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Cultural Immersion Program: Exploring How the Learning Process Shapes and Influences the Students' Transformational Outcomes in Global Service Learning and Study Abroad Programs

Oghenebruphiyo Gloria Onosu

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CULTURAL IMMERSION PROGRAM: EXPLORING HOW THE LEARNING PROCESS
SHAPES AND INFLUENCES THE STUDENTS' TRANSFORMATIONAL OUTCOMES
IN GLOBAL SERVICE LEARNING AND STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Oghenebruphiyo Gloria Onosu

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

August 2018

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Title: Cultural Immersion Program: Exploring How the Learning Process Shapes and Influences the Students' Transformational Outcomes in Global Service Learning and Study Abroad Programs

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The purpose of this study was to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes (e.g., global awareness, cultural tolerance, and social justice consciousness) and how these transformational outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. Using a qualitative method research framework, I employed both individual in-depth, semi-structured interviews and program-related documents to understand the experiences of current and former students as well as faculty members who participated in cultural immersion programs within the last one to seven years.

The data analysis produced seven categories that are influential in shaping the learning outcomes in various ways (participant worldview and program expectation, experiencing cultural immersion, program structure, design, learning is multidimensional, the impact of the experience coming back home, lessons from global service, and takeaways from study abroad). The study findings further revealed themes about how each type of program influences the way that the participants translate these transformational outcomes in multicultural contexts. Additionally, the findings indicated that participants in both program types experienced a new insight about the strength of culture and shared humanity of others around the world, but the GSL participants retained a deeper understanding of how power and privilege operate in a "cross-cultural context.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the Problem

Education is not limited to the classroom, in reality, life experiences are what educate you; the school does not, it only teaches you. It becomes your choice to educate yourself on what you have learned from school. That is the reason there are two types of people: people that learn about, and those who learn to become (Woghiren, interview, December 7, 2017).

In many societies today, governments, educators, nongovernment organizations, and scholars struggle with the challenge of preparing the next generation to function and exist in a world that is increasingly complex and interconnected. The demands and problems that come with living and working in this changing society require that youths, students, and graduates alike be well prepared to interact, cooperate, and negotiate with diverse groups. Advocates have long argued that with the changing structure of the social world, there is a need to educate students about the challenges of international security, economic competitiveness, and cultural diversity (Association of American Colleges & University [AAC&U], 2007; AAC&U, 2006; Aigner, Nelson & Stimpfl, 1992; American Council of Education, 2003; CIEE, 1988).

For this reason, proponents of global learning continuously have called for an educational curriculum that supports various forms of education that teach concepts that go beyond the classroom borders. Nussbaum (2002), an advocate of global learning, argues that the present system of education gives little information about lives outside one's community and thus it stunts moral thinking. In other words, the current educational system is restrictive and does not provide outlets for students to think and seek knowledge beyond their immediate localities. The realization has led to the current campaign for global learning in higher education. Global

learning means that the educational system can provide channels that will equip students with the knowledge required to deal with issues of poverty, cultural diversity, social calamities, and economic crises both at the local and international levels (Whitehead, 2015).

In response to this problem, the United States and many other countries are reverting to educational systems that lean toward the global learning objectives (American Council of Education, 2015). Using a teaching method that focuses on collaborative, active community service, and structured critical reflections, students are encouraged to question cultural, political, and social issues from a global perspective (Hartman & Kiely, 2014). The global learning model motivates students and others to engage in critical analysis of complex problems, and the process might lead to outcomes such as increased cultural understanding, civic engagement, and critical thinking (Hartman, Lough, Tom, & Reynold, 2015).

To achieve global learning objectives, higher educational institutions in the United States are now utilizing several forms of cultural immersion programs (AACU, 2015). As a result, variations of cultural immersion programs have continued to emerge to meet the learning demands in recent years. Some of the commonly used cultural immersion programs include service learning (SL), global service-learning (GSL), the study abroad program (SAP), international education, engagement with international scholars, globally focused capstones, international internship and work experience, and international interactive video conferences (AAC&U, 2015).

Among the programs, the global service-learning (GSL) and the study abroad program (SAP) are the two that have gained increasing interests among college students in the United States (Campus Compact, 2015). For instance, evidence shows that since 2003, SAP and GSL have witnessed a steady increase in the number of participants and more universities have been

offering these programs (Open Door Report, 2015). Advocates believe that the increasing participation results from the transformational outcomes caused by the participants' exposure to and experience of other cultures (AAC&U, 2007). Educators and practitioners believe that exposure to SAP and GSL can lead to transformational outcomes such as global awareness, cultural tolerance and competence, self-development, increased civic engagement, social justice consciousness, and critical thinking skills (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Hartman, Lough, Tom, & Reynold, 2015).

Presently, there are variations of SAP and GSL. The differences lie in the structure and design of the programs, especially in the areas of program location, program curriculum, learning outcomes, exposure, and length of cultural immersion (Lopez-Potillo, 2004; Sherraden, Lough, & Bopp, 2013; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012). Based on this observation, the questions that remain unanswered are as follows: (1) Is there a difference in the way participants experience the cultural immersion process in these programs? (2) To what extent does the program structure and curriculum influence cultural immersion experience outcomes? In other words, how does the location, extent of the cultural exposure, and the learning experience impact the process that leads to the stated outcomes? Most of the studies that have examined the benefits of short-term programs have not yet considered these questions (Lopez-Potillo, 2004; Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner 2014). Hence, this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the experience of students who participated in two- to- sixteen weeks either in the SAP or GSL program. Primarily, the study will observe the difference, if any, in how the program structure impacts the way students experience the transformational outcomes such as global mindedness, cultural tolerance and competence, civic engagement and social justice consciousness, and how students translate these outcomes into changes that influence their behavior and actions.

Although SAP and GSL participation continues to thrive, much is still unclear to educators, practitioners, and researchers about how these programs transform participants (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). In particular, there is uncertainty as to how the program structure impacts the process in which participants convert cultural immersion experiences into long-term transformational actions (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Kiely, 2005). Much of the research on SAP and GSL programs present evidence that supports the notion that cultural immersion experiences leads to the stated SAP and GSL outcomes (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Crowder, 2014; Hartman et al., 2015; Kiely 2014; Metzger & Faria, 2012). There is still little or no explanation on how participants achieve this process. To understand this process, Elyer (2013) suggests that researchers need to observe and compare the outcomes that result from the different types of cultural immersion programs. He proposes that the findings might offer insight into how the transformational learning process occurs during cultural immersion experiences.

Despite Elyer's appeal, much of previous cultural immersion research has focused on program outcomes and only a few researchers paid attention to the need to understand the transformational learning processes that take place as a result of cultural exposure (Kiely, 2004; Kiely 2005). Hence, the focus of this research is to understand how the program structure supports the mechanism by which SAP and GSL participants translate their cultural immersion experiences into long-term transformational actions. The findings from this study will provide needed insight on the effects of the program structure and design on SAP and GSL learning outcomes.

Statement of the Problem

The need to equip students with the knowledge to face multicultural issues is fueling the demand for global learning models in educational systems. As a result, many colleges around the

world, including the United States, are now using various forms of cultural immersion programs to achieve global learning objectives (AAC&U, 2015). Although evidence supports the idea that participation in cultural immersion programs such as SAP and GSL can lead to transformational outcomes (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Crowder, 2014), there is still limited knowledge on how the program structure contributes to the transformation process.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes (e.g., global awareness, cultural tolerance, and social justice consciousness) and how these transformational outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. To accomplish the purpose of this study, I examine the following questions:

- How does the structure (curriculum, learning outcomes, location, housing, and length or extent of cultural immersion) of cultural immersion program influence the participants' transformational outcomes?
- How do students' expectations about a cultural immersion program shape the way transformational outcomes impact their attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them?

In exploring these questions, I used a qualitative approach to obtain data from SAP and GSL Alumni, faculty members, and program coordinators who have either planned or participated in SAP or GSL cultural immersion experiences.

The Significance of the Study

The importance of this study is twofold. One benefit is that it sheds light on how SAP and GSL program structures affect the process in which students transform their cultural immersion experiences into long-term actions. The findings are useful to SAP and GSL administrators, educators, practitioners, and host communities in planning future cultural immersion programs that enhance the goals of global education. In spite of the relevance of such information, the current literature shows that the bulk of research in this field provided little knowledge about how the program structure affects the process in which people transform their cultural experiences into long-term actions.

Additionally, the findings from this study are useful in educating future SAP and GSL participants about how the various components of a program promote transformational learning experiences before, during, and after cultural immersion experiences. The findings from the study might help SAP and GSL participants make the best use of their cultural immersion experiences to facilitate the transformational outcomes.

Theoretical Perspective

This section of the chapter gives an overview of the transformational learning theory. Using Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning theory model and the Kiely's (2005) expanded version of the transformational learning model, this study examines how the program structure impacts the learning processes in which students translate their cultural immersion experiences into transformational outcomes. The transformational learning theoretical perspective serves as the lens that guides the data analysis for this study.

Mezirow's Transformational Learning Model

Mezirow's cognitive, rational approach to transformational learning takes its root from multiple intellectual sources such as the social science constructivist perspective, Habermas's critical social theory, and Blumer's and Mead's symbolic interaction theories (Finger & Asun, 2001). The central assumption of Mezirow's (1991) theory is that knowledge comes from the interpretations and reinterpretations of the meaning given to a particular experience. Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning theory assumes that human beings function from a set of "habitual expectations" known as perspectives, which serve as a filter that guides one's view of self and other. Mezirow argues that one's perspectives develop through the process of socialization and this, in turn, shapes beliefs, values, ideas, and viewpoints. He believes that whenever a person experiences disorientating dilemmas, the experience gives spaces for reflection to occur. This reflection then triggers a process that leads to the reevaluation of old perspectives. The process allows one to become aware of how and why long-held assumptions can constrain learning new ideas (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 2000).

While conducting a study that examines the experiences of women who were reentering a college campus after taking an extended time away from school because of family obligations, Mezirow (1991) discovered that perspective transformation occurs because these women experienced a dramatic change in their way of life that led to a shift in their mindset. Based on the findings from this study, Mezirow developed a ten-phase transformational learning model, which starts with a process he called the "disorienting dilemma." The process occurs whenever a person experiences a dramatic situation, which then leads to self-examination that allows for a critical assessment of one's sociocultural assumptions. In the next phase of this transformational process, one begins to feel discontent, but at the same time comes to realize that others who have

navigated similar change can share this transformation process. This process leads to actions such as “the exploration of options for new roles for relationships, the planning of a new action, and acquiring knowledge and skills to implementing one’s plan” (Mezirow, 1991, p.168).

Mezirow (1991) also asserts that “the process leads to trying of new roles, building competence and self-confident in the new roles and relationships, and reintegration into one’s life by conditions dictated by one’s new perspective” (Mezirow, 1991 p.168).

Mezirow (2000) theorizes that when a person experiences this transformational process, it causes a modification of perspectives to the extent that one seeks a change. His transformational learning model provides a framework to explain how learning can lead to a change in how people view self and other. Many researchers in fields such as education, management, nursing, and most recently, study abroad and global service learning, have applied this theory to study the transformational learning processes in adulthood (Kiely, 2004; Kiely, 2005; Taylor, 2000). A few studies have applied the Mezirow transformational learning model to several aspects of adult learning that occurs during cross-cultural experiences (Kiely, 2000, 2004, 2005). The literature review section will include a more in-depth account of these studies and their findings.

Although the transformational learning theory has been used extensively in the literature, some critics believe that the Mezirow’s transformational learning model fails to consider the effects of the emotional and social context in which learning process occurs (Kiely, 2005; McDonald, Cervero, & Courtenay 1999; Taylor, 2005). For this reason, Kiely (2004) expanded the transformational learning theory and developed a modified version of it. The modified transformational learning theory addresses the concerns raised by the critics of the Mezirow’s transformational learning model.

Kiely's Transformational Service Learning Process Model

Kiely (2005) examined the emotional and social context of adult learning processes. He used a longitudinal study that examined students' transformational learning process during a service-learning cultural immersion program in Nicaragua. He found that the learning processes happens in five dimensions, which include contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting. Kiely (2005) explains that contextual border crossing describes how personal, structural, historical, and programmatic elements of service learning experiences influence the learning process in a way that can promote or deter the transformational learning outcomes.

The dissonance is the difference between the previous frame of reference and the new experience. The personalizing represents how individuals respond to and learn from dissonance. The processing includes the process of reflective learning, the social context, and the dialogic learning process. The connecting is the point where the individual begins to adequately understand and empathize with the experience (Kiely, 2005). Based on the findings of this study, Kiely developed a five-dimension transformational service-learning process model. This model, together with Mezirow's transformational learning model, will serve as the main conceptual framework for this study.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, (see Table 1) this section of the chapter will discuss the definitions of the concepts used in this study.

Cultural Immersion Experience

Cultural immersion experiences involve a learning process that exposes a person to an environment that is culturally different for a particular period to develop knowledge, tolerance,

and self-development (Grusky, 2000). In this study, the cultural immersion period would be between two to sixteen weeks. Cultural immersion experiences occur through programs such as service learning, global service learning, international volunteer program, and study abroad programs designed to expose participants to new environments and cultures.

Study Abroad Programs (SAP)

Study Abroad Programs are a form of educational and cultural experiences that require participants to live and take classes in a structured college environment in a foreign country for a period that ranges from two weeks to one academic year (Goode, 2007; Spenader & Retka, 2015).

Global Service Learning Programs (GSL)

Global Service Learning Programs are a form of educational service experience that requires participants to live with members of a host community and engage in service projects for a period that ranges from one week to a year or more (Crabtree, 2008). These experiences allow participants to engage in critical reflections on issues relating to self, human dignity, society, economy, environment, and power relations within a global context (Hartman & Kiely, 2014).

Transformational Learning

Transformational Learning is a process wherein a person experiences a change in perspective as a result of events which creates disorientation that allows time for critical reflection of long-held assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Geller, Fisher-Yohida, & Schapiro, 2009; Meziro, 1991).

Transformational Outcomes

Transformational Outcomes refer to learning experiences that lead to a developmental shift in a person's thinking, attitude, and behavior (Geller et al., 2009). For this study, transformational outcomes will include the short and long term effects of cross-cultural participation in SAP and GSL programs. These transformational outcomes include global awareness, cultural tolerance, competence, increased civic engagement, social justice consciousness, self-development, and development of critical thinking skills (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Bringle & Hatcher 2011; Hartman et al., 2015).

Transformational Education

Transformational Education is a formal or informal educational program designed to foster transformational learning experiences that result in transformational outcomes (Geller, et al., 2009). In this study, transformational education refers to the various aspects of preparation, learning, and experiences that occur before, during, and after cultural immersion experiences.

Program Structure

Program Structure refers to the different components of the cultural immersion programs. These components include the location (Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, etc.), curriculum (seminars, community engagement, reflection journals, etc.), learning outcomes (cultural awareness and tolerance, self-reflection, etc.), housing (homestay, student housing, etc.), and the extent and length of cultural immersion (Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou 2012).

Table 1

Terms and Definitions

Terms	Definition of Terms
Cultural Immersion Experience	Involves a process that exposes a person to a cultural environment that is different from one that the individual is accustomed (Grusky, 2000).
Study Abroad Program (SAP)	A form of educational and cultural experiences that requires participants to live and take classes in a structured college environment in some other country for a period that ranges from two weeks to one academic year (Goode, 2007; Spenader & Retka, 2015).
Global Service Learning Program (GSL)	A form of educational service experience that requires participants to live with members of a host community and engage in service projects for a period that ranges from one week to a year or more (Crabtree, 2008).
Transformational Learning	A process whereby a person experiences a change in perspective as a result of events which creates disorientation that allows time for critical reflection of long-held assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes (Geller, Fisher-Yohida, & Schapiro, 2009; Meziro, 1991).
Transformational Outcomes	Learning experiences that lead to a developmental shift in a person’s thinking, attitude, and behavior, e.g., global awareness, cultural tolerance, and competence increase civic engagement, social justice consciousness, self-development, and development of critical thinking skills (Geller, Fisher-Yohida, & Schapiro, 2009).
Transformational Education	Formal or informal educational program designed to foster transformational learning experiences that result in transformational outcomes (Geller, Fisher-Yohida, & Schapiro, 2009).
Program Structure	Program Structure refers to the different components of the cultural immersion programs. These components include the location (Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America), curriculum (seminars, community engagement, and reflection journals), learning outcomes (cultural awareness/tolerance, and self-reflection), housing (homestay and student housing), and the extent and length of cultural immersion (Vande Berg et al., 2012).

Note. The definitions of key terms in this study

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter gives an overview of the events that lead to the development of global learning perspectives, the statement of the problem, the purpose of this study, the significance of this study, and the theoretical perspectives that shape this study. The proceeding chapter will examine and analyze existing literature on cultural immersion history, cultural immersion programs, study abroad programs, and the global service-learning program.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Recently, colleges and universities in the United States witnessed an explosion in the number of students enrolling in the numerous cultural immersion programs available on college campuses (American Council on Education, 2015). In light of this development, the field has seen researchers who have studied different aspects of cultural immersion programs and their outcomes. This chapter will present a review of the literature that has evolved from these studies. The first section of the literature review will provide a general overview of the history of cultural immersion programs, including the development of SAP and GSL programs. The next section will look at the research on SAP and GSL learning processes and program outcomes. The final section will examine the transformational learning theory and its application in understanding SAP and GSL programs and the stated transformational outcomes.

Cultural Immersion Programs

Cultural immersion experiences involve a process that exposes a person to an environment that is culturally different from one that the individual is accustomed to and that allows the person to develop knowledge, tolerance, and self-development (Grusky, 2000). In the United States, cultural immersion programs are fast becoming popular among undergraduate and graduate students at many higher educational institutions (American Council on Education, 2015). Different variations of the cultural immersion programs continue to provide opportunities for these students to explore other cultures, traditions, and lifestyles. SAP and GSL are currently used programs that afford students the opportunity to step out of their borders and experience life outside their home country. Although the stated principles and outcomes of the two programs are similar in many ways, the program's designs differ structurally and pedagogically (Bringle &

Hatcher, 2011). Structurally, the design of SAP allows students from one country to take formal credit courses in another country for a specified period (Hartman, 2008). SAP offers formal credit-bearing courses that allow the student to live, study and experience other cultures through a structured learning environment (Rubin & Matthew, 2013). For the most part, SAP focus on outcomes that benefit both the students and universities involved in the exchange. Mostly, SAP design seeks to increase foreign language skills, cross-cultural skills, and critical thinking skills; the notion is that these skills tend to increase students' job marketability (Crabtree, 2008).

