenous perspective, therefore, you create it from that environment, from that land in which it sits. Indigenous peoples with their traditions and customs are shaped by the environment, by the land. They have a spiritual, emotional, and physical relationship to that land. It speaks to them; it gives them their responsibility for stewardship; and it sets out a relationship. (p. 180)

Cardinal's view of a common Indigenous perspective, thus, comes from an impulse to achieve something from which some people have been "far removed," not measured in time but in consciousness and awareness. He is prompted to ask a similar question to that which we pose for this investigation: How can program administrators evoke an indigenized worldview, bring it forward, and implement it?

A brief look at examples of indigenization in academic and professional disciplines in Canada shows the potential of the indigenous perspective to achieve transformational learning outcomes in higher education. In health care, for example, Curtis (2014) shows how indigenization in learning can validate Indigenous ways of knowing through "interventions in keeping with Indigenous pedagogical imperatives" (p. 161). Similarly, at Dalhousie University, Loppie shows how researchers can "incorporate the paradigmatic and methodological traditions of Western science and Indigenous cultures" (Loppie, 2007, p. 276). In addition to these examples of indigenization in health, sustainability researchers also find themselves aligning with indigenous perspectives. Johnson, writing about sustainability programs, claims that "Indigenous observations and perspectives are critical for establishing or expanding collaborations with sustainability scientists" (Johnson et al., 2016). The work of Johnson and colleagues at the University Manitoba in the special issue of *Sustainability Science* explores indigenization "to cultivate mutually conducive and appropriate principles, protocols, and practices that address humanity's collective need to sustain landscapes that demonstrate the ability not only to maintain human life but more crucially the interrelated more-than-human biosphere" (p. 1).

#### *How do scholars articulate these connections?*

Anderberg (2009) finds an important interface between global learning and sustainability perspectives, noting that,

> There is an increased awareness in the academic [sustainability] community of the global perspective. The global perspective can stimulate students to widen their thinking and go beyond their own national context, by being more critical and imaginative when considering how classical concerns of social policy are developed in a global context. (p. 372)

Indigenization, or doing public work in alignment with Indigenous perspectives, is also present in policy thinking about law. Napoleon and Frieland note that the key overlapping concepts lie in Indigenous

thinking about law. “By bringing common pedagogical approaches from many Indigenous legal traditions together with standard common law legal education, we hope to help people learn Indigenous laws from an internal point of view” (Napoleon & Friedland, 2016). Perhaps most importantly for higher education program administrators, the motivation toward Indigenization is fueled by developments in research policy. Incorporating an Indigenous perspective in research is one of the most urgently needed but challenging areas of Indigenization. As pioneer thinker on Indigenous research, Tahwai Smith writes, “The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world’s colonized peoples” (Smith, 2013). In terms of what comprises an Indigenous perspective, Durie has identified a number of characteristics of “Indigeneity” (2005). These concepts, shared among actual Indigenous groups, include: balance, nature, respect and reciprocity (relationships), and storytelling.

So the point here is that Indigenous frameworks and “indigenization” are relevant to a variety of domains when seen as a revision framework for higher education: a variety suggesting commonalities with global and transformational learning. In the next section we expand these known commonalities, drawing out the institutional challenges found among the three pedagogical trends.

**Challenges to the Indigenization Framework**

The possibility of a mutual interface among these perspectives has not gone unnoticed. Durie (2005), for example, explains an “interface” area of research that, while it starkly contrasts scientific knowledge and indigenous knowledge, is a shared conceptual area for learning and research which blends the “two systems of understanding in order to create new knowledge that can then be used to advance understanding in two worlds” (p. 306). In this article I take a similar approach; only I assert that the intersection of global learning and indigenous learning may be profitably assessed by seeing them as mutually accelerating. Together they push transformational learning from the margin to the centre of the higher-education world. A fruitful thought experiment is to see the obstacles facing Indigenization in light of the four challenges facing transformative learning: silos, positivism, disorientation, and apathy.

In the next section we briefly analyze how indigenization, and the perspective it brings on the knowledge and learning characteristics of Indigenous culture, aligns with the four challenges to transformational learning discussed earlier. Table 1 summarizes how Indigenization reflects these challenges seen through the analytical lens of the transformative learning model.

In this brief analysis, I address each of the four challenges to transformative learning, and extend them by turning to Indigenization concerns that have been expressed in scholarly literature. The challenge with the *emancipatory* element, or goal, is putting the individual into the context of “the land.” Indigenous knowledge is based on the land; the land is a kind of textbook for learning (Johnson et al., 2016; Mamers, 2017). Indigenous perspectives are thus “redefining” for administrators as for students. The disorientating redefinition pushes the learner to decouple with existing disciplinary “turf” as well as from physical land. Many researchers, such as myself, routinely acknowledge the importance of territorial “starting points” for all learners. In universities, the challenge lies in *presence* and *origin* as a starting place, rather than school experiences. Likewise the rubric of *interpretive*, non-Western scientific methodologies is manifest in knowing and learning not by science, but by a sense of reciprocal interaction with human and non-human people. *Developmentally*, the connect-the-dots element of indigenization is storytelling. Storytelling reorients the individual to his or her narratives of community after the disruption of learning and reconnecting. Part of the storytelling struggle connects it with research and research reporting, in that many have yet to reconcile the storytelling or narrative framework with the more Western-oriented, expository, “main point up front” approach so often taught in universities (Grabe, 2002). The connection with the *spiritual* challenge highlights the parallel between citizenship and personal identity. However, as we will learn from Gaudry and Lorenze and others, the spiritual element of indigenization lies in relationships of social justice and equity. The spiritual connection that results from transformative learning should be a refined relationship of equality (assumed in any “decolonized” situation) among Indigenous people and the rest of society. These interpretive parallels with transformative learning form the basis for looking at the institutional challenges to Indigenization.

Kirkness and Barnhart challenge the transformative mission of universities when seen from the perspective of the Indigenous person "going to" the university rather than "coming to" the university to begin a process of enculturation and assimilation (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991). Transformative learning does not entail a kind of brain-wash transformation: learning that separates a student from his or her cultural background or ethical foundations. Perhaps a better way to see transformative learning is that the students' scope of understanding and perspective is challenged and expanded, bringing an accumulative awareness of the issues facing others on a global scale. As with other models of cultural and empathetic capacity, a person does not lose his or her identity, but rather accumulates and accommodates other identities into living relationships.

Gaudry and Lorenz focus on Indigenization as "a move to expand the academy's still-narrow conceptions of knowledge, to include Indigenouse perspectives in transformative ways" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 218). These efforts are analyzed under three "distinct uses" or levels of Indigenization, briefly summarized below.

***Indigenous inclusion***

Merely enrolling Indigenous students and creating courses is a good start, but it is the least disruptive for the institution. It is, however, disruptive of the status quo and is seen as a rhetorical advance. Inclusion is a matter of numbers and, as the authors point out, often a co-objective of both diversity and inclusion measures. However, the burden of change remains with Indigenous people and students: change as in once they are here Indigenous students, faculty, and staff are "expected to adapt to the intellectual worldview, teaching, and research styles of the academy" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 220).

***Reconciliation Indigenization***

This type of indigenization occurred in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's *Calls to Action* (*Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2012) The authors see this document as creating a watershed consisting of "the establishment of Indigenous advisory and/or reconciliation committees" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 222). This indigenization effort created an administrative and pedagogical working space for all parties, beyond the window-dressing metaphors. This is the "course requirement" level of indigenization.

***Decolonial Indigenization***

Decolonial indigenization is identified as "a transformative indigenization program rooted in decolonial approaches to teaching, research, and administration" (Gaudry & Lorenz, 2018, p. 223). Decolonization has to do with power, class, and settler relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenos people. This level of indigenization only lives in scholarship, but with a voice that is increasingly heard (Aikenhead & Elliott, 2010; Manuel & Grand Chief Ronald, 2015). One voice of this level of change is the scholarship of Indigenous resurgence, which sees a pathway to a decolonialized future achieved through practices occurring within Indigenous communities (Asch et al., 2018; Barker, 2015; Corntassel, 2012). So with a university or university program, decolonizing indigenization would result in knowledge and learning addressed from the perspective of a person who disburdens him or herself of a colonial social influence. The adaptation process would follow local or Indigenous practices such as knowledge circles, storytelling, and land-based learning.

## Analysis

Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) point out that much of what appears to be indigenization is actually limited to inclusion of additional Indigenous students, faculty, and staff, or superficial accommodation to Indigenous ways of knowing without substantive ("decolonializing") implementation (p. 223). Their discussion acknowledges that much has yet to be done to implement deeper-level indigenization in

Canadian universities, an implementation that would require a decolonizing impulse. But a decolonizing motivation is often missing in programs and administration.

**Vectors of Adoption**

From our analysis, program administrators interested in transformative learning can see how elements of transformative learning show it to be a link between global learning and Indigenization. But to take the analysis a step further, the elements of transformative learning may themselves reflect stages or various depths of implementation—here I call them "vectors" because they seem to "point"—similar to the surface-to-deeper direction seen in Gaudry and Lorenz's discussion of the adoption of Indigenization (*Vector Definition*, n.d.). These vectors of adoption map the way to levels of capacity maturity (e. g. surface to depth, temporary to sustainable, piecemeal to integrated). As such, these vectors reflect/suggest important measurement criteria for transformative learning capacity of an institution or program. Challenges to the indigenous trend in higher education make evident the connections to transformative and global learning that are implicit in the argument so far. What else can we learn by analyzing this progressive structure of ideas?

We can assert special consideration to these incremental stages because the three levels of indigenization reveal a process that is also *accumulative*. As we have seen inclusion comes first, then reconciliation, then decolonization. Each stage lays the groundwork for the next, so that an advanced organizational capacity would exhibit at the same time all the previous stages. The process follows or deepens, like a vector from inclusion to reconciliation to a decolonizing perspective. The three trends push in the same direction. Transformative learning, global learning and indigenization work as accumulative processes, from more to less superficial, from token to transformation, from the margins to the centre.

**The Transformative Learning Capacity Maturity Model**

The intention of this article is to look at transformative learning as a lens for framing two related trends: global learning and indigenization. A high-level thoughtful analysis of these three learning models suggests a number of similarities among them. What this paper has shown, however, is two things: 1) that those similarities actually exist at the level of learning theories, knowledge definitions, and learning processes, and 2) that the defining elements of the three trends may be matrixed with an action sequence or productive series of steps. These steps have the special characteristic that each step implies the accomplishment of the previous step. In this way, the building blocks or defining characteristics are indicative of or *ontological to* a stage of accomplishment arrayed along vectors of shared learning outcomes. The name often used for the resulting cumulative process framework is a "maturity model."

Maturity models are conceptual devices for measuring competency, or, to use a more current term, *capacity*. In our era of organizational accomplishment and agency, it is often convenient to see an organization or group as having a capability to produce or achieve organizational outcomes. For example, organizations develop advanced financial processes or industrial processes that consist of integrated and cumulative operations for maximum efficiency. Some software companies have a more mature production cycle, just as some universities have matured in areas like diversity, inclusion, or strategic planning. These are characteristics of the organization itself that exhibit best practices like integration with supply and workforce, education and training, and above all, the impulse for recursive examination of capacity toward the goal of continuous improvement. These points of definition are summed up in the definition offered by de Bruin, Freeze, Kulkarni, and Rosemann., "Maturity models have been designed to assess the maturity (i.e. competency, capability, level of sophistication) of a selected domain based on a more or less comprehensive set of criteria" (2005).

The previous discussion of the defining elements of transformative learning, when seen as challenges or outcomes to be achieved, showed interesting parallels with the challenges facing the two similar trends of global learning and indigenization. Such an alignment suggests a further step, inspired by the work of Gaudry and Lorenz, that identifies levels of implementation of indigenization (inclusion, reconciliation, decolonializing). Following their analysis, we can begin to construct parallel levels of

implementation, or implementation capacity, back to transformative learning. The argument or warrant for this de-construction uses the theory of communicative constitution of organizations (CCO) to trace the ontological sources and results of discourse behavior (Wilhoit, 2018).

In the case of detecting the ontological *roots* of process maturity of implementation, the scholar needs to rely on the scholarship of constitutive structures (or "elements") (triangulating with the structures found in global learning and Indigenization) as a reverse scaffolding, then trace possible levels (and names for levels) that might constitute the levels of a maturity model for transformative learning. By articulating the defining elements of each level as parallel with a capacity descriptor (at varying levels of detail) the resulting matrix of level names and process characteristics comes clearly into view. Table 2 contains a list of the four steps of a prototype for a maturity model of transformative learning.

Table 2

*Transformative Learning Maturity Model*

| Level | Capacity Descriptor | Characteristics |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Inclusive | The lowest level of maturity is indicated by creating educational space for a variety of local/global perspectives. Activity is local, enrollment driven, and quantitative. |
| 2 | Reflective | At this level transformative learning is inclusive plus follows a process of reflection, review, and reciprocity. |
| 3 | Connected | This level is inclusive, reflective, and embedded in networks of collaborative learning and sharing of narratives. |
| 4 | Powerful | At this level transformative learning encompasses the first three levels, and has the potential to meet social justice and decolonization goals. This level is rarely if ever achieved. |

## Conclusion

This article has examined the defining elements of transformational learning. These elements reflect on the definitions of global learning and indigenization as promising trends in experiential learning in higher education. We saw how these trends share an emphasis on common elements of transformational learning, emphasizing the *emancipatory*, *developmental*, *interpretive* and *spiritual* dimensions of transformative learning. Global learning tends to reorient the learner's experience to broad or physically remote locations, while indigenization tends to reorient the learner's experience to the immediate vicinity of the land. Together, these three dominant currents interact at the level of ontology as witnesses to us about how institutions of higher education are, for the most part, charting future core elements of learning. For this kind of analysis, the comparison of global learning and indigenization is highly instructive. The resultant maturity model builds on existing scholarship to trace the interaction of defining characteristics and implementation practices. Such a model combines both nominal definitions and process stages. This matrix of ideas is a star to help program administrators design transformational or experiential courses and programs that meet the capacity of a given university.

For the readers of this article, the takeaway from this analysis is how we can examine cross currents of defining elements and, by looking at the practical realities of implementation, begin to realize that movements in pedagogy in colleges and universities, seen through analysis, reveal broad vectors of development and significance. In this way the context of implementation connects ontologically with the theory and ideas of the trends. In the case of international students or culturally isolated students, the need is to bridge the divides between dominant cultures by fostering transformative cultural awareness and broadening experiences. Providing opportunities is just the start. For readers of this work, the need is to track trends in university learning in ways that measure the goals of inclusiveness, reflect on that inclusion, connect reflection and inclusion through study and collaboration with others, and build power by shaping these transformational impulses towards social justice and decolonization.

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# Women4Peace: Transformative Learning through International Collaboration and Peacebuilding

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**Abstract**

*Recent literature suggests that education abroad programs provide a unique opportunity for transformative learning experiences (Gibson, 2017). This paper examines one such approach through a case study of an international exchange program called Women4Peace that offered education abroad opportunities for students and faculty from the United States and Colombia. This program was developed to intentionally maximize opportunities for transformative learning that could enhance key skills for global citizenship, including empathy, collaboration, and self-awareness (Hanson, 2010). This paper provides a detailed summary of the Women4Peace initiative, along with a historical and sociopolitical rationale for the program. This paper also presents strategies that Women4Peace employed to maximize transformative learning among participant to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Colombia. Student and faculty reflections are provided to highlight the transformative learning that occurred during Women4Peace.*

*Keywords:* transformative learning, study abroad, Colombia, women's leadership, collaboration, peacebuilding

## Introduction

International education provides students opportunities to interact with people from other cultures, and can be a catalyst for ongoing personal and professional development. Recent literature suggests that education abroad programs provide a unique opportunity for transformative learning experiences (Gibson, 2017; Hunter-Johnson & Newton, 2016). These experiences are considered transformative because they promote emancipatory principles in which "the learner is presented with an alternative way of interpreting feelings and patterns of action; the old meaning scheme or perspective is negated and is either replaced or reorganized to incorporate new insights" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 88). This process helps the learner develop empathy and embrace differing world views, especially when there is meaningful collaboration towards a common human rights goal (Hawkins & Knox, 2014). Likewise, the cross-cultural, experiential learning that takes place in international education helps develop collaboration and problem-solving skills that can aid in diplomacy and peacebuilding (NAFSA, 2020a). In fact, experts from both higher education and foreign relations have called for a national strategy that recognizes the role of international education in the peacebuilding process (NAFSA).

This paper examines one such approach through a case study of an international exchange program called Women4Peace that offered education abroad opportunities for students and faculty from the United States and Colombia. This program was developed to intentionally maximize opportunities for transformative learning that could enhance key skills for global citizenship, including empathy, collaboration, and self-awareness (Hanson, 2010). This paper provides a detailed summary of the Women4Peace initiative, along with a historical and sociopolitical rationale for the program. This paper also presents strategies that Women4Peace employed to maximize transformative learning among participant to contribute to peacebuilding efforts in Colombia. Student and faculty reflections are provided to highlight the transformative learning that occurred during Women4Peace.

## Background of Women4Peace

Women4Peace arose from a grant winning team, sponsored by the U.S. Department of State and the Colombian Institute of Educational Loans and Studies Abroad (ICETEX) within the framework of the 100,000 Strong in the Americas Innovation Fund. A network of eight higher educational institutions from Colombia (Universidad de La Salle, Universidad de Los Andes, Universidad Nacional, CESA School of Business, Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina, Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Universidad del Tolima, and Universidad de Santander, as well as three from the U.S. (Texas State University, Purdue University, and North Carolina State University) created this project to develop leadership and academic knowledge of undergraduate women from different disciplines interested in research and academic training, in working with communities, and in the implementation of regional projects that contribute to peacebuilding and social development in rural areas of Colombia. The project was made up of a team of mostly female students and professors, with one student and one professor from each university, who developed academic work that led to the formulation of four regional interventions to empower women as agents of change in a post-conflict scenario in Colombia.

The project was developed in three main stages: online academic training, student mobility, and project formulation. During the first stage, the professors designed four specific training courses in peacebuilding, rural development, business, and innovation that students took to create effective interdisciplinary engagement and learn about peacebuilding key issues. In the second stage, two academic visits were conducted, one in the U.S. and one in Colombia that allowed participants to develop intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue, teamwork, and critical thinking. During the visits, students exchanged ideas and information of local good practices in agriculture, social innovation, entrepreneurship, and they also learned about Colombia's armed conflict and the current implementation of the peace accords with the FARC guerrilla movement. The visits provided students with tools and knowledge and paved the way to formulate regional intervention proposals on women's empowerment and social development in Colombia. As a result of the project, three women-targeted initiatives were proposed: 1) cultivating support networks to empower rural women, 2) using art as a form to promote well-being, and 3) promoting start-ups driven by Colombian women who have been victims of domestic violence.

Women4Peace is an example of cross-cultural, interdisciplinary work among students to develop critical thinking and understand social issues from different perspectives. The fact that the consortium was made up of such a diverse group of higher education institutions facilitated an inclusive study where the diversity of the profiles of teachers and students was highly valued. Not only was there cross-cultural exchange, but the project also brought together female students from high-income, urban universities with students from regional universities with particular backgrounds such as those coming from indigenous communities or those who had been directly affected by violence and war. American students learned that limited resources did not stymie Colombian local farmers to develop exemplary good practices in agriculture. In addition, Women4Peace prepared female students to overcome language and cultural barriers, allowing them to praise values that transcend geography and underscores women as agents of change.

**Historical and Socio-political Rationale for Women4Peace**

There are two main factors behind the rationale of the Women 4 Peace project. The first one has to do with the consolidation of peace and social development in a post-conflict scenario in Colombia. After a five-decade internal conflict which claimed at least 220,000 lives and displaced more than six million people, on November 24th, 2016 the Colombian Government signed a peace accord with the FARC-EP guerrilla movement (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia), which laid the foundations to end conflict and build a stable and long-lasting peace (Morales, 2018). Taking into account this context, the Women4Peace project was designed to address key issues in peacebuilding, such as the development of productive projects, social innovation and entrepreneurship, among others.

The second factor attends to empowering women, especially from the rural sector, as a result of a glaring gap between men and women, as well as traditional gender roles. According to the National Administrative Department of Statistics of Colombia – DANE (Ministerio de Agricultura y Desarrollo Rural, 2017), a high percentage of rural women (37.4%) live in poverty, compared to a much lower percentage (12%) of women who live in the same condition in the cities. In addition, the percentage of female-headed households who live in poverty amounts to 41.9% in comparison to male-headed households (37.6%). Rural women and girls continue to take care of domestic tasks, partly because men take on the hard tasks related to agriculture, such as livestock, fishing, mining, and felling trees and, in part, because this division of labor is more a cultural phenomenon. Both men and women who live in the rural area feel that the house belongs to women. Based on this context, the Women4Peace project aimed to increase awareness about this situation by training female students willing to contribute to peacebuilding by enhancing women's participation in economic decision-making.

## International Collaboration and Peacebuilding

Experts in conflict resolution and peacebuilding assert that "international engagement and global learning can help mitigate conflict and empower individuals to become peacebuilders" (NAFSA, 2020b, para. 4); therefore, international collaboration and peacebuilding were key elements of the Women4Peace initiative. Given the collective trauma that Colombia has sustained, along with increasing rates of violence in the United States, both Colombian and U.S. students had a vested interested in working together as women to address these issues by engaging in peacebuilding projects on the local level. Students formed small teams to initiate these local projects, but first, they had to develop their collaborative skills and abilities to work together as a group. In order to achieve group cohesion, Women4Peace utilized experiential peacebuilding activities that gave students and faculty opportunities to develop their communication and problem-solving skills. Group members engaged in physical activities, such as problem-solving and trust-building games and initiatives that promoted transformative learning through interaction and play.

The Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding (2020) provides a comprehensive definition of experiential peacebuilding:

> Experiential peacebuilding is best thought of as an active process with transformative power. It is truly an experience, comprised of rigorous learning and physical activity – two aspects that unite in a kinesthetic effect on the body and mind. The theory behind this work is that experiential learning can build common language and empathy, accelerate trust and facilitate positive experiences within a group. Substantial evidence shows that certain types of experience, particularly cooperative learning toward the mastery of critical life skills, such as communication, creative problem solving, and leadership, and sharing a peak life experience, are especially likely to increase the capacity for compassion towards others and promote group solidarity. (para. 1-4)

Based on Lederach's (1997) book *The Moral Imagination*, experiential peacebuilding highlights the importance of building relationships, positive risk-taking, creating space for creativity, and promoting curiosity about varying worldviews. According to the Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding, these

types of experiences assist with "leadership development, the formation of viable communities and organizational capacity building" (OBP, 2020, para. 4).
Along with the implementation of experiential peacebuilding activities with the students and faculty, Women4Peace was also diligent about incorporating transformative learning best practices for education abroad.

## Maximizing Transformative Learning in International Education

In order to maximize transformative potential for students, it is critical to understand what program components lead to transformative learning in an international context. First, Women4Peace ensured that students were selected into the program for the right reasons. Students' views of education abroad experiences as personal vacation time have been identified as a block to transformative learning (Bain & Yaklin, 2019); therefore, only students who demonstrated a serious commitment to the human rights goals of the project were selected. Women4Peace also focused on maximizing transformative learning by priming students for the transition into a new culture by educating students on the cultural, economic, and historical background of the host countries. Women4Peace did this very intentionally for both travel to the U.S. and travel to Colombia.

In addition to priming students and faculty, Women4Peace included experiences that aided the academic objectives of the project, as well as put students in contact with immersive cultural experiences. Maximizing the contact students had with a culture different from their own helped facilitate student transformation (Bain & Yaklin, 2019). However, these transformational changes can be preceded by an experience of culture shock and feelings of "otherness" (Klein & Wikan, 2019). For this reason, Women4Peace was careful to make sure that the initial introduction to cultural differences was not so great as to induce feelings of powerlessness or helplessness within students, as such feelings may result in emotional disconnect or egocentrism which can block transformative learning (Foronda & Belknap, 2012).

Assignments were given which promoted a deeper understanding of the host culture, coupled with opportunities for personal reflection, which encouraged students to compare their personal beliefs with the new culture, a process known to lead to deep personal transformation (Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, & Lundahl, 2014; Namaste, 2017, Intolubbe-Chmil, Spreen, & Swap, 2012; Stone & Duffy, 2015). Research shows that the prevalence of these well-constructed assignments appears to have a greater influence on transformative experience than program length (Strange & Gibson, 2017), so Women4Peace was intentional in providing these types of assignments ahead of time because the program only included one week in the United States, followed by a week in Colombia.

Though students completed the assignments, Women4Peace maximized transformative learning for both students and faculty. On an individual level, transformative learning was fostered in students by methods that required deep learning and catered to students as whole, complex individuals, rather than information receptacles (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks, & Kasl, 2006). Common tactics included interactive and collaborative, experiential exercises such as group problem-solving, case-studies, discussion, and self-reflection (Adelopo, Asante, Dart, & Rufai, 2017; Alterio, 2011; Brock, & Abel, 2012; Cranton, 2002; Yarosz, & Fountain, 2003; Laver & Croxon, 2015; Xing, Popov, Zhu, Horwitz, & McIntyre, 2019). Self-reflection is critical to transformative learning; therefore, Women4Peace gave students an opportunity understand their own beliefs, explore new avenues of perception, and rework mental schemas. Students were exposed to opinions and views that differed from theirs, which increased their likelihood of experiencing an activating event or catalyst to begin the transformative process (Cranton, 2002). Women4Peace also gave students the opportunity to apply previous life knowledge to the new situations to which they were exposed, in order to generate the reworking of mental frameworks and also enhance the process of transformation (Stacey, Oxley, & Aubeeluck, 2015; Wyant, & Lockwood, 2018).

Not only did students experience transformative learning, but so did faculty members from different disciplines. When faculty experienced this type of transformation, it impacted their beliefs about the nature and methods of pedagogy, often resolving discrepancies between their belief in pedagogical

theory and actual practices. Both self-study and critical reflection were implemented to promote transformational learning, all with the goal of enabling faculty to better understand their own teaching practices (Samaras, Hjalmarson, Bland, Nelson, & Christopher, 2019). Through critical reflection, faculty reflected on the role of education within their culture, the link between education and the creation of a better society, and their place within that system (Liu, 2015). According to Franco (2019), this process required "constant analyzing, questioning, and critiquing the established assumption and implementing changes…" (p.199). Therefore, Women4Peace incorporated methods that supported transformative learning for faculty, including peer groups that utilized a systematic method of self-reflection (Samaras, et al., 2019) and reflective writing (Sockman, B. R., & Sharma, 2008). The following reflections from a Women4Peace student and faculty member, demonstrate the transformative learning that occurred as a result of international collaboration and experiential peacebuilding, as well as the intentional use of transformative practices in education abroad.

**Student Reflections: America—"In Her Words"**

I used to think that because I am a Latina, a daughter of Mexican immigrants and a first-generation college student, I would never get to have an opportunity like Women4Peace. I also thought that because I was only a student, there was nothing I could teach others. As a social work student, I am exposed to the disparities and injustices in the world on a daily basis. This makes it much easier to feel small and hopeless, which is how I was beginning to feel. Nevertheless, in the face of those feelings, this project allowed me to flourish personally as a student, a friend, and a future social worker. Women4Peace gave me the opportunity to travel both in the United States and abroad, learn more comprehensively about peacebuilding, make connections around the U.S. and Colombia, and make lifelong friends.

Not only did this project impact me and the other Women4Peace faculty and students, but it also made an impact on my parents, social work peers, and friends on social media, as I made sure to share the concepts and ideas we discussed throughout the process. I passed on the new information I learned to my parents when I returned home, and to my social work peers through updates and discussions on social media. I know that this project planted a seed of hope for peace that not only motivated me, but also motivated others to be a part of the peacebuilding process.

Although there were many things I learned from this experience, there are two specific skills that were strengthened that I know will help me as a professional in the field of social work. My intercultural communication skills were strengthened in a way that could not have occurred in the classroom alone. The importance of learning about other cultures and their history is especially significant in the field of social work in order to understand peoples' different needs and worldviews. A social worker cannot meet a client's needs if they are not aware of the individual's culture and background. To complete this project, our small group had to identify the needs of the rural women with whom we developed our project, so that the projects we incorporated were relevant to those specific communities.

I also learned how important it is to consider and incorporate different educational backgrounds, perspectives, and cultures when working together to try to solve social and political challenges in our world. While working on these projects, we all had different perspectives, which allowed us to think outside-the-box and have a holistic approach. The students and professors involved in this project came from a wide range of disciplines such as business, social work, soil sciences, psychology, communications, and more. This taught us how to look at a problem from many different angles and gave us the skills to work together with people with different mindsets and approaches to solving political and social issues.

On a personal level, this project helped me build confidence as a student and future social worker. I used to believe that, because I am a young woman and a student, nobody would see any value in what I had to say. Throughout this project, I was able to use my life experiences to contribute ideas for the formation of the project. I did not think that my life story had any meaning, but this experience made me realize how valuable and powerful every person's story really is. I learned that it does not matter where you come from, or what you have been through, your story matters.

This experience also helped me improve my self-efficacy and willingness to set more challenging goals for myself. During the process of the Women4Peace project, I was a full-time college student, an intern at an adult education organization (interning 40+ hours per week), and was in the process of developing *Healthy Hermanas*, a social media platform that my colleague and I created to share health-related content geared toward the Latinx community. However, I participated in and completed the Women4Peace curriculum, which consisted of four modules, video calls, and group work with my peers from around the U.S. and in Colombia. This meant I had to organize and plan accordingly for the project to be a success. Regardless of how much was on my plate, I successfully completed my internship, graduated summa cum laude, and completed the life-changing Women4Peace project with my peers.

This international experience also gave me several tools that will be used in my work as a social worker. It improved my cultural competency and allowed me to see social and political issues from a bird's eye view. It strengthened my ability to work with people from other cultures by learning about their history, their society, and how interconnected we all are around the world. This experience gave me comfort in working with people from cultures different than my own. Overall, this experience helped me identify many qualities and skills I did not know I had and allowed me to flourish and realize my true potential.

**Faculty Reflections: Jorge—"In His Words"**

In my opinion, the Women4Peace project was a very valuable practice of transformative learning because it took into account two important features: diversity and experience. The project was diverse in nature, as its participants came from different backgrounds and disciplines. As the consortium consisted of American and Colombian universities, we were able to look at things from different perspectives and experience different languages, cultures, and lifestyles. Furthermore, the students' areas of study ranged from Engineering and Administrative Sciences to Arts, Agriculture, and Social Sciences, which promoted the emergence of varying positions that incited critical thinking and reflection. Students and faculty from different universities had their own expertise and backgrounds. Thus, urban affluent students could exchange points of views with low and middle-income students who lived in small municipalities or rural areas, sometimes affected by the armed violence in Colombia.

This dynamic created empathy in the group and an interest in what happens to others. I was struck by how we developed a true feeling of solidarity due to the experiences we shared. The experiential nature of the project brought about profound changes in peoples' thoughts and perspectives as students directly encountered how people live in other parts of the world. In addition, experiential learning allowed us to perceive and assess concepts and impressions that were previously overlooked.

Through my own experience as coordinator of the project, I was able to undergo a meaningful change in my way of thinking. Only by sharing everyday situations with the group of female professors and students was I able to understand the importance of using gender-inclusive language in daily communication, which led me to reflect that in many different aspects women do not feel represented. These experiences helped me own some of my male privilege and taught me that it is vital to promote the empowerment of women and fully embrace gender equality. Thanks to my work in this project, I realized that reclaiming women's rights and bridging the gender gap in the workplace deserves the highest importance. However, it seems that there is not enough consciousness about this; however, the experiential learning opportunities provided by Women4Peace helped us build relationships with each other and become aware of situations and tacit assumptions that can be problematic.

## Discussion

These student and faculty reflections provide insight into the power of transformative learning. Shifts in identity, attitudes, and perceptions were some of the profound results of the Women4Peace project, all of which have been identified in the research as key aspects of the transformative learning process (Baldwin, 2019; Illeris, 2014). However, another profound outcome occurred during Women4Peace that can deepen our understanding of the power of international transformative learning

experiences: the development of empathy. Though there is little research showing the link between transformative learning experiences and empathy development, Livingston's (2019) exploration of a transformative learning experience on the Texas-Mexico border, comprised of a 4-week program for medical students to develop compassionate leadership focused on social justice, does begin to shed light on the role that transformative learning can play in empathy development. Students in this program had encounters with the "other" and bore witness to many social injustices, which led to the development of emotional empathy, not just cognitive empathy (Livingston). A similar process occurred during Women4Peace, as demonstrated by the student and faculty reflections shared in this essay.

This process of transcending cognitive empathy, which is defined as having a mental model of someone else's emotional state based on one's own experience, fails when encountering people who are different from us because it is only propositional knowledge (Livingston, 2019). However, transformative learning in an education abroad context seems to help move participants towards emotional empathy, which comes from having shared experiences with those who are different from us, which is experiential knowledge (Herron, 1992). Additionally, Kasl and Yorks' (2016) strategies for creating empathic space among diverse groups is relevant to what occurred during Women4Peace. Women4Peace employed the strategy of whole-person dialogue, which Kasl and Yorks define as an "encounter with feelings, ideas, and actions from within the other's life world" (p. 6). Women4Peace participants joined together in whole-person dialogue around such difficult topics as gender roles, armed conflict, sexual violence, drugs, and poverty. However, these discussions were open-hearted and empathic, leading to greater cross-cultural understanding and awareness.

## Implications for Practice

This program was developed to intentionally maximize opportunities for transformative learning by enhancing key skills for global citizenship, including empathy, collaboration, and self-awareness (Hanson, 2010). The strategies used in this project to achieve these goals have broad implications for the larger field of education abroad. In particular, the human rights focus of this program could be applied to other international exchange programs, along with opportunities for cultural immersion, self-study, and critical reflection. At the core of this program were experiential learning opportunities, in which faculty and students engaged in novel experiences together, followed by opportunities for reflection and integration of learning. The role of experiential learning as a transformative practice is one that is well documented in the education abroad literature, and should be a core element of international education (Bain & Yaklin, 2019).

## Conclusion

Successful education abroad programs that incorporate transformative learning result in significant positive personal and professional changes for both students and faculty. These changes are typically the result of perspective transformation and are marked by an expansion of participants' attitudes, ways of thinking, and frames of reference to a more global and conscious level i.e. global citizenship (Daly, 2019, Dass-Brailsford & Serrano, 2010). However, students and faculty also develop a new sense of empathic identity, grounded in self-efficacy regarding helping others and contributing to building peace in the world. This was certainly true for participants in the Women4Peace project, as articulated through these final reflections from America, the social work student who participated in the project:

> It was not until the Women4Peace project was completed that I realized that I *did* deserve to be in this position. I did deserve to bask in this experience with my peers because my contribution matters, our contribution matters. Our stories and ideas as young Latina women matter in the peacebuilding process. This experience fostered deeper learning and engagement, and I know it

will have a lasting impact on myself and my peers. I will use the skills I learned during Women4Peace to deepen my work serving others in my community and beyond.

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# Transformative Growth in an International Experience through Cultural Humility

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**Abstract**

*After six years of experience in an international project with educators in the Dominican Republic, team members critically reflect on assumptions about the cultural and transformative dynamics of the work. As Mezirow (2009) asserts, "the most personally significant transformations involve a critique of premises regarding the world and one's self" (p.22). The experience details the work of faculty members at a US college of education and partner schools in the Dominican Republic (DR). The deep level of transformative learning was a humbling element, especially for those who considered themselves the culturally relevant educational "experts." This essay additionally examines the depth of the transformative process and the lessons learned as participants came to accept the realization that a more honest evaluation was needed to transform from deficit to asset thinking (Valencia, 2010). Four phases of transformation from an intercultural perspective are explored including disorienting dilemmas, critical assumptions, competence in relationships, and the reintegration of new perspectives (Mezirow, 2000). Experiences from other international projects will examine and compare the challenges of cultural competence and the impact of transformation on individuals. An essential component was listening to the voices of our DR partners. Through contemplative practice, critical reflection, and honest conversation about cultural capacity, transformative learning through cultural humility is recognized as the most significant area of growth.*

*Keywords:* transformative learning, international experience, cultural humility, disorienting dilemmas, critical assumptions, cultural competence, professional learning

## Background

This essay details the complexities, challenges, and transformative learning experiences encountered by educators from the United States of America and the Dominican Republic (DR) during a six-year long collaborative partnership aimed at supporting student learning. During the stages of reflection in gathering and reviewing feedback as well as composing this essay, we have come to realize that it is through cultural humility (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) that we have experienced the most transformative growth from this international encounter. As Mezirow (2009) asserts, "the most personally significant transformations involve a critique of premises regarding the world and one's self" (p.22). Our international project has demonstrated ways that deep transformative learning takes analysis of assumptions (Mezirow, 2000) and creates extensive critical reflection (Mezirow, 1990; Brookfield, 2010, & 2017). Moreover, we learned through cultural humility that what seemed like cultural roadblocks turned into cultural bridges.

This project began in the fall of 2013 at the request of our university leaders who had been exploring a partnership with The McDonald Center for the Advancement of Global Education. The project focus was to work with Dominican schools to set common goals and strategies for improving student learning. By the fall of 2019, we were working with four schools and by the summer of 2020,

three additional schools will be added to the endeavor. Our university team ranges from four to six faculty members as well as numerous college students who help with various components of the project.

During an initial visit in 2013 to what would be our first partner school in San Pedro de Macorís, the cultural challenges became apparent. The visit was primarily designed to meet the educators, talk with them, visit classes and find out if they felt we could help in any way. We listened as they voiced concerns about their needs; some very concrete in terms of professional learning or resources but others reflected systemic issues of poverty in their communities.

In talking with the school leaders, they expressed desires to share ideas with teachers about ways to help students better understand content. They were particularly interested in strategies for classroom management. As the project moved forward, we found ourselves developing learning modules and providing professional learning. The project progressed quickly and now, in retrospect, we were looking more at ways to improve student learning based on our Americanized view of instruction rather than through the lens of the needs of the Dominican cultural mores. Interestingly, as faculty teaching courses that embedded cultural competency and transformative learning theory, we now humbly realize we were discounting some of the key tenets of these premises in our international experience. There is poignant truth in Mezirow's comments that "the more reflective and open we are to the perspectives of others, the richer our imagination of alternative contexts for understanding will be" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 20). It became clear that we needed to question our cultural competence for the project to move forward.

The next sections of this essay will look at some specific pieces of this international project and how transformative learning experiences worked in various ways to provide new understandings and practice through disorienting dilemmas, sets of assumptions, and reintegration of new perspectives combined with the power of reflective practice and cultural humility.

## The Disorienting Recognition of Ethnocentrism

Most of the faculty involved in our project had taught about Mezirow's theory. We knew Mezirow's key tenets of transformative learning theory "as the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindsets, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2018, p.116). The question became: were we enacting the elements of the theory with fidelity in our intercultural experience?

International projects like ours, have many intertwining levels of cultural and implementation complexity. Mitchell and Paras (2018) have eloquently expressed the concerns of the dissonance in international initiatives and how this challenge can have the positive outcome of transformative growth. In our project, the notion of meeting the expectations of our project funding source as well as the demands of the Dominican educational authorities promoting and supporting our work all generated elements of disorientation. In conversations and interviews with Dominican educators, especially those teachers on the frontline of day-to-day instruction, we realized the project presented dissonance and dilemmas for them as well. Nevertheless, our ethical sense of examining our own preconceived assumptions about the purpose and mission of our work was a task that we could not avoid.

When critically reflecting on our experiences over time, it seems that the initial signals we were getting from our Dominican partners were ones that indicated they welcomed our educational innovations. We had the impression that we were advancing their methods of instruction. The feedback on professional learning evaluation forms was always glowing and complimentary. However, we would notice that during our next instances of communication or observation that the educators had not really embraced the ideas and, in many cases, their familiar Dominican teaching methods had remained the same. There were times when we were totally puzzled by this. We found ourselves worrying about our partnership and questioning the commitment to the project. It became clear that deficit thinking (Valencia, 2010) and what Mezirow (2018) labels as "ethnocentrism" were getting in the way. Kohlbry and Daugherty (2015) detail findings related to the ways that new cultural perspectives can lead to the realization of unconscious ethnocentricity that is part of the process of transforming into a deeper level of

cultural competence. We experienced this same awareness of hidden ethnocentrism and, in the process, it proved to be a disorienting manifestation of our own cultural competency.

Disorienting dilemmas can be a common experience when participating in international projects especially when there is a stark contrast in the cultural mores of the partner country. Numerous authors have conveyed the unsettling experiences felt by participants encountering international settings especially for the first times. McDowell, Goessling, and Melendez (2012) specifically looked at the experience of disorienting dilemmas in the students participating in an international immersion. They noticed that what the students saw and experienced led them "to inspect their values and understandings of the world—sometimes affirming their cultural perspectives and sometimes challenging and/or broadening their systems of assumptions" (p. 377). This introspection is a common occurrence when one encounters disorienting dilemmas. Mezirow (1991) explains that without the disorienting dilemma, the process of self-examination through reflection and discourse might not even happen. We inherently knew this premise but were taken off guard when we encountered it ourselves.

Mezirow (2018) mentions the issue of ethnocentrism as an example of a habit of mind that can lead to regarding others outside your own cultural realm as inferior (p.116). Mezirow further explains that having a positive experience with someone outside of your group "may change an ethnocentric point of view but not necessarily one's ethnocentric habit of mind" (p.117). If someone would have asked us about our beliefs or cultural sensitivity regarding the international project at its inception, we would have been appalled at the mere insinuation that we were not fully culturally responsive and fully accepting of our Dominican partners. However, over time, and deeper reflecting during our late-night conversations within our group and our closest Dominican friends, we realized that we did in fact have some sets of assumptions that needed examination and transformation.

In conversations with our Dominican partners, we noticed that they were worried that they were not meeting "our" goals. We noticed that they were talking about the work as if it were solely ours and not their project. We also learned that there were more than a few teachers who thought the project was creating more work for them and that they were not sure of its effectiveness. In fact, one of the Dominican school leaders commented "I was discouraged every time I felt like the efforts of the project were met with resistance or complacency." This seemed alarming since we thought we had worked extremely hard at planning and helping our international partners establish their own goals and maintain ownership of the initiative. Mezirow (2012) mentions how disorienting dilemmas are many times "situations that take us by surprise and cause us to question assumptions … and in the process we alter how we see ourselves…" (p.142.) Our critically reflective conversations with our partners and among our university colleagues led us to reassess our thinking. We came to the realization that we did indeed have cultural biases that we had not clearly identified in the beginning stages of the project. Clapp-Smith and Wernsing (2014) noted that self-reflection in international cultural experiences can serve as transformational triggers. Certainly, our critical reflections caused what we now label as epochal disorientations. The notion that we were not culturally sensitive to the needs of the educators was indeed a hard pill to swallow.

## Critical Assessment of Assumptions

Recognizing and transforming cultural bias takes deep introspection and reflection. As Mezirow commented in his conversations with Dirkx, Mezirow, and Cranton (2006), "Those of us who take seriously the 'transformative' in transformative learning are interested in a kind of 'deep' learning that challenges existing, taken-for-granted assumptions…" (p. 126). When designing and implementing international experiences there can be the tendency for those from the dominant culture to think of the work with those in international settings as less fortunate and needing our help. This work can make those more privileged participants think of themselves as being on a higher moral plane and not really in need of assumption examination. In our case, along with recognizing cultural biases, there was the admonition that we had to humbly accept the idea that our project was not as culturally relevant and impactful as we initially had hoped. Our sense of participating in a project that would be a way of helping others and

increasing learning experiences for less fortunate groups of international students and educators in a sense fed our moral belief that we were doing "good work." As Brookfield (1998) asserts, "We learn to recognize the dimensions of selfishness that attach themselves to moral action and come to distrust the pleasurable feelings we experience in acting 'morally.' Moral behavior is scrutinized for the selfishness it sometimes represents" (p.293). During our critical assessment, we realized that there was this element of selfishness in our thinking.