Unlike SAP, GSL provides students with cross-cultural experiences that combine cultural immersion and community service in a way that allows students and faculty alike to experience the foreign culture (Grusky, 2000). Structurally, GSL programs focus on outcomes that are reciprocal and beneficial to the host community, the student the universities and the affiliated organizations (Crabtree, 2008). The next section offers a detailed review of the various studies that have examined different aspects of SAP and GSL programs, learning processes, and program outcomes.

Study Abroad Programs (SAP)

Study Abroad Programs (SAP) are a form of educational and cultural learning that requires students to live and study in another country for a period (Goode, 2007). A growing number of colleges and universities within the United States are incorporating liberal educational studies into their curriculum that encourage students to participate in some form of SAP during undergraduate or graduate studies (American Council of Education, 2014). According to one study, the primary reason most schools are adopting this mode of education is to increase students' awareness of the global economy, national security threats, social justices, and the global climate change (Sabania & Braskamp, 2009).

A recent Open Door Report shows that 325,339 students from across various colleges and universities within the United States studied abroad in 2015/2016. This figure represents an increase of 3.8% in the number of students who participated in SAP from the previous year. Out of the total number, 63% of the students participated in short-term summer programs (two to eight weeks), 34.6 % in mid-length programs (one semester), and 2.4% in the long-term program (one academic year) (Open Door, 2017). Another report shows that most of the students who participated in SAP in 2015/2016 were predominantly white female undergraduate students. Additionally, the SAP destination breakdown shows that the majority of students who participated in these programs visited countries in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Only a few participants went to destinations outside these regions (Institute of International Education, 2017).

Studies show that when people are exposed to a culture that is dissimilar to what they are accustomed to, people are more likely to develop cultural understanding and tolerance towards people of other cultures (Crowne, 2013; Takeuchi, 2010; Takeuchi, Yun, & Russell, 2002). Despite this finding, evidence from the data indicates that SAP participants tend to seek cultural experience in locations that are similar to their home countries. The current pattern shows that students have a higher preference for a short-term SAP with destinations in Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia (Institute of International Education, 2014). The question that one is tempted to ask at this point is: Does a short-term SAP meet the learning goals that higher educational institutions are seeking? To what extent does the cultural dissimilarity of the location affect students' learning processes? It will be helpful to look at the study abroad literature across the disciplines such as Education, Management, Sciences, Nursing, Social

Sciences, and the Arts to answer these questions. Hence, the proceeding section of this chapter will present an overview of the types and structures of SAP and the stated SAP outcomes.

Types of Study Abroad Programs

The study abroad literature identifies three types of SAP designs; these are the instructor-led topic and subject short-term study abroad engagement activity, instructor-led short-term study abroad, and the immersion semester-long enrollment study abroad (Graham & Crawford, 2012). Each of these SAP designs uses a specific structural model to incorporate formal academic activities and cultural experiences into the program. The SAP structural models include the direct enrollment, hybrid programs, and island programs. The direct enrollment allows students a direct placement into an educational institution in the host country for a period ranging from four weeks to one academic calendar year. Hybrid programs give students the opportunity to enroll in a short course at a host university. The students take a part of the course at the home university and the faculty member who facilitates the study abroad trip will be the one to teach this class. Island programs allow students to take courses designed and taught by a faculty member from their home university, but the learning occurs outside the typical classroom environment at the location of the host university (Hanouille & Leuner, 2001). Findings from various studies that measure SAP outcomes indicate that people who participated in the different types of SAP developed noticeable transformational outcomes such as cultural awareness, cultural sensitivity, self-development, and global mindedness (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Medina-Lopez-Potillo, 2004). However, it is unclear about the extent to which the Study Abroad Program design and structure contribute to the observed results.

Stated Outcomes of Study Abroad Programs (SAP)

There is no agreement in the literature about the outcomes of SAP. Several studies suggest that SAP does enhance students' cultural development, global enlightenment, and global mindedness (Graham & Crawford, 2012; Hanouille & Leuner, 2001). For example, Graham & Crawford (2012) used an open-ended interview to study the learning experience of 15 college students who participated in an instructor-led study abroad program. The findings from their study show that the students gained self-awareness and global enlightenment. Other studies indicate that SAP promotes self-development, enriches educational experience, and increases cultural competence/intercultural competence, global awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and global citizenship (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Clark, Flasherty, & Wright, 2009; Kitsantas, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Potillo, 2004). Similarly, one study reports that students who participated in a short-term summer SAP became aware of the complexities of intercultural communications (Levine & Garland, 2015).

In contrast, other studies claim that SAP on its own does not enhance cultural development. The findings from these studies suggest that for cultural development to occur during SAP, the program needs to include activities that encourage the students to embed themselves in the host culture. (MacNab, Brislin, & Worthley, 2012; Pederson, 2010; Rohmann, Florack, Samochowiec, & Simonett, 2014). Despite variations in the findings regarding the outcomes and benefits of SAP, the number of students enrolling in these programs keeps growing (Blake-Campbell, 2014). The next section of this chapter presents further discussion of findings from studies that have investigated different aspects of study abroad programs and the outcomes.

Study Abroad and Global Mindedness

Various studies have examined different aspects of SAP and the stated outcomes of short-term SAP (Graham & Crawford, 2012; Hanouille & Leuner, 2001; Kehl & Morris, 2008). Global mindedness is one of the outcomes of SAP that researchers have widely studied. Hett (1993) defines global mindedness as the ability that makes a person feel connected and responsible to the global community. A study that examined effects of global mindedness among undergraduate students attending a multicultural university in San-Diego, California found that global mindedness reflects in people's behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes. Hett argues that individuals with high levels of global mindedness understand that the world is interconnected and tend to value the diversity and differences that come from this interconnectivity. Based on the findings, Hett (1993) developed the global mindedness scale (GMS) which consists of questions that test the five dimensions of global mindedness, which include responsibility, cultural pluralism, global –centrism, efficacy, and interconnectedness.

More recently, Kehl and Morris (2008) measured and compared the levels of global-mindedness achieved by two groups of students who studied abroad: one for an eight- or fewer-week island short-term program and the other for a full semester long-term program. Kehl and Morris used the GMS to collect data from 990 students from three colleges. Based on the length of the SAP, the findings indicate that there is a significant difference in the students' global-mindedness scores. Students who participated in the full-semester program received a higher global mindedness score than students who took part in the short-term (eight weeks) program. Kehl and Morris believe that the findings from their study suggest that the development of global mindedness during SAP experiences occurs progressively over time.

Although Kehl & Morris found that students who participated in mid-length SAP achieved a higher score on the global-mindedness scales, they suggested further research in this area to determine if there is a difference in the levels of global-mindedness achieved by students who participate in other types of SAP programs. Additionally, the researchers recommended that it would be helpful to investigate if the global-mindedness achieved by participants during cultural immersion diminishes over time.

Effects of Study Abroad on Cultural Awareness and Sensitivity

Cultural awareness is the ability to be aware of and recognize the existence of other cultures (Norton & Mark-Maran, 2014). Evidence shows that cultural awareness enhances the developmental process that helps individuals develop cultural sensitivity: an ability to appreciate and respect other cultures (Pederson, 2010). For example, Lumkes, Hallett, and Vallade (2012) investigated the impact that a two-week-plus faculty-led study abroad program in China had on the development of cultural awareness and sensitivity among the participants. Findings from this study indicate that the students developed deeper appreciation and respect for other cultures from their experiences. Additionally, the students reported a significant change in their perceptions of the meaning of privilege as well as their understanding of cultural diversity and the issues of globalization.

Other studies show that the cultural awareness learning processes develop in different stages (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006; Pedersen, 2010): 1) The reversal stage. This is a “Us vs. them” stage, where students feel that their culture is better than the culture of others. 2) The minimization stage. There students begin to sense the similarities of different cultures. 3) Acceptance and adaptation. At this stage, the students accept and respect cultural differences (Anderson et al., 2006; Pedersen, 2010). Various studies have suggested that during

SAP, the majority of the participants experience the different stages of the development of cultural awareness. However, after the SAP experience, there is no clear evidence to show the extent that participants translate their cultural awareness into the way that they interact with people from other cultures (Lumkes et al., 2012).

Lopez-Potillo (2004) believes that to achieve the desired level of cultural awareness, SAP needs to incorporate cultural and experiential learning elements into the program. Hence, Engle and Engle (2003) introduce seven elements to help facilitate the development of cultural awareness during SAP. These elements include the program duration, participants' language competence, the instructional language used in classrooms, assignments, housing arrangement, cultural activities, experiential learning, and structured reflection of cultural experiences. In this regard, Engle and Engle observe that when the SAP design includes activities that allow for direct interaction with the culture of the host community, participants reported a higher level of cultural awareness after a cultural immersion experience. Similarly, other studies found that the use of experiential learning elements in SAP designs give students the chance to interact directly with the local culture (Clark et al., 2009; Wang, Peyvandi & Coffey, 2014). Furthermore, these studies indicate that having direct contact with diverse groups increase the likelihood of the students gaining cultural awareness (Clark et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2014).

Study Abroad and Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is the ability that enables a person to recognize, value, and respect other cultures. The result of intercultural competence is that it helps people develop open-mindedness, make a personal judgment, and reduce bias toward other cultures (Deardorff, 2006). Some studies have investigated the concept of intercultural competence in relation to other types of SAP designs. For example, Stebleton, Soria, and Cherney (2013) examine

intercultural competence associated with the five different types of cultural immersion programs. The programs studied include the university study abroad program, study abroad affiliated with other agencies, travel for cultural experiences, international service learning, and international volunteer and work experiences. An interesting finding from this study suggests that female students had a higher degree of cultural competence compared to the male students in the study abroad program and the international service-learning program. Additionally, the authors observed that students who participated in the university study abroad program and the international service-learning program achieved improvement in the comfort level when working with people from diverse cultures.

By contrast, other studies show that SAP alone has little or no effect on the development of intercultural competencies of the students who participated in cultural immersion programs (Pederson, 2010; Root & Ngmapomchai, 2012). For instance, using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) in a pre-test and posttest experiment, Pederson (2010) compared the levels of intercultural competence of three groups of students who participated in a year-long SAP in England. The findings from this study show that students with prior international travel experiences scored higher on the posttest. Students in the second group had pre-departure cultural awareness interventions before their trip. These students reportedly had a higher level of cultural sensitivity compared to students in the other group who did not receive any cultural intervention. Pederson's study suggests that study abroad programs without the intentional cultural immersion will not help students to develop the desired intercultural competence.

Similarly, Root and Ngmapornchai (2012) found that students who had comprehensive cultural training before and after programs exhibited higher levels of intercultural competence. Root and Ngmapornchai observed that most institutions of higher education in the United States

design their SAP program with little or no cultural immersion. Testing the assumptions that active cultural exposure leads to the development of intercultural skills, Root and Ngmapornchai analyzed reflective papers submitted by 18 students who participated in different types of cultural immersion programs. The programs examined in their study include study abroad, global service learning, volunteering and other travel abroad programs. The analysis of the students' self-reflections shows that SAP participants only gained the stated intercultural competence if they had pre-departure and post-departure cultural training. Additionally, they observed that only those students who participated in programs that incorporated cultural activities achieved transformational outcomes that influence the way they view other cultures.

In another study, Salisbury (2011) observed a large group of American undergraduate students that participated in a long-term study abroad program in Europe. Although the students reported an increase in intercultural competence, there were no significant changes in the students' attitudes towards cultural differences. Salisbury noted that the similarity in language and other cultural characteristics of the SAP location might have contributed to the response and the lack of change observed in students' attitudes toward diversity. Despite evidence that shows that students develop intercultural competencies and cultural understanding from SAP, it is not clear how it affects individual behaviors. There is no clear evidence that SAP improves students' abilities to translate the intercultural competence into behaviors that allow one to be more likely to accept other cultures (Ganyea, 2008; Salisbury, 2011; Salisbury, An, & Pascarella, 2013).

Study Abroad and Global Citizenship

Within the various study abroad literature, there has been a disagreement among scholars on the definition of global citizenship. Some argue that this concept is vague and hard to define (Dolby, 2008). Others seem to believe that global citizenship is a multifaceted concept that has

three dimensions: global awareness, social responsibility, and civic engagement (Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2014). Some researchers share this explanation and corroborate this assumption with evidence from research studies. For example, Dolby (2008) argues that the interpretation of global citizenship is usually contextual. While studying 26 American and 22 Australian undergraduate students on a short-term study abroad program, Dolby observed that the interpretation and definition of what is known as global citizenship changes as the diverse context varies. Dolby believes that the concept of global citizenship is a phenomenon that closely intertwines with cultural awareness. For this reason, during cultural immersion experiences such as SAP, whenever a student fails to achieve cultural awareness, the experience becomes a means to reinforce the student's old philosophy of others. Most times, this results in situations that emphasize the difference between the host culture and the home culture. If not managed, the situation will eventually foster an "us" versus "them" attitude that might restrict learning processes that stimulate the development of global citizenship during cultural immersion experiences (Dolby, 2008).

Recently, Tarrant et al. (2014) measured the difference in students' global citizenship for a short-term SAP. The types of SAP programs compared in this study include one offering experiential field-based sustainability courses and one without experiential field-based sustainability courses. The SAP/sustainability course designs involved 75% fieldwork and 25% traditional classroom lectures while the SAP/non-sustainability course designs did not involve fieldwork but just had the traditional classroom lecture. The findings from this study show that for both programs, students only started showing noticeable global citizenship characteristics during the fourth week of the study abroad experience. Overall, after controlling for age, gender, prior international travel experience, socioeconomic status, and race, students who participated in

the SAP/sustainability had a higher score on global citizenship than those who took part in the traditional class based course. Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner noted that although the students showed signs of global citizenship characteristics after the program, the long-term transformational effects of this outcome on the students' behavior towards cultural differences and diversity is unknown. Tarrant, Rubin, and Stoner believe that there is a need for further research in this area to help ascertain whether there is a connection between one's global citizenship and cultural tolerance in the long term.

Challenges of Measuring SAP Outcomes

In spite of the growing body of research supporting the use of SAP to promote transformational outcomes such as global mindedness, intercultural competence, cultural awareness, and global citizenship, critics believe that there are still some gray areas in the SAP research. For example, some researchers have questioned the methods used in testing and ascertaining SAP outcomes (Deardorff, 2008; Gillespie, 2002; Salisbury et al., 2013). Although studies show that SAP promotes many of its stated program outcomes, there are still concerns about the generalizability of the findings from these studies (Salisbury et al., 2013). Some researchers argue that the lack of a standardized assessment process in measuring SAP outcomes calls into question the generalizability of SAP findings, and the extent to which the achieved outcomes get overstated (Deardorff, 2008; Gillespie, 2002; Salisbury et al., 2013). The challenges addressed consistently in the literature are as follows: 1) How are SAP outcomes determined and measured, 2) What assessment instruments did the researchers use to measure outcomes, and 3) What criteria was used for the participants?

The Abstract Nature of Study Abroad Stated Outcomes

Researchers have drawn attention to the abstract nature of some of the outcomes of SAP such as intercultural competence, cultural awareness, and intercultural sensitivity as a primary source of concern in assessing these outcomes (Dolby, 2008; Gillespie, 2002). The belief is that the abstract natures of these outcomes have made it difficult to agree on operational definitions to use in measuring these outcomes across the disciplines (Gillespie, 2002). For instance, Dolby (2008) claims that the scholars' inability to agree on an operational definition for the concept of global citizenship has resulted in a situation where different academic disciplines measure and interpret the concept of global citizenship differently.

Gillespie (2002) raises similar questions about the operationalization and measurement of intercultural competence in SAP outcomes. How is this concept of intercultural competence measured across the different academic disciplines? Is there a difference between the intercultural competence developed locally and the one developed through SAP? How reliable are the methods and instruments currently used to assess SAP cultural competence? Gillespie believes that presently, many of the studies that examined intercultural competence as an outcome of study abroad programs failed to address these issues adequately. Gillespie argues that there is a need to triangulate SAP studies, to prevent the overgeneralization of study abroad outcomes. The argument suggests that researchers need to incorporate research techniques that support qualitative methods, quantitative methods, or mixed methods in assessing SAP program outcomes.

Assessment of Study Abroad Outcome

Certain aspects of the method used in evaluating SAP program outcomes continue to draw attention in the literature. For example, Salisbury (2011) observed that the use of cross-

sectional design in SAP research for assessing intercultural competence leaves room for overgeneralization of the SAP findings. He argues that because of the multifaceted nature of intercultural competence the use of a one-time survey questionnaire will not sufficiently account for the effect of SAP on intercultural learning processes. In a similar study, Deardorff (2006) discovered that the use of student self-reported surveys inadequately measures the different facets of intercultural competence. Deardorff believes that the limitations in measuring intercultural competence come from the fact that this concept is multifaceted. To measure this concept adequately, one needs an assessment tool that can measure both the qualitative and quantitative effects of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). Hence, Anderson and Lawton (2011) argue that the greatest challenge SAP researchers face when measuring intercultural competence is the absence of a unified assessment tool.

Currently, the tools available for evaluating intercultural competence include Intercultural Adjustment Potential Scale (ICAPS), International Educational Survey (IES), Global Awareness Profile (GAP), Beliefs, Events, and Values Inventory (BEVI) and Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Anderson & Lawton, 2011). Anderson and Lawton argue that the use of different assessment tools in determining the effects of SAP on intercultural competence development creates a scenario where these instruments tend to measure the same dimensions in different ways. The authors suggest that to overcome these challenges, SAP researchers need to develop a more robust tool.

Another area of SAP outcomes assessment factor that gets often criticized in the literature is that the researchers do not give significant wait time before they measure the transformational outcomes at the end of the programs. For instance, Salisbury et al. (2013) observe that the assessment takes place on the last day of the SAP program. They believe that this method of

evaluation overlooks the impact of the post-departure process on SAP participants' attitudes. Other critics claim that assessing SAP outcomes on the last day of the program will not account for any possible effect of detrimental reverse culture shock that might affect the developmental process of intercultural competence (Bennett, 2008; Gaw, 2000).

Study Abroad Selection Bias

A growing number of researchers have questioned the demographic composition of the students who participate in SAP and how this composition affects the stated SAP outcomes. In particular, these studies examine how demographic factors influence learning process (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009; Schneider, Carnoy, Kilpatrick, Schmidt, & Shavelson, 2007). For example, recently, one study examined how the socioeconomic status, ethnic composition, and prior travel experiences affect the development of intercultural competence among undergraduate students on short-term SAP experiences. Evidence from this study suggests that students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds reported a higher level of adaptation and development of cultural competence because of prior international travel experiences and cultural exposure (Salisbury, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2011).