As we look back over these periods of critical reflection there is the additional realization that we sought not only internal reflection but external input as well. We were fortunate to have other scholars not involved in our project who were well versed in cultural competence. Some deep conversations about the challenges we were facing and our apprehensions about meeting the needs of our international partners led to honest and sometimes humbling critiques from our colleagues. O'Dwyer, Bowles, and Chróinin (2019) noted that external critical friends can extend our internal reflection and extend the ways we challenge our assumptions and ideas. In a recent study by Ceo-DiFrancesco, Dunn, and Solorio (2020), the process of experiencing dissonance through group reflection promotes new perspectives and builds the self-awareness necessary for enhancing intercultural competence. We found these factors at play in our personal growth in cultural competence. A trusted peer that is not deeply connected to your work can help in the identification of frailties that insiders may not be able to recognize.

After deep critical reflection and honest examination, we realize with humility that our assumptions about our unbiased thinking about the Dominican culture were unfounded and that we did indeed possess cultural biases that had to be recognized and owned. The positive result is the power of transformative experience and the capacity to use this learning to share our experiences with college students who work with marginalized populations. Research by Nerstrom (2017) reiterates our belief that transformative learning "has a long-term effect and that truly transformed people do not eventually revert to their prior ways of thinking and being" (p. 36). For us, the test of transformation is the ability to maintain constant examination of cultural relevancy and to ensure that new members of the project are included in reflective asset thinking (Valencia, 2010) about our Dominican partners.

## Community and Growth Through Relationships

Despite the initial struggles of facing assumptions and uncovering bias, eventually there were many positive transformative elements in our international project that supported transformation. One aspect that stands out is the way that deep personal relationships within our team and with numerous Dominican educators developed over time. In our many discussions and interviews, we learned that our DR partners were experiencing transformative learning along with us. Taylor (1998) described the way that establishing relationships with others was one of the essential factors in transformative learning. Taylor (2007) additionally noted that we grow in our sense of community "through trustful relationships that allow individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly and achieve mutual and consensual understanding" (p. 179). It was through more open, honest, and culturally sensitive conversations that we came to develop relationships with our Dominican partners. One key descriptive element of the DR culture is the importance of spending time strictly on social discourse. We learned to relax, slow down, stop looking at the clock, and enjoy chatting about the weather, family, and life in general before jumping into business talk.

In collaborative international projects, it takes time for both sides to navigate the cultural landscape. There can be misinterpretations and cultural nuances that can be either deliberately or unconsciously misread. Of course, many times it is strictly a language translation problem. In our conversations with our partners, they acknowledged that our inability to speak fluently in Latin American Spanish was a roadblock. Also, sometimes our translated instructional materials did not convey meaning that made sense. It took several rounds of translation with their support to get our educational jargon in sync with their pedagogical customs. These interactions uncovered our realization that despite reading, talking and listening about their culture, in our small private conversations, we came to understand that we still did not really understand them. This would lead to deeper, personal and sometimes very

individual reflective moments. Chang, Chen, Huang, and Yuan (2012) talk about this same concern they experienced with an international project in Taiwan. They found the participants in the project faced deeper inner personal growth. "When they interacted with the new environment, new challenges increased … consequently, there was a strong motivation for introspection from a deeper and closer perspective." (Chang et al., 2012, p. 241). Cultural conversations revealed differences, but it was also in some of those quiet, reflective moments alone that we faced the most honest recognition of our hidden deficit thinking.

## Reintegration of New Perspectives

Over time the process of self-examination and critically reflective conversation, we came to identify the assumptions and biases that were holding us captive and preventing us from fully appreciating all the cultural assets inherent in our international work. These new sets of thinking proved to be beneficial to our closest Dominican partners. We took time to more closely attend to their insights and did more observing and listening than talking. Three of the teacher leaders that we were working with came to stay with us in the US. This time together opened new avenues for discussion since they visited numerous schools and had a better understanding of the commonalities and differences in the structure and cultural dimensions of our educational system. The trip was also full of social and family events. In interviewing these teachers, a few years after their visit, they mentioned that this trip was a turning point for them in the project, because we built deeper relationships in this intensive time together. One teacher wrote about the impact of this visit and that it was a transformative moment in the partnership since we were connecting with each other on human levels rather than professional levels.

Facing philosophical dilemmas did indeed lead to transformed behavior. Our American team transformed in specific ways. The planning of visits to the Dominican schools altered in the ways we approached our partnerships. Having a pre-established filter to look at the work from a more culturally responsive stance changes the focus and the outcomes. There is now more deep analysis about the assumptions related to our goals and actions. There is a more profound sensitivity to the needs of our partners. We realize now that we are the learners. These are good lessons that we have been able to pass on to new members of this international project as well as sharing with our college students.

## Power of Reflective Practice and Cultural Humility

There are many elements of transformative learning that have occurred over the course of this international adventure. In this final section, there are two points that seem most salient to this essay. The first is the importance of open and contemplative reflection and the second is the power of recognizing cultural humility as a transformative area for growth when making assumptions regarding others who have backgrounds and ways of knowing different from your own.

In the case of this international experience, we believe that without critical reflection there would not have been the extent of transformative growth or the positive benefits of the goals of supporting international educational endeavors. Brookfield (2017) probably says it best when he describes critical reflection as the "sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of our … assumptions" (p. 3). It is never easy to conduct a deep examination of assumptions especially for adults who may think they have mastered bias recognition. However, many times assumption examination happens on a superficial level. Many of us are truly unaware of deep-seeded biases. In fact, some will swear they have none. However, when confronted with an international setting, when one is away from what is familiar and comfortable, sometimes, if you are fortunate enough and receptive enough, you may come to grips with your menacing biases and face them head on.

It is also through the tasks of listening and creating respectful conditions that one opens the doors to growth. Butterwick & Lawrence (2009) beautifully express these concepts:

> How we ourselves illustrate respectful listening through our bodies and our words is important. We can create an environment where transformational learning can occur; however, without care and attention to the power we have and the working of creating conditions for respectful speaking and listening, we can also contribute to oppression and silencing. (p. 44)

There is a fine line we walk when involved with international experiences. We can approach the precipice with open and receptive frames of reference, or we can plunge ahead arrogantly thinking that we are the most culturally responsive ones in the room. We have come to believe that one of the ways we must begin each new international encounter is with a strong sense of cultural humility.

Tervalon and Murray-García (1998) originally considered cultural humility as a needed perspective for medical staff working in culturally diverse settings. These authors defined the concept as a "process that requires humility as individuals continually engage in self-reflection and self-critique as lifelong learners and reflective practitioners" (p.118). As the idea of cultural humility has evolved, recent work has examined the transformative capacity of cultural humility in the context of law (Hamman, 2017), library science (Andrews, Kim, & Watanabe, 2018), and nursing (Kako & Klingbeil, 2019). In addition, cultural humility naturally has many relevant applications for international experiences.

Hockett (2018) asserts that "the concept of cultural humility furthers the building blocks of transformational theory by also addressing one's previously held biases and assumptions regarding culture and diversity" (p. 124). As detailed in our international experiences, the disorienting dilemma of realizing our hidden cultural biases was the impetus for our transformative growth and revitalization of our cultural exchanges with educators in the Dominican Republic. What has become more apparent is how humbling an experience this can be. We believe that is that very sense of humility that brought about our deep analysis of our hidden cultural biases. There is power in knowing that transformative learning can occur even with those who are highly educated if they are willing to deeply examine their assumptions, critically reflect, and be open to change. Mezirow (1998) labeled transformative learning as emancipatory. We concur.

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# Transformative Holistic Learning Experiences through Study Abroad: Place-Based Pedagogy with Pre-/In-Service Teachers

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**Abstract**

*Teachers' first years are challenging for a variety of reasons, and can result in them leaving the profession (Veenman, 1984). Reasons for leaving are numerous but include: feeling unprepared to teach diverse student groups, lack of self-satisfaction, and feeling disconnected from students. International, place-based experiences provide opportunities to address interdisciplinary connections, which can provide rich experiences for teachers to meet the needs of our increasingly diverse educational landscape. In an effort to address these issues, the authors investigated the following research questions: Does a short-term international study abroad in Costa Rica for pre- and in-service teachers initiate holistic transformative experiences? And to what extent do short-term study abroad experiences transform pre- and in-service teachers' perspectives of their profession? Students' reflections were coded primarily using Singleton's Head, Heart and Hands Model for Transformational Learning. Much of the development in the cognitive (Head) domain involved students' experiences engaging with content-specific knowledge through interdisciplinary activities. The more physically active elements of the study abroad directly contributed to participants' psychomotor (Hands) development, and students reported feeling more confident and engaged, especially as they worked on overcoming fears and doing things they've never done before. Lastly, in the affective (Heart) domain, participants consistently reflected on a reinvigorated passion for teaching and learning, and the experiences contributed to deconstructing stereotypes they held about people different from themselves. The present study implicates: the need for continuing inclusion of challenging, international cultural experiences, the purposeful development of critical place-based pedagogical approaches, and the importance of place as an aesthetic context to frame and transform perspectives.*

*Keywords:* transformative learning, study abroad, pedagogy of place

## Introduction

Teachers' first three years, often referred to as their induction years, are challenging for a variety of reasons (Veenman, 1984). Many educators leave the profession during this period of time—nationally, approximately 17% of teachers leave by their fifth year (Gray and Taie, 2015). Reasons for leaving are numerous, but can include: feeling unprepared to teach diverse groups of students, lack of self-satisfaction and engagement, and feeling disconnected from students, the material, and the educational space (Stinebrickner, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2003; Inman & Marlow, 2004). While teacher preparation programs continually strive to improve, meeting the needs of students in schools with increasingly

challenging contexts remains an uphill battle given the wide variation in teacher preparation programs (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2003). In light of trying to meet these needs, noted curriculum theorist, Patrick Slattery (2013), stresses that to do so, education must recognize that, "[t]his is a dramatic time to analyze the interdisciplinary connections among economics, ecology, social upheaval, accountability, and curriculum" (xiii).

International study abroad experiences, grounded in implementing a pedagogy of place approach to instruction, provide opportunities to address interdisciplinary connections through intersectional lenses. Research shows that international experiences, as well as pedagogical experiences grounded in "place" outside of traditional classroom contexts, can positively impact teachers holistically through the creation of transformational learning experiences (Barkhuizen & Feryok, 2007; Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009). In citing Pugh's (2002) operational definition of transformative experiences, Singleton (2015) address the holistic nature of transformative experience which include an expansion of perception, experiential value or interest, and motivated use, which is an active use of concepts learned during school in students' personal lives. Dewey (1934), in *Art as Experience*, discusses the benefits resulting from having aesthetic, transformative experiences as having the potential to change a person's relationship with the world, causing the rise of new ways of seeing, perceiving, and existing. Oftentimes, and consistent with pedagogical ideas of "discomfort" as a curricular asset (Zembylas, 2015), these genuine and deep experiences can be uncomfortable for students. In spite of that discomfort, or rather, *because* of that discomfort, one which involves mind, body, and heart, transformational learning experiences can be positive for participating students (Singleton, 2015; Gardner, 1999). For teachers undergoing such experiences, impacts include teachers' development of their own self-efficacy, improvement of classroom management skills, and refinement of pedagogical practices (Hoy & Spero, 2005). Despite a multitude of research studies, a gap in the literature exists in examining the holistic impact of international place-based experiences that directly incorporate service-learning with pre- and in-service teachers.

Participants in the present study included undergraduate and graduate pre and in-service teachers enrolled in a large southwestern U.S. research university. This study investigates participants' takeaways, or learned insights, from attending a seven-day study abroad program in Costa Rica. Prospective and current K-12 teachers participated in a variety of structured learning activities intentionally designed to push students into zones of discomfort (Zembylas, 2015) with the intention of provoking deep and meaningful transformational learning experiences. Activities included nighttime rainforest hikes, service within a local elementary school and a combined middle and high school, forest zip-lining, and several others. Simultaneously, an equal and primary goal of this study abroad experience is in its modeling of the importance of pedagogical practices emphasizing "place." In consideration of the intentions of the program presented in this study, we sought to address the following research questions:

1. Does a short-term international study abroad in Costa Rica for pre- and in-service teachers, grounded in pedagogy of place, initiate holistic transformative experiences?
2. To what extent do short-term study abroad experiences transform pre- and in-service teachers' perspectives of their profession?

## Literature Review

### *Teacher Induction Years*

Over the last decade, researchers have found an increase in the attrition rate of novice teachers (Papay, 2017; Redding & Henry, 2018), with some leaving even before the end of their first school year. By the fifth year, some sources report that 40-50% of beginning teachers leave; in urban schools and rural schools with a high-percentage of minority students, that number increases to 75% (Ingersoll & Perda, 2012). High percentages of teacher turnover and attrition are costly, both in time and money. According to the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, nearly $8 billion per year is spent on recruitment and hiring, as well as professional development and training of replacement teachers (Carroll, 2007). These percentages reflect the combined number of teachers that transfer to a different

school/district, as well as those who leave the profession entirely; nonetheless, they paint a stark picture of teacher retention.

There are a number of reasons that teachers choose to leave the profession, but researchers have identified four major factors: compensation, preparation, mentoring and induction, and school conditions (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). While all of these factors are important to consider, we are particularly interested in how preparation and induction can be positively impacted by transformative learning experiences. Continuing research has shown that attrition is unusually high for those who are less prepared to enter the classroom (Ingersoll, Merrill, & May, 2014). There are also many workplace conditions that contribute to teachers' decisions, including: instructional leadership, school culture, collegial relationships, time for collaboration and planning, teachers' agency, effective professional development, school facilities, parental support, and resources (Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, & Carver-Thomas, 2016). As described above, schools with high rates of minority students tend to have higher attrition rates. Teachers in Title I schools have 50% higher rates of attrition than those in non-Title I schools (Carver-Thomas, 2016).

As teacher preparation programs work to meet the challenges of preparing student teachers for increasingly diverse schools, study abroad programs provide interesting opportunities for growth. Myers (1997) states that the best way to achieve the highest level of cross-cultural awareness is to be completely immersed in a culture completely different than one's own. It is imperative that pre-service and induction-phase in-service teachers are provided with opportunities to work with diverse populations in various contexts, both to provide more preparation to work in high-minority schools as well as increase their cross-cultural awareness. Experiences such as study abroad can provide those opportunities.

***Pedagogy of Place***

Transformative learning theory presents a framework to view how place-based educational experiences can change a learner's mind-set to become more inclusive, open, reflective, and emotionally capable of change. Changing and expanding worldviews of learners is the goal of transformative learning from the perspective of Mezirow (1978), Taylor (2007), and O'Sullivan (2008). As Lange (2004) conveys, it is hoped that the "cultural scripts they held for success, security, status, importance of paid work, life purpose, and fulfillment were redefined" (p. 132). Foundational to this approach of transformative learning is the critical pedagogical perspective that knowledge is not value-free, and that learning needs to be personal and meaningful (Gruenewald, 2007; Orr, 1992; Sipos, Battisti, & Grimm, 2008). Meaning-making which involves emotions, relevance, and context is central to the development of individuals and in creating optimal conditions for engagement to learn. Places are invested with meaning and shape our consciousness, social identities, attitudes and behavior (Hutchison, 2004). Place provides a context, an internal and external landscape, that frames, organizes, and anchors experience which is needed to extract meaning and construct knowledge. Place also provides an experiential background for shared experience and reflection.

*Pedagogy of place* is a combination of critical pedagogy and place-based education. Critical pedagogy situates learning spaces in a sociocultural and socioespacial perspective (Pipitone, 2018). Study abroad is an experiential learning journey in a place that is novel to the participants. Being immersed in another culture and ecosystem can be a catalyst for enhancing pre-service teachers' ecological knowledge, but also global competencies, social awareness, and cultural responsiveness. The study abroad program described here includes service and interaction with rural Costa Rican elementary, middle, and high school students. In these spaces, they are aware of cultural differences, yet also experience the commonalities of teaching and working with children. These interactions and experiences have the potential to enhance pre-service teachers' ability to work with diverse learners in their own practice at home.

Even a short-term study abroad (STSA) can increase intercultural awareness, emotional intelligence and increased self-awareness (Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017). While traditionally, study abroad has been between one semester and a full academic year, more recent trends illustrate a concerted shift in the nature of study abroad design and enrollment. The Institute of International Education (IIE), as

cited in Vanden Berg and Schwander (2015), report that "the majority of students (62%) who studied abroad did so in a short-term program," indicating a shift from traditional study abroad program enrollment toward STSA programs. Vanden Berg and Schwander (2015), in citing Donnelly-Smith (2009), note that:

> In addition to increased numbers of student participation, the nature and scope of study abroad programs have changed dramatically in recent decades. There has been a shift away from full academic calendar year programs toward short-term study abroad programs generally accepted to be from one to eight weeks long. (p. 18-19)

Although the program is very short in duration, it has been carefully designed to facilitate transformative learning experiences. This STSA has been facilitated by the same instructors for four years. Group leaders have established relationships with local people, local schools, and the staff at the university's rainforest research center where participants reside and study during the trip. In addition, the instructors had taught the majority of participants and had already built relationships with students. A well-designed study abroad program that is purposed to initiate transformative experiences includes a disorienting environment, cognitively critical reflection, and emotionally charged relational interactions with a goal towards incorporating these experiences into personal practice. During nightly class meetings, we reflected on the day's events and discussed the impact of place-based experiential learning from a theoretical and personal perspective. These experiences and reflections became catalysts for constructive discourse that allow cognitive, affective (social-emotional), and behavioral transformations (Ritz, 2011). This holistic approach is framed by the Head, Hand and Heart model for transformative learning in place.

***Head, Hands, and Heart***

Pugh's (2002) transformative learning construct offers an analytic tool for measuring transformational experiences through expanded perception (head), expanded value (heart), and application of learning (hands). A holistic framework from the personal perspective of head, hands, and heart is a starting point to frame transformative experiences. Transformative learning involves a holistic approach that is inclusive of growth in all domains of development: cognitive, psycho-motor, and affective. Holistically addressing all learning domains relates to the organizing principle of transformative education through engagement of head, heart, and hands (Orr, 1992; Sipos, et al, 2008). There are also specific attributes that have been associated with transformative processes. These are reflection, active engagement, and relational interactions (Mezirow, 1978). The measurable components of change in perception, change in value, and active use of new awareness in one's personal life are easily categorized within the domain areas (Pugh, 2002). Educators set the stage for transformative experiences through authentic community context that allows for deep engagement, building relationships, and experiences for reflection. It is the authentic context of place that offers students a context to create meaning from their learning experiences.

The Head, Hands and Heart model reflects that transformation is a multi-dimensional process and that change requires more than knowledge, logical argument, or an emotional appeal. Experience and reflection along with awareness and caring are needed to initiate a true transformational event. In the case of a study abroad experience, place offers a stimulating, authentic context for meaningful educational experiences that hold potential for personal growth for learners, going beyond academics. The essential elements of transformation—deep engagement, relational knowing, and reflection—can have a greater impact within an authentic context and place, for meaning-making. Relevant educational experiences are needed to reshape teaching and learning for more productive means (Sipos et al., 2008). The holistic pedagogy of engaging head, hands, and heart reclaims a personal perspective which brings community into the curriculum and the real world into our student's lives. From this perspective, transformation goes beyond epistemological processes of a change of worldview to an ontological process of a change in being in the world (Lange, 2004).

For a visual representation of the Head, Hands and Heart Model, see Figure 1 below. In the figure, Head, Hands and Heart refers to the three learning domains—cognitive, psycho-motor, and affective—and reflect the holistic nature of transformative experience. Reflection, relational knowing, and deep engagement are essential aspects of transformative learning theory and can be examined qualitatively. Expansion of perception, expansion of value, and active use of concepts are quantitative aspects of transformative experiences. It is hypothesized that transformative learning experiences are more likely to occur in a place, such as a natural setting, that offers an authentic, aesthetic context for meaning.

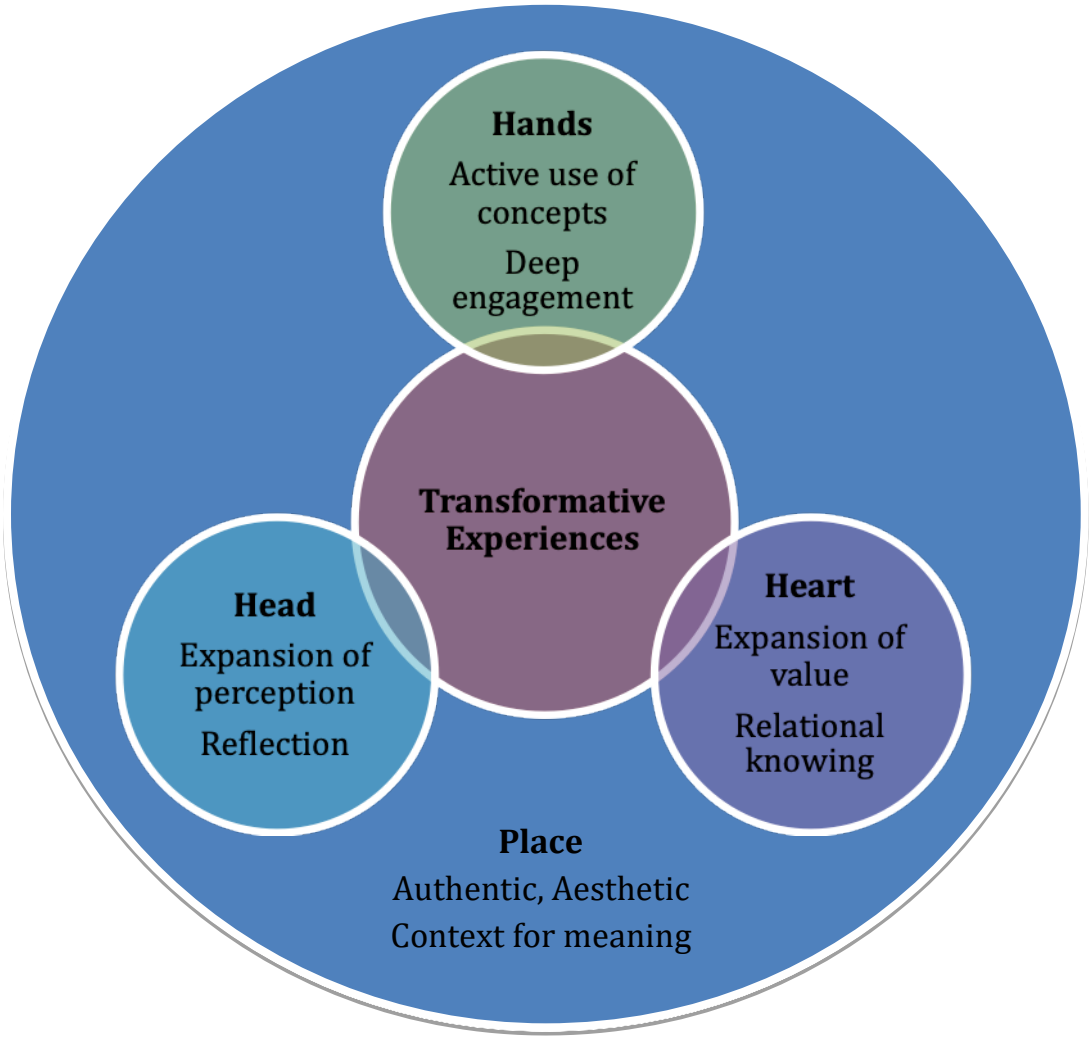


*Figure 1*. Visual Representation of the Head, Hands and Heart Model.

## Methods

In this qualitative study, the researchers investigated the impact of a structured international STSA program grounded in a pedagogy of place. Participants provided written accounts of their experiences while attending a study abroad in Costa Rica. Selection of participants for the experience was separate from recruitment and selection for this study. All study abroad students were asked to participate in the study, with most electing to participate (n=12).

Data was derived solely from participants' summative reflection essays. Participants' essays were analyzed using *a priori* coding (Saldaña, 2013) according to Singleton's (2015) HHH model. Each domain of Singleton's (2015) HHH model was selected as a code for our data set. "Member checking" (Saldaña, 2013) was used subsequent to the initial coding and occurred over the course of several conversations among the three research team members. To systematize this, and given the narrative structure of participants' summative reflections, we used Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zimbler's (1998) analytic approach to categorical content analysis, whereby "[c]ategories of the studied topic are defined, and separate utterances of the texts are extracted, classified, and gathered into these categories/groups" (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998, p. 13). Table 1 delineates the overall breakdown of where participants' reflections fall within each domain. This coding process then served as the catalyst for several dynamic conversations among the research team members to finalize placement of the data into each category.

Table 1

*Breakdown of Head, Hands and Heart Entries*

| Participant | Head entries* | Hand entries* | Heart entries* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| 4 | 2 | | |
| 5 | | 1 | 2 |
| 6 | 2 | | |
| 7 | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| 8 | | | |
| 9 | | | 2 |
| 10 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| 11 | 1 | 2 | 1 |
| 12 | 4 | | |
| **Total** | **14** | **8** | **13** |

**Entries* defined coherent chunks of continuous information on a topic, where a given topic was determined by the cohesion of an experience/s through its/their effect/s as the linkage.

**Data Sources**

Data for the present investigation was collected during a STSA program at a large research-intensive university in the Southern U.S. Participants included both undergraduate (n=7) and graduate (n=5) students at different stages of their teaching careers: the undergraduate students were all pre-service teachers, and all but one of the graduate students were in-service K-12 teachers of varying years (the remaining graduate student is currently pursuing a doctorate and is teaching in a higher education context). As a required component of enrollment in the study abroad program, each student was required to write summative reflection paper recounting, exploring, and debriefing their experiences while attending the program. For students volunteering to participate in the present investigation, their final papers were utilized as the primary data set. Because students' final papers were used as data, no analysis was conducted until after the required course attached to the study abroad officially closed and grades were submitted. Additionally, any personally identifying information was anonymized prior to coding and analysis. More information on how data were gathered is provided in the results section.

## Results

As an instructional component of the course attached to the study abroad tour in Costa Rica, attending students were required to write a final paper conveying overall impressions and take-aways of their time abroad, specific memories, moments, or accounts which resonated for them during their time in Costa Rica. This included any thoughts, shifts in thinking, or noticed changes in attitude attributed to their participation in programmed activities and events. Students were provided with several opportunities to recall and reflect upon experiences. These opportunities took the form of guided debriefs in group settings following a programmed activity. Guided debriefs were intended to surface ideas and encourage community building. Opportunities for individual, free explorations of both planned and unplanned activities were also provided. These were intended to provoke introspection and cultivate intrinsic connection to space, place, and self. Additional time was provided allowing students to write the final paper for the course.

Findings indicate that participants' experiences resonated in one or more ways. While participants varied in their thoughts on which experiences resonated enough to provoke explicit reflection in their final papers, each participant identified the study abroad as deeply moving and life-changing. In recording their take-aways, all participants indicated a sense of intrinsic transformation or growth. Many directly tied this growth to the program's fundamental premise as an *international* study abroad and as one directly grounded in a pedagogy of place. Crucially, related to their current roles as prospective or inservice educators, many also connected their take-aways toward bettering their own overall instructional efficacy and passion for teaching. Additionally, these experiences provoked the development of character traits and new ways of knowing necessary for the implementation of layered critical thinking processes in curricula. Many stated the experience as a whole was a reminder that learning is both a continuous process and life-long.

Using Singleton's HHH model, participants' written reflections of their experiences are categorized into three domains: head (cognitive), hands (psychomotor), and heart (affective). Of the 14 enrolled graduate and undergraduate students participating in the study abroad program, 12 chose to participate in the present study. In total, 14 entries were categorized in the "head" domain, 8 were categorized in the "hands" domain, and 13 were categorized in the "heart" domain (see Table 1).

**Head**

Much of the development in the cognitive domain focused on participants' experiences with ecological experts who provided substantial information related to the program's context and history.

> I find it hard to write a reflection on a trip that took my breath away. The week I have spent here [has] felt like a lifetime, and Costa Rica feels like home. I did not know what to expect at first. I was mostly very nervous, fearful of the unknown. I let the fear hold me back from applying for the trip until I decided that it was time for me to face those fears. It was the first time I left the country, and it was worth every minute. At first, I will admit, I carried my own stereotypes along with my luggage. These played a small role behind my fears of traveling to a new country, but a role nonetheless. With all the negative stigma surrounding foreign nations it was difficult to distinguish fact from fiction without seeing it firsthand. (Participant 3)

Participant 3 relays having had a sense of anxiety and fear tied to attending the program itself. Here, she connects this fear to the "stereotypes" she had about travelling in "new" countries. In identifying this fear as she does, participant 3 impugns the education she has had in her region of the United States, calling into question the ways in which fear of the "other" or the "unfamiliar" are instilled in students through formal and informal educational mechanisms. Further, in mentioning the "negative stigma" surrounding foreign nations, there remains an unambiguous sense of coded, racialized language euphemistically and covertly distinguishing between White, Western countries and other countries, such as those found in Latin America. While she may not then or yet be consciously aware that she employs this kind of coded language directly tied to "stereotypes," her recognition and acknowledgement of the ways in which these stereotypes have informed and shaped her approach to the world provides a necessary and vital cognitive

bridge toward undoing those stereotypes and opening up to new understandings of the world. Participant 3's reflections represent the power and necessity of extended, structured, international experiences in reshaping cultural attitudes and perceptions.

As a pre-service teacher, participant 3 goes on to signify a relationship for such cognitive shifts to their applications in her future pedagogical practice, stating, "Fears I faced: language barrier. Now I can relate to ESL students much easier having experienced what it is like to be in a country that speaks a different language" (Participant 3). Here, language is named as a specific, fundamental cause of fear. She bridges this situationally derived realization of this fear to its impact in crafting profound understandings that she explicitly conveys she wants to carry over to her classroom practices.

Participant 6 discusses the deconstruction of previous implicit culturally-derived biases through the knowledge acquired over the course of her time in an international context:

> Just being around the culture for a week has allowed me to slowly pick up on different habits. Even my Spanish has improved. It also opened my eyes to countries the US tends to see as "less fortunate". What I picture when I hear that is people struggling to survive, living in run down homes, with very limited resources. However, in Costa Rica there were a multitude of buildings and resources, the people are happy and enjoy life, and most everyone has a job. What I find most amazing is that ecology is taught in schools, beginning in first grade. This has had an impact on the children's views of the world they live in and the impact they have on it. This is something I have always wanted to incorporate into my classroom, but seeing it first hand [*sic*] helped reignite that spark. I am so grateful for this experience. (Participant 6)

Through participation in an international study abroad program, insights were elicited directly tied to being out of a United States context. Participant 7 encapsulates the overall effect of knowledge acquired through their participation in this study abroad:

> Coming on the trip to Costa Rica has been an experience of a lifetime. There was not a day that I did not learn something new. Being a teacher, I feel that I should also be learning on a daily basis to show my students and my own children that a person should never quit learning. As I participated in each event, I thought about how I could take my new information back to help expand others knowledge. I want to lead by example to show others that you can do what ever [*sic*] you put your mind to. (Participant 7)

This participant quite explicitly explains the cognitive gains made as a result of their attendance in the program.

**Hands**

The more physically active elements of the study abroad directly contributed to participants' psychomotor development while raising new perceptions of self and the world:

> *Pura Vida*. I think about the zip-line, and how much different it was from my experience in Wimberley, Texas. 650 feet looks a whole lot scarier when you are in the air being suspended by a cable and a harness going 50 miles per hour. As excited as I was, every time we got ready to go, I would feel my stomach get in knots and palms would start to sweat. I felt like I would come zooming in on the other side and break both of my legs trying to stop myself on that wall. (Participant 2)

Participant 2 recalls the feeling she had in participating in one of the challenge-by-choice activities. She begins with the phrase, *Pura Vida*, which is, for many in Costa Rica, a phrase indicative of an authentic philosophy promoting an embrace of life. Beginning with this phrase suggests that, despite the sense of adrenaline-inducing apprehension and exhilaration, she remained glad to participate in the zip-lining.

Participant 5 recounts the sensory experiences in attending the *Finca Don Juan* eco-farm and the subsequent zip-line activity:

> On our third day of our trip we visited a farm called Finca Don Juan. Our guide was a man named Domingo. As he took us through the garden he had so much fun and was so passionate about everything he knew. Through his excitement we had so much fun as well. Throughout the tour, we were able to taste the fruits and vegetables that they grew. At the end of the tour we had a lunch that was made up of the food that we had seen through the tour. Thinking about it now I think this is a great example on how Costa Rica really does embrace the idea of Pura Vida. This farm is growing so many different things and they are able to make a meal right there for 14 or more people. The food was completely simple and pure. After a great lunch, we traveled to Sky Treck [*sic*], which is a zip line place in Costa Rica. As I literally flew through the rain forest, 600 feet in the air, I was amazed by the beauty around me. (Participant 5)

Although these are quotes from just two participants, many of the students similarly acknowledged the zip-line activity as pivotal in surfacing and shifting underlying fears. Other participants also mentioned a quiet trek through the rainforest to an isolated waterfall as an extremely physically demanding, yet deeply rewarding, experience. Participants' writing associated with the *Hands* domain reported feeling more confident and engaged directly because of these activities. The visceral impact of overcoming fears and doing things they had never done before provides a transformative sense of accomplishment. This sense of newfound confidence is important for pre- and in-service teachers as they approach their daily practice and professional responsibilities.

**Heart**

In the affective domain, participants consistently relayed a reinvigorated passion for teaching and learning. In addition, participants wrote that, although they may have held pathologizing myths or stereotypes prior to the study abroad, those myths were deconstructed as a result of relational understandings derived from unplanned interactions with humans throughout their time in Costa Rica. Here, Participant 11 conveys feeling the underlying sense of community and connection by virtue of our shared humanity:

> One of the little girls that I was working with pulled a book out from her sparse desk. I knew instantly from the cover illustration that it was an adaptation of Little Red Riding Hood. Picture books are one of my biggest passions and it warmed my heart to see the pride on her face as she shared her book with me. Even though we couldn't connect through language, we were able to share a common connection through literature! That moment for me was priceless! (Participant 11)

Participant 11's experience occurred during a time when the pre- and inservice teachers assisted at one of the local schools with which program coordinators have developed a relationship over several years. Clearly, Participant 11 was profoundly impacted by what she characterizes as a very heartfelt interaction.

While Participant 11 expresses the domain of "heart" through situationally-grounded relational knowing, Participant 10's account below describes "heart" by having the courage to believe in herself:

> I signed up for the directed studies course with some hesitation. I am 43 years old and a mother of three. I knew that I didn't fit the mold of the typical student and worried that I would feel uncomfortable or out of place. However, the idea of visiting a school in Costa Rica and being immersed in the local culture was an opportunity that I just couldn't pass up. I submitted my application and was thrilled to learn that I had been accepted. (Participant 10)

Through an intangible openness fostered in various ways through the program, many participants developed relationships and life-long connections with their peers, with many of the people they interacted with, and, importantly, with themselves. Many of the interactions began as merely polite interactions, but evolved into deep and meaningful relationships. In particular, the visit to the local schools evoked feelings of protectiveness toward the children and gratitude toward the teachers. Many of the participants reported feeling very attached to the children, despite such a short time frame, and expressed a need to stay connected. This protectiveness extended to their surroundings and the environment, and participants felt that the rainforest and its inhabitants deserved protection.

### *Mitigating Teacher Attrition, Turnover, and the Woes Afflicting Education*

Participants' reflections were coded according to Singleton's (2015) Head, Hands, and Heart model. At its core, this model integrates together an effective approach toward inducing transformative learning experiences for students as well as a lens to interpret the reflection essays. We contend that providing future and current educators with transformative learning experiences is made more effective through the provision of an international study abroad experience undergirded by a pedagogy of place approach to curriculum, teaching, and learning. As prefaced in our literature review, we are deeply concerned with the continued attrition and turnover trends in education. As such, we sought to examine how educators' experiences in Costa Rica might shape or reshape their views on the profession. The results indicated that participants' experiences enrolled in this study abroad did shift, reshape, or craft understandings that worked favorably for K-12 students in the long run. Participants reported feeling joy and passion for education or seeing new avenues of instruction that more actively and accurately grapple with the world's increasing ecological and sociopolitical complexities.

Participant 4's final synopsis of her experiences nicely encapsulates the authentic, multidimensional, and layered impact of Costa Rica in a way that speaks to its own very potential to improve education for our K-12 students by improving educational experiences for their teachers:

> As I leave this beautiful country, I want to remember how each experience challenged me and transformed me because this trip was not only about ecological sustainability and education, but it also helped me grow as a person and as an educator. The activities we did helped me understand that although something may intimidate me at first if I just give it a try, I will accomplish something that I never thought I would be able to. I also want to bring back with me a new sense of appreciation for my family, friends, education, and life that I am so fortunate to live. I want to wake up every morning and remember "Pura Vida," and I want to live out that phrase whether it is through my teaching or my relationships that I will continue to build and maintain. Costa Rica is a special place, and it will leave an everlasting impact on my heart forever (Participant 4)

For Participant 4, the entire endeavor seems to have caused a fundamental shift, or a spark, one which expresses each domain of Singleton's (2015) HHH model. Though she verbalizes this beautifully and succinctly here, each participant—without exception—convey like takeaways, albeit in their own voices. Participant 4 also reminds us of that which Dewey continued to express throughout his lifetime, and something which many at all levels of our educational system seem to forget: Education *is* a *human* enterprise. The humanity of education seems often missed, not impressed in teacher preparation programs or in many school meetings and professional development. Yet, this investigation's cohort informs our understanding in a way that suggests that, teacher induction programs, and by extension, quite possibly, current teacher professional development programming, would benefit by creating learning-intensive experiences which marry the head, the hands, and the heart.

## Discussion

*Research Question 1: Does a short-term international learning experience in Costa Rica for pre- and in-service teachers, grounded in pedagogy of place, initiate holistic transformative experiences?*

Although the data set was limited for this study, the majority of students expressed a holistic transformative experience in their writing. Students' statements, placed into the categories of cognitive, emotional and practice implications, aligned with the head, heart, and hands respectively. The HHH model framed programmatic planning, classroom discussions, reflection papers, and the lens through which we evaluated their experiences. Many expressed deeply emotive and thoughtful reactions to the experience. And though this qualitative, subjective experience is difficult to capture, we found the majority of participants had an authentically immersive transformative experience during this STSA in Costa Rica.

*Research Question 2: To what extent do study abroad experiences transform pre- and in-service teachers' perspective of their profession?*

Regarding research question 2, the results indicate that the study abroad experience did affect participants' perspectives of their teaching. In the category of head, expansion of perception, students reflected on several aspects of their teaching practice in terms of breaking stereotypes, teaching ELL students, being a life-long learner or the impact of teaching local ecology. In both categories of hands and heart the idea of having the courage to believe in one's self, overcome fear, lean into risk and discomfort has the potential to increase young teachers' agency and self-efficacy in their teaching practice. The heartfelt interaction with the Costa Rican school children seemed to have a profound impact on participants' attitudes toward the importance of connecting and building relationships in educational settings. The impact of place, the beautiful and verdant rainforest, the genuine people and the rich culture did provide an aesthetic context for deep engagement, construction of new meanings, and relational knowing.

**Limitations and Acknowledgements**

There were several limitations in this study that we want to make explicit for future research considerations. First, all data in this study is self-reported by participants and, as such, reflects participants' perceptions and not our observations. Second, while students' grades were submitted prior to reviewing students' final reflections for the purposes of this study, in an effort to remove potential bias, it is impossible to say whether students' written reflections were completely honest. And, of course, the reflection papers were written immediately while emotions were high. A longitudinal study would be needed to fully address whether transformative experiences from an STSA impacted pre- and in-services teachers' retention in the profession and whether they implement place-based or transformational experiences in their teaching practice.

Given that the majority of our participant pool are cisgender women, and from the same southern State, it seems sensible to both examine final responses for particular demographic markers (e.g. the impact of such a program on cisgender men, for instance), *and* how region of origin and domicile within the United States might shape a participants' response to such an experience. We believe it is appropriate to continue similar investigations and to expand the pool of data itself such that other analyses might be properly conducted.

In acknowledgement of the data described in this manuscript, many of our participants' excerpted reflections overlapped and fell into more than one domain of Singleton's HHH model. Although the research team conscientiously and systematically made decisions about which excerpts fell within which domain of Singleton's HHH model, we recognize that this process, being dynamic, is given to the justifications and rationale of the present research team. Other research teams, in using the same selection criteria, may make entirely different decisions related to the same data set.

**Implications**

The present study implicates: the need for continuing inclusion of challenging, international cultural experiences; the purposeful development of critical place-based pedagogical approaches; and the

importance of place as an aesthetic context to frame and transform perspectives. This study has broad and profound implications for the improvement of pre-service teacher preparation programs, as well as for currently practicing teachers through the meaningful inclusion of international study abroad experiences made possible through a critical pedagogy of place. In addition, this study highlights the importance of cultivating place-based transformational learning experiences in order to engage students in rich and meaningful ways beyond learning content or earning a grade. Too often, schooling for teachers focuses on cognition, methodology, curriculum and assessment rather than development of human potential and relational networks. As trip leaders role-model critical place-based pedagogy and facilitate transformative experiences, pre- and in-service teachers are opened to new possibilities and depth in their own teaching practice. Participants experience holistic educational practices and learn to go beyond intellectual cultivation to include the development of relational and cultural learning. This meaningful, purposeful learning may encourage teachers to stay and grow in their profession. This movement toward lifelong transformative learning can keep teachers engaged in the profession.

In an increasingly global and interconnected society, it is crucially important for students to have broader understandings of the world. Students reported learning a wide variety of content, including aspects of: sustainability, agriculture, ecology, geology, animal behavior, political and educational structures, Costa Rican culture, U.S.-Costa Rican relations, colonization, and the impact of climate change. Situating this knowledge within the context in which they briefly occupied amplified and broadened the learning experience beyond the typical vacation trip and supported notions of pedagogical implementation within their own classrooms. Certainly, investigations of STSA programs in additional contexts are necessary to think further about those curricular and pedagogical choices which seem to consistently produce similar transformative results. Indeed, this study leaves us with more unanswered questions than not and proves to be a nascent and rich area of scholarship ready for pursuit. The researchers have intention of continuing this research and applying the HHH model in future study abroad programs in this impactful environment.

## Conclusion

With rapidly changing demographics in our country, teacher preparation programs need to address cultural responsiveness and social awareness. Being unprepared for the reality of today's classrooms is one of the reasons for teacher attrition. Pre-service teachers can have many preconceived beliefs about teaching, learning, and learners that should be challenged and critically examined. Properly facilitated, learning experiences in unfamiliar and "uncomfortable" places can enable personal growth among participants and greater flexibility in social awareness. The participants' guided reflections showed their experiences impacted their identity as educators, learners, and global citizens. Students wrote in their reflections that the study abroad experience made them feel more selfless and committed to ecological sustainability. The reflection essays showed participants have a renewed passion for teaching and a willingness to engage in risk-taking and challenge-by-choice.

Transformative learning theory presents an epistemological and ontological framework to view how intense place-based educational experiences can change a learner's mind-set to become more inclusive, open, reflective, and emotionally capable of change. In our dynamic society, educators require transformative skills to grow and adapt to changing needs of the next generation of learners. Because transformation is a very personal, identity changing, and holistic experience, capturing this experience from a research perspective can be daunting. The framing that the HHH model provides addresses changes in cognitive perspectives, expansion of relational knowing, deep engagement, and application. Developing self-awareness by reflecting on personal assumptions, norms, and personal meaning is a critical transformative process. The HHH model meets the essential aspects of transformative learning—critical reflection, active purposeful learning experiences, and reconstructing personal meanings for future actions. In addition, because the HHH model is situated in place as an aesthetic context to construct meaning, it is a good match for examining the transformational impact of a study abroad.