One thing that is apparent from the SAP studies reviewed is that there are gaps in the methods used in assessing SAP outcomes and the effect they have on SAP alumni. The reason for these disparities is that there are no precise agreed upon definitions for most of the stated SAP outcomes, let alone a clear operationalization of the concepts measured. With a challenge such as the one mentioned above, it becomes hard to ascertain the extent to which SAP participants achieve transformational learning outcomes. Although scholars have suggested the use of qualitative design and mixed method design as a means to overcome this issue, the majority of current SAP studies still utilize quantitative tools to assess program outcomes

(Deardorff, 2006). The hope is that the use of a qualitative approach in this study will provide the needed understanding of how students utilize cultural experiences to develop transformational learning outcomes during SAP and GSL programs. The remaining sections of this chapter review the research on GSL programs; GSL stated outcomes and GSL studies that have tested these stated outcomes and the findings.

Global Service Learning (GSL)

GSL programs are an organized local and international excursion that incorporates components of community service alongside educational experiences. Unlike SAPs that involve traditional courses, GSL programs entail a cultural immersion experience that allows students and faculty to experience foreign culture through the eyes of the host community (Grusky, 2000; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Slimbach, 2017). GSL programs have witnessed increased popularity among students and faculty looking for local or international cultural immersion opportunities (Garia & Longo, 2013). As part of the cultural immersion process, GSL program participants and facilitators live among the host community and engage in learning service projects within that community (Engle & Engle, 2003). GSL programs use active community service and structured critical reflections to encourage participants to view cultural, political, and social issues from a global standpoint (Hartman & Kiely, 2014).

Scholars argue that structurally GSL is different from other international cultural immersion programs because the programs' focus transcends educational benefits (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Kiely, 2004; Hartman & Kiely, 2014). Unlike other cultural immersion programs, GSL seeks to connect education with community service in a collaborative manner. GSL programs incorporate both experiential and transformational learning principles to encourage the development of cross-cultural learning, global enlightenment, global awareness, critical

reflective skills, citizenry engagement, and social justice in social issues of global concerns (Crabtree, 2008; Slimbach, 2017).

Types of Global Service Learning Programs (GSL)

Bringle and Hatcher (2011) identified four types of structure commonly used to design GSL programs. The models include international volunteering, international service learning, field education, and international internships. International volunteering focuses on learning processes that occur through community service. These programs can either be short-term, medium term, or long term. The short term can be one to two week long alternative or spring break programs. The medium term can be six to eight week long single courses in the host location or sandwich programs that focus on community civic engagement and social justice awareness. The long-term can be between 52 weeks and one academic year (Niehaus & Crain, 2012; Sherraden et al., 2013). Typically, GSL programs are designed either as faculty and staff led credit bearing co-curricular mission service trips, academic courses with international and local cultural immersion through community engagement, or international volunteer programs with formal service learning curricula (Crabtree, 2008). Irrespective of the structure or duration of these GSL programs, the primary shared goal is to use the cultural immersion and the community service experience to expose students to learning processes that challenge long-held viewpoints (Kiely, 2005; Parker & Deardorff, 2007). As initially stated, SAP and GSL provide cultural immersion experiences to foster global awareness, cultural tolerance and competence, civic engagement, social justice, self-development, and critical thinking skills (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Hartman et al., 2015). Based on the specified structural differences between the SAP and GSL, one wonders if there are differences in the impact that these programs have on the outcomes participants achieve. Despite the increased number of research on SAP and GSL

program outcomes, studies have yet to test if differences exist in the outcomes that develop across these programs (Sherraden et al., 2013).

Global Service Learning Transformational Outcomes

Most recently, Hartman and Kiely (2014) highlighted ways in which GSL outcomes differ from other types of service learning program outcomes. GSL stated outcomes include academic and professional growth, career goals, intercultural competence development, global engagement, global citizenship, and knowledge of social justice, inequalities and language skills (Crabtree, 2008; Hartman, 2008; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Kiely, 2004; Sherraden et al., 2013). One of the unique attributes of GSL is the involvement of all stakeholders in developing the learning process and reciprocal transformational outcomes. In the next session, I discuss the GSL program outcomes.

Potential Benefits of GSL Outcomes to Students

One study reports that students who engaged in a teaching GSL program in Navajo reservations experienced a new appreciation for the culture and customs of the local community. This GSL experience created a channel for the students to engage in reflective processes that helped raise questions about common, long-held stereotypical beliefs about native people (Stokowski, Richardson & Henderson, 2003). Likewise, evidence shows that students experienced transformational changes in the areas of self-awareness, intercultural sensitivity, cultural competence, and privilege awareness during GSL program experiences (Pusch, 2004). Other benefits of participating in GSL programs discussed in the literature include the development of cultural knowledge and language skills. Broadly, research shows that the duration of cultural immersion experiences significantly affects the level of cultural knowledge and language skill development during such programs (Sherraden et al., 2013).

Equally, studies have shown that students who participated in GSL programs gained personal and professional growth, cross-cultural skills, intercultural competence and sensitivity, global engagement, and personal transformation in matters relating to inequality and social justices (Sherraden et al., 2013). For instance, Parker and Deardorff (2007) found that American students in an international GSL project in Nicaragua became aware of the social inequality and the value of other cultures. Another study shows that students who participated in the 2003 and 2004 Amizade GSL programs in Bolivia, Ghana, Brazil, and Jamaica became more interested in issues of global engagement compared to other students who did not participate in the programs (Hartman, 2008).

Similarly, a longitudinal study that investigated the transformation impact of GSL on undergraduate students' learning and development found that in the short term, participation in GSL programs developed the students' intercultural competence, language ability, and appreciation for cultural and global issues. Although this study reported that the participants experienced self-transformation, the major challenge that most participants faced was how to retain the new attitude they got from the program experience toward matters of social justice after re-entering their local communities (Kiely, 2004).

While conducting a qualitative study of five students who participated in a GSL program in Kenya, Cowder (2014) discovered that cultural experience alone does not lead to transformational outcomes. Although participants in this study perceived that they experienced some form of transformation, they believed that the program design did not provide adequate tools for transformational learning processes to occur. Other studies show that, for most people who participate in cultural immersion experiences such as GSL, the experience is not enough to transform their behavior (Kiely 2004; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000). Investigators observed

that for many alumni of GSL programs, once the initial cultural shock experience wears off, things begin to normalize, and eventually the tendencies to return to old beliefs and values become hard to resist (Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000). The evidence reveals that, although most participants experience some change during GSL programs, what is unclear is how and to what degree the program structure and design help the participants to use the cultural immersion experience to achieve change in perspectives that result in transformational outcomes that benefit self and other.

Potential Benefits of GSL Outcomes to Host Community

Although GSL scholars recognize that GSL stated outcomes benefit all the stakeholders, for the most part, GSL research focuses on the benefits and outcomes for students, universities and private affiliates. Only a few studies have examined GSL outcomes for the host community, and the findings from these studies show a need for more research in this area (Crabtree, 2013; Crabtree, 2008; Grusky, 2000; Nelson, 2014; Tonkin 2013). For instance, Crabtree (2013) found that while working on community service projects with visiting students, members of host communities developed intercultural competence and intercultural sensitivity.

One study observed that the presence of GSL participants in local communities provides financial, human, and material benefits to the host communities (Keino, Torrie, Hausafus, & Trost, 2010). Furthermore, Crabtree (2013) finds that although GSL programs contributed positively to host communities, the presence of students also hurts the community. Studying the effects of GSL on communities, Crabtree claims that sometimes host communities face opposition from their government and other neighboring communities because of the projects initiated by the GSL participants who visit these communities. One wonders, how much the structure of GSL program design contributes to creating this effect on the host community.

Nelson's (2014) study of international service programs in South Africa provides insight to this question. Nelson found that when GSL educators and practitioners fail to involve the host community in planning a program, the outcomes tend to reinforce social inequality, which is the very thing that the program seeks to correct.

Potential Benefits of GSL Outcomes to Universities and Affiliated Organizations

Sponsoring universities and affiliated organizations also benefit from GSL programs. The benefits include cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, global engagement, and increased international partnership (Anette, 2003; Sherranden et al., 2013). For instance, Metzger and Faria (2012) investigated a group of graduate students and their faculty members who participated in a social work GSL program in a Russian community. They found that during the program, faculty members developed relationships with the community that became a useful reference for future research and learning. Similarly, Johnson's (2009) study showed that universities and affiliated organizations witnessed a rise in students' awareness of social problems happening locally and around the globe when students were enrolled in GSL courses. Likewise, Machin (2008) observed that participating universities profit from the cultural competence that students develop during GSL. Machin suggests that GSL students returned to campus with a broader view and perspective of international issues, and they were able to share them with other students in class discussions.

The Challenges with Global Service Learning Research

Despite the positive outcomes that research continues to attribute to GSL programs, there are some notable challenges highlighted in the GSL literature about the program design and the outcomes. For instance, Grunsky (2000) observed that programs that fail to explain the reflective process in pre-departure preparation and fail to emphasize the need for reflection in the GSL

program often result in situations where GSL programs “become small theaters that recreate cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes” (p.858). Grunsky believed that, sometimes, the structural design of GSL programs helps to reproduce popular misconceptions that reinforce privilege and power. Grunsky argues that when the pre-departure preparation fails to enlighten the students of the importance of the social realities of their host community in the learning process, the GSL experience quickly turns into a charity event that reinforces participant’s privilege and position.

Studying the intended and non-intended consequences of GSL, Crabtree (2013) observed several GSL scenarios that created positive or adverse effects on the host communities. The findings show that the program curriculum can sometimes reinforce the social values that the programs seek to challenge. For example, Crabtree found that students sometimes left the GSL programs with the notions that the host communities are poor and helpless. Based on these findings, Crabtree concluded that without a true understanding of the structural causes of poverty, many students end up believing that the intervention from richer nations is the solution to poverty in these communities, hence, reinforcing the colonial mindsets (Crabtree, 2013). The findings from this study indicate a need for participants to have a better understanding of how the GSL program structure and design can strategically achieve the desired GSL program outcomes.

Scholarly Critique of GSL Research

The issues of unequal power distribution between the students, faculty members, and host communities emerging from GSL programs is a concern that bothers scholars in the field (Crabtree, 2008; Crabtree, 2013; Grunsky, 2000). For instance, Grunsky (2000) observed that often because GSL brings underprivileged and privileged people together, the likelihood of equal cultural exchange is hard to achieve. Hence, the GSL program objectives need to be made clear

to all partners from the onset to avoid situations where the program becomes another exploitative voyage that reinforces privilege and power (Crabtree, 2013; Grunsky, 2000; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Metzger & Faria, 2012).

Additionally, Sherraden et al. (2013) question the research methods and designs commonly used to measure GSL program outcomes. These authors argue for building a valid and reliable knowledge base. They believe that the time has come for GSL scholars to move past anecdotal research methods to methods and designs that use valid and reliable means of measurement to determine GSL program outcomes. Another major downside is that much of the current research in the field tends to focus on short-term program outcomes (Crabtree, 2000; Grunsky, 2000; Kiely, 2004). The disadvantage of this research approach is that it limits information about the long-term program effects such as the decisions to choose future careers that promote social justice and civic engagement (Kiely, 2004; Sherraden et al., 2013). Hence, scholars and practitioners recommend that researchers undertake studies that look at the short term and long term benefits of GSL. Additionally, they advocate that researchers compare the findings of GSL program studies with the findings of other types of cultural immersion programs such as study abroad and service learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Elyer, 2011; Kiely, 2011).

The Transformational Learning Process in SAP and GSL

As mentioned earlier, SAP and GSL share areas of interest. One theme that resonates across both programs is the use of cultural exposure to create opportunities for participants to experience disorientating dilemma that might contribute to reflective processes allowing for shifts in previously held perspectives (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000). An idea that Kiely (2004) exemplified while studying undergraduate college students who participated in a GSL program in Nicaragua. Kiely found that the cultural experience created a platform for the participants to

reflect on old assumptions about issues relating to poverty, economic disparities, culture, and health practices. Kiely proposed that this process creates the space for students to experience transformational learning during GSL. Similarly, Cowder (2014) found that students who participated in a GSL program in Kenya experienced a change in their worldview on poverty, cultural tolerance, and the effects of global economic systems in those least industrialized nations.

Most recently, studies that tested the impact of cultural experiences on transformational learning processes during SAP reported similar findings (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Graham & Crawford, 2012; Trilokekar, & Kukar, 2011; Vatalaro, Szente, & Levin, 2015). For instance, Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) examined the study abroad experience of pre-service teacher candidates from York University who participated in a four-week SAP program. The scholars observed that despite the fact that the program design included a pre-departure orientation and re-entry programs, participants reported that most of the disorientating moments happened during the cultural immersion process. Evidence from this study shows that the SAP exposure allowed the students to engage in reflective practices that helped students recognize the privilege and power relationship between the program participants and their host community.

How SAP Differs from GSL

Although there are some similarities between SAP and GSL stated outcomes, the biggest difference between SAP and GSL is the reciprocal nature of the outcomes (Kiely, 2004). GSL program outcomes are designed to be reciprocal, meaning the GSL program benefits all the stakeholders participating in this cultural immersion process. The reciprocal learning approach allows students, faculty, sponsoring institutions and host communities to participate as partners

in the developmental program process and equally benefit from the experience (Crabtree, 2008; Parker & Deardorff, 2007).

Another difference highlighted in the literature that differentiates the SAP from GSL programs has to do with the long-term objectives. For GSL, the program emphasizes creating opportunities that enable students to develop long-term program outcomes through the process of community service and personal reflections. Long term participants are expected to gain knowledge that will increase their interest in matters of civic engagement, intercultural tolerance, and social justice for all the stakeholders (Crabtree, 2008; Parker & Deardorff, 2007; Sherranden et al., 2013). For SAP, the primary focus is to develop programs and outcomes that lead to student learning to enhance their future work opportunities. SAP learning processes focus on outcomes that improve students' experiences and satisfaction, as well as marketable qualities that increase job opportunities for students who participate in these programs. Also, an integral part of the study abroad desired outcomes is to help students develop knowledge of international trade and international relations through language and intercultural skills (Deardorff, 2008).

One can observe the differences in the targeted outcomes of both programs in the manner through which participants interact with the host community. GSL programs involve complete immersion in the culture and the environment in which the learning occurs. In most instances, participants live with the community members and engage in community services. In contrast, SAP frequently uses the content-based learning approach to teach participants about the host culture, which may or may not involve immersion in the host community. Most SAP locations are within cities or towns where students hardly have opportunities to interact directly with locals except occasionally when shopping or engaging in other social activities (Kiely, 2004).

Based on the structural difference highlighted above, SAP and GSL employ teaching strategies that will best achieve the set program outcomes. For example, GSL educators sometimes collaborate with non-profit organizations to develop community projects. These projects are useful in teaching GSL participants the essence of civic engagement. Through community engagement, students are encouraged to continuously reflect on these experiences as a way to challenge preconceived notions and expand their worldviews (Crabtree, 2008; Grusky 2000; Kiely, 2004). The table below shows the similarities and differences between the short-term global service learning and the short-term study aboard program. The table presented below highlights the similarities and differences between the types of SAP and GSL programs studied in this research (See Table 2)

Table 2

Types of Study Abroad Programs and Global Service Learning Programs

Study Abroad	Global Service Learning	Similarities in Program Structure	Differences in Program Structure
Instructor-Led topic/subject short-term study abroad engagement activity. (Island program: one to two or more weeks) Students take coursework at the home college but then participate in cultural immersion experience at a host university site. (The students are housed on campus and participate in guided activities such as tours to historical site and communities.)	Faculty/staff led credit bearing or co-curricular mission and service trips, academic courses with international/local cultural immersion through community engagement (one to two or more weeks alternative/spring break programs). Students enrolled in the course are assigned reading materials (e.g., article, books, and movies) on specific topics and concepts that relate to community engagement.	<p>Period of cultural immersion</p> <p>The SAP is a Short-term faculty-led trip (two or more weeks). Complete coursework before participating in a cultural immersion experience.</p> <p>GSL is a short –term faculty-led trip (one to two or more weeks). Students take coursework before participating in a cultural immersion experience.</p>	<p>Type and Intensity of Cultural immersion</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>SAP: On Campus student housing (interactions mostly restricted to members of host university).</p> <p>GSL: Homestay, community hostels (direct interactions with members of the host community).</p>
Instructor-Led short term (Hybrid program: four to eight weeks). Students enroll in a short course at a host university. The faculty member who facilitates the study abroad trip teaches a part of this course at home university and the other part at the host university. (Students living on campus.)	Medium-term (six to eight weeks). Students take a single course in the host location or sandwich program involving on-campus credit coursework that focuses on community and civic engagement, and social justice awareness. Students live with members of the host community (homestay).	<p>Period of cultural immersion</p> <p>SAP: a short-term faculty-led trip (four-to-eight weeks). Students take coursework before and during the cultural immersion experience.</p> <p>GSL: Medium –term (six to eight weeks). Students take coursework during the cultural immersion experience.</p>	<p>Type and Intensity of Cultural immersion</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>SAP: On Campus student housing (interactions mostly restricted to members of host university).</p> <p>GSL: Homestay, community hostels, (direct interactions with members of the host community).</p>
Immersion semester-long enrollment abroad (direct enrollment in a host university for a semester/ one academic calendar year). Students stay in university housing, take classes and participate in organizing social activities on campus and off-campus.	Long-Term International volunteer programs with formal service learning curricula (52 weeks/ academic year gap programs and international volunteer). Students live in the host community where they serve.	<p>Period of cultural immersion</p> <p>SAP: Long term immersion. Coursework and cultural immersion experience occur simultaneously.</p> <p>GSL: Long term immersion. Cultural immersion experience and learning process occurs Simultaneously.</p>	<p>Type and Intensity of Cultural immersion</p> <p>Housing</p> <p>SAP: On Campus student housing (interaction mostly restricted to members of host university).</p> <p>GSL: Homestay, community hostels (direct interaction with members of the host community).</p>

Note. (Sources: R.D. Crabtree, 2008; N. Graham and P. Crawford, 2012; L. Hanouille and P. Leuner, 2001; E. Niehaus and L.K. Crain, 2012; M. Sherraden, B.J Lough, and A. Bopp, 2013).

Summary of the Literature Review

This chapter reviews studies on SAP and GSL program outcomes, the similarities and differences between SAP and GSL programs, and the effects of transformational learning on SAP and GSL program outcomes. The evidence shows that SAP and GSL share some similarities in the expectation for students who participate in a cultural immersion program to achieve outcomes such as cultural competence, cultural sensitivity, global citizenship, and global awareness (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Notably, the differences between SAP and GSL programs lie in the intensity of the cultural immersion and the long-term objectives of these programs. For SAP, the long-term goal is to enhance students' marketability in the global job market. Hence, SAP focuses on outcomes such as cultural competence, global awareness, and global citizenship that are beneficial to actualizing the set goals (Deardorff, 2006; Clark et al., 2009). The long-term objective of GSL is for students to understand the challenges of their host community through a global lens that illustrates how power, privilege, and hegemonic assumptions interconnect to create complex economic and political situations (Hartman & Kiely, 2014). As a result, GSL programs emphasize cultural activities that enhance outcomes that are reciprocal and beneficial to students, the community, and partners. Irrespective of the objectives, the majority of existing literature shows that cultural exposure through SAP or GSL promotes participants' self-development, intercultural competence, global awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and global citizenship (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Clark, Flasherty, & Wright, 2009; Medina-Lopez-Potillo, 2004).