Travel to another country can push an individual out of their comfort zone by entering an intellectually, emotionally, linguistically, and culturally difficult territory. Humidity, heat, elevation,

insects, snakes, and other common causes of discomfort literally surround participants. For some, even the steady beat of rain every evening, or the silence itself during the day, serve as discomforts. Many of our activities, too, are physically demanding, such as the rainforest hike, or emotionally and mentally challenging, such as the zip line high above the rainforest canopy. Participants must push themselves to meet the challenges. We must also accommodate cultural challenges, such as language barriers, especially when we are working with local school students. But discomfort pushes participants towards personal growth as they choose to meet challenges, which increases their flexibility, resilience, and agency in all life endeavors, including their teaching practice. When one grows personally, one grows professionally.

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# Can the Development of CQ be Transformative?

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**Abstract**

*Globalization requires students and employees to adapt to an ever-increasing range of diverse cultures and responsibilities, yet methods of training may fall short. To truly shift to a global mindset, transformative learning may be required. This paper uses autoethnography to analyze how the development of cultural intelligence (CQ) may have prompted transformative learning as a student and career professional. Exploring this connection has implications for theory, research, and practice.*

*Keywords*: studying abroad, working abroad, cultural intelligence, transformative learning

## Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected, globally interdependent world, the ability to work seamlessly across borders takes on greater importance. As communities and workplaces grow more diverse, today's students and employees are more likely to encounter a wide range of situations, groups, and responsibilities that require intercultural capabilities (Peng, Van Dyne, & Oh, 2015).

Institutions of higher education and organizations recognize that students and employees need new skills and competencies to thrive, yet traditional methods of preparation such as intercultural training based on cultural knowledge acquisition (Rosenblatt, Worthley, & MacNab, 2013), and study abroad programs may fall short (Peng et al., 2015; Strange & Gibson, 2017). Research on the effectiveness of cultural adaptation after intercultural training shows that shifting to a global mindset requires more than knowledge acquisition or exposure to intercultural experiences, it requires experiential (Ng, Van Dyne, & Ang, 2009), perhaps transformative, learning (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the development of one's cultural intelligence quotient (CQ), a measure of intercultural competence (Livermore, 2011), may trigger transformative learning. Autoethnography (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) provides a means to reflect on my lived experience (van Manen, 1990) of studying, working, and living abroad over more than four decades. Overlaying this personal narrative with analysis using the four-factor model of CQ (Earley & Ang, 2003; Livermore, 2011) and transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009, Taylor & Cranton, 2012), I will explore how the development of CQ may have precipitated transformative learning as both a student and career professional. The paper concludes with implications for theory, research, and practice.

## Cultural Intelligence (CQ)

Livermore (2011) defines CQ as the "capability to function effectively across a variety of cultural contexts, such as ethnic, and generational and organizational cultures" (p. 5). Through his teaching and research of thousands of individuals around the globe, Livermore maintains that CQ is a set of values, skills, and behaviors that can be assessed, learned and improved over time. The question to explore in this paper is whether the development of high CQ simply adds to existing knowledge, skills, and competencies, or whether the process of CQ development is itself transformative (Taylor & Cranton, 2012).

CQ was developed by business researchers, Earley and Ang, in 2003, and is based on scholarly scales that measured different types of intelligence and behavior. A personal CQ assessment provides quantifiable measures for the four capabilities:

1. **CQ Drive (motivation)** is your *interest and confidence in functioning effectively in culturally diverse settings.*
2. **CQ Knowledge (cognition)** is your *knowledge about how cultures are similar and different.*
3. **CQ Strategy (meta-cognition)** is how you *make sense of culturally diverse experiences*.
4. **CQ Action (behavior)** is your *capability to adapt your behavior appropriately for different cultures.* (Livermore, 2011, pp. 6-7)

CQ is grounded in decades of work on intelligence research that has 1) focused on capabilities that can be learned (versus personality traits); 2) incorporated empirical studies from psychology and sociology research; 3) focused on profound learning that impacts one's view of self and others; and 4) aligned with insights from research on other types of intelligence (Livermore, 2011, p. 27). In its extension of intelligence streams of literature, CQ is based on four factors of intelligence: motivational, cognitive, meta-cognitive, and behavioral (Earley & Ang, 2003). In the CQ framework developed by Livermore (2011), these are known as the four CQ Capabilities, each of which has multiple sub-dimensions.

**CQ Drive**

This capability consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and self-efficacy (Livermore, 2011, p. 46). Intrinsic motivation refers to the internal enjoyment derived from engaging in multicultural interaction in and of itself. This is distinguished from extrinsic motivation which is influenced by external factors such as career advancement or financial gain. Self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001) is the degree to which an individual is confident of his or her abilities to adapt and be effective in cross-cultural situations. All of these sub-dimensions together provide the foundation for an individual's desire to learn and succeed in new intercultural contexts.

**CQ Knowledge**

CQ Knowledge incorporates the sub-dimensions of business (legal and economic systems), interpersonal, socio-linguistics, and leadership (Livermore, 2011, pp. 75-76). This capability is what people normally encounter in training programs where they learn about cultural systems of countries around the world, as well as the social norms and languages, both verbal and non-verbal, that influence behavior. The leadership sub-dimension measures how well one understands how management practices vary from one culture to another.

**CQ Strategy**

The third capability includes the sub-dimensions of awareness, planning, and checking (Livermore, 2011, p. 112). This capability is the nexus between the desire to engage interculturally, the knowledge about the culture(s) under consideration, and how this drive and knowledge will be applied in the real world. Awareness is the first step in strategizing, requiring one to pay attention to cultural cues to be able to respond appropriately. Planning refers to the intentional process of preparing for intercultural engagement, and checking is the ongoing process of comparing expectations and assumptions to reality.

**CQ Action**

This is where the previous three capabilities are manifested in behavior and consists of the sub-dimensions of nonverbal, verbal, and speech acts (Livermore, 2011, p. 146). Nonverbal behavior measures how well one can adjust gestures, and facial expressions in a new cultural setting. Verbal behavior includes one's tone and pace when speaking with others, as well as accent and pronunciation when speaking a foreign language. Finally, speech acts captures the ways in which one alters methods of

communicating in various cultural contexts. While all four capabilities are inextricably interrelated, CQ Action is the behavioral component that determines how we show up and are judged in a new cultural context.

The CQ framework provides a holistic and consistent way to understand how these four factors can enable individuals to adapt seamlessly across multiple cultural contexts. Critical to the development of high CQ is the individual's ability to assess current state and develop learning strategies to improve. The CQ Center developed the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) to provide a measure of competence in each of the four CQ capabilities (Cultural Intelligence Scale, 2005). I took the CQS (Cultural Intelligence Scale, 2005) in 2015 as part of a certification workshop to become a CQ Facilitator. In 2016, I took the 360-degree, multi-rater version of the assessment prior to an offsite where I provided training to our geographically-dispersed team.

In my assessment results (Cultural Intelligence Center, 2016), the 1-100 scale defines "Low" as scores that fall in the bottom 25% range of worldwide norms. "Moderate" scores represent the middle 50% of these global norms, and "High" are in the top 25% of scores from across the globe. Using this sliding scale rubric, CQ Drive scores from 1-64 would be "Low" because 25% of all assessments in 2016 fell within this range. Scores of 65-86 were in the "Medium" range and scores of 87-100 were "High." The following table provides these ranges for all of the CQ Capabilities as of the 2016 report.

Table 1

*Baseline Ranges for CQ Capabilities Scores of Low, Medium, and High*

| Capability: | Low: | Medium: | High: |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQ Drive | 1-64 | 65-86 | 87-100 |
| CQ Knowledge | 1-39 | 40-67 | 68-100 |
| CQ Strategy | 1-53 | 54-77 | 78-100 |
| CQ Action | 1-49 | 50-77 | 78-100 |

The question under investigation in this paper is how the development of CQ may have triggered transformative learning. One way to pull together the diverse strands of personal experience, cultural immersion, CQ development, and transformative learning is through autoethnography, where "auto" refers to self, "ethno" to cultural experience, and "graphy" to analysis (Ellis et al., 2011).

Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis et al., 2011). Drawing on the ethnographic traditions of investigating a culture's relational practices, its values and beliefs, and shared experiences from the perspective of a participant observer, autoethnography employs personal narratives to "…understand a self or some aspect of a life as it intersects with a cultural context" (p. 279).

Accordingly, I provide five narratives covering a sampling of international experiences as a student and professional over four decades. Using the CQ 2016 assessment scores as a baseline, along with my experience as a CQ Facilitator, I retrospectively estimate my before and after CQ scores for the multi-cultural experiences described in the autoethnographic narratives (Ellis et al., 2011) below as a means of estimating my CQ development over time. I follow this description of CQ development with an analysis from the lens of transformative learning theory.

## Autoethnographic Narratives

### American Foreign Study League (AFSL)

My first extended experience of being abroad was the summer I turned 16. I had learned about the American Foreign Study League from my English teacher, and when I discovered that I could get academic credit for touring Europe for a month, I was sold! It took longer to convince my parents who agreed to advance the $2,000 program fee on the condition that I would pay it back, not a small matter for a teenager without a steady job. But we came to an agreement and I was on my way.

One of the requirements of the program was to keep a journal recording thoughts about our experiences. The first several entries were full of daily minutiae; what time I woke up, what we had to eat, what the weather was like, what "boring class" we had to attend, and, of course, what tourist attractions we got to see. Then, slowly but surely, I began to record my thoughts and feelings about the trip, including a memorable experience with a local in Tunisia. What can I say about how this first trip abroad impacted my level of CQ? In retrospect, I estimate my CQ scores before and after the month-long study trip in Table 2 below.

Table 2

*Before and After Comparison Scores for AFSL*

| Before: | Score: | After: | Score: |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQ Drive | 67 (Med) | CQ Drive | 73 (Med) |
| CQ Knowledge | 27 (Low) | CQ Knowledge | 27 (Low) |
| CQ Strategy | 40 (Low) | CQ Strategy | 46 (Low) |
| CQ Action | 10 (Low) | CQ Action | 14 (Low) |

To summarize, as indicated by my CQ Drive estimated scores, my motivation to engage in multi-cultural experiences increased slightly after the short study abroad trip, but my other CQ estimated scores didn't change significantly. This could be explained by several factors: lack of immersion in local culture; travel with large group from home country; and very little preparation beforehand to increase cultural awareness and understanding. In short, this first foray outside my home county was educational, but not transformative. It did, however, set the stage for further exploration.

**InterFuture Scholar – Germany**

As a college sophomore, I was selected to participate in the prestigious InterFuture (Intercultural Studies for the Future) program for undergraduates to design and execute a graduate-level research project across three different countries. The InterFuture program goals are to:

- firstly, to enhance students' sensitivity to and understanding of the inner workings of other cultures;
- secondly, to teach them to appreciate and respect these cultures as they do their own;
- and thirdly, to lead them to self-reflection, and to re-evaluation of both the culture visited and their home culture. (InterFuture, n.d.)

Reflecting on my personal and career trajectory after the InterFuture experience, I see it as marking a phase transition. As noted in recounting the previous intercultural experience, I was already well motivated to learn about other cultures. In fact, my fascination with other languages and countries had begun at the age of 8, when I listened to my aunt speaking Spanish to my cousins and a whole new world opened up. I began studying Spanish at the first opportunity, middle school, and continued throughout high school. Pedagogical methods at the time focused mostly on the ability to read and write in the target language. After six years of studying Spanish, I graduated from high school without being able to actually carry on a conversation in that language.

Within a few months of starting college, a friend introduced me to German. I had had other friends in high school who studied German, but hearing this new friend, soon to be boyfriend, and later to be husband, rattle off sentences in German provided a completely new level of motivation. I was determined to speak it as well as him, and took first and second-level German concurrently the following year. Within six months, I was corresponding with him in German.

This dedication to learning a new language stood me in good stead when I was selected to be an InterFuture Scholar with cross-cultural research to be pursued in Germany, Jamaica, and the U.S.A. I

landed in Germany with about 18 months of language study completed, and stayed the first three weeks with a host family who had been instructed to only speak German with me. This was my first true immersion experience and I was so terrified to make a mistake that I hardly spoke the first week. Then I noticed that their younger son (8 years old) made frequent grammatical errors. I decided that if he could make mistakes as a native speaker then it was acceptable for me to make the occasional error as well.

Giving myself permission to 'fail' was the start of success. In short order, I had moved to a student dorm in Frankfurt where I began carrying out my three-month mixed methods research design, in which I surveyed participants on their reaction to different types of music, and interviewed Pastors and Music Directors. I recorded and transcribed all of the interviews and soon realized that I no longer had to think in English and translate to German; I was already dreaming and thinking in German after just six weeks.

Immersing myself in not only the culture, but also the language of a new environment was exhilarating and contributed hugely to my motivation and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001) when encountering new intercultural situations (CQ Drive). I also grew tremendously in terms of my knowledge about the language, values, and norms of Germany (CQ Knowledge). The capabilities of CQ Strategy and CQ Action improved considerably as well as I had daily opportunities to practice and learn more in these areas. Estimating my scores in retrospect, one can see the huge difference before and after this three-month cross-cultural research study (see Table 3).

Table 3

*Before and After Comparison Scores for InterFuture – Germany*

| Before: | Score: | After: | Score: |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQ Drive | 73 (Med) | CQ Drive | 87 (High) |
| CQ Knowledge | 27 (Low) | CQ Knowledge | 62 (Med) |
| CQ Strategy | 46 (Low) | CQ Strategy | 79 (High) |
| CQ Action | 14 (Low) | CQ Action | 78 (High) |

What factors may have contributed to this increase in cultural intelligence? First, total immersion in both the culture and language broadened my perspective immensely as I began to understand and align myself with new cultural norms (CQ Strategy; CQ Knowledge). Being on my own also made a difference since I couldn't fall back on usual patterns of speech and behavior with native English speakers. In fact, the only time I allowed myself to think or communicate in English was when reading or writing letters to friends and family.

Finally, the discipline of conducting research, transcribing interviews and writing up my findings in German took me far beyond the level of casual conversation to true fluency (CQ Action). This was brought home to me when attending a farewell luncheon at the end of my three-month stay. My in-country advisor invited me, the other InterFuture Scholar in the area, and a range of host advisors and support staff to his home. All of the German natives were fluent in English, but my American InterFuture colleague and I were both by that time also fully fluent in German. The conversation moved easily between the two languages and I realized later that I had not even noticed when we switched from one to the other. It was completely seamless. I had learned to think, converse and "be" in a new language and culture (all 4 CQ Capabilities).

**InterFuture Scholar – Jamaica**

After a short break, I continued on to the second of the two study locales, Kingston, Jamaica. I hadn't truly noticed while in Germany that one of the reasons I felt at home rather quickly was because, as a White female, it was easy to blend in. In preparation for the trip, I had researched Jamaican history, and knew that it was a former British colony with a predominantly Black population, but "knowing" was different from "experiencing." While living in Jamaica for three months, I interacted with just one study participant who was White. The only other White people I encountered were tourists. Having heard about

racial differences and minority experiences in America while growing up, this was the first time that I experienced being "the only."

I quickly acclimated to this new reality, helped immensely by the warm welcome of my host family with whom I lived for the entire three-month period. There were, however, quite a few aspects of Jamaican culture that came as a shock to me. First was Reggae music which was heavily influenced by rhythms and textures of heritage African music. Despite having listened to some recordings of Reggae in preparation for the trip, hearing it performed live was a whole new experience!

Other significant cultural differences are illustrated by the following anecdote. After a month or so of living on the island, I was sufficiently used to the traffic driving on the other side of the road to be handed the keys to the family's van. My parents were arriving to celebrate my 21st birthday with me. For some reason, all of the passenger benches had been removed except the one at the very rear of the van. So, after greeting them at the airport, my parents sat in the back of the van with their luggage in front of them. They were a little nervous with their first experience of seeing the traffic drive on the "wrong side," but more alarming were my frequent swerves. I had forgotten to warn them about what was now "normal" for me, i.e., the proliferation of potholes, goats, and chickens in the road that required me to avoid these obstacles on a regular basis. Sitting in the back without any visibility of the road, they had no frame of reference to understand my reactions. This was a memorable example of how something considered as "normal" in one cultural context could be experienced as life-threatening in another.

A less humorous memory also illustrates the vast differences between Jamaican culture and the homogenous WASP (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant) environment of my youth in Southern California. While living with the host family and traveling around town to my various appointments, I experienced three instances of assault. Nothing had prepared me for situations where I was not only the racial and gender minority, but where years of colonial history had primed Black men to perceive and respond to White women in ways that were completely foreign to me. Over time, I learned how to deflect or ignore unwanted attention, but I learned, for the first time, what it meant to feel unsafe.

Table 4

*Before and After Comparison Scores for InterFuture – Jamaica*

| Before: | Score: | After: | Score: |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQ Drive | 87 (High) | CQ Drive | 86 (High) |
| CQ Knowledge | 62 (Med) | CQ Knowledge | 59 (Med) |
| CQ Strategy | 79 (High) | CQ Strategy | 80 (High) |
| CQ Action | 78 (High) | CQ Action | 68 (Med) |

In this immersive experience, my CQ development was much more uneven. I estimated a slight decrease in CQ Drive, primarily due to challenges to my self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001) in this new and sometimes hostile environment. CQ Knowledge also decreased somewhat, as I realized that the history of Colonialism and Black subjugation was still an area where I had much to learn. CQ Strategy increased slightly as I learned to cope with new cultural norms. Interestingly, the biggest dip was in CQ Action. There was a huge disparity in my level of comfort with the family where I boarded and the research site, compared with multiple negative experiences in public places. This inability to fit in and convincingly exhibit local mannerisms may have contributed to my difficulty in deploying the CQ Drive, CQ Knowledge, and CQ Strategy capabilities for successful CQ Action (Livermore, 2011).

**Fulbright Scholar – Austria**

This post-graduate opportunity marked another turning point in my life. Not only had I graduated from student to professional, but for the first time I was living overseas with someone else, my husband. We had left for Europe two days after the wedding, settling in Austria for my Fulbright-sponsored job after a honeymoon spent researching pianos across Europe. This time, instead of being forbidden to speak English, I was an assistant to all of the English teachers at an Austrian Gymnasium (students aged 10-18).

For many of these students, I was the first and only American they had ever met. I found myself in the unexpected position of being an unofficial Ambassador, doing my best to explain American customs and rationale for action on the global stage.

This experience was also different from the preceding ones in that it was long-term. We lived in this small town in Upper Austria for two years, interacting with locals on a daily basis. We had anticipated that our German language abilities would be applicable but learned quickly that Austrians consider German to be a foreign language. In fact, the dialects differ so much from region to region that someone from Vienna might be unable to converse with a countryman from Tirol! Luckily, we had made friends with a couple where the husband was an English teacher and the wife was from America. They created a tip sheet for us, explaining how German was transformed into the Upper Austrian dialect. This became the key to unlocking meaningful engagement with locals as it allowed us to increase our comprehension and communication of the local language dramatically.

One anecdote illustrates the importance of language fluency as well as the differences in American and Austrian education environments. On my first day working with one English teacher in his 5th form class (10-year-old students), I was amazed when they all stood as we walked in the door and greeted us as a class before taking their seats. Showing respect in such a visible way was something I'd only heard about, but never seen personally. Once I had been introduced, they immediately put me to the test. Apparently, the students asked all of the Teaching Assistants to say one word in German that inevitably tripped up native English speakers with its difficult pronunciation: Eichhörnchen (squirrel). I passed the test and their delight was evident as we then dove into the lesson of the day. In retrospect I realized that this combination of respectful and fun engagement was typical of many of the students I worked with over the two-year assignment.

Table 5

*Before and After Comparison Scores for Fulbright Scholar – Austria*

| Before: | Score: | After: | Score: |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQ Drive | 86 (High) | CQ Drive | 89 (High) |
| CQ Knowledge | 59 (Med) | CQ Knowledge | 66 (Med) |
| CQ Strategy | 80 (High) | CQ Strategy | 83 (High) |
| CQ Action | 78 (High) | CQ Action | 81 (High) |

In the estimated before and after scores, the largest gains are in CQ Knowledge and Action. As noted previously, my CQ Drive had started out high and continued a slight rise due to ongoing increases in motivation and self-efficacy. CQ Knowledge is more specific to the immediate context and here I had learned quite a bit about the business norms and values of Upper Austria as expressed in their educational philosophies and styles. CQ Knowledge also includes socio-linguistic capabilities; becoming fluent in the local dialect contributed to the slight rise in score. CQ Strategy built on my previous experience in Germany and was adjusted for the adaptation to differences in cultural norms encountered in Austria. The biggest gain was in CQ Action (Livermore, 2011). Immersion in school and village life enabled me to adapt my language skills (from German to Austrian dialect), and bridge differences between US and Austrian teaching methods in my work environment.

**Intercultural Responsibilities in Professional Roles**

After completing the two-year Fulbright Scholarship in Austria, my husband and I moved to Munich, Germany where we lived and worked at the US Army Base. We were eager to experience as much in local economy as possible, and were amazed when we met a number of Americans who had lived there for ten years or more and rarely ventured off-base. For us, this was an unparalleled opportunity to sample a wide range of cultural experiences in classical music, art, fine dining, and extended travel across Europe.

Within a short time, I had found a job with a US contractor where I began to act as a translator and relocation coach for incoming personnel. It was my first full-time job with a US-based company, and I was able to compare and contrast business norms and values between the expat Americans, and German local hires, as well as see first-hand how salaries, benefits, and social services differed between the USA and Germany. In fact, I obtained an MBA from the overseas program of Boston University while living in Germany, and completed several papers that delved more deeply into cross-cultural issues for expats as well as salary, taxes, and benefit differences between the two countries.

I finished the MBA about the same time as the drawdown for US troops across Germany began. The base where we lived in Munich was scheduled to shut-down, and I started looking for a job in the US. Shortly after a visit to Washington, DC, where I met with the president of the newly-established US headquarters for Deutsche Aerospace, I was offered a job as his executive assistant. This eventually morphed into a leadership role in the nascent field of knowledge management and competitive intelligence. It also marked the first time that I began working, on a regular basis, with colleagues at a distance. In today's environment of instant communication via a broad range of technologies, this doesn't seem remarkable. But in the days before email and internet access, it was much more difficult to stay connected to colleagues who were not co-located.

I discovered that my language skills were invaluable in forging connections and enhancing remote communication. It was also useful that I had already experienced being the "face of America" while in Austria. In my new job as the first American employee of this German-based company, I likewise had to be the translator and representative of American culture for my German colleagues. This role expanded when the company merged with other aerospace and defense companies in the United Kingdom, France, and Spain. As I started to travel back to the offices and factories in these countries, I was able to practice and improve my French and Spanish, realizing that I didn't have to be fluent to demonstrate goodwill and a desire to continue learning.

After 10 years in the US field office for this European company, I finally took a job in the international division of a US-based global company. For the first time, I was responsible to engage not only with colleagues across the entire US, but with non-US nationals based in dozens of countries around the globe. In short order, I was tasked to stand up a global knowledge management system, traveling to 14 countries to train personnel in this new web-based technology. This was a unique opportunity to put my CQ capabilities to the test, and develop further in the areas of CQ Knowledge, Strategy, and Action.

As shown below, my motivation to continue learning, and belief in my abilities (CQ Drive) has continued to rise over decades as a career professional. There has been a dramatic increase in my CQ Knowledge due to ongoing engagement and leadership on projects with colleagues across the globe. CQ Strategy has also increased, partly due to intercultural experience over the years, and partly attributable to an increased range of resources to plan for cross-cultural encounters. Finally, CQ Action has shown how all of these capabilities have combined to help me be a more effective employee and cross-cultural leader.

Table 6

*Before and After Comparison Scores for Intercultural Responsibilities in Professional Roles*

| Before: | Score: | After: | Score: |
|---|---|---|---|
| CQ Drive | 89 (High) | CQ Drive | 91 (High) |
| CQ Knowledge | 66 (Med) | CQ Knowledge | 88 (High) |
| CQ Strategy | 83 (High) | CQ Strategy | 94 (High) |
| CQ Action | 81 (High) | CQ Action | 89 (High) |

In the following section, I analyze these retrospective accounts and description of CQ development with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009) to better understand how my perspective transformation might be linked to an increase in cultural intelligence over time.

## Analysis of CQ Development from the Lens of Transformative Learning Theory

In the experiences described in the preceding autoethnographic narratives, I elaborated on how my cultural intelligence developed from the perspective of my lived experience (van Manen, 1990). Was this development over time transformative? How can transformative learning theory provide insight into the perspective transformation (Cranton, 2006) I experienced over many years of living and working in countries around the globe?

### Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory emerged from Mezirow's 1975 research studying the experience of women who had returned to college after an extended absence (Mezirow, 1978). In his findings, he described the ten phases they experienced in their transformative learning process: "a disorienting dilemma; self-examination; a critical assessment of assumptions; recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation; exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions; planning a course of action; acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans; provisionally trying of new roles; building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 19).

In the early years of transformative learning theory development, Mezirow emphasized the rational, cognitive approach to change, placing critical self-reflection at the forefront of this process (Mezirow, 1978, 1998). In subsequent decades, scholars have broadened the scope of transformative learning considerably to incorporate holistic elements such as extrarational, affective, somatic, spiritual, intuitive, or whole-person approaches to transformation (Dirkx & Smith, 2009; Hoggan, Simpson, & Stuckey, 2009; Taylor & Cranton, 2012; Yorks & Kasl, 2006). Central to all of these approaches is the agreement that the individual has had a perspective transformation that results in a change of the "very form by which we are making our meanings" (Kegan, 2000, p. 53).

In his review of the first two decades of transformative learning theory and research, Taylor provides three themes that summarize the10 phases of transformative learning explicated by Mezirow (2009): "centrality of experience, critical reflection and rational discourse in the process of meaning structure transformation" (Taylor, 1998, p. 8). Experience is at the heart of transformative learning; it is the experience of a disorienting dilemma that triggers the process of critical reflection, discourse, and a transformed perspective.

The second theme of critical reflection stems from the work of Habermas on rationality and analysis (Mezirow, 1998; Taylor, 1998). Mezirow considered reflection to be a key characteristic of the adult learning process, distinguishing between content, process and premise reflection. It is premise reflection on assumptions and beliefs that is most likely to lead to a shift in perspective in how individuals see the world (Cranton, 2006). Finally, in the third theme of rational discourse, the learner engages with others to critically reflect and make sense of the experience. In this part of the process, learners may try on other perspectives, determine their validity, and ultimately, transform their meaning schemes (Cranton, 2006; Taylor, 1998).

### Experiential Learning Theory

These three themes are congruent with one of the recommendations for fostering transformative learning in practice: experiential learning (Taylor, 1998; Hoggan et al., 2009). Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) emphasizes the centrality of experience in learning, a theory propounded by 20$^{th}$century scholars such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, and William James, among others. In his 1984 seminal work, Kolb outlines the six principles derived from these scholars which combine to form ELT: 1) learning should be considered an ongoing process rather than a specific outcome; 2) learning incorporates continuous relearning; 3) learners must constantly resolve dialectically

opposed modes of adaptation such as feeling and thinking, and reflecting and acting; 4) learning requires holistic engagement with the world; 5) learning is situated in specific contexts; and 6) learning creates knowledge both socially and personally (Strange & Gibson, 2017).

Experiential learning is a theory that outlines the holistic learning processes of feeling, perceiving, thinking and doing as Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). These four components interdependently interact in an ongoing, nonlinear way such that learners are able to: 1) engage and function well in new, unstructured experiences through feeling and intuition more than rational thinking—CE; 2) reflect critically on these experiences from a variety of perspectives—RO; 3) distill these reflections into general theories to guide future action—AC; and 4) incorporate these theories into action, determining whether they fit reality (Hoggan et al., 2009; Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

In their model integrating research on experiential learning with cultural intelligence, Ng et al. (2009) adopt the ELT framework to outline the process by which global leaders develop through their international assignments. Their ten propositions link the four stages of ELT with the four CQ capabilities as shown in Figure 1:

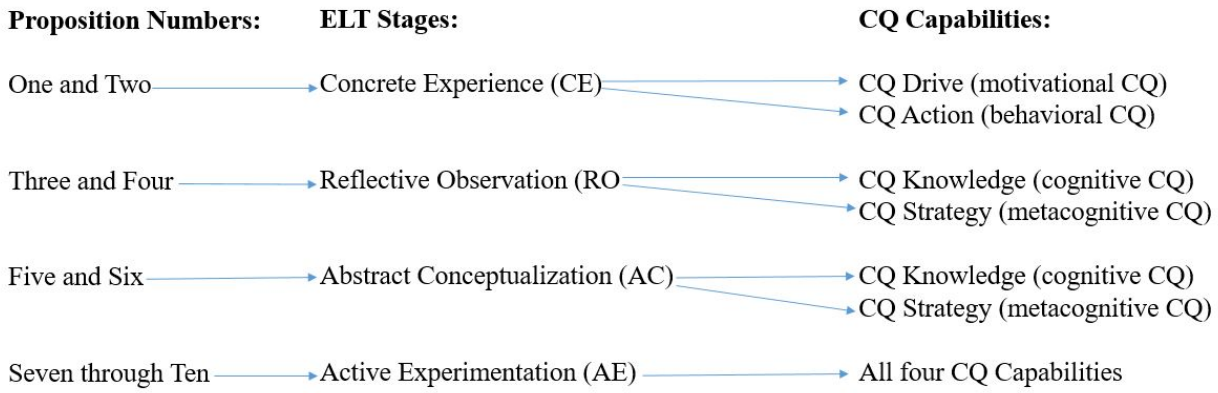


*Figure 1.* Propositional Linkage of the Four Stages of ELT to the Four CQ Capabilities

Figure 1 depicts the relationship between the 10 propositions in Ng et al.'s model and how they are linked to the four stages of the ELT and the four CQ capabilities (pp. 515-518). Following their rationale to explain how engagement in all stages of the ELT and high levels of CQ impact the success of global leaders in their international assignments, I will examine my examples of CQ development and transformation against their propositions (Ng et al., 2009).

## Examination of CQ and Personal Transformation

### *Concrete Experience.*

In their first two propositions, Ng et al. (2009) examine the ELT phase of Concrete Experience, proposing that an individual's level of CQ Drive (motivation) and CQ Action (behavior) will directly impact the quality and amount of concrete cross-cultural experiences they seek out. In my narratives, I describe how my CQ Drive was already at a medium level (67) in my first intercultural experience of a study month abroad. It moved from medium to high (89) during the immersion experiences in Germany, Jamaica, and Austria, stabilizing at a high of 91 over subsequent years of cross-cultural engagement in a professional capacity.

My CQ Action scores likewise rose at varying rates during the various cross-cultural experiences. The most dramatic increase was from a low of 10 prior to the month-long study trip to a high of 78 after the first InterFuture stay in Germany. The increase was likely the result of full immersion in the language

and cultural norms of the host country, providing the opportunity to put all of the CQ capabilities into action. Further increases to the current score of 89 reflect the many opportunities to be engaged multi-culturally over decades, both personally and professionally.

***Reflective Observation.***

In propositions three and four, Ng et al. (2009) describe the ELT stage of Reflective Observation, proposing that the capabilities of CQ Knowledge (cognition) and CQ Strategy (metacognition) will allow individuals to better understand cultural differences and similarities, be more aware of cultural cues, and be more likely to think through their observations in light of their assumptions, values, and beliefs.

This was borne out in my recounting of an increase in CQ Knowledge from a low of 27 after the first intercultural experience to a high of 88 over several immersion experiences and cross-cultural responsibilities in professional roles. CQ Strategy likewise increased from a low of 40 to the current high of 94. The development of CQ Knowledge was fairly steady in moving from low to medium while becoming fluent in German and learning about local norms and values. It then decreased slightly while in Jamaica as I realized how much I still had to learn about the experience of Colonialism and Black subjugation. The CQ Knowledge scores stabilized at medium during the two years in Austria then jumped from a medium score of 66 to a high score of 88 after exposure to dozens of other cultures through business travel and collaboration with global colleagues.

Throughout the multiple cross-cultural experiences of travel, study, and working abroad, I went through several iterations of reflecting on these experiences and examining them in terms of my assumptions and beliefs (CQ Strategy). During the three-month rotation in Germany, my perspective expanded due to exposure to new cultural norms and values. These were, however, not sufficiently different from my own norms and values to prompt a disorienting dilemma (Cranton, 2006). Jamaica, though, was completely different from any previous experience and several negative experiences caused difficulties in adapting. Reflection on these experiences once I arrived home did prompt a disorienting dilemma as illustrated by the poem I wrote after months of struggling to reconcile my preexisting values and beliefs with those that were emerging.

*I feel so alone*
*A drifting, wayward star*
*Without order, nothing makes sense*
*Why am I struggling so hard to escape the structures? Without them – I am nothing*
*Freedom is a beautiful and dangerous word*
*It is an eagle hurtling to its own destruction . . .*
*Without order – there is no freedom*
*I must obey the inherent laws in order to be free*
*But which comes first?*
*In my struggle to be free, I am losing myself. It hurts.*

The feelings evoked in that poem are still real to me. The language already hints at the notion of chaos versus order, as well as the disorienting nature of the dilemma I was facing at the time. I now think of that time as the beginning of my transformative learning journey.

***Abstract Conceptualization.***

In propositions five and six, Ng et al. (2009) present the ELT stage of Abstract Conceptualization, proposing that individuals with high levels of CQ Knowledge (cognition) will more accurately and effectively see patterns that will enable them to develop interpretations of cultures they encounter. High levels of CQ Strategy (metacognition) facilitate the process of modifying generalizations when these individuals encounter cultural paradoxes to resolve.

In my cross-cultural experiences, immersion provided the best opportunities to consolidate new knowledge, observe, and adapt to new socio-linguistic and cultural norms on a daily basis. CQ

Knowledge increased from low to medium throughout the InterFuture and Fulbright immersion experiences then increased further from medium to high over many years of engagement with hundreds of colleagues from more than 35 countries.

CQ Strategy is the metacognitive process of thinking about thought processes. In the cross-cultural contexts I experienced, this was discernible in my ability to strategize prior to intercultural encounters and think through the engagements that occurred, checking them against existing assumptions, values, and beliefs. Increases in CQ Strategy from a low score of 40 prior to the month-long study trip, to a high score of 79 after the first InterFuture rotation illustrate the improved ability to make adjustments to my mental map and strategy for engagement as required. Repeated opportunities for learning in Jamaica, Austria, and dozens of countries as a professional have continued to improve my CQ Strategy to a current score of 94.

***Active Experimentation.***

In the final four propositions, seven to ten, Ng et al. (2009) discuss the fourth and last ELT stage of Active Experimentation, proposing that individuals with high levels of CQ in all four of the capabilities are more likely to implement what they have learned as they activate their CQ Drive, Knowledge, Strategy, and Action to successfully adapt and flex their styles to various cross-cultural engagements.

Over the course of 40+ years of studying, living, working, and traveling abroad, my CQ scores have increased from low or medium levels at the outset to the current high scores for all four CQ capabilities. The development over time is evident in the figure below that plots the scores for each of the CQ capabilities over the intercultural experiences described in the autoethnographic narratives (Ellis et al., 2011).

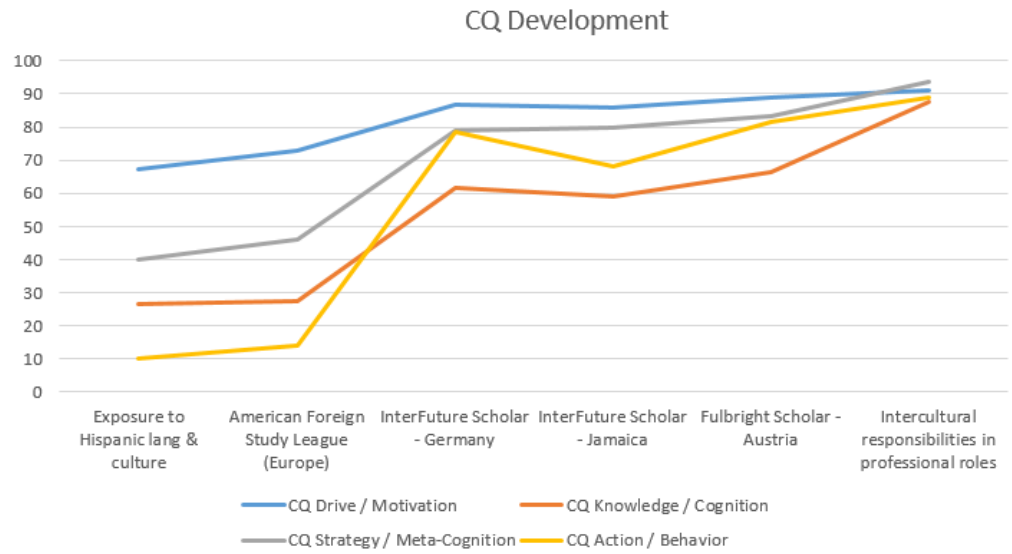


*Figure 2.* CQ Development

The perspective transformation (Cranton, 2006) that occurred over this period has likely been a combination of epochal (Kitchenham, 2008) after the InterFuture Scholar rotations to Germany and Jamaica, and continuous over the long-term immersion experiences in Austria and Germany. The final section concludes with implications for theory, research, and practice.

## Implications for Theory, Research and Practice

The purpose of this paper has been to understand the potential linkage between CQ development and personal transformation as experienced over several decades of studying, living, traveling and

working abroad. Demonstrating the plausibility of this connection may have implications for theory, research and practice.

From a theoretical perspective, the use of Peng et al.'s (2009) process model integrating cultural intelligence and experiential learning provided an overarching framework to analyze the autoethnographic narratives of my CQ development. Such a framework incorporating measures to assess development answers the criticism of traditional training approaches that lack a conceptual framework, and tend to use a smorgasbord approach to preparing students or professional for intercultural encounters (Rosenblatt et al., 2013). In my analysis, each of Peng et al.'s 10 propositions were borne out in my experience. Overlaying this with transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2009) provided a reasonable explanation of how my experiences abroad both supported an expanded perspective and, in some cases, prompted a disorienting dilemma that led to a further perspective transformation (Cranton, 2006).

As a research method, the autoethnographic process addresses issues of trustworthiness through triangulation of multiple sources of data (Duncan, 2004). These include participant observation as evidenced in the five examples, reflective writing sources such as letters, journals and narrative retrospection, and artifacts including photos and the thesis produced for the InterFuture study (Kennedy, 1982).

In the research and literature streams of study abroad (Strange & Gibson, 2017) and global leader development (Ng et al., 2009), empirical data demonstrates the importance of experiential learning (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). This style of learning was linked to perspective transformation in the investigation of students participating in programs abroad (Strange & Gibson, 2017), as well as to the development of intercultural competence for global leaders (Ng et al., 2009). In my analysis, I likewise found that the greatest increase in CQ was during the full immersion InterFuture experiences in Germany and Jamaica. Both of these three-month stays incorporated high levels of experiential learning through intensive engagement in the local communities. My disorienting dilemma and subsequent perspective transformation (Cranton, 2006) was captured in a poem written after the completion of the program.

For training programs preparing students or professionals for experiences abroad, and for researchers who wish to understand the effectiveness of these programs, the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (CQ Center, 2005) provides a validated assessment, dozens of empirical studies and a wealth of learning tools to support the development of cultural intelligence. Not all cultural training programs frame their course objectives in terms of transformative learning (Cranton, 2006). Understanding the relationship between the development of cultural intelligence and transformative learning may improve program goals and methodologies to achieve these goals.

Finally, if there is a plausible connection between the development of CQ capabilities and transformative learning, how might this inform a transformative education approach for students and career professionals (Peng, et al., 2015) in practice? Participating in study abroad, rotation programs, or expat assignments may not always be economically viable. While these kinds of programs are more likely to incorporate the type of experiential learning that prompts CQ development (Ng et al., 2009), and perhaps transformative learning (Strange & Gibson, 2017), intentional design of CQ education in their home locations can also achieve impressive results (Rosenblatt et al., 2013).

In addition to formal, structured cross-cultural training programs, many students and professionals have regular, informal cross-cultural encounters on their campuses or in the workplace. Providing resources and development programs to raise awareness may encourage the development of CQ during these emergent opportunities. Not only could the intentional development of CQ provide guidance and practical recommendations to positively impact productivity of global virtual teams, but exploring the transformative potential of CQ provides an opportunity for enabling well-rounded, productive, and successful global citizens.

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# Cross-Cultural Competencies in a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Process

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**Abstract**

*Do intentional pedagogical practices in a Global Scholars program transform students and faculty in their growth to become inclusive global citizens? This scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) study explored whether the content and assignments in Professionalism Across Cultures, a course collaboratively co-taught by faculty in five different disciplines, change student interactions with aspects of cultural competence (Antola Crowe et al., 2013). Professionalism Across Cultures is a course designed to provide students in the Global Scholars program with experiences to increase awareness, acceptance, and diversity, as well as to emphasize the importance of communicating effectively with people across cultures and disciplines. The Global Scholars program requires students to take this course, a world language course, have an international experience, attend global activities, and present on their own international experiences. This Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) study was approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB) and utilized an observational, mixed methods no design for students enrolled in the required course for the Global Scholars program. Data were collected via a pre- and post-reflection, a pre- and post- cultural intelligence scale, and two cultural presentations. Using the validated, quantitative Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) developed by Ang et al. (2007), results suggested that students, over the course of a semester, increased their cultural intelligence across all levels (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral) with a statistically significant difference with cognitive and behavioral ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, using the framework by King and Baxter (2005) and Perez et al. (2015) regarding intercultural maturity, qualitative results indicated students increased intercultural maturity across all levels (cognition, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) over the course of the semester. These results agree with other studies that have shown that semester long experiences can positively impact the cultural development of students (Marx & Moss, 2011). Further, the process of evaluating the students and engaging in research while teaching brought not only cohesion and lively discussion among the faculty team, but also purposeful reflection, blurring of boundaries of the learner/teacher dynamic. The learning community of the course Professionalism Across Cultures created a space for growing together toward inclusion, while learning to withhold judgment.*

*Keywords:* cultural intelligence, cultural maturity, transformative learning, SoTL, transdisciplinary teaching

## Introduction

In an increasingly global world, it is imperative that students become inclusive global citizens (Noddings, 2005). Higher education institutions, being keenly aware of this need, often require coursework and experiences outside of the disciplinary requirements of programs in an attempt to foster students who are globally minded (Lilley et al., 2015). These educational experiences must be intentional to promote the desired growth within students (Rennick, 2015). Faculty play a significant role in this endeavor, particularly when utilizing a transdisciplinary teaching approach, which is centered on the learner and grounded in a constructivist framework (Antola Crowe et al., 2013; Illeris, 2015).

This transdisciplinary teaching approach has been shown to lead to transformative learning (Lange, 2015), which changes the learners frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). With transformative learning, the habits of mind and a point of view are critical components of the frame of reference, and a paradigm shift in these may transform future experiences (Mezirow, 1997). Ultimately, this can result in fundamental changes in the self-identity of the learner and in their world view (Heddy & Pugh, 2015; Illeris, 2015). According to Mezirow, this can move learners "toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self-reflective, and integrative of experience" (1997, p. 5).

Transformative learning is common in relation to cultural experiences (Lilley et al., 2015; Rennick, 2015). Students have been shown to have defining cultural experiences that alter their view point of themselves and their world, particularly with immersive experiences such as study abroad (Lilley et al., 2015; Rennick, 2015; Robinson & Levac, 2018). The cultural development of students can be difficult to measure, particularly with experiences that are on a smaller scale. However, even small transformations are an important part of the learning process and these can lead to growth (Heddy & Pugh, 2015). Non-immersive, frequent encounters with individuals of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in the everyday life of students can support the development of cultural competence (Choi & Kim, 2018; Chen et al., 2018). Additionally, opportunities to pursue knowledge about diverse individuals or groups can provide small transformational learning experiences (Choi & Kim, 2018; Chen et al., 2018).