Evidence from the literature supports the assumption that cultural immersion produces transformational outcomes such as developed global awareness, cultural tolerance and competence, self-development, civic engagement, social justice consciousness, and critical

thinking skills (Dolby, 2008). The consensus among researchers is that the definitions and measurement of most of these outcomes are still questionable (Dolby, 2008). The variation in the operational definitions of these outcomes among the different academic fields offering SAP and GSL programs remains a major challenge in the practical assessment of these concepts (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Deardorff, 2006). Scholars believe that it will be easier for studies to determine program effectiveness when the definitions of program outcomes are similar across the disciplines (Sherraden et al., 2013). Besides the clear definitions of outcomes, there is a call for SAP and GSL assessment research to move from anecdotal designs to rigorous qualitative and quantitative research designs grounded in sound theoretical and conceptual frameworks (Crabtree, 2008).

Finally, although there is a growing body of research on the outcomes of SAP and GSL, the evidence shows that there are certain aspects of SAP and GSL programs that are yet to get attention. The review of the existing cultural immersion literature shows that there is a gap in the knowledge on how the structure and design of SAP and GSL programs contribute to the transformational outcomes achieved through these programs. The literature reports that cultural immersion experiences lead to transformational outcomes, but it is unclear what role the program structure plays in stimulating behavioral outcomes such as cultural tolerance and global awareness (Salisbury, 2011; Tarrant et al., 2014). For example, the literature suggests that there is a need to determine the transformational effects of SAP and GSL program design on outcomes such as intercultural competence, global awareness, and global citizenship on the participants' attitudes and behaviors toward diversity when they re-enter their local community (Crowder, 2014). Despite this need, the review shows that most of the SAP and GSL research focuses on only program outcomes without investigating the effects the program structure and design have

on the outcomes. There is little to no information on how SAP and GSL programs' structure and design influence program outcomes. Hence, the next chapter gives a detailed description of the methodology used in studying the proposed research questions.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes (such as global awareness, cultural tolerance, and social justice consciousness) and how these transformational outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. To conduct this study, I used a qualitative method to design the research framework. According to Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012), the research methodology consists of the set of decisions and procedures employed in investigating the research questions. In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology used in this study. First, I provide an overview of the qualitative approach and the rationale for choosing this research method. Then, I discuss the selection of the participants and study sites. Additionally, I give a brief description of the study design, explain the rationale for the design, and describe the data collection and data analysis process. Finally, I talk about how I ensured data quality check and addressed the ethical issues and the study limitations.

Overview of the Research Methodology

As earlier stated, the purpose of this study is to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes and how these outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. To accomplish this study's purpose, I used a qualitative research design to examine two central inquiries:

- How does the structure (curriculum, learning outcomes, location, housing, and length/extent of cultural immersion) of a cultural immersion program influence transformational outcomes?

- How do students' expectations about a cultural immersion program shape how the transformational outcomes influence their behaviors and attitudes towards others who are physically and culturally different from them?

The existing studies suggest that further knowledge in these areas will provide needed evidence to ascertain the impact of program structure on participants' cultural immersion experiences and the influence the experience has on their everyday life (Crowder, 2014; Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Kiely, 2004). Using these questions as the focus for the study, I generated the question guide which I used to conduct semi-structured interviews. Then, I collected data from SAP and GSL alumni and faculty members who have participated in cultural experiences. The questions were also used to analyze the SAP and GSL program brochures collected from faculty members. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), qualitative research methods provide an inquiry technique that is used to investigate research questions that require the investigator to understand the events or phenomenon within social contexts. Similarly, Patton (2003) believes that, because qualitative inquiry seeks to understand issues through the eyes of individuals who have experienced the concepts of interest, the assumptions that guide qualitative research originate from the constructivist and interpretivist paradigms. For this study, a qualitative framework is employed to investigate how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes. The hope is that the findings from this qualitative study will provide the needed information to fill the gap in the literature.

The Rationale for Qualitative Research

As mentioned earlier, this study uses qualitative inquiry to explore the research questions proposed. The reason for choosing this research design is twofold. First, a qualitative method was selected because the proposed study is an exploratory research project. Supporting this

approach, Marshall and Rossman (1999) argue that qualitative inquiry provides the appropriate tools for exploring concepts when knowledge is just emerging. They believe that the use of qualitative research methods allows the researcher to develop a rich description of issues that are unexplored in the literature.

The second reason for choosing qualitative inquiry is that this study explores a socially constructed concept that happens in a natural setting (experiences during and after SAP/GSL participation). Patton (2002) advocates that issues connected with daily life experiences are better studied qualitatively. Since the purpose of this study is to understand how people use cultural immersion experiences to change their perceptions and actions toward others who are physically and culturally different from them, the qualitative method lends itself as the most appropriate tools to answer the questions posed in this study.

Constructivist Approach

In conducting this research, I adopted the constructivist paradigm to gain insight and understanding into how the SAP and GSL participants make sense of their cultural immersion and the learning process. Goduka (2012) defines paradigms as the sets of beliefs, values, and research techniques shared by a group of researchers that provide a conceptual framework for studying a phenomenon. Hence, Goduka defines the constructivist paradigm as a worldview that emphasizes that an individual's understanding and interpretation of situations develops from the meanings, experiences, and memories a person attributes to an event. Since the focus of this study was to understand a concept that occurred within a social setting, the constructivist approach is the most appropriate conceptual framework for this research.

A constructivist approach allows the researcher to understand the multiple realities that participants share through the stories and the meanings they give to a particular experience

(Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). For this reason, a constructivist approach was adopted.

Additionally, the constructivist perspective goes hand in hand with the transformational learning theory that provided the framework for the data collection and analysis process in this study.

Positionality Statement

For the most part, in qualitative research, the researchers hold a unique position because they serve as the instrument for data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation (Merriam, 2002; Patton 2002). Serving as the research instrument, the challenge is that the researcher comes with their worldview of the concept that they seek to study (Merriam, 2002). To minimize the effect of this personal knowledge in a qualitative study, Merriam recommends that it is a good practice to state upfront how the researcher's values, beliefs, and biases might influence the assumptions that they make before, during, and after the study. As such, I will present a brief statement that describes possible values and biases that I bring to the research that might have the potential to influence this study.

As a woman of African descent who comes from a continent that is frequently described as underdeveloped and often serves as a location for missionaries and other non-profit organizations to engage in voluntary service, I have had the opportunity to witness the benefits and the challenges that often come with this kind of cross-cultural engagement. As a person who has worked in the aviation industry, sojourned across various nations, and is presently studying in a rural town in Pennsylvania, I have experienced the joys and challenges that come with crossing cultural boundaries. I have encountered the task of learning how to navigate cultural barriers, and I have tackled the challenges and the emotional turmoil associated with the process of immersion into another culture. This experience and its dilemma ignited a quest for me to explore and understand what it takes to convert the cultural experiences into meaningful change

that impacts how we interact with others in the community. For me, the curiosity to understand this phenomenon stems from both personal and academic interests.

I am aware that the pre-knowledge I have of this research topic might raise the potential for bias influencing the choice of literature and the review process, research questions, data analysis, and data interpretation. Equally, I recognize that this knowledge serves as the connection to understand the experiences of the participants. Cognizant of this fact, I worked to reduce the possibility of personal bias by intentionally acknowledging this position during the interviews with the participants. Besides that, I conducted an extensive literature review and allowed the literature to guide the formation of the research questions. Moreover, I used multiple sources to collect and analyze the data for this study. The data triangulation process helped to reduce the biases that could have occurred at the stages of data collection and data analysis.

Research Design Strategies

I designed this study from a naturalistic inquiry standpoint, which means that knowledge comes from the meaning individuals attribute to social or cultural experiences that take place within the natural environment (Patton, 2002). Supporting this assumption, Lapan, Quartaroli, and Riemer (2012) suggest that, to study social concepts and how people make sense of situations, the researcher needs to discover the meaning of an event by immersing the self repeatedly in the natural setting or interacting with those who have experienced the phenomenon. Hence, I used individual, in-depth interviews and program brochures to collect the data. I interviewed program alumni and faculty members and gathered supplemental data from SAP and GSL program fliers and brochures. Doing so allowed me to capture the experiences of people who have participated in SAP and GSL programs. In this section, I provide an overview of the design approach, sampling strategy, data collection, and data analysis process.

Site and Participant Selection

Patton (2003) believes that one unique feature of qualitative inquiry is that it uses small samples that are purposefully selected to study in-depth the subject of inquiry. Patton suggests that purposeful sampling allows the researcher to select and sample participants who possess and exhibit the characteristic that is of interest in the study. For this study, I used the snowball sampling and maximum variation sampling strategies to derive a purposeful sampling of students and faculty members who have participated in a faculty-led, short-term credit-based curriculum cultural immersion program to understand their experiences.

Noy (2008) suggests that, for social science research, snowball sampling produces a distinct category of participants that provide rich knowledge of the subject of interest. As such, I used the snowball sampling strategy to locate participants who possess rich information regarding the study's phenomenon. A good example of the usefulness of this sampling technique is evident in Beauchemin and Gonzale's (2011) study of Senegalese immigrants who settled in European countries. Their sampling strategy led to the collection of rich and unique data of their participants' experiences. Snowball sampling strategy involves identifying and locating individuals who have experienced the concept of interest or informants who have close ties with people who fit the criteria of interest (Ritchie & Lewis 2003). The advantage of using this sampling technique is that it makes it easier for the researcher to locate and purposefully select the population of interest. Although this sampling strategy produces rich information, the challenge is that the study participants selected might not adequately represent the larger population of SAP and GSL programs participants (Patton, 2002). To minimize this effect and ensure that I capture a variety of experiences from different individuals, I used an additional sampling technique to maximize the participant selection. I applied the maximum variation

sampling strategy in recruiting and selecting students and faculty members. I selected participants from a wide range of universities, educational disciplines, genders, races, as well as undergraduate and graduate SAP and GSL programs.

To locate the initial participants for this study, I reached out to personal acquaintances (students, professors, study abroad coordinators in the Office of International Education, and Global Service Learning Coordinators working with partner organizations) to start the snowball chain. A number of the program coordinators and faculty members who have facilitated programs that I contacted sent out emails and Facebook messages with my contact details to alumni. As soon as the target participants started responding to these emails, I contacted those who indicated an interest in participating in the study and scheduled a time and place that would be convenient for them to conduct the interview. A total of 12 students and four faculty members who had returned from a short-term cultural immersion program within the last one to seven years were recruited using this technique.

Once the chain referral process started, I was able to recruit an additional 12 students and two faculty members through recommendations and contact links that I got from some of the initial participants that I interviewed. I continued recruiting and interviewing participants until it became obvious that no new information was emerging from these interviews. At that point, I decided to stop seeking more participants. In deciding to end the participant recruitment, I followed the advice of authors such as Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Ryan (2010) that define data redundancy as the point where new information no longer emerges from conducting new interviews. Altogether, I conducted 30 interviews over a period of 9 months. The participants interviewed varied in gender, social class, race, and age (18 years and above). Since the structure of SAP and GSL varies across programs, I restricted the sample selection to only those

participants who took part in short-term credit-based curriculum that lasted between (two to sixteen weeks) and completed their program within the last one to seven years. Additionally, during the interview sessions with some of the faculty members, I was able to request and collect copies of the program brochures that the program facilitators used as part of the materials to inform and prepare the students for the cultural immersion trip.

Sample Size

I interviewed and collected data from 30 individuals who had participated in SAP and GSL programs facilitated by faculty members in a public university in the northeastern region of the United States, a private university in the western of the United States, a private and a public university in the southern regions of the United States. At the start of data analysis, I had to exclude four participant interviews from the study because these participants attended short-term SAP that did not include a credit-based curriculum. In total, I analyze 26 participant interviews. As shown in Table 3, the participants include two SAP faculty members (one from a private university and the other from a public university) and four GSL faculty members (two from private universities and two from public universities). Student participants included 10 SAP undergraduate students (four from private universities and six from public universities), five GSL graduate students (from public universities), and five GSL undergraduate students (four from private universities and one from a public university). All the student participants completed their program during the previous one to seven years. Unlike the participants from private universities who were required to participant in the cultural immersion program to complete their degrees, for participants from public universities participation was optional.

Participant Variation

The participants in this study varied and consisted of current students and students who graduated from various academic majors (International Business, Management, Pre-Engineering, Spanish, Nursing, Sociology, Education, and Global Studies Program) that participated in a short-term cultural immersion experience in college. Additionally, there was a variation in participants' demographics, more specifically, in the educational levels (undergraduate and graduate), race, age, and gender (See Figures 1 through 4).

Furthermore, the participants attended programs that were co-developed and facilitated by faculty-members working alongside partner organizations that were affiliated with their universities. Participants primarily attended programs run by two different established partner organizations located in the northeastern region of the United States. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the use of maximum variation in selecting the sample can produce diversity in the characteristics of participants, which might result in the transferability of the research data and findings across a wider range of groups. Table 3 shows the variations in the educational levels, age, gender, and social class of the participants.

Table 3

Participants' Demographic Information

Pseudonyms	Age	Educational Level	Gender	Race	Social Class
Alex	26-49	Faculty	Male	White American	Middle Class
Helen	50-64	Faculty	Female	White American	Middle Class
Mary	50-64	Faculty	Female	White American	Middle Class
Daniel	50-64	Faculty	Male	White American	Middle Class
Rebecca	26-49	Graduate	Female	White American	Middle Class
Doris	26-49	Graduate	Female	White American	Middle Class
Donald	26-49	Graduate	Male	White American	Middle Class
Douglas	18-25	Graduate	Male	White American	Middle Class
Dennis	26-49	Graduate	Male	White American	Working Class
Donna	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	Biracial American	Middle Class
John	18-25	Undergraduate	Male	Asian American	Middle Class
Joe	18-25	Undergraduate	Male	White American	Middle Class
Jane	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	White American	Middle Class
Amy	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	Hispanic American	Middle Class
Jackson	50-64	Faculty	Male	Asian American	Middle Class
Gabby	50-64	Faculty	Female	White American	Middle Class
Dorothy	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	African American	Middle Class
Cassidy	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	Biracial American	Middle Class
Brianna	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	White American	Middle Class
Lilly	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	Latino American	Middle Class
Collins	18-25	Undergraduate	Male	White American	Middle Class
Samantha	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	White American	Middle Class
Ella	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	Asian American	Middle Class
Debra	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	White American	Middle Class
Elijah	18-25	Undergraduate	Male	African American	Working Class
Katelyn	18-25	Undergraduate	Female	Asian American	Middle Class

Note. Initially, I collected data from 30 participants. I analyzed only 26 of the interviews because four of the participants attended SAP programs that did not meet the criteria for this study.

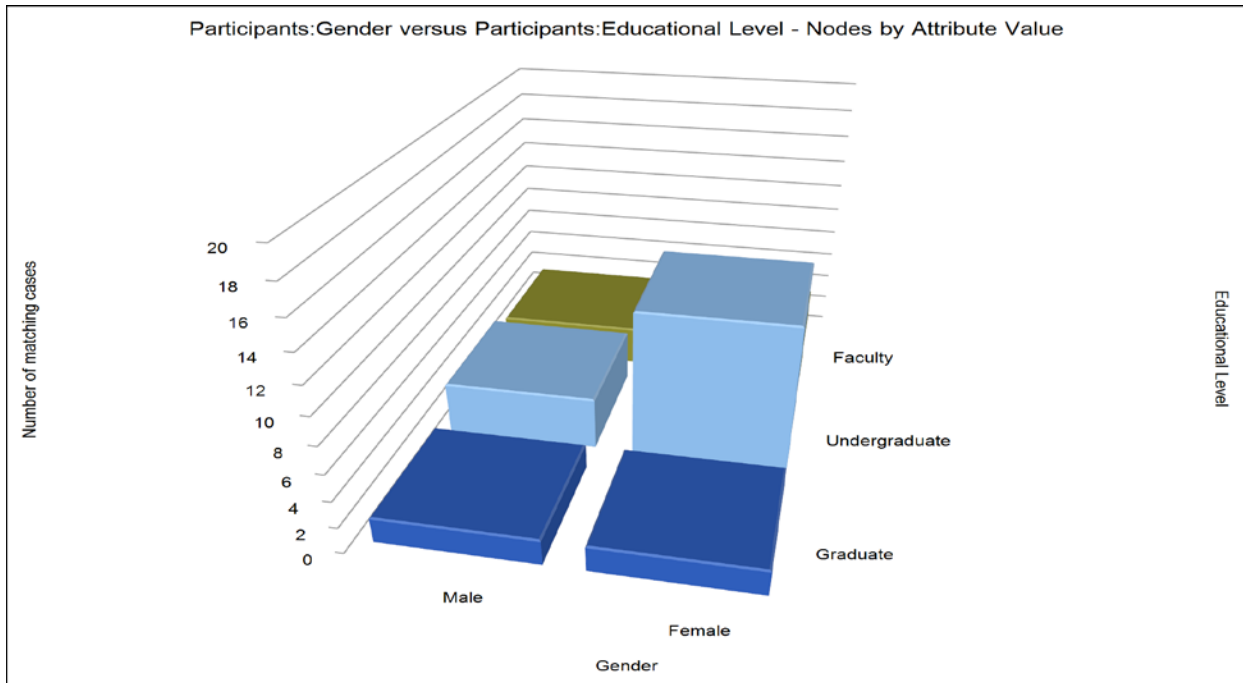


Figure 1. Show the variations in the education levels of the SAP and GSL participants in this study.