This growth can be measured in many ways, but the focus of this study was with cultural intelligence (Ang et al., 2007) and cultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Perez et al., 2015). Cultural intelligence refers to one's ability to function in culturally diverse settings and Ang et al. developed the cultural intelligence scale (CQS) to measure this concept using four dimensions (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral) (2007). King and Baxter-Magolda (2005) created a 3 x 3 matrix framework for cultural maturity, which includes an initial, intermediate and mature level of development for cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development. Perez et al. (2015) built upon this model including two transitional phases between each of the three levels of development. Importantly, both of these instruments can be utilized in a classroom setting. For the present study, the vehicle through which these ideas were developed was through reflecting on class experiences, interactions, and learning from projects (Schön, 1987).

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) is regularly used in higher education to scrutinize the effectiveness of classroom practices and student learning and to make that scrutiny public (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012). The purpose of the present SoTL study was to investigate whether intentional pedagogical practices in a required Professionalism Across Cultures course, with a transdisciplinary teaching approach, transforms students and faculty in their growth to become inclusive global citizens.

## Methodology

### Participants

Participants were enrolled in a required Professionalism Across Cultures course, which was co-taught by faculty in five different disciplines, as a part of a Global Scholars program. Other requirements of the program include completing a world language course, completing an international experience, attending activities involving international interactions and global topics, and presenting on their own

international experiences. Students take Professionalism Across Cultures at different stages in the program, though generally as a junior or senior. Data were collected from students who consented to participate in the study (n = 7). Due to the small sample size, the generalizability of the findings is limited to the participants in this study.

**Procedures**

This Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved SoTL project utilized an observational, mixed methods study design to gather multiple types of information due to the anticipation of a small class size and to help triangulate the data. The study was designed to incorporate assignments that were already a part of the course with only one new assessment. All were required components of the class, thus, there was no difference in coursework between students who consented to participate in the study and those who did not. Specifically, students completed three pre- and post-assessments including reflections, quantitative surveys, and presentations, totaling six data points.

On the first day of class, students completed a reflection that had six questions relevant to this study, such as "describe your experiences with other cultures" and "what does being a global citizen mean to you" to garner their thoughts, experiences, and opinions prior to digging into the coursework. Students completed the same reflection on the last day of class and the qualitative data were analyzed using a thematic approach. A new assignment to the course was introduced as a part of this research study and it aligned with one of the course objectives. This was the 20-item, four-factor (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral) Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (Ang et al., 2007). This scale utilizes a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The 20 questions are divided as follows: cognition (6), motivational (5), behavioral (5), and metacognitive (4); thus, scores cannot be compared directly as sums range from 28 to 42. Students completed the validated CQS at the beginning and the end of the semester and results were compared using t-tests with significance set at $p< 0.05$.

Students completed two cultural presentations during the semester and these presentations were evaluated two ways by faculty. The first project was a Country of Interest presentation (week 5) and the second, Cross-Cultural Interdisciplinary project (weeks 13 and 14, respectively). Initially, students were evaluated using traditional rubrics with scores included as part of their overall grade, but these scores were not a part of the present study. Data that was utilized for this study included intercultural maturity as defined by King and Baxter Magolda (2005) and Perez et al. (2015). Student presentations were videotaped to enable faculty to focus solely on intercultural maturity at a later date. Specifically, after the completion of the semester, the five faculty who co-taught the course, met as a group for data analysis, which consisted of both independent evaluation and group discussion to come to a consensus on which of the five levels (initial, transitional phase from initial to intermediate level, intermediate level, transitional phase from intermediate to mature level, and mature level) for each category (cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal) to assign to each presentation. Data were reported as pre- and post- levels to assess progression of intercultural maturity over the duration of the semester. Additionally, this process generated some interesting findings that were not part of the original project. These findings are addressed in the discussion section of this paper.

## Results

**Reflections**

Responses from both the pre- and post- reflections indicated that students had an interest in learning about different cultures and that most had traveled outside of the United States on multiple occasions. Due to the requirements of the Global Scholars program, this was not surprising. A comparison of the pre- and post- responses revealed a broadening of how students described global citizens, culture, and cultural diversity. For instance, one student described cultural diversity as "differences between cultures and how they interact with people different [*sic*]" in the pre- reflection, and as "accepting/learning about different cultures and learning that people are different than you" in the post-reflection. The reflections shifted from simply identifying differences to embracing differences.

Growth was also evident with the question that asked what the most important thing that could/did come out of the class. The intent behind this question was to gauge priorities and aid faculty instruction at the beginning of the semester and to evaluate what students felt they learned, if anything, at the end of the semester. Pre-reflection comments focused on gaining knowledge about various cultures. The comments suggested that learning about culture was finite and that they wanted to become culturally competent by the end of the semester. However, post- reflection comments suggested that students gained a deeper appreciation for the complexities of culture, or as one student put it "I've learned that everyone is different from place to place and no one fits a "perfect" description." Additionally, comments focused on the application of information, rather than simply the knowledge. The students seemed to be thinking about how they will use what they learned in class in their future careers, as evidenced by comments such as "learning about cultures and diversity and how that applies to being a professional" and "learning about basic practices from other cultures and incorporating that into healthcare."

**Cultural intelligence**

The questions from the CQS can be found in table 1 with the corresponding factor (metacognitive, cognitive, motivational, and behavioral). Table 2 depicts the means and standard deviations for each of the four categories, as well as the overall scores for the CQS for both the pre-test (administered on the first day of the semester) and the post-test (administered on the last day of the semester). The means for all categories were higher in the post-test data compared to the pre-test, indicating an increase in cultural intelligence over the course of the semester. A comparison of the means using t-tests revealed a statistically significant difference between the pre- and post-tests of both the cognitive and behavioral factors ($p< 0.05$), but not for metacognitive or motivational factors.

Table 1

*Questions aligned with the corresponding factors on the Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS)*

| CQ Factor | Question |
|---|---|
| Metacognitive | 1. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I use when interacting with people with different cultural backgrounds. |
| | 2. I adjust my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from a culture that is unfamiliar to me. |
| | 3. I am conscious of the cultural knowledge I apply to cross-cultural interactions. |
| | 4. I check the accuracy of my cultural knowledge as I interact with people from different cultures. |
| Cognitive | 5. I know the legal and economic systems of other cultures. |
| | 6. I know the rules (e.g. vocabulary, grammar) of other languages. |
| | 7. I know the cultural values and religious beliefs of other cultures. |
| | 8. I know the marriage systems of other cultures. |
| | 9. I know the arts and crafts of other cultures. |
| | 10. I know the rules for expressing nonverbal behaviors in other cultures. |
| Motivational | 11. I enjoy interacting with people from other cultures. |
| | 12. I am confident that I can socialize with locals in a culture that is unfamiliar to me. |
| | 13. I am sure I can deal with the stresses of adjusting to a culture that is new to me. |
| | 14. I enjoying living in cultures that are unfamiliar to me. |

Table 1 Continued

| | |
|---|---|
| | 15. I am confident that I can get accustomed to the shopping conditions in a different culture. |
| Behavioral | 16. I change my verbal behavior (e.g. accent, tone) when a cross-cultural interaction requires it. |
| | 17. I use pause and silence differently to suit different cross-cultural situations. |
| | 18. I vary the rate of my speaking when a cross-cultural situation requires it. |
| | 19. I change my nonverbal behavior when a cross-cultural situation requires it. |
| | 20. I alter my facial expressions when a cross-cultural interaction requires it. |

(Ang et al. 2007)

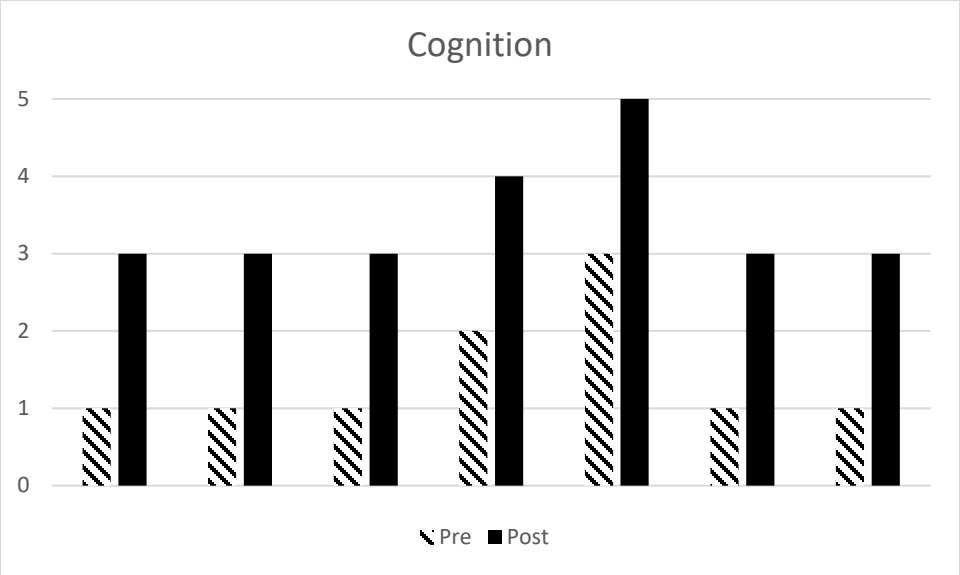
Table 2

*Descriptive statistics for pre- and post- Cultural Intelligence Scale (CQS) (n = 7)*

| Factor | Maximum value | Pre-test mean ± SD | Post-test mean ± SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| Metacognitive | 28 | 19.57 ± 2.07 | 22.71 ± 4.23 |
| Cognitive | 42 | 16.43 ± 3.91 | 23.14 ± 6.99 |
| Motivational | 35 | 27.21 ± 4.26 | 30.29 ± 4.68 |
| Behavioral | 35 | 21.57 ± 4.58 | 28.00 ± 3.74 |
| Total | 140 | 84.79 ± 11.94 | 104.14 ± 16.52 |

**Intercultural maturity**

The intercultural maturity scores were rated on a five-point scale where 1 = initial, 2 = transitional phase from initial to intermediate level, 3 = intermediate level, 4 = transitional phase from intermediate to mature level, and 5 = mature level. Figure 1 highlights the results of the progression of intercultural maturity over the semester per each of the seven students. Similar to the trend noted with cultural intelligence, all participants increased on each category from pre- to the post-assessment. The means for all three categories were similar, as noted in table 3.


Cognition
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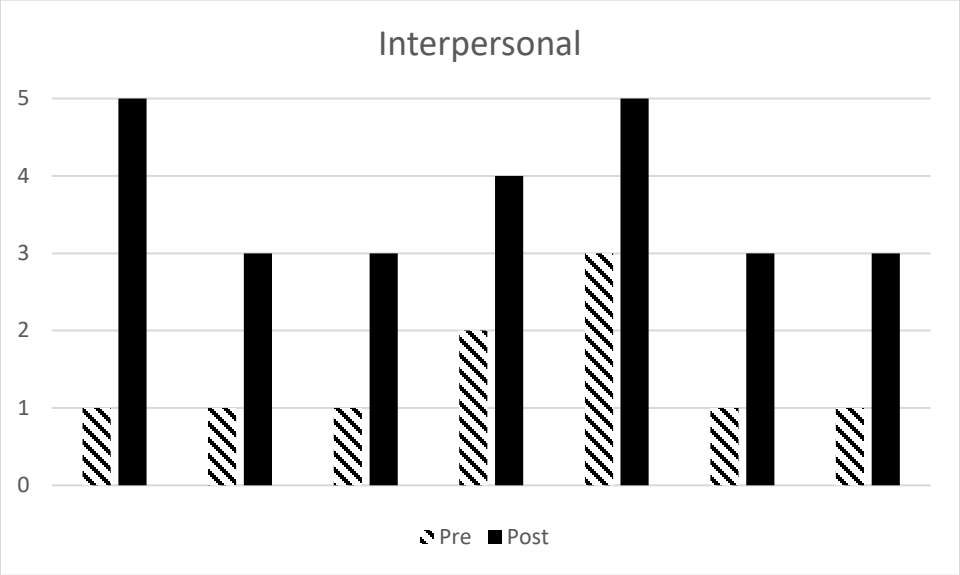
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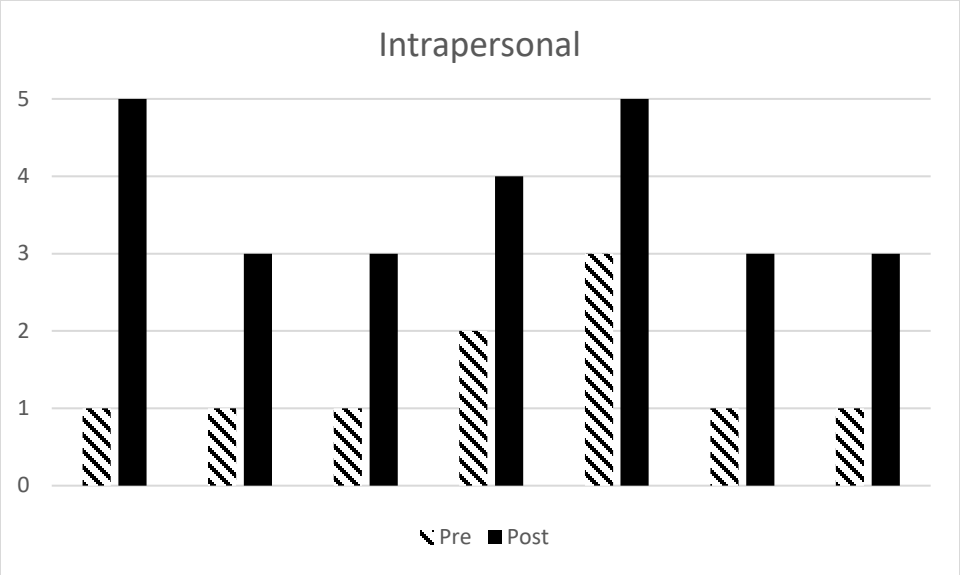


*Figure 1.* Comparison of pre- and post- intercultural maturity (1 = initial, 2 = transitional phase from initial to intermediate level, 3 = intermediate level, 4 = transitional phase from intermediate to mature level, and 5 = mature level for each student (n = 7) for each of the three intercultural maturity categories (cognition, interpersonal, and intrapersonal).

Table 3

*Descriptive statistics for pre- and post- intercultural maturity (n = 7)*

| Category | Pre-test<br>mean ± SD | Post-test<br>mean ± SD |
|---|---|---|
| Cognition | 1.43 ± 0.79 | 3.43 ± 0.79 |
| Intrapersonal | 1.43 ± 0.79 | 3.71 ± 0.95 |
| Interpersonal | 1.43 ± 0.79 | 3.71 ± 0.95 |

**Discussions and Implications**

The findings from this SoTL study agree with previous research that shows that semester long experiences can positively impact the cultural development of students (Marx & Moss, 2011). Specifically, over the course of the semester, the qualitative comments in the reflections highlighted a broadening of the culture and diversity, as well as a shift from knowledge to application. Additionally, cultural intelligence, as defined by Ang et al. (2007) and intercultural maturity, as defined by King and Baxter Magolda (2005) and Perez et al. (2015), were both shown to increase over the course of the semester. This suggests that the course resulted in transformative learning, described as "learning which implies change in the identity of the learner" (Illeris, 2014, in Illeris in 2015) and as an "expanded consciousness" for the students (Heddy & Pugh, 2015, p. 53). As with many educators, this is certainly a goal of the course, which was strategically planned throughout the semester. Since this course is part of a Global Scholars Program, it is hoped that each of the other requirements of the program are at minimum transformative experiences. Heddy and Pugh (2015) describe the importance of transformative experiences in an educational journey that may not result in a fundamental shift of how one thinks about the world, but that do lead to smaller transformations, such as an appreciation of various cultures. Since students in this course were at different points in the program, it is difficult to distinguish the influence among each of these requirements; however, it is evident that transformation occurs.

Transformative student learning has been a goal of faculty for this course since its inception, but transformative faculty learning was not a consideration prior to this SoTL project. A unique component of this course is that it is taught by five faculty members from five different disciplines within the same college. The interdisciplinary approach was for the benefit of the students to ensure that students were able to learn from multiple perspectives. In fact, classroom diversity is an important component of student learning (Choi & Kim, 2018; Chen et al., 2018; Gurin et al., 2002) and this concept is threaded throughout the Professionalism Across Cultures course. However, this SoTL project unexpectedly brought to light transformative learning that occurred within the faculty. The process of designing the study and evaluating the projects with the added layer of using the validated instruments for cultural intelligence and intercultural maturity, required faculty to think about the course in a more intentional manner to try to elicit growth in the students. Further, this project enabled faculty to reflect on their own role in the classroom, which seemed to blur the boundaries of the learner/teacher dynamic. This was most notable during the discussions between faculty during the evaluation of the videotaped presentations which were used to measure intercultural maturity. Lively and deep discussions among faculty during these evaluations served to find consensus for each presentation, as well as to discuss faculty's own understanding and experiences with the criteria.

As far as the nature of SoTL, the public sharing of our work occurred in phases. The experience of interdisciplinary teaming in this course initially was a new opportunity for all team members. The teaming (all teachers present at all sessions) created a space where each team member gradually got more comfortable sharing their teacher persona, their expertise and sharing their voice to a primarily spontaneous dynamic of classroom interactions. Culture was celebrated not only in the class but in the people present; our international experiences and cultural backgrounds contributed to that atmosphere. From these interactions trust grew, and the first public sharing outside of the team occurred in a regional academic teaching conference, and presently, writing the study for a journal depicting the very theme of international experiences that the teaching team had experienced.

A limitation to this study, however, is the sample size of seven participants. Using one class, resulting in a small sample, is common with many SoTL projects. While the small sample size reduces generalizability of the findings, the faculty are collecting additional data on subsequent classes in an attempt to increase the number of participants.

The present study has taught that the power of collaborative learning experiences cannot be underestimated in learning cross-cultural competencies. The SoTL approach in a course developed is an organically living entity itself, challenging a group of faculty in fruitful ways to focus on the development of student learning and their own development as teachers. The SoTL approach concretely allowed for a step of thoughtful deliberation, metacognition (becoming aware of one's awareness, thinking about thinking), a deep look at one's learning through the processes that are involved while learning (Scharff, 2020). Based on the trustful relationships developed over time teaching this course, the team had the courage to interact in honest and surprisingly authentic ways. The intercultural maturity of faculty as well as the readiness to enter into dialogue with students at various points in their development is at the same time rewarding, transformative, challenging, and productive.

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# Short-Term Travel Abroad to Uganda & Guatemala: A Preliminary Assessment of Student Transformative Learning

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**Abstract**

*We take a cumulative case studies' approach to explore transformative learning in the areas of service learning, global competencies, and leadership through travel abroad course trips to Uganda (May 2016, 2017) and Guatemala (March 2017). These courses took students on service-learning trips to educate and develop their knowledge and experiences related to the Central Six learning tenets at the University of Central Oklahoma. Student's primary emphasis for these experiences was the completion of a service focused project in partnership with a local organization. In addition to these projects, students engaged in cultural learning activities and programs focused on local customs and experiences. In Uganda, students partnered with St. Monica's Tailoring School/Sewing Hope Foundation to support their educational and civic efforts in the communities of Gulu and Atiak. In Guatemala, students partnered with Habitat with Humanity's Global Village program. In both tours with different students, we assessed whether students have exhibited indications of expanded perspectives by conducting a post experience, transformative learning assessment tool and by looking for evidence in student journaling using our Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) rubric. We compared the trips to better assess their transformative potential for students. The research is valuable as little to no work has examined pairing transformative learning and short-term student travel abroad. We do find indications of transformation in students on both trips, especially through global and intercultural awareness.*

*Keywords:* travel abroad, transformative learning, service learning, Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR)

## Introduction

In 2017, the Institute of International Education (IIE) reported 325,339 American students studied abroad during the 2015/2016 academic year. They also report that study abroad participants have more than tripled during the past two decades, but growth has been slowing over the past 5 years (Institute of International Education, 2020). During this time, colleges and universities have expanded global destinations and academic programs, increasing opportunities for students which include learning outcomes focused on global/cultural competencies, service learning, and leadership. Students often return from these experiences with new perspectives and an understanding of a diverse world, a deeper appreciation of varied cultural practices and beliefs, and an expanded knowledge of their place in their own communities. NAFSA (National Association of Foreign Student Advisors): Association of International Educators finds that study abroad and its impacts on students are significant in the following learning outcomes: improved grades, retention, graduation rates, language learning, international understanding, enlightened nationalism, and employability (Johnson & Spalding, 1997). Johnston and Spalding (1997) and Thies (2005) recommend incorporation of student travel abroad into curricula due to the benefits provided to participants. These findings are valuable as higher education continues to commit

significant resources to these opportunities, providing students with transformative learning experiences which prepare them for a global work environment.

Yet these results have focused primarily on long term (6 months or more) international experiences and there is a growing number of higher education experiences which are one month or shorter. Short-term programs have been developed to solve three primary challenges related to international education. The first is the cost of semester or yearlong programs. Many students have neither the ability to save the amount of money necessary nor the option to take on additional student loans for these longer programs. Many academic programs have rigorous course requirements, which would extend student's academic programs into a 5th or 6th year of study if a student was to leave for a semester or year and miss core academic courses required for graduation. The final challenge is separation anxiety from peers and family. Students are cautious about missing key events at home or on campus and also experience trepidation related to their ability to navigate months away from home.

As these programs have developed, attention to the unique assessment challenges is needed to determine evidence of student learning, growth and transformative experiences. The University of Central Oklahoma's (UCO's) Student Transformative Learning Record (STLR) and assessment rubrics provide solutions to these challenges and have supported the development of consistent and intentional learning outcomes (King, Kilbourne, & Harrison, 2015). The STLR framework, based on the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) VALUE rubrics and developed by 20 faculty on UCO's campus, provide the foundation to develop specific learning outcomes which can be integrated into short-term international study courses. These rubrics help to provide three key components of assessment:

1. "Consistent set of values to guide assessment. Terminology and language that is shared across multiple disciplines in higher education.
2. Tiered system to measure a student's progress after the experience. The not achieved, exposure, integration, and transformation levels fit well into assessing a student's growth.
3. Learning outcomes that guide course development and material" (Jobe, 2017).