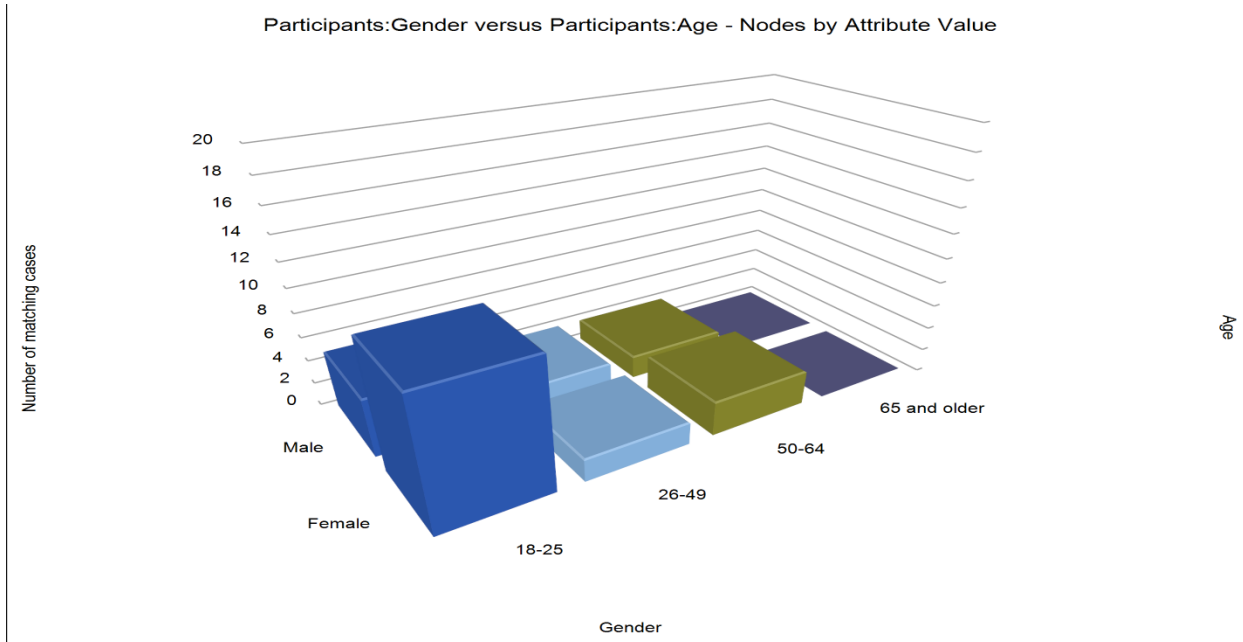


Figure 2. Show the variations in the gender and age of the SAP and GSL participants in this study.

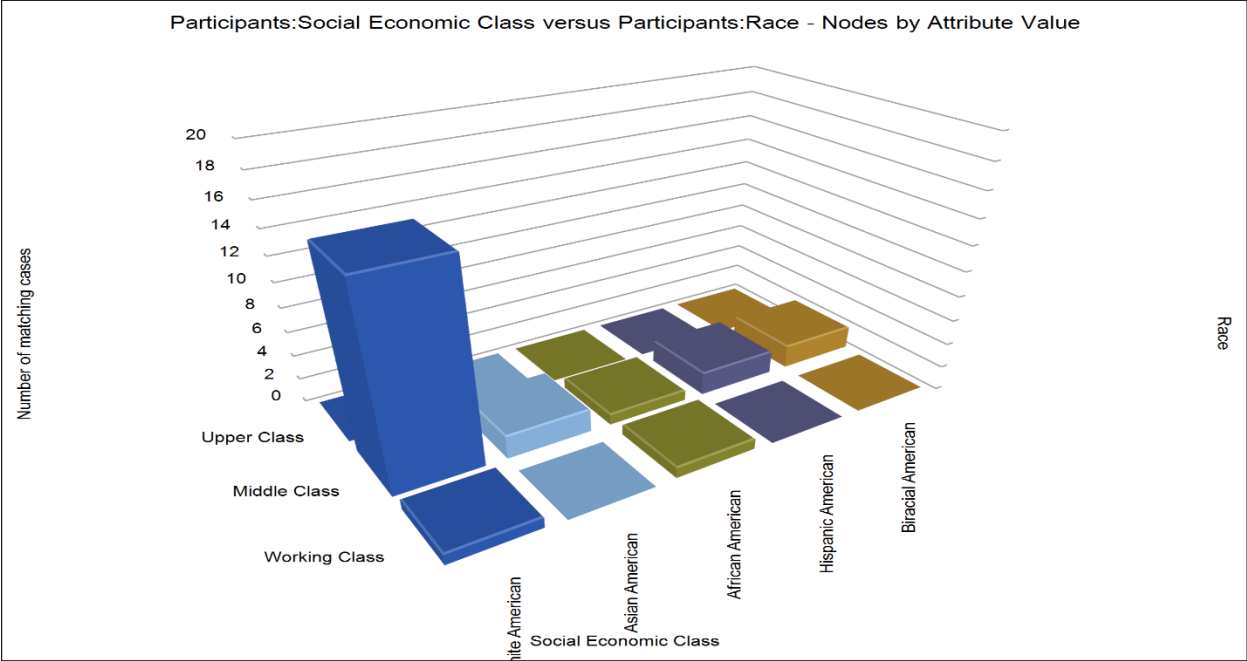


Figure 3. Show the variations in the social class and the race of the of the SAP and GSL participants in this study.

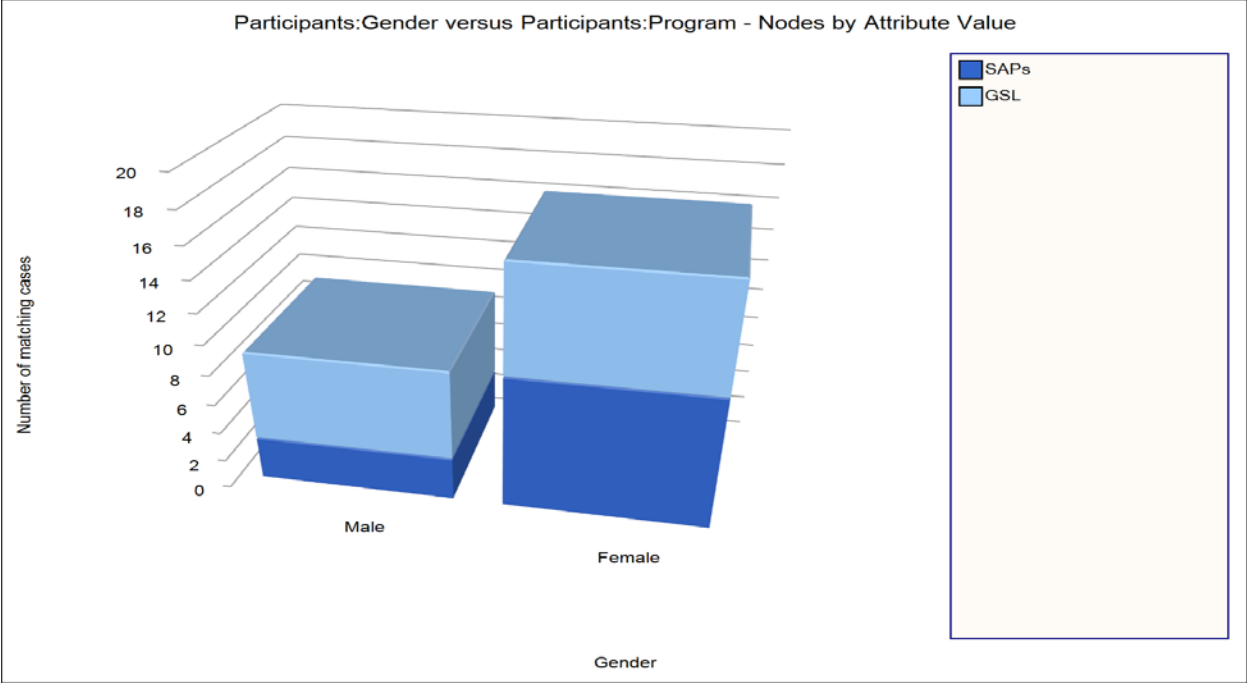


Figure 4. Participants displayed by program type (SAP and GSL).

Data Collection

To collect the data, I used a primary process that involved conducting in-depth individual interviews with participants. I conducted interviews and collected data from participants over a period of nine months. Furthermore, I used a supplementary process that entailed the collection and review of information documents such as program brochures and program proposals to collect additional data. The rationale for choosing these methods of data collection was that the questions that I researched consisted of concepts that were unobservable. In such cases, Patton (2002) suggests that, an in-depth interview provides the tools and the means to gain insight into the participant interpretation of the event. Hence, to understand how the learning process occurs during cultural immersion experience, I conducted face-to-face interviews and reviewed related documents. Moreover, using these two data sources helped to triangulate the data collected and thus, increased the data credibility (Saldana, 2011).

As soon as a participant indicated their interest in taking part in this study, I contacted them to explain what the study was about. Then, I sent the informed consent form and scheduled the time and place for our meeting. I ensured that each participant signed and returned the informed consent forms (Appendix E) before the scheduled interview date. The semi-structured interview sessions conducted with each participant lasted between 45-60 minutes. Due to limited funds and resources, it was difficult to travel to the different states where each of the participants resided. As such, for those who lived out of Pennsylvania, I conducted online interviews via Zoom. For those who resided in Pennsylvania, I conducted the interviews onsite at a location that was private and convenient for the participants.

Data Collection and Transcription

During the interview sessions, I used an interview guide that had a list of questions about cultural immersion experience to collect the data from the participants. Ratner (2002) sees this as

a good practice, and he recommends that researchers should use the interview guide to start the interview conversation and further probe responses for deeper knowledge. As suggested, in some instances, after the participants' initial response to the questions from the guide, I probed further to gain an in-depth understanding of the meaning that the participants were attributing to a particular event. I obtained permission from each of the participants I interviewed to digitally record the conversations, which I later transcribed verbatim to create a word document for data analysis. Additionally, during the interview sessions, I paid attention specifically to words and phrases that participants used repeatedly. After each session, I recorded the keywords and other ideas that developed from listening to their conversation in a memo. I continued the practice of writing down the ideas that were developing as I worked with the data in an analytical memo (See Appendix F).

The additional data collection process involved collecting information from brochures and program proposals obtained from some of the faculty members that I interviewed. I read and reread these documents to analyze and collect additional information that relates to their SAP/GSL program structure and design. Patton (2002) sees the review of program documents as another way to provide the researcher with information that can reveal the events that took place before, during, and after the program. This review can reveal information that may not ordinarily be observable or obvious to the participants interviewed.

Data Analysis

One unique quality of the qualitative data collection process is that it leads to the accumulation of massive amounts of information (Patton, 2002). After completing the data collection process, the challenge for the qualitative investigator becomes how to organize the data to make sense of it all (Creswell, 2013). To organize, manage, and analyze the data, I used a

form of content analysis approach that entailed a three-cycle process: a preliminary data analysis, structural coding, and thematic analysis (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2011). During the content analysis, I was able to see the patterns, develop themes, and generate basic categorizations through the cyclical act of listening, reading, rereading, coding, and recoding the data (Grbich, 2007; Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2013).

Preliminary Data Analysis

For naturalistic research, Patton (2002) suggests that the analytic process should start at the point of data gathering. Preliminary data analysis involves questioning the data by checking and tracking to see what ideas are developing and identifying areas in the data that might require further probing while collecting the data (Grhich, 2007; Patton 2002). During each interview, I took notes while the participant was talking. At the end of the interview, I listened to the recorded conversation, and I wrote down the new ideas or thoughts that stood out. As I engaged in this listening cycle, it became visible that I might need to probe deeper to understand some of the events that the participants experienced. After gathering all the data required for this study, I proceeded to transcribe the digitally recorded interviews into Microsoft Word document to allow for easy reading and analysis. The transcription process is an opportunity to familiarize oneself with the data because it entails listening to the voice recording repeatedly from start to end while typing the voice into words (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2011). To begin formal coding, I imported all the notes, the transcripts, and the text document into NVivo 11 (Pro), a qualitative research software tool created by QSR International, and ran a word frequency query. The word frequency query allowed me to search for and see repetitive keywords and to see how participants used certain words to describe their experiences. Additionally, I used this software to store, systematically organize, manage, code, and write analytical memos in readiness for the

next phase of the analysis. The full details of the second analytic process employed in this study are described in the next section.

Structural Coding

Generally, in qualitative research, coding is a process of discovering meanings from the data that result in the development of patterns, themes, and categories (Saldana, 2011; Taylor & Bogdan, 1988). Specifically, structural coding is a technique that uses the research questions to organize the data into segments for coding. This process results in the creation of labels, patterns, and themes (Saldana, 2013). First, I organized the interview questions into labels and headings; then I compiled the participants' responses under these headings. Next, I read and reread the transcribed manuscript to identify similarities in the patterns in which participants answered questions about their SAP or GSL program experiences. As I read each segment of the interviewees' responses, I began to see certain patterns emerge, which I then coded to develop the initial themes.

Thematic Analysis

The data analysis process involves a careful and systematic examination of the transcript to generate meanings from the information developed from the patterns, themes, and the categories created (Ryan, 2010). I applied a thematic approach in the third phase of data analysis. Thematic analysis involves translating qualitative information through the sensing of patterns, coding the pattern into themes, categorizing themes, and interpreting the shared meaning for the developing themes in the categories (Boyatzis, 1998; Patton, 2002). In this analytical stage, I worked with the initial themes generated during the first and second coding (See Appendix F). Generally, I searched the themes to look for the interrelationship, in terms of the similarities, differences, and connections that exist among the themes (Saldana, 2011). Based on these

relations, I created categories that are composed of clusters of themes. I then examined how well each theme is represented by its category. Also, the titles of categories were refined to describe the categories more appropriately (Saldana, 2013). Through these actions, I was able to create summary statements that explained how the themes in the group interrelate. I repeated this process several times to ensure that the final categories of themes generated have both internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. According to Patton (2002), internal homogeneity refers to the degree to which data in each category holds together, while external heterogeneity is a process that ensures that there is no overlapping between groups in the different categories.

Reporting the Findings

My intention from the start of this study was to understand the influence of cultural immersion program structure on the learning processes by which students develop outcomes and the impact of these outcomes on their attitudes and behaviors towards others. To investigate the research questions, I analyzed data collected directly from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon. Patton (2002) believes that the final step in qualitative analysis and data reduction involves the reporting and interpretation of the findings developed during the analytic stage. At this point of data reduction, the challenge in reporting qualitative finding is how to balance the participants' voices (using rich description and quotation from their stories) and the researcher's analytical interpretation of the story without losing the context (Denzin, 1989; Patton, 2002). In chapter four, I will present the findings from the data analysis using thick description which includes the participants' voices, emotions, and contexts as discovered in the themes (Denzin, 1989). I will tie it all together in chapter five by providing my interpretation of the findings through the lens of the transformational learning theory.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), qualitative researchers need to examine the issue of trustworthiness, especially as it relates to credibility, dependability, and transferability in their studies. Hence, this section details the several ways I address the issue of the research trustworthiness and creditability in this study. Because the qualitative study takes place in the naturalistic environment and it is interpretative, it allows for the use of a small sample size to collect data to conduct the study (Patton, 2002). However, using a small sample size as the primary source of data collection in research raises issues such as credibility: how much do the findings from the study represent participant's reality? It also raises issues about dependability: how consistent are the results of the research with the data? Additionally, it raises issues about transferability: are the findings applicable and transferable to other contexts? (Lincoln & Guba, 2013; Patton, 2002).

An approach that I used to address this issue is triangulation. Patton (2002) believes that data triangulation is a way to increase qualitative research credibility. By using multiple data sources for the study, the triangulation process helped in increasing the credibility of the findings. Another way that I dealt with this issue was to create an analytic memo where I recorded thoughts, ideas, and other activities that took place during the collection and analysis of the data (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2011). Furthermore, Patton (2002) recommends sharing the themes and finding with experts to assess the quality of the analysis. During the analytical phase, I shared the themes that were developing from the data with some of the faculty members that I interviewed, and based on their feedback, I further refined my themes and categories. Triangulation helped in limiting personal biases. It also enabled me to scrutinize the influence of any preconceived notions on the data interpretation. Additionally, I included detailed

descriptions of the participants and their narratives in reporting the study findings. Giving these detailed descriptions will make it easier for other scholars to replicate this study in other contexts (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Finally, I used the transformational learning theory to develop the questions in the interview guide used in collecting data, as well as using it as the theoretical lens in the interpretation of the data (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2011).

Ethical Considerations

Naturally, when a research study consists of human subjects, issues of ethical considerations are bound to arise. Although this study poses minimal risk to human subjects, this section of the chapter discusses the measures I took to protect the human subjects involved in the study. I provided all potential participants with detailed information about the purpose of this study in an informed consent form. The information allowed participants to make an informed decision about whether or not to volunteer for this study. I ensured that all the volunteers in this study read the information in the consent form and understood that their participation is voluntary, and they have the right to withdraw from the study at any stage. After reading the forms, each participant signed and returned a copy of the form to me before the scheduled interview took place. Throughout the research process pseudonyms were used to keep participants' identities confidential. Finally, I kept all the data collected during interviews and the document reviewed locked in a safe place. The recorded interviews and transcriptions were kept in a password protected personal computer.

Summary of the Chapter

As mentioned throughout this chapter, the purpose of this study is to understand how the cultural immersion program structure influences the learning processes by which students develop outcomes and the impact of these outcomes on their attitudes and behaviors towards

others. Hence, this chapter presented an overview of the proposed methodology used to understand the questions that guided this inquiry. Additionally, the chapter gave an overview of the qualitative method, the rationale for adopting the research strategy, the study site and participants, study design, the reason for the design, data collection, and data analysis processes. Finally, the chapter examined the potential ethical issues and ways to safeguard participants and their identities during this study. In the next chapter, I present the findings.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes (such as global awareness, cultural tolerance, and social justice consciousness). In turn, how these transformational outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. To understand these research questions, I conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with 30 individuals who had participated in a cultural immersion experience in recent times.

I used an interview guide that contained a range of questions covering topics such as the participant's expectations and preparation, the cross cultural experience, the learning process and the application, to collect data to answer the following central research questions:

- How does the structure (curriculum, learning outcomes, location, housing, and length/extent of cultural immersion) of cultural immersion program influence the participants' transformational outcomes?
- How do students' expectations about a cultural immersion program shape the way transformational outcomes impact their behaviors and attitudes towards others who are physically and culturally different from them?

Irrespective of the program type, during the interviews, I asked the same questions to all the participants, and based on their initial response, I probed further to collect additional information. After the interviews, I transcribed all the recorded conversations. I then coded 26 of the 30 transcripts for further analysis to identify the commonality in the participants' experiences. Although all the participants were asked the same questions, as I began the process of data

analysis, I noted that there were some similarities and differences in the way the participants responded to these questions. Based on the pattern observed in the data, several themes were generated through the coding process. I further analyzed these themes to group together themes that are related to similar concepts with the aim of creating categories.

The coding process resulted in the development of several themes which were grouped into seven categories. Five of the categories (participant worldview and program expectation, experiencing cultural immersion, program structure, design, learning is multidimensional, and the impact of the experience coming back home) showed that SAP and GSL participants had similar perceptions and interpretations for some of the events that occurred before, during, and after the cross cultural immersion experience. The remaining two categories (lessons from global service learning and takeaways from study abroad) showed how SAP program participants interpreted the events differently from the participants of the GSL programs.

In this chapter, I outline each of the categories and the themes listed under them. Then, I describe and explain the meanings that I ascribed to the themes under the categories and how those meanings differed from or were similar to the types of programs. Additionally, I discuss how the meanings and interpretation of the cultural immersion experience varied across the participants based on their educational level, age, race, and whether the type of program shaped those experiences. Below, I list the themes, grouped together to form each of the categories under headings that reflect the events that took place in the three phases of the cultural immersion process (before, during, and after).

Preparing for Immersion

Participants' worldview and program expectations

- Principles: Before embarking on the cultural immersion trip, their socialization, beliefs, values, and ideas influenced their interaction with people who seemed different from them.
- Reason for Participation: Motivation for engaging in cultural immersion experiences.
- Expectations: Participant expectations about the experience determined the choice of program (SAP/GSL).

Experiencing Immersion

Experiencing cultural immersion

- Preparation: Preparation process for the trip.
- Never Enough: No matter how much they prepared prior to the trip, the participants never knew what to expect.
- Discomfort and Then Comfort: The process involves three stages, 1) experience the challenges, 2) the process of adjustment, and 3) realize the benefit of the experience.

Program structure and design

- Program Location: The learning process in developed, developing, and least developed communities.
- Housing: Impact of the accommodations, homestay, hotel, and hostel on the cultural experience and learning process
- Intensity of Immersion: The type of interactions and time spent immersed in the culture.

The learning process is multidimensional

- Self-awareness: Becoming aware of self-potentials

- Recognizing our Humanity: People are more similar than different
- Appreciating Culture: Culture is unique, and it is what defines the behaviors of the people
- Different and Unique: Understanding self and other is a multifaceted process, and one may not be able to experience this process as a single linear pathway.

Returning From Immersion

The impact of the experience coming back home

- Applying the Lessons: Learning to use the experience in everyday interactions and actions
- Staying on with Change: become conscious of one's culture and its influence on one's thinking and way of living
- Career Pathway: Using the experience in making career decisions
- Reverse Culture Experience: A craving for nature and healthy ways of living

In this section, I list the themes that show specific differences in the way the SAP and GSL programs participants interpreted the events that happened before, during, and after their cross cultural immersion experience. These themes in these categories seem to show the differences that exist between the SAP and GSL programs, in terms of the programs structure, design, objectives, and goals (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Clark et al., 2009; Graham & Crawford, 2012; Kiely, 2005). Based on these themes, in Chapter Five I discuss in-depth the impact the similarity and difference between the SAP and GSL program design had on the participants' cross cultural immersion experience.

The themes under the category "the lessons from global service learning" show how participants who took part in the GSL interpreted their experience.

Lessons from Global Service Learning

- The Community: The relationship, the exchange, and the service
- Seeing Privilege: Recognizing the privilege and the power dynamics that exist
- Unlearning the Learned: Realizing the narrowness in how our education teaches about other cultures

The themes under the category “the takeaways from study abroad” represent the meanings and interpretations that participants who took part in the SAP gave to the experience.

The Takeaways from Study Abroad

- Local Contact: Being in the environment but not interacting directly with the local people in the community
- Friendships: Networking and friendships with other SAP alumni

Preparing for Immersion

The cultural immersion process consists of three phases that include the pre-immersion, (preparing for immersion) immersion (experiencing immersion), post-immersion (returning from immersion). In this section, I discuss the categories and themes that narrate the events that took place during the pre-immersions phase. Particularly, I explain how the SAP and GSL participants selected the programs that they took part in and the impact their program expectations had on their learning process during the immersion phase.

Participants’ Worldview and Program Expectations

To understand the extent to which the participants’ expectations about their program impacted the learning process before, during, and after the cross cultural immersion trip, I asked the participants a range of interview questions that probed the principles that guided their interactions with others before their cross cultural experience. Equally, I asked the participants about the expectations they had regarding the cultural immersion program before and during the

trip, and how it impacted their experiences. The participants' responses to these questions generated three themes and these are: principles, reasons for participating, and expectations. These themes were grouped together to form the category "participant worldview and program expectations." The themes in this category highlights how the participants' worldviews connect to their program expectations and the choice of the program they decided to participate in. In this section, I explain how the participants' principles relate to the expectations they had about the program and how these expectations influenced their reason and interest in selecting and participating in the program.

Principle

In responding to questions about the principles that guided their interactions with people who look different from them, participants suggested that, before the cultural immersion, the extent to which they engaged in interactions with others depended on their knowledge from socialization with family, friends, peers, and education. For some, growing up in their family and neighborhood resulted in the opportunity to interact with diverse groups due to their cultural heritage, and this has become a natural way of life. It was evident from the interviews that participants who grew up with similar experiences testified that interacting with people from diverse backgrounds was just a part of their daily life and, over time, engaging in multicultural interactions have become natural to them.

One participant puts it this way, saying "That's a hard question because in the US, everyone is different, and I'm a minority as well. So, I'm used to seeing different people and everyone having their own way." Lilly, who identified as one from a minority ethnic group, said that, "before studying abroad, one of the things that I really liked was to connect with people that were from different cultures." She explained why this was important to her, saying that, "I just

liked getting to know them, and it was not just getting to know them, but getting to understand the way they think..., interact, and handle daily stuff.”

Another participant explained that:

So, growing up I was always uh..., let's just put it like this, I'm a first-generation Taiwanese American, so growing up, I had an extremely diverse experience, and like growing up, I was always visiting Taiwan to visit people back home. So, it's always like this, when you are American and another ethnic group, especially when you are first generation. Your identity as a person is like divided, and that is so true for anybody who has lived in two countries for a long time. Anyways, that is the fundamental influence that I had. (John's interview, 2017)

The comments from these participants tend to suggest that their socialization with their family, neighborhood, and community had an influence on the way they think of and interact with people who are different from them.

Some other participants talked about growing up in a conservative environment, where access to information and knowledge about diversity was very limited. Despite this type of environment, these participants were able to broaden their views about others due to the influence of their family, their travel experience, and the media. Amy shared about living in the southern region of the United States and experiencing what she called the southern bubble. She described her experience as follows:

I was raised in Mississippi in the South (silence). I was raised in Mississippi, and so, I was raised very much in a bubble, the Southern bubble. I moved to California when I was sixteen and luckily when I was growing up in Mississippi my parents let me..., I had family in New York, and I also went to California a lot. So, I was a little well-traveled

and kind of knew what else was out there in the other states anyway. Then I went to California, and I think that it was the first time when I was out there that I kind of realized that there was a lot more out there in the world. (Amy's interview, 2017)

Similarly, Debra talked about her socialization and interactions living in a small rural town; she said that, "being from a small town, I haven't really seen too many different people working together because my school was mostly white." She further explained that "like in my class, I do not know if we had anyone who was not white except for two African Americans. Everyone else was white. Both in school and my community, I haven't experienced too many differences." Despite being socialized in a conservative family, Douglas' beliefs and values about life, in general, align more with liberal thinking. He stated, "I knew that there were different views out there, but my main view came from my family." He further explained that although his family was "very conservative, really, I do not know how I became so liberal and to be like sociology major, and all that..." For Collin, when he was in sixth grade, his parents decided to move from the urban city to a small rural town. The relocation experience became the catalyst that altered his perception of people. According to Collin:

That transition from living in more of an urban area to moving to a very rural area in Pennsylvania that definitely shaped my perspective and outlook of the people I surrounded myself with, and the way I interacted with the people who might be apprehensive or less open-minded. I started to be kind of more critical of uh, you know, people who were just kind of, you know, have shallow assumptions and stereotypes because I was now one of those stereotypes. I was that person who was foreign to them, you know, even though it was just one state away. (Collin's interview, 2017)

Interestingly, the responses from participants who identified as members of an ethnic and minority group suggested that, because of their diverse backgrounds and socialization, there is this tendency to engage in interaction with people from other groups. The responses were quite different for participants who grew up in rural towns where they experienced little or no diversity; in these instances, some of the participants indicated that they had to intentionally develop the habit of going out of their way to reach out to others.

Reason for Participating

The participants' responses to the question about why they decided to participate in the cultural immersion experience fall under three different reasons which include the desire to visit other cultures, wanting to make a difference in society, and earning educational credit outside the classroom. For some, the desire to visit other cultures had been a long held dream. The desire is fueled by the need to experience cross cultural life and gain knowledge to expand their global awareness. Katylin, an International Business major, echoed this concept in her conversation when she explained her motivation for participating in an SAP: "Well, this is something I have always wanted to do since I was a kid, plus like there is so much talk about how the world is becoming global, you know. I guess that's a big point..." For most of the participants in the group described above, the common thread in their response to the question was the use of words that suggested that their participation in cultural immersion originated from a long held desire to explore. According to Cassidy, "I have always wanted to go to Japan." She explained that "since I was a child that was just my dream when I was little I always liked the animation, all those cartoons, food, sushi, and all of that." Similarly, Rebecca said that, "I have always had it in me to want to go and venture out and see other countries uh...and experience other cultures." Debra explained that, "actually, since I was like ten years old I had always wanted to go to England just

from reading books like Harry Potter.” I noticed that a lot of the participants who shared that their motivation for participating in the cultural immersion were to fulfill their desire to live in and experience other culture were attracted to and wanted to participate in SAP program rather than a GSL program.

For those participants who indicated that their worldviews were shaped by their educational ideology, their values, and belief that one can make a difference in society, they were more interested in participating in the GSL programs. Talking about her reason for participating in a GSL program, Doris indicated that her interest came from her discipline: “Well, I think my interest in sociology comes from the ability of sociology to create social change.” She further explained, “so, I wanted to be a part of something where we were actually engaged in actions that, um, applied these principles.” Dennis believed that his interest to participate in the cultural immersion program stemmed from the opportunity offered by the program to combine traveling and service to communities. He said that, “the ability to combine my interest in service as well as traveling abroad, I thought it was a perfect way of doing both.” Jane shared that for her, it was all about wanting to make a change in her society: “I had always wanted to make a change and see the world because I believe that when you are open to change, it gives you the opportunity to deal with new things.” Amy explains that, “my faith would have played a part in it, but I don’t think that was all of it. I think like a lot of what I had learned about like systemic issues and like political issues, and I guess just like engaging in like basic human dignity.”

For others, it was about the opportunity to be able to earn credit outside of the classroom while engaging in the immersion experience. As for Brianna, she said that, “I got a scholarship, so I got most of the trip paid for; all I had to pay for was the plane ride over there.” Then she explained that “I figured that was a very good opportunity for a cheap trip, and I got credit for

school. Uh, so I went to China, and it was just amazing.” Dorothy expressed similar reasons for embarking on a study abroad trip: “so, I think my inspiration was more about the academics.” She went on to elaborate, “my university had a foreign language requirement of three credits, I had already taken one credit on campus at that time, and the study abroad would provide the additional two credits in six weeks, so I said why not.” Lilly wanted a program that “support” [s] her career purpose in Business and International Relations. For this reason, she said that she chose “a program that had an element that focused on business.”

It is obvious from the conversations that many of the students chose to participate in the cultural immersion programs to achieve goals such as a personal desire for cultural awareness, service orientation towards others, or an academic interest. The study findings suggest that the participants of SAP and GSL program were self-selected into these programs. Additionally, the findings also showed that, in many ways, the participants’ goals and desires determined their interest in the particular type of program they attended.

Expectations

Participants shared about the expectations they had before and during the cultural immersion program. A major thread that runs across most of the conversations about participants’ expectations and their program preferences (Study Abroad vs. Global Service Learning) centered around issues that linked to beliefs and values about others (principles) and the motivation for wanting to experience other cultures (reason for participating). For Rebecca, her expectation for the trip was to be able to have the opportunity to work alongside people from the community they were visiting on a project that encouraged development and sustainability. She said that her interest in the program was related to the community project, explaining that:

“It was really that the program was looking at sustainable development there because my interests in sociology are quite broad and you know, I’m kind of interested ...in impoverished indigenous areas.” Another participant described her interest in the field of sociology, and how she expected to use the cultural immersion experience to learn more about the concept of social change. Doris explained that:

I wanted to be a sociologist because the part of sociology that got me interested was the social change aspect and the power that sociology gives you to make changes. So, being part of global service learning was an opportunity to effect social change through my experience and for me to use it to apply the concepts that I was learning on a different level. (Doris’s interview, 2017)

Lilly’s expectations differ in the sense that she believed that when “I travel I really prefer not to have so many expectations about the people or the place just because I don’t want to set an expectation and later be disappointed.” She explained that, “if you expect something and you don’t get it, you can get disappointed, but if you don’t set those expectations, then everything you experience will be a fresh experience, so, there is no way to get disappointed.” Joe sees things differently: “I think going there I had a higher expectation for the staff and most of those expectations weren’t met, and so, I was kind of disappointed at the beginning.” Despite this rough start, he explained that, “it was a good learning experience for me to learn that not all organizations are perfect, and people are imperfect, and that if I’m always seeking perfection, I will be kind of disappointed...” In next section, participants describe how they prepared for the immersion trip and their experience at the program site locations.

Experiencing Immersion

Many of the SAP participants shared that their programs curriculum includes a pre-departure meetings, formal academic coursework, and no post-program assignment. As part of their program pre-departure preparation, they had series of meeting with their program facilitator where they talked about cultural, health, and safety precautions. Additionally, at the host location, they had in-class learning (formal lectures) and outside the class learning (escorts to historical sites). Similarly, the GSL participants said that their programs include a pre-departure academic coursework where they learned about the cultural, economic, and social issues of their host community. During the program, they participated in informal community engagement and group reflections, and after the program they wrote an academic post-program reflection piece. In this section, I discuss the categories and themes that tell the stories of the events that occurred during the immersion phase.

Experiencing Cultural Immersion

Although the SAP and GSL programs used remarkably different curriculum to prepare participants for the cultural immersion trip, the category “experiencing cultural immersion” comprise of themes that share stories of how the participants prepared themselves for the cultural immersion experience. It also shed light on the excitement, challenges, and changes that the SAP and GSL participants encountered before and during the trip. In the category “experiencing cultural immersion,” three themes developed from the stories that participants shared. These themes include preparation, never enough, and discomfort then comfort.

Preparation

Participants explained that besides the preparation provided by their program, they took time to do their own personal research about the host locations. Many of the participants who

took part in Global Service Learning programs talked about wanting to know how people in the host community perceived Americans. Donna expressed the concerns that she had before the trip and how the concerns informed her preparation for her global service learning trip. She explained in her story that: “I was mostly just curious about, maybe like an outsider perspective. I was a little bit concerned..., about how we were going to be viewed, and what was the best way to handle the relationships.” She elaborated that her concerns came from the knowledge about the past relationship that existed between the United States and the community they were visiting, stating that, “you know, since there is a very, very intense history uh, coming to this phase.” Donna also shared how she used her preparation to address her concerns when she explained that, “these were kind of some of the way I tried to prepare for the trip, uh, I did some readings about their tribes and geographical history, but honestly, I just wanted to see it for myself.”

Many other participants spoke about similar worries while preparing for their trip, Jane said that, “I did a lot of research about the country as a whole, and I looked at their political background. I looked at the relationship between Columbia and the United States.” Similarly, Doris shared her reasons for doing some extra research about Jamaica before her trip, saying that, “I was going to a former colony and a place where my skin color would be the minority, and I wanted to understand how we may be viewed or seen by the Jamaicans.” She explained the reason why this was an important part of her preparation was because she wanted, “to understand the relationship between the United States and the Jamaican government.” There, the data tends to suggest that because of the difference in the socio-economic status in GSL host community and the United States, most of the GSL participants make the effort to do additional research

about the country to ease their concerns and fears about how they will be perceived by the people in the host nation.

Most of the faculty members who were involved in facilitating Global Service Learning trips echoed similar concerns about how to prepare students for these trips. Dr. Helen described her experience:

Well, the preparation is really important. I do a couple of things; one is that there is the academic preparation; I give the students a series of readings to both give them a kind of the scholarly location of what we are doing and why. But also, the background of the country, because I don't want them going in not knowing, you know, what the country is about, what the issues are... and what's going on. (Dr. Helen's Interview, 2017)

The GSL program participants and the faculty members alike felt that it was important to understand any historical and political events that existed between the United States and the communities comprising the host programs. Surprisingly, those participants who took part in a SAP did not express similar concerns or worries in regard to the host community they would be placed in.

Some other areas of preparation that resonated in the conversations with the SAP and GSL participants included the following: language and the culture, social support from family and friends to manage trip anxieties, as well as what and how to prepare for a trip. Ella, one of the students who participated in a study abroad experience, explained how she prepared, stating that “we were told about the basic things that you should expect, but on my own, I did a lot of research about Barcelona and the Spanish culture.” Likewise, Joe talked about the importance of having some knowledge of how to communicate in cross-cultural locations. He said that:

We took a whole class (Contemporary Global Issues) the semester before the trip to kind of prepare us, and in some ways that were helpful. Those things were helpful, but I did not kind of really feel prepared with like cross-cultural communication, just even saying like hey, instead of Hi. (Joe's interview, 2017)

Many of the participants whose cultural immersion experiences occurred in non-English speaking communities shared similar apprehensions about their preparation processes. It was apparent from the conversations that the participants felt that the language barrier will limit the extent to which they could engage in meaning interaction with their host community.

Interestingly, many participants who had close ties with their families talked about the preparation and the feeling of going away from family. For these participants, getting social support and becoming mentally prepared was of significant importance in helping them manage the emotions they felt before and during the trip. For Collin, he said that, "I had just met the lady who is now my wife, my girlfriend at that time. I had been with her for just three months, and that summer she knew I was going to go to Japan." Amy experienced similar feelings, saying that "I don't think you can prepare for it, I knew in my head that is how it was going to be...is different from feeling it, oh my God.....how it feels, when you are far away from your family." It is obvious from the data that the participants insinuated that having the right social support is essential to manage the stress felt during times in the program when they felt absence from their family. Dorothy elaborated this point when she shared her experience saying that:

I don't think you can prepare for it, I knew in my head that is how it was going to be, but that is different from feeling it. Oh my God.....how it feels, when you are far away from your family." Dorothy expressed similar feelings; personally, it was a hard time for me to be away from family because it was my sister's prom and my mom's graduation. And I

have always been close to my family. (Dorothy's interview, 2017)

To help her deal with this situation, Dorothy went on the trip with a friend to have some sort of support, elaborating that, "I applied to the program with one of my best friends, so I wanted to make sure that I wasn't alone, that was the idea for most of the preparation I did." Having this type of social support created a sense of security for Dorothy that enabled her to part take in the cross-cultural immersion learning process.

Elijah approached this challenge of separation from his family differently; he said that, "talking to family members and getting my mind ready for the experience was how I went about it." He explained that, although one cannot predict what to expect on site, it is helpful to be mentally ready. He supported this notion by saying "you don't know what you can expect but just try to have some kind of mental readiness that you can hold on to when you are there."