Through this process we have arrived at two research questions. Can short-term study abroad programs produce transformative learning outcomes in participating students? How do we assess these outcomes to provide a deeper understanding of transformation? Examining these questions can help to provide consistency of assessment and broader application of transformative learning outcomes to short-term international experiences.

## Literature review

### Transformative learning

The foundations of transformative learning in higher education are most often associated with Jack Mezirow. Mezirow's (1975) early work developed an articulation of what transformation represented for adult students. Transformation is a change in perspective, a change in the way an individual views herself and her relationships. Transformative learning has also been described as "a comprehensive and complex description of how learners construe, validate, and reformulate the meaning of their experience" (Cranton, 1994: 22) Mezirow's ordered phases of transformation created a blueprint for recognizing and understanding the transformative learning process (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). These phases are listed below:

- "A disorienting dilemma
- A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
- Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

- Planning a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
- Provision trying of new roles
- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective."

Mezirow describes this constructionist perspective as one that focuses on rationality, ideal discourse conditions, and critical reflection. He finds it is a way of learning that constructs and appropriates new ways of thinking of one's own experience with greater personal independence and autonomy as the goal. Through transformation, thought changes into "a more inclusive, differentiated, permeable, and integrated perspective" (Mezirow and Associates, 2000: 18). Furthermore, he describes this transformation as a "transition from being a passive learning who accepts the definition provided by others to become active learners able to define meanings and gain new perspectives on their own."

Cranton *et al.*(2014) describes three types transformative learning: 1) Cognitive/Rational, Extrarational, and Social Critique. This study will focus on the first – Cognitive/Rational. He finds this way of transformative learning constructs and appropriates new ways of thinking of one's own experience with greater personal independence and autonomy as the goal. He later describes this process as "learning to think like an adult," or perspective transformation.

At the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO), transformative learning has been adopted and defined as a process that "develops beyond-disciplinary skills and expands students' perspectives of their relationships with self, others, community and environment," according to the website. The university engaged six core tenets, called the "Central Six": Discipline Knowledge; Global and Cultural Competencies; Health and Wellness; Leadership; Research, Creative and Scholarly Activities; and Service Learning and Civic Engagement. These six tenets serve as the foundation for academic and co-curricular learning for each student. Through a continuous process of assessment in courses, programs, and experiences, students can indicate growth in each tenet and communicate this progress through their STLR Snapshot and/or eportfolio.

**Travel Abroad**

Higher education study abroad programs in the United States initially developed between the two World Wars and now offer considerable options for students. While there has been a steady increase in students participating in these programs, globalization has made these experiences a priority for American students, higher education, and their future employers. The University of California-Merced compiled an overarching list of powerful statistics of study abroad participants. Noteworthy data points include a significantly higher likelihood of employment within 12 months after graduation (97% compared to 48% of non-participants) and 59% of employers reporting valuing the skills associated with international experiences (MERCED).

Research related to these experiences and student learning outcomes has also increased. Ingraham and Peterson provide one of the first comprehensive looks at student outcomes and their study abroad experiences. They find significant, positive impacts on a student's academic performance, personal growth, and intercultural awareness as a result of participating in a study abroad program (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). Numerous studies have confirmed these results in the same areas of focus related to both long-term and short-term experiences. Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) look at short-term study abroad experiences and find students who participated in a short-term experience reported they were more confident in their intercultural awareness and knowledge versus non-participants. They conclude short-term experiences are worthwhile endeavors, focused primarily on one-month programs.

Harrigan and Vincenti (2004) provide evidence that higher order thinking can be facilitated not just by traveling to another country, but by cross cultural assignments implemented into the curriculum. Cannon and Heider (2012) adopted a critical approach, creating a "model of social justice action" to facilitate development in students through a travel abroad trip in Tanzania.

**Transformative Learning and Study Abroad**

Minimal research has been completed focusing on short-term study abroad experiences and transformative learning, particularly in the areas of service learning, global competencies, and leadership development. The most persistent gap is related to substantive critical reflection (which can be anecdotal and personal nature) and combining larger sample studies which provide a foundational understanding of the overarching learning outcomes of participants in these experiences.

Rennick (2005: 73) presents a theoretical paper on transformative learning and travel abroad, emphasizing Dewey, Freire, and Mezirow, creating a context for transformative experience which is "action oriented, collaborative, real world problem-solving education." Kiely's case study of service learning in Nicaragua provides some evidence of successful learning in these experiences and transformative learning. In his study, he found five areas where students experienced transformative learning: 1) Contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing and connection. Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) look at short-term experiences and how students integrated learning the year post participation. Using a case study approach and transformative learning as their framework, they determined that a short-term experience can create a point of entry for students' learning, but additional experiences are needed for transformation and long-term learning. Short-term experiences can open the door to additional opportunities.

## Methods

We take the cumulative case studies approach where information is aggregated from multiple places at different times (Yin, 2014). Case studies are often of a nonrandom sample for the purpose of observing a particular environment, group or phenomenon in a particular time or place. Case studies can be supported by both qualitative and quantitative data. This set of case studies focuses on three student study abroad trips: Two to Uganda in the summers of 2016 and 2017 and one to Guatemala in March 2017.

We used the student learning outcomes backing three of UCO's Central Six learning tenets as a lens through which to view students' transformative growth in all three travel-abroad experiences. The three tenets were global and cultural competences; leadership; and service learning and civic engagement. We employed a mixed methods approach by collecting evidence of transformative learning from journal reflection and surveys. Students met once a week over the course of six weeks before departure and once to debrief after returning from the experience. Class meetings covered student expectations, historical analysis of each destination, research on the service focused project or topic (e.g., affordable housing), and basic logistical topics. The student reflection piece was required for submission 2 weeks after return from the trip and consisted of a 12- to 15-page journal inspired paper. The post-survey assessment was provided during immediate return from the trip.

We assess transformative growth using UCO's STLR rubrics, as described in the literature review, tied to each of the aforementioned Central Six tenets. However, reflection by itself can be problematic. Students do not come from the same place. Instead they individually bring a variety of experiences, beliefs, and intentions to the trip. Also, reflections may be convoluted as students often talk among themselves about the "right" answer they suppose will get them a grade they need (Cranton, 2006). Likewise, transformative learning can be a longer-term process and improbable in a single course, event, assignment, or even a trip (Wolcott & Lynch, 2001). Observation of student behavior can also be included as evidence, particularly when assessing a student's capacity related to leadership. This process of observation and reflection of each student allows us to make appropriate assessments of their experience, which supports the designation of not achieved, exposure, integration, or transformation, as described in UCO's tiered transformative learning system.

To further develop our approach and analysis we include Stuckey, Taylor, and Cranton's (2013) Transformative Learning Outcomes and Processes survey. We created demographic questions and added them to Stuckey, Taylor and Cranton's 95 survey questions. This survey combines questions from the aforementioned perspectives which dominate the field: 1) Cognitive/Rational 2) Extrarational and 3)

Social Critique. The cognitive/rational perspective is our focus here. Responses for the anonymous survey data for each question are the following: "Mostly disagree," "Slightly disagree," "Slightly Agree," and "Mostly Agree." We analyzed this survey by counting frequencies.

Combining the survey data with the student reflections creates a dynamic assessment of these experiences which helps to mitigate bias across qualitative judgment and provides deeper meaning to results and findings.

## Findings

### Student Reflections and UCO's STLR Assessment

Focusing on the cognitive/rational transformation perspective from Mezirow, assessment of student's reflections and actions provided significant findings for inclusion. Our primary focus is aligning their thoughts and experiences with UCO's STLR assessment rubrics. UCO's definitions for each tenet and their levels are included below, with examples from student reflections for each tenet in the exposure, integration, and transformation levels. Global and Cultural Competencies as found on UCO's Transformative Learning webpage:

1. Exposure – The student displays an openness to learning about global and cultural differences and/or took part in an activity where she/he was exposed to worldviews of other cultures.
2. Integration – The student's perspective has expanded to value different cultural worldviews and she/he is able to articulate a sense of identity in a global context.
3. Transformation – The experience led to the student's new identity as a global citizen, and she/he now seeks interactions and growth from diverse communities and cultures.

Below are examples of Global and Cultural Competency quotes from student journals. The first is an example of integration and the second is transformation.

> *Student Journal Reflection – Integration* – "Throughout my time in Guatemala, I was humbled, amazed, and a little bit worn out, but mostly I was inspired by not only the people I met in the local community, but also by the students and faculty who were a part of our travel group. In the span of eight days, my life was completely changed." (Senior, Female)

The student articulates a shift in her identity (life) related to her experience in an international environment and interacting with a community yet does not describe how this has transformed behavior/beliefs.

> *Student Journal Reflection – Transformation* – "I have gained an incredible amount of knowledge from every single one of these experiences. I truly don't know what I would be like today if I had not stepped out of my comfort zone that first time and gone to South Africa. It is crazy to think how my ideology about what is important in life has changed so drastically from just immersing myself in a different culture for seven days." (Junior, Male)

The student describes a shift in ideology, particularly in his value system, through participation in this and other programs. Describes the culture as a mitigating condition. This shift is also accompanied by changes in actions and behaviors and was observed through his interaction with the community, project, and peers. Service Learning and Civic Engagement as found on UCO's Transformative Learning webpage:

1. Exposure – The student took part in, or heard results of, a service or civic activity and/or is able to voice her/his perspective on the importance of these activities to her/himself and society.

2. Integration – The student's experience led to new insights related to civic identity and to possible solutions to addressing social issues. She/he now desire to serve be more involved in a diverse community, and/or improve confidence in self as a change agent.
3. Transformation – The experience has prompted a major shift in the student's attitude; and she/he now views service and civic action as a rewarding use of time for personal growth and/or to contribute to addressing community challenges by initiating action with a diverse team.

Below are examples of Service Learning and Civic Engagement quotes from student journals. The first is an example of integration and the second is transformation.

> *Student Journal Reflection – Integration* – "The sense of community was astounding. The families interacted with each other and the workers as if they had known each other for many years. Seeing how big a transformation of a $285.00 healthy home kit could make for a family, or a simple water filter bucket was sobering." (Junior, Female)

The student describes an understanding of the civic identity of the community she engaged in during her experience. She includes a description of solutions provided during this experience and how this impacted her perception.

> *Student Journal Reflection – Transformation* – "Feeling the need to take initiative and leave something better than when we found it, we decided to merge our dream and logical minds in order to transform the overlooked playground space." (Senior, Female)

The student communicates an understanding of assessing a need in the local community, developing a plan to actualize this through an integration of ideas, and taking action to accomplish this goal. Observable behavior was paramount for assessing transformation. Taking initiative without encouragement from trip leaders reflected the student's ability to connect community needs to their abilities and accomplish an additional project that could only be determined and completed after engaging in the environment. Leadership as found on UCO's Transformative Learning webpage:

1. Exposure – The student is open to improving her/his views of leadership and/or participates in activities where she/he observes others using their influence to empower others/teams or advance a cause or causes.
2. Integration – The experience has led the student to recognize her/his leadership qualities; and/or desire to use her/his influence to empower others/teams and/or advance a cause or causes.
3. Transformation – The student has developed her/his identity as a leader due to the experience, and actively seeks to empower others/teams and/or advance a cause or causes.

Below are examples of Leadership quotes from student journals. The first is an example of integration and the second is transformation.

> *Student Journal Reflection – Integration* – "On the plane ride back, I looked out the window over the Gulf of Mexico. I couldn't tell where the sea ended and the sky began. The world is so big and there are so many people in it – many of those people need help. Not many care about them and less are looking after them. I wondered to myself if it was all a lost cause. After all the good is done, does it make a difference? Will it end up changing the world? I could not answer this question for a long time, but then I realized I did not have to – what I know is there are people who need help and I want to be there to help them. It does not matter if I change the world – what matters is one person who needs help and is asking for it. All I want to care about is if I can just

> help one more person, their world will be changed. That is what will make it all worth it." (Sophomore, Male)

The student expresses a clear identity and role for themselves in a global context. He includes a description of how he plans to advance his efforts in serving a broader community through one interaction at a time.

> *Student Journal Reflection - Transformation* – "The trip to St. Monica's was a life-changing experience that has helped me to appreciate the things I have more, complain less, and invest in those around me to the best of my ability. These are not one-time lessons; I'm going to have to work on each of them every day. But without the trip to Gulu, Uganda, I might never have begun that journey and for that I am very thankful." (Junior, Female)

The student articulates a recognition they can support individuals through their investment in a community. She also recognizes a process of development necessary for her to empower and advance others. A behavioral shift is communicated that the student recognizes has been part of this experience.

We find applying these rubrics and descriptions to students' reflections and observation provides robust results from the study tour course experiences. The percentages reflected in Table 1 report the percentage of students who earned this ranking in our final assessments.

Table 1

*STLR Assessment –Transformation, Integration and Exposure*

| | **Transformation** | **Integration** | **Exposure** |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Global and Cultural Competencies** | 30.7 % | 57.8% | 11.5% |
| **Leadership** | 23.1% | 57.7% | 19.2% |
| **Service Learning and Civic Engagement** | 34.6 % | 57.7% | 7.7% |

An important addition to this analysis is the description of a disorienting dilemma for participants. Mezirow (1991) argues this is the first stage of transformative learning. For Wasserman and Gallegos (2009), authentic dialogue is the key to this sort of transformation (Wasserman & Gallegos, 2009). These disorienting dilemmas arouse emotion in people, generating a need to reflect deeply even to the point of questioning their very sense of self (Taylor, 2000). With this questioning comes grief, but also enlightenment which might lead to new ways of thinking (Scott, 1997).

We find 77% of student participants experienced a disorienting dilemma during their experience, creating opportunities for them to reframe their own perspectives and life experiences. Included are examples of three reflections from students describing these disorienting dilemmas:

> When we returned to St. Monica's, we planned to attend a cultural dance competition in town. Our entire group went. We walked up on the event to a huge crowd of people. I was intimidated. We made our way to the back of the crowd. Immediately, the show transitioned from the dancing to us. I have never in my life been stared at in such a manner. Every eye was on us. I figured it would end after a while, but it certainly did not. The people stared at us up until the minute we left. As uncomfortable I was, I am grateful for this experience because it showed me what being the minority of a group felt like. I can now empathize with anyone who has ever stood out because of their skin color. I can relate to the aggression some minority groups feel. I can see how alienating it feels to be the odd one out. I remember wanting someone to come up and talk or

> smile at us. Now, I hope to be the person who smiles and greets those who feel out of place. (Junior, Female)

This student reveals a shifting in self by noting that after being in a place as a minority, the shoe is on the other foot, and she can now "empathize with anyone who has ever stood out because of their skin color."

> I'm ashamed to admit it but I can't possibly deny that I've been whining to God about already wanting to go home. The motion sickness and sleep deprivation has me drained and I don't see a way over this hill. How shallow am I for feeling that way? The second thing I prayed was for God to sustain me through this trip. I hope God hears my prayer and honors my honesty. I don't want to be the selfish and whiney person that I feel like I'm being right now, but that's where I'm currently at. (Junior, Female)

This student is becoming aware of her "whining" about the need to go home and is having difficulty experiencing the "shallowness" of these emotions.

> It was almost unreal to me to see these wild creatures in the environment that they had inhabited for thousands of years. It was a once in a lifetime opportunity and I couldn't have asked for a better experience! But at the same time there was a strange feeling that accompanied the experience. I felt a bit of guilt that I was experiencing these amazing things in such extravagant comfort while the people that I had seen in countless small villages throughout our drives through the African countryside had next to nothing. I still would not trade the experience and I am so thankful that I received it, but I came to the realization that the fulfillment I had been looking for may not even lie fully in seeing great beauty and unbelievable sights in different parts of the world. I decided then that I couldn't live life as a tourist and be entirely content. (Senior, Male)

This student is becoming aware though guilt that he is experiencing a comfort level not experienced by those he has seen on the countryside of Uganda.

**Survey Data**

Stuckey, Taylor, and Cranton's survey includes 95 topic questions for review. Each student participant completed the survey post-experience within 24 hours of completion of the program. When examining the survey data we focused on questions which reported a 75% or greater response rate for "Mostly agree." We have aligned the survey results with STLR competencies to determine the tenets where development is occurring.

Table 2

*Mostly Agree Survey Results – 75$^{th}$ percentile*

| Statement | Mostly Agree % | Competency |
|---|---|---|
| I have greater empathy for others' positions than I used to have. | 88.5 | Cultural |
| I become aware that some people have more advantages in life and others have few. | 88.5 | Cultural |
| I feel a strong need to be active in giving back to my community. | 88.5 | Service/Civic |
| I realize that I am a different person now than I used to be. | 88.5 | Cultural |

Table 2 Continued

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| I am aware that my beliefs are both the same as and different from others' beliefs | 80.8 | Cultural |
| I look for opportunities to act to make the world a better place. | 80.8 | Service/Civic |
| My feelings show when I talk about my values. | 76.9 | Service/Civic |
| When I have a new understanding of something, I act on it. | 76.9 | Service/Civic |
| My learning is not complete without action. | 76.9 | Service/Civic |
| Reflection about others who have less privilege leads me to question my lifestyle. | 76.9 | Cultural |
| Self-reflection leads me to revise some of the assumptions I used to hold. | 76.9 | Cultural |

Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus would find that at least six of the eleven statements reveal intercultural competence: first, second, fourth, fifth, tenth, and eleventh in Table 2. Likewise, Chieffo and Griffiths would label these statements as intercultural awareness. UCO's STLR rubric would likewise find these six statements are related to the Global & Cultural Competencies value of the "Central Six." Four of the eleven statements reflect the "Central Six" value of Service Learning and Civic Engagement, specifically the third statement and sixth through nine.

Combining the student reflections with the survey data provides substantive evidence of transformative learning in UCO STLR categories, particularly global/cultural competencies and service learning/civic engagement. In these tenets, there is clear articulation individually through journal reflections. The STLR tenet rubrics offer a consistent and thorough approach to assessing their reflections and provide instructors baseline definitions to use across multiple experiences and programs. The included student reflections are indicative of individual development in the targeted tenets and themes according to these rubrics.

The survey data conveys our aggregate data of participants, reporting the frequency of student learning outcomes across the various themes of cultural competency and service learning. With multiple themes reporting over 75% of responses in the "mostly agree" category, students report they believe these experiences have increased their capacities and development in these areas.

We also find it necessary to inspect student's perception in areas where survey data reports a significantly lower agreement with the provided statements. These responses are included in Table 3.

Table 3

*Mostly Agree Survey Results – Least Agree*

| Rank | Statement | Mostly agree % | Competency |
|---|---|---|---|
| 79 | A traumatic event leads me to question my values | 21.9 | Identity |
| 81 | I seriously question my beliefs and actions | 21.9 | Identity |
| 82 | I use poetry or fiction to help me understand myself and my experiences | 21.9 | Cultural |
| 83 | To address injustice, I confront those in authority | 18.8 | Service/Civic |

Table 3 Continued

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 84 | I participate in social movements | 18.8 | Service/Civic |
| 85 | I question my beliefs and how they are shaped by those in power | 15.6 | Identity |
| 86 | I move away from the beliefs of my family and culture that are related to gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation | 15.6 | Cultural |
| 87 | When I am making a change, I can see in my imagination how things should be | 15.6 | Identity |
| 88 | I realize I am a different person now than I used to be | 12.5 | Identity |
| 89 | Creating art during a life-changing experience that helps me to understand myself | 12.5 | Identity |
| 90 | Dreams give me insight into my soul | 12.5 | Identity |

In examining the other end of the spectrum where students seemed to disagree most with the Stuckey, Taylor and Cranton's questions, it seems they reveal more dramatic changes of identity did not take place. While students who participated in travel abroad in one of the three aforementioned trips did exhibit greater intercultural competence and greater efficacy in service learning and civic engagement, they were less likely to say they found a profound shift in their identity. As evidenced by Table 3, students were not likely to participate in events such as social movements, address social injustice through confronting authority, questioning power holders, or even do more poetry for fiction now due to the experience. They were also not likely to question who they were in terms of their beliefs, values, insight, or understanding themselves. These observations provide important understanding of how we look at the student transformative process in these experiences. Students reported they agree they have been changed in areas of perspective, individual autonomy, empathy, when to act, and challenges communities experience. Yet these experiences have not consistently shifted their thoughts concerning higher authority and core beliefs related to family and social experiences. This provides illumination on potential limitations on transformative learning on short-term international experiences.

## Conclusion

Short-term travel abroad experience reveal opportunities for transformational learning as three quarters of students in our study experienced a disorienting dilemma; followed by critical reflections assigned to all of them (both through journaling and completion of the surveys). These open them up to further intercultural competence and confidence in service learning and civic engagement as found in our survey. However, we do not find any profound change in the self-reported identity of students. This research does, however, give some gauging of the transformative learning experience because while disorienting dilemmas, reflection, dialogue, and action are important, time and multiple experiences might be just as important. This finding may give more credence to the idea of a more gradual and cumulative rather than epochal transformative learning as the realistic goal for short-term travel abroad.

There is minimal research on short-term international experiences and the impact they maintain on student learning and transformational learning. As these programs continue to grow in number and scope, to include service learning, gaining a broad understanding of potential and expected outcomes is vital to develop sustainable and impactful experiences.

The international service experiences highlighted in this research have provided students with transformative learning experiences in developing global/cultural competencies, their leadership skills, and in understanding their capacities related to service learning and civic engagement.

Through using well defined STLR rubrics in desired learning outcomes, it is our belief this research can continue to be measured across a diverse set of experiences and environments. With the limited work on short-term international programs, expanding this work is vital to our understanding of expectations related to these programs, and ensures we can continue to communicate the value of these programs for higher education institutions, and prepare students in meaningful ways for their futures.

## Future Research

Since we covered only three short-term travel abroad trips to two different locations, research on more trips might be worthwhile to continue to build a broader understanding of the consistency of student experiences across multiple destinations and course expectations. With the continued emphasis on expanding global engagement in higher education, further examination is necessary to effectively assess student learning and value of this work. While we found that transformational change was more gradual rather than on an epochal scale, more study on disorienting dilemmas and reflection in cross-cultural frameworks could help make clear the links between short-term study abroad and transformative learning.

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