Another participant explained that the way to deal with the feeling of separation from your family support is to recognize that there will be challenges. She explained that:

I think the best way that you can mentally prepare yourself is to know that it is going to be messy, and there is going to be really bad days, and that there is also going to be really great days. For me, it was really important to constantly remind myself that home is going to be there waiting for me. (Jane's interview, 2017).

Sharing about her program preparation process, Dr. Gabby elaborated on this issue, explaining that:

About day three or four in the country, they get homesick, they aren't doing emotionally very well I know that... So, I will have their parents or siblings write and send the letters directly to my address before the trip, and I'll put it all off in a package. Day four or five into the trip during the debriefing, I will say to them, all right team tonight I have

something I need to give you, then I will give them their family letters, and I will leave the room. So that has been a very important piece to connect them with their family.

(Dr. Gabby's interview, 2017)

In general, SAP and GSL participants and the faculty members spoke about how challenging it was for them to prepare for the cross cultural immersion trip and to handle the feelings of separation from family and other sources of social support. The findings imply that participants need some form of social support during the program to help them navigate and manage the feeling of discomfort that comes from being separated from family and friends. The participants see this support as a form of encouragement to persevere the discomfort that comes from this separation. With this type of support, participants eventually reach the point where they become comfortable and began to benefit from the cross-cultural immersion learning process.

Never Enough

An interesting point that the participants touched on was their preparedness for the cultural immersion. The participants indicated that you prepare as much as possible, but it is never enough because one cannot predict all the situations one could encounter when experiencing or interacting with other cultures outside of your own. For many of the participants, they talked about the amount of preparation they had before the trip; when they eventually got to the program location, they realized that the preparation was helpful. However, one could not prepare for every single scenario that could potentially be experienced during this trip. Some of the participants shared instances during the trip where it became apparent that the pre-departure preparations were important, but at the same time, the willingness to quickly adapt to situations was something that was equally essential.

Jane illustrated this principle when she stated that, “I think you can never prepare enough by the research. You have to be prepared to adapt to the situation.” As for Amy, she believed that, “you can only prepare so much..., like nothing is going to really prepare you to move into a situation where everything is completely different.” Similarly, Douglas expanded on this thought, saying that, “I think no matter what you read before you go, you are never going to be prepared for what you actually experience.” He elaborates on the statement further by making the point that, “you could read about a place in the book and have an idea of what that is, but you don’t actually understand it until you are there. And that is really what I experienced.” Samantha echoes this same sentiment as well when she explained that, “I think I learned a lot of things just being there rather than just reading about it.” Dr. Gabby shares the same experience as the other students through facilitating study abroad trips, explaining that, “you try to prepare them for it with book work, by presentations, maybe by hands-on in-class activities, but on site, the wounds that they see there is the real deal; it is really nothing that they can really anticipate.” Dr. Jackson, another faculty member who facilitates study abroad program, highlighted this fact, saying that, “in spite of the preparation, in spite of the orientation that prepares them for what they are going to see, students are shocked when they finally arrive in India and see the ocean of people.”

For many of the SAP and GSL participants, they came to the realization that physically being in a location is very different from just reading about the location itself. Lilly agrees with this overall idea, illustrating the point that, “they told us what to expect in general terms, and that helped out a lot. I mean, no matter how prepared you are, there is always a bit of a culture shock.” Lilly recognized that no amount of preparation can prepare you for experiencing a new culture or country. She realized that, “the culture shock was a good thing, I feel it is the best way

to learn, you just get thrown into it, and you have to learn as you go.” For Dorothy, this was not the case. She stated, “I don’t think I was prepared for an immersion experience where another language would be the primary language, and my preferred or major tongue would hardly be spoken...., I didn’t realize or understood how challenging that would be.”

The central theme that resonated in all these conversations is certainly the need to approach the experience with openness and an attitude to learn from circumstances. From the stories told, during the cultural immersion experiences, it seems that the participants not only realized that the pre-departure preparation was necessary, but also a mindset that is flexible and ready to adapt was required when the unexpected occurs. Debra and John summarized this thinking; “honestly, I believe that if you are willing to put yourself out there and not be holding on stubbornly to your [own] view of things, you will definitely experience and learn something new.” For John, he believed that, “you just have to jump into it, honestly, like you just have to jump into it; yeah, just accept all of the things, truly.” Expressing her thoughts on how to prepare students for the GSL cultural immersion experiences, Dr. Mary explained that, “I find that challenging because there is no way that you can fully prepare them for what is coming, and I think I try my best to prepare them to be unprepared.”

Discomfort and then Comfort

Several participants discussed the experience of discomfort at some point in the immersion experience and how they dealt with the feelings. Dennis, an older participant, shared his experience at the initial stage, stating that, “to be honest I didn’t experience much culture shock. It was more of discomfort which I think was a product of my age and staying with five students.” Dennis, elaborating on this point, said that, “It was kind of that experience of discomfort of how we did everything together. Our time there was very scheduled...., that was

my main source of discomfort.” Interestingly, many of the older participants who partook in GSL cultural immersion experiences indicated that, at the start of the trip, sharing their space with the other participants was a challenge and a source of discomfort. An older participant described her experience by saying:

I don't know that I necessarily prepared myself emotionally because being an older person uh, and having lived on my own for a very long time, it was difficult for me to be kind of thrown into this like, here, is an 8 x 8 room and you shared it with other people.
(Rebecca's interview, 2017)

Rebecca explained why she felt this way when she said, “I don't think that I prepared myself for that kind of a shock, oh crap...., oh crap.., I'm like I can never be alone...it felt like I could never be alone and that was difficult for me.” Douglas, another older participant, expressed similar feelings, “we were together all the time, and there were times where I just like, I just need five minutes to like listen to music and be by myself (laughter).”

Many of the older participants attributed this feeling of discomfort to their age and the fact that they were accustomed to living by themselves with some sort of monopoly over their time and daily schedule, which in this instance, was highly controlled. However, Douglas shared a different reason why he felt the way he did, stating that:

We were in this new place, learning new things that are challenging our existing beliefs. So, you know, sometimes I just like I wish I had like five minutes to just like be completely alone and just like listen to some music and decompress and think about things. (Douglas's interview, 2017)

Dennis expressed similar concerns when he said that, “I was really uncomfortable with not having any kind of private time..., you know, we were bused from one place to the next. And we

didn't have a lot of downtimes to reflect on the experience personally." Although these GSL participants stated that they experienced these initial discomforts, over the course of their stay, they were able to move past the discomfort and adapt to their new environment.

However, there were cases where participants did not adjust to the new living experience. Some people reacted differently to these situations and the sequence of discomfort, and then comfort did not occur. Dr. Mary illustrated this principle when sharing her experience, stating that:

I once had a student who was very uncomfortable about some things that she had seen, and it challenged her and her thinking in a way that she wasn't prepared for at all. So, I have seen cases where students have negative views at the end of the program, more negative than at the beginning. (Dr. Mary's interview, 2017)

She further elaborated that, "to me even though that is a negative outcome, it's a good outcome right? I don't think the outcomes always have to be wrapped up in a nice neat bow." Similarly, Donna makes the same argument when explaining that, "there were some of our classmates that definitely experienced a stronger culture shock and they had a much harder time adjusting. And there were people that you could see them, as time went on, becoming, kind of going, native." She explains that this was not the case for all:

There was one girl, in particular, that was selfish [unwilling to adapt to the social situation in their host community] when she got there and was selfish when she left. I think the whole time, she was saying I don't know what I am doing in this God forsaken country, get me the hell out of here, and that was kind of how she felt the whole time. (Donna's interview, 2017)

For other participants, the initial discomfort they experienced happened because some things in the program were not going according to their expectations. One participant shared her experience during her study abroad program and the discomfort she felt in the early stage when it seemed that the program was not meeting her expectations. “I remember that by the fourth day I was like oh I've had it. I'm about to buy a plane ticket because I cannot do this anymore.” This participant had a vision or expectation in her mind of how this experience was going to be and when the expectation felt short, she experienced feelings of anger, dissatisfaction, and wanting to give up. She described this feeling saying that, “I was so angry about it. I was so mad, and I was so tight inside, you know, nothing was like how I wanted it to be...” Katelyn explains how she managed her feelings:

I remember it was like 10 o'clock at night and I was standing in front of my suitcase staring at it, and ready to throw everything in and take the next cab to the airport and pay whatever amount that it cost to go back. I was so close to doing that, then I took a second and I was like, it's ok I need to take a step back, and I need to breathe. (Katelyn's interview, 2017)

Katelyn further shared insight on how she dealt with the situation and was able to move past the discomfort to a place of adjustment, and then comfort even in the midst of other challenges:

I closed my eyes, and I took a few deep breaths, and I was like everything is going to be okay. I need to learn to let go of these expectations, I need to let go of my anger, and I need to roll with the punches like there's nothing that is going according to plan. (Katelyn's interview, 2017)

Despite her irritation, Katelyn was able to adjust to the situation. She said that “I was so angry that things weren't planned. I was just like, take everything just as it is and I remember that night I slept pretty well because I finally loosened up on the inside.” After that experience, Katelyn explained that her view of the situation changed:

I remember that after that fourth day, the time that I had, there was like one of the best times that I have ever had in my whole life so far. Now, don't get me wrong, I had so much more to come, but I let go of my expectation, and I realized that with that you really enjoy things, and you look for the best as they are. And that in itself is so beautiful.
(Katelyn's interview, 2017)

Katelyn's revelation shows that when you allow yourself to get past your expectations and adapt to the situation at hand, you can turn a negative experience into a positive learning experience. Amy's experience in her GSL homestay with a host family is an example that illustrates how negative situation can serve as a form of culture education. She shared her experience saying that:

There were a lot of challenges... there were a lot of things to learn... the biggest moment was when I hit rock bottom, rock bottom really sounds dramatic... I think the thing that got me frustrated the most; I don't want to say the lack of concern, they wake-up super early like 4 am..., and my room was by the kitchen... my room was this little panel so I could literally hear everything. In the early hours of the morning, nobody was quiet..., you can hear them, banging pots and pans, and talking out loud... There were times that I got woken up at 4 am, I was like, I cannot..., I was so frustrated...they don't try to tiptoes when others are sleeping, and it annoyed me so much. I just lay on my bed and said to

myself you have to be patient; this is not your space you can't change them...

(laughter)... in that aspect, there was a lot of cultural difference.(Amy's interview, 2017)

Dr. Gabby, one of the faculty members who facilitated the summer study abroad trip to India summarized the discomfort and comfort that the participants underwent as a two-cycle process. She explained that:

It's just a matter of getting away from our comfort, which is the main point of going to India because it is really uncomfortable. It's interesting when it seems that it doesn't matter anymore..., I think that is the success, when the comfort that they so wanted in the first week seems that it doesn't matter anymore. (Dr. Gabby's interview, 2017)

Dr. Gabby alludes to the point that participants would have a potentially more successful experience if they get past the desire for personal comfort when experiencing new situations.

Another faculty member puts it this way:

In terms of the outcomes, how do I know that it is working? One of the ways and I mean this is terrible, but this is how I feel as a faculty member, one of the ways I know that it is working is by watching the students become uncomfortable. (Dr. Mary's interview, 2017)

What this means to me is that the feeling of "uncomfortableness" is all part of successfully assimilating into a new environment and culture. It is a stage that all must go through and experience during the immersion process. Debra confirmed this viewpoint when she shared her experience, stating that, "I knew that I wanted to do the study abroad program and that meant, stepping into situations that would be uncomfortable sometimes. Being an introvert, it makes it even harder. I had to give myself a personal push." The conversation from the participants indicated that at the initial phase of the trip, certain things might not go as planned, which might cause discomfort. However, once the participants began to adjust to the situation, it became easy

to see the benefits of viewing the uncomfortableness as a positive as opposed to focusing on these issues as a negative.

Program Design and Structure

As a category, the program design and structure include four themes: the program location, the length of immersion, the housing, and the intensity of the interaction. In the following section, I detail each of these themes.

Program Location

Most of the participants talked about how their program location contributed to the learning experience during the cultural immersion. Some faculty members explained why they choose certain locations and the important role it plays in the learning process. For instance, Dr. Helen put it this way, “the very first thing is, it’s important to me for the kind of teaching that I do to be in a country that is what you call developing or at a lower socioeconomic level.., I think that's important.” Dr. Alex, another faculty, explained that “basically, the location determines the kind of text I assign for the trip.” Similarly, describing the impact of the location on the student’s learning, Dr. Gabby shared her experience, “I think location matters, we are busy; every minute of the day because that is the culture of Kolkata, nobody stops.” She said that the, “location makes a big difference because I want them to have the full brunt of India in it: hot, sticky, smelly, noisy, reality and they get it, I don't think we would have the same experience say in Spain.” Katelynn, a study abroad participant, said that “I feel like if I knew that the city was not well developed, I would not have gone for the trip. But looking back now, I have no regrets going there, and I’m glad that I went because I would not be the same person that I am today.”

One of the participants who took part in this study had the opportunity to study abroad at two different locations, Italy and India; she talked about this experience and the difference each

of the location made to her learning process. Lilly shared her experience of the trip she had:

I think I learned a lot from the exposure I got from both countries... India made me reflect a lot about life and how I define need because of what I saw there. The people in India were very open and welcoming, and you can feel that it was from the heart not superficial. They really want to help you understand their way of life and want you to feel at home... I think this attitude was something so unique about them, and it's hard to see that genuineness these days because we just tend to live in our superficial boxes and we don't pay attention to things that we don't know. For example, we don't talk to people we don't know, but in India, people will engage you in conversation even if they are seeing you for the very first time. Again that is something unique and different from what I experienced in Italy. (Lilly's interview, 2017)

Similarly, Douglas had participated in two cultural immersion trips. One to a country in South America and the other Global Service Learning trip was to a Native America Reservation. He explained that his learning experience was different in each of the locations:

I think the most impactful thing about the South America trip was that we were there for two weeks, and in each part of the trip, we saw a different group of people in terms of socioeconomic status. That was the first time; I really understood the differences in socioeconomic status and that experience kind of helped me become sensitized to those things. And then with the Native America Reservation, I just think it was such a powerful experience the whole thing, listening to the stories... and it is just nice to see how like immersing yourself in a cultural experience like this and doing service for people who need it, can like change your outlook on life. (Douglas's interview, 2017)

In this instance, these stories illustrate how the social, economic and cultural traditions and the way of life of the people in the different location can enhance participants learning and development in ways beyond what their formal education can offer.

Furthermore, another participant describes the impact of her program location on her experience during a GSL cultural immersion trip:

I think what effect it has depends on the country the person is going to. So, my experience as a white woman going to Jamaica will be very different than if I was going to Mexico or if I went to Peru. You know, there was one African American student in our group, so, her experience was different than ours because people didn't immediately look at her and think she was a foreigner. And so I think the country you are going to matters in how it affects you. (Doris's interview, 2017)

There, the data suggest that the learning process in a location might be different for participants based on their racial and ethnic identity because of how they are perceived in the location.

During his GSL trip to a South American country, Dennis began to realize that, irrespective of location, people who are of upper and middle social class tend to enjoy similar social activities. He explained that:

We had like, a kind of farewell dinner with a family, this was back in the city.... Their kind of life was not so much different from the American life. Like their food was kind of different, it was dinner basically..., you know, it really wasn't much different from what we were used to, and I think it took kind of the experience from the rural life to notice it. (Dennis's interview, 2017)

The data from the SAP and GSL participants in this study supports the premise that the program locations have an impact on the learning process during and after the cultural immersion

experiences. Most of the SAP and GSL participants who went to developing countries or rural areas, shared that they saw firsthand how people in these communities could be generous with time and resources despite living in adverse economic conditions. The participants reported that the experience offered an opportunity to reassess their definition of “need and want” in ways that may not be possible in a much more developed location. In her words, Doris, a GSL participant who went to a developing country, illustrated this idea, saying that, “One of the concepts that kept coming up to me during our trip was this idea of enough... I saw there that people didn’t dwell on what they didn’t have, but they focus on what they have.”

Housing

Participants talked about the type of accommodations they had during their immersion trips and how the experience of the living arrangements influenced their learning processes. Although some participants expressed preference of a particular type of accommodation, there was a general agreement that the housing was a critical part of the cultural immersion experience and learning process. Among the SAP participants interviewed, two participants lived with host families in a homestay, four participants stayed in a college hostel, and four participants lived in hotel. Similarly, six of the GSL participants interviewed lived in homestay, two participants stayed in a hostel, and two lived two weeks in a homestay and one week in a college hostel. Dennis, one of the GSL participants, described how the housing arrangement during the trip contributed to his learning experience saying, “two things, the homestay definitely... the first week when we stayed in the university town in the university housing, it really wasn’t that different from staying here... staying with a family and then we did lots of activities ...” Jane put it this way, “just like having an open host family that was interested in learning and communicating too, that helped me a lot because we were able to talk through things.”

Similarly, Amy, a GSL participant talked about her homestay experience and how this encounter contributed to her learning process: “The host family is huge, and it is one of the best things about the program for us students... it gives you, like a way in and once your family accepts you, you are accepted in the community.” She expressed her opinion about housing choice as “in my head, it doesn’t make sense that you are doing a global service learning program where you don’t do a homestay with a local family, because the family connects you to the people.” She explained the reason for the thinking, “I think the host family was critical to the level of learning. It was one of my favorite parts just like in general being there.” Another GSL participant shared her story about her homestay experience during a global service learning program:

So, for this experience, to be able to live with the families and experience that family life um..., and to be somewhere long enough and to be in that space of someone’s home, to experience that... I think any other way of doing it like if we had gone back to dorms, hotel rooms, or any other kind of stuff, the experience would not have affected us as deeply as it did. At least for me, it definitely wouldn’t have because you can shut, you can compartmentalize, you can shut yourself off from, but there was no getting away from it. That damn rooster was outside that window, twenty four seven, waking you all night long. (Doris’s interview, 2017)

For some participants, just the fact that they were sharing the living space in a college hostel with other students from diverse backgrounds was part of the experience of dealing with and learning about differences during the program. Dorothy, a study abroad participant, explained it this way, “I will say the housing, I loved the options that we were given. I was living with about six to seven people all from different countries, all of us going through the same thing

but coming from different places.” Dorothy’s view differs from some of the global service participants who prefer homestay because they believe that this type of housing forces the participants to immerse self completely in the cultural process. Surprisingly, none of the study abroad participants interviewed indicated a preference for a particular type of housing choice.

Intensity of Immersion

Another major theme that developed from the participants ‘conversation centered on the type of interactions and the amount of time spent in the cultural immersion location and how these impacted their learning processes. Generally, participants shared their experiences living with the host community. Many of the participants told stories about the length of the stay, the interactions with the locals, and the impact of these encounters on the immersion experience. In describing the intensity of the immersion process, many of the GSL participants repeatedly talked about the length of the stay, the community project, and the host family.

Talking about the intensity of immersion, Dennis explained the significance of the length of the stay in the community saying that, “I recognized that three weeks was a good start, but three weeks is not really enough to understand another culture. So, I just said I would like to be immersed.” John, another GSL participant, believed that the one-month experience was not sufficient to engage intense immersion. Here is how he described his experience:

I think the first few days you are trying to understand things; then like three weeks in, you begin to understand for sure, hey, I’m in a different country. Then you realize you are only going to be there for some time. I will tell you, I truly believe in the three rules: three days to kind of figure out where you are going, three weeks to know where you are, three months and you can say you lived in that place, and in three years you belong there.
(John’s interview, 2017)

Speaking about the connection between the length of the stay of programs (a short term program is between one to 16 weeks) and the intensity of the immersion, Dr. Daniel expressed his observation from his personal experiences organizing and managing GSL trips for students. He explained that:

If it is short term, the interactions are superficial, and they are surrounded by other people like themselves instead of being immersed, dependent and vulnerable...I'm not saying that there is something wrong with that, really...the problem is with the design of the programs...Programs are intentionally designed that way to keep students feeling comfortable and happy... That means keeping them in their comfort zones, which means not immersing them in disturbing realities. (Dr. Daniel's interview, 2017)

Dr. Jackson, another faculty member who takes students on a two weeks study SAP trip, viewed the short term trips differently. He suggested that, despite the short time frame, students learn as much from his trips:

I tried to promote students going to India for an extended period, and most people were not interested in that because they do not feel comfortable going to a developing country without knowing anybody. Then, I came up with the concept of me going with them for two weeks, and then literally taking care of them for that period, and I also tried mixing the cultural experience with business, history, and fun and then that did work. (Dr. Jackson's interview, 2017)

Some participants suggest that the immersion process did not depend just on the length of the stay, but also the degree to which one was engaged in activities within the community. John emphasized this point when talking about the community project that he participated in during his global service trip: "I want to say that the project experience was really deep, and I made

connections with some of the local people. And that's what I appreciated most was to be able to connect with the local people.” Donna reiterated the same point, “I think the engagement of all five senses is what I really appreciated.” She explained how this process supported intense immersion saying that “to immerse ourselves, you know, part of it was what we were looking at, so whether we were going to see the great site, or going to see the environment, as well as the feeling... all of these experiences we were like experiencing as a family.”

Explaining the role of the host community in the immersion process, Doris shared her view saying that, “it was really important that while we were there, we had our time with each other and we had our time away from each other. I think that without the immersion piece, it could never be the same.” Doris further explained her reasons for thinking this way:

I said that because at the end of every day I was able to isolate myself from the rest of the traveling companion but could not isolate myself from experience. If I didn't, I don't think I would have had the same experience. So, because we lived in their homes with the people, there was no choice for me to isolate myself from the experience and the people because I couldn't. You know, you go to Jamaica, and you spend all your vacation surrounded by other European or Americans, never really experience Jamaica. You are in Jamaica, but you are not experiencing Jamaica. So, I think that can happen in a Global Service Learning trip if you are not immersed if you are not living with a family if you are not experiencing their everyday life. (Doris's interview, 2017)

Many of the participants shared similar experiences that tend to suggest that being open to the experience made their learning experience more effective. The participants noticed that open-mindedness was essential to achieving the level of learning that was beneficial to self and the community during the cultural immersion trip. Doris illustrated this idea by stating that “what

you learn when you travel with an open mind can't be learned in class." Additionally, the data show that other factors such as the length of the stay, the participant engagement project in the local environment, and the housing arrangement contribute to the intensity of the immersion. Reinforcing this idea, Amy stated that, "what you learn on these trips are definitely real life situations that you can't see in the classroom."

The Learning Process is Multidimensional

In this category, several themes developed from the conversations that the participants shared about their cultural immersions experiences and the learning that occurred. Katelyn talked about the multiple facets to learning when she said that "everything that I experienced whether good or bad taught me something." Another participant described her learning experience this way, "Oh gosh! It is not just one thing... I think the experience of knowing that there are other ways of being..." Many others expressed the notion that the learning process that took place during and after the program increased their understanding of self and other in many aspects. The four themes that emerged in this category include Self-Awareness, Recognizing our Humanity, Appreciating Culture, and Different and Unique. I discuss these themes in the next section.

Self-Awareness

While sharing reflections on the learning process, participants from both the SAP and GSL programs talked about how the cultural experiences allowed them to become aware of strengths and weaknesses in various areas of their personal lives. Some participants shared how they learned some skills during the cultural immersion experiences that they currently use to manage stress and anxiety. According to Douglas, "the biggest thing that I learned was how to be in the moment." Similarly, Donna shares her learning experience on the need to care for self,

“that was something I definitely took away because even to this day there are times when I feel that I’m rushing through things until I hear the word “self-care.”

Furthermore, participants talk about becoming conscious of the impact of their decisions on self and other. Lilly described how the trip change her process of decision making, saying that “now I’m more conscious of my actions like I think that sometimes you don’t realize until you travel.” She further elaborated on this statement mentioning that “what I mean is that studying abroad makes you more responsible because you have to make decisions when you are studying in another country constantly.” She explained that “now, I’m more conscious about the decisions I make and the outcome it has on me and others.”

Expressing similar thoughts, Amy talked about how her GSL homestay experience allowed her to become independent, “not constantly being with other students was huge.” She said that “I think that was a really big deal because it forced me to like grow up and do things on my own because I didn’t have people to fall back on.” The SAP experience made Joe gain “maturity,” “confidence,” and “courage.” Growing in an “inner city,” Elijah believes that his SAP experience allowed him to break the structural constraints of his immediate community and gave him the opportunity to see the world beyond his neighborhood. He said that this experience “put me in a position which I had never been in before.” For Debra, one of the things she had to learn during the trip was to recognize that despite her introverted personality, she could still reach out to others. Debra explained that although “It is really hard to reach out [to other], but once you do it, you get more comfortable doing it, then you get comfortable with yourself.”

Recognizing our Humanity

Among the SAP and GSL participants interviewed, there was a consensus that the cultural immersion experiences helped them to recognize that all humans have similar desires

and needs. They discovered that the similarities that exist between humans are far greater than the differences. Many of the participants spoke about this idea repeatedly during their conversations. For example, Douglas told a story that illustrated this notion, “we are all five fingered people, and that’s how we are all connected.” He explained that “no matter like what difference we have in a parent, we all have five fingers, we are all human beings, and so we are all a part of this.” Douglas continues to use the revelation from this message in his daily encounters. He mentioned that whenever he witnesses a situation where people discriminate against others, he intervenes by sharing the story of the five fingers.

For many of the participants during and after their cultural immersion trips, they became aware that people generally are all in search of the fundamental human need of joy, peace, and happiness, regardless of their location. Dr. Jackson told of his experiences with the students that went with him to India, explaining that, “when they meet students who are of the same age range, they realize something that I realized, that people wherever they grow up they have a lot of commonalities.” He further explains that once the students get to that point, they start to understand that “everybody has the same desire to be successful, and you just see that there are lots of points of commonality despite the cultural differences.” Cassidy, one of the SAP participants, said that during her trip, she noticed that, “we have so many things and values that are exactly the same, but their physical reality just like looks different.” It is obvious that over the course of the period of cultural immersion, many of these participants began to realize that, despite the difference in geographical location and culture, humans share many characteristics in common. Elaborating on this concept, Doris and Amy shared their GSL immersion experiences, saying that:

I learned a lot about how people kind of are different in how they live and do things, but at the center of it all, we are the same if you come to think about it. People just want to be happy in whatever environment they live in. People are different only because of our culture, but we are all the same anyway. And, I just wish we can as a people see this truth. Then we would be able to respect one another; I mean truly value people.(Doris's interview, 2017)

Amy reechoed this notion using similar language to describe her learning experience in this area:

It's the program that gave me that: to be able to see the humanity in every single person. And it's the program that opened me up to be able to see beyond stereotypes and lump sum generalizations. I realized that in the ways that truly, truly matters, humans are far more alike than they are different..., we all want love; we all want peace, and we all are just trying to make a living for ourselves. And the way that people go about doing that, it changes with different cultures. (Amy's Interview, 2017)

Some of the participants shared that the cultural experiences expanded their understanding of people and the discovery that the difference between humans come from the variation in peoples' culture. Illustrating this idea, Ella said that "no matter what culture you are from, no matter what religion you were or the color of your skin, like people are people. And I met some good people in China." She further elaborated, saying that, "we did not speak the same language, but, we still got along, it made me appreciate people more." For Lily, it dawned on her that, "we can have diverse opinions about things, but at the center of it all, we are all humans, and we tend to desire and want similar things in life." In other words, these participants signaled

the message that although humans have cultural differences that influence the structure of their society and their manner of life, at the core of it all, people also share many areas of similarities.

Appreciating Culture

In this study, several participants shared stories about the cultural immersion trip and how the participation in the program opened their minds to other views and an appreciation of other cultures. Some of the participants discovered that people living in the host communities have their own cultural ways of existing and doing things. Samantha voiced this feeling saying that:

The world is so much bigger than just where we are, not just this space. It just opened my eyes to how much is out there and how much we [participants] can see and experience and learn from other people, and other cultures” we [participants] are not right all the time, and we shouldn’t think our ways are always right or the best way. (Samantha’s interview, 2017)

Jane expressed a similar observation, highlighting the point that, “there are so many ways to be a human being...my way is only one of them. It’s not about right or wrong, nothing is black or white, just because this is how I do things...Everything is pretty relative.” Debra explained that she now understands culture differently, stating that, “not everyone has the same story, and there are many things like how we grew up and where we live that comes into each person’s story. You can only know that story if you allow yourself to listen and talk to others.” The indications from these comments show that as the participants continue to interact in their host community, they become aware of the importance of culture in the formation of peoples’ identities.

Other participants shared that they learned that culture is unique, and it defines peoples’ way of life. One participant, who took part in GSL program in a Native America Reservation in the United States, found it surprising that the culture and way of life of her host community

differed distinctively from the dominant culture in the United States. She said that “the biggest takeaway that I took from this trip was really recognizing the stark difference in cultures. It was really difficult for me to wrap my head around the fact that I was still in the United States.”

Another GSL participant noticed that the people in his host community expressed feelings differently from his own culture. He said that:

In general, in Tagalog [Filipino] there aren't a lot of words for like emotion or expressing your emotions. In that culture, you like express emotion through body language... it is mostly like nonverbal, which is very different from my culture. So, with that being the kind of the culture there, it was harder for me to feel connected to the people there. (Joe's interview, 2017)

Similarly, Brianna discovered that “culturally, things are done in different ways.” She emphasized that, “in the US, things might be done one way and just because it is done in the west; it doesn't make it more valuable.” She further explained that, “it showed me that the way people do things kind of works and it doesn't necessarily have to be the same.” In summarizing how the cultural immersion program helped her come to understand the concept of culture, Donna explains that, “If you really want to know about a culture, you can learn about it, but to understand it, an immersion level is something that can make it real.” In describing how the cultural immersion process enhanced the knowledge gained about the impact of culture on the lifestyle of the people in the host community, many of the participants through their conversations acknowledge that one can only get that type of understanding by the interaction that occurs during the immersion trip.

Different and Unique

Regarding the learning process before, during, and after the cultural immersion programs, most of the faculty members who facilitated SAP and GSL suggested that, although the participants in these programs get exposure to the cultural immersion process, the learning and the discovery experience might not lead to the same outcomes from everyone. One of the faculty members observed that often the language used in framing the outcomes for these programs does not capture the fact that the learning processes and outcomes are not always instant, but can occur through the developmental process over time.

Dr. Alex's statement supported the idea that participants' learning and outcomes before, during, and after cultural immersion experiences can be multifaceted and developmental. He said that sometimes there can be a lot of, "framing that looks at the idea that difference could be made during the time of community engagement, rather, it will be far more appropriate to frame everything as development for a social change maker or catalyst over a lifetime."

Similarly, another faculty member, Dr. Helen said it this way: "I don't think that integrating our social experiences or lived experiences necessarily occur on a linear intermediate trajectory, sometimes, those things have to go under for a while, percolates, and then pop up in different areas."

For Ella, the learning and the outcomes began to manifest right from the first day, "I remember that before I made this trip, someone told me that before you go and study abroad you are a story listener. After your experience, you become a storyteller, and it is such an amazing experience." Joe, on the other hand, struggled initially, and it took him some time to experience the learning process. He said that, "I felt like the cultural shock for me was too much in the first few weeks. I felt disoriented the first week I was there, not knowing and kind of losing a sense of

purpose, not knowing why I was there, and I began to feel lonely.” For others, the program might not lead them to the expected outcome: “One student was very much out of her comfort zone and uncomfortable I think with the cultural aspect of it.” Dr. Mary talks about her personal experience leading students on GSL trips, “I think on this personal pathway that each student has to take, they will end up in different places.” She further elaborated that, “because of that we have to acknowledge that they might end up in a place at the end of the trip where they are not there, they are not at that positive end stage of that road, and then comes the challenge of what do I do.” The stories shared by the faculty members and participants illustrate that there are no single sequence to how the learning process occurs during the immersion trip. To an extent, this study’s findings suggest that each participant who partakes in the cross cultural immersion trip might react uniquely to the experience and, in some cases, despite the learning opportunities that the immersion process offers, participants might become negatively impacted by the cultural exposure.

Returning From Immersion

Participants shared conversations about the challenges they faced in the process of adjusting to community after the trip. In this section, I discuss the categories and themes that share insight to how SAP and GSL participants progress in the transformational learning process upon reentry into their local community.

The Impact of the Experience Coming Back Home

Several themes developed that tell the general experience of many of the participants when they returned to their local community after the cultural immersion experiences. The themes that make up this category include Applying the Lessons, Culture Matters, Career Pathway, and Reverse Cultural Experience. I discuss these themes below.

Applying the Lessons

When explaining the positive experience of her immersion trip, Debra illustrated that, “The experience made me want to be more accepting of people, and I wish that we could be as open and accepting of others in my community... in general...I have developed respect for people and their experience” (Debra’s interview, 2017). Interestingly, in answering the questions about the impact of cultural immersion experiences on their behaviors toward others who are physically and culturally different from them in their local communities, most of the participants reported that, after the immersion trips, they felt a sense of connection and an urge to interact with others. Likewise, Samantha said that “coming back to the US I really wanted to talk to anyone that had traveled before. I guess it was like you have that experience of traveling. It’s hard to explain the feeling; you just get this feeling that you kind of know each other because you have shared this unique experience.” Lilly summarizes her experience this way:

I think that this experience in many ways has made me kind of like a city center of the world because every person that I met during the trip kind of represent a country right?

They represent their culture, their values and I think this experience now makes it easier for me to step out and interact with people who are different. (Lilly’s interview, 2017)

Some others talked about developing respect for people’s experiences. Cassidy said that “I came back understanding stupid questions, curiosity, being scared to ask the question, being lost; I think that is the biggest thing. I now have empathy when I see people going through the same thing.” Ella feels that her respect for others increased on her return from the cultural immersion trip: “Now I see foreign exchange students, and I understand them more... I guess what I got most out of this trip is that it kind of changes my point of view about people more or less.... I treat people with a little bit more respect now.” Amy, one of the GSL participants said

that “on a social level, I came out a little bit more patient and a little bit more understanding of people’s reality, and I think now, I have less tolerance for people who take pity on others like pity doesn’t do anything.” The travel experience taught Brianna to seek information about other countries and their cultures, she commented that, “now I seek information, and I seek understanding and knowledge of other countries of the world versus just the information that I’m seeing and getting in the United States...”

The SAP and the GSL participants alluded to the fact that, to a great extent, the cultural experience changed how they think about and interact with people from other cultures.

Surprisingly, some of the GSL participants reported that after the immersion trip they felt a desire to become an advocate for marginalized populations and fight for their cause because of the respect they now have for other cultures. Donna, one of the GSL participants interviewed, described her desire, “I also just have a lot more drive to be a social advocate, and it gave me a heart for an entire body of people beyond my own ethnic group. I never imagined caring about another population beyond my own.” Other GSL participants shared a similar thought. Joe, for one, explained that the experience helped him to develop a deeper commitment to social justice and become an advocate for the poor. Although the SAP and GSL participants shared that they developed respect for others because of the cultural immersion experiences, only the GSL participants indicated a need to engage in social justice causes for marginalized group.

Staying on with Change

Participants spoke in-depth about the aspect in their cultures that became apparently different to them on their return from the cultural immersion trips. For instance, a lot of the participants described how upon returning to the United States, they become more aware of how wasteful they and others around them were in terms of finances. They mentioned that after

settling back into their communities and beginning their normal routines, over time, it was hard to continue to resist those norms and behaviors that they fought against initially when they came back from their trip. Doris talked about this saying that, “I found myself resisting at first but then falling back into it...., culture has such a strong effect on you that you find yourself doing things because we are not always reflective of our behavior and actions.” Dennis put it this way, “I still do my normal routine, but you know, if we were reflective of our behaviors and actions all the time, we would be exhausted (laughter)”. Ella said that it was difficult to keep up with the behavioral change she developed during her SAP cultural immersion experience in China. She explained that “after you sleep off all the jet lag, it would begin to feel like you never left...., your family, and friends, and before you know, you just kind of get back to your usual routine.” Ella’s experience exemplifies the idea that on re-entry, if participants fail to consciously reflect on the lessons learned during the trip, participants can easily revert to initial behaviors.

Similarly, other participants shared that the setting in which their local community is located restricts the extent to which they can keep up with the lifestyle change they desired after the cultural immersion experience. Cassidy talked about her experience, noting that, “people don’t care about the world at large. They just want to live in their town, live in their bubble.... Briefly, it just pissed me off that people can be like that, but after a while, I just decided that it just the norm, and there isn’t much I can do.” Katelyn further elaborated on this issue, when she mentioned the challenge she had sharing the details of her experience with family and friends on her return from her trip:

I hate to say it, but it is because of my location, like, being back here (small town) that doesn’t see a lot of diversity. I mean, yea, there are international students, but unless you are in class with some of them, it’s hard to interact with them....it is just like

discouraging. It is like, you know, a town like this tucked away in the middle of nowhere like this, where everybody just sees only a small section of the world. You know, they don't appreciate the difference. They don't appreciate all these different views, all these different ideas, It makes me feel like depressed, also that I'm not able to share these life-changing experiences, like those moments; and I just have to keep that in me, and they are fading away. (Katelyn's interview, 2017)

Interestingly, both the SAP and GSL participants interviewed in this study acknowledged that over time, after returning to their local environments, they found it difficult to stay on with the behavioral changes that they made to various aspects of their lives before and during their trips. One of the participants suggested that the most challenging part of the cultural immersion process is how to keep up with the things learned during the trip because on return, it becomes obvious that one's culture is ingrained, and it is a huge part of one's environment and personality. Doris summarized the situation by saying that, "what I felt when I came back was this pull, this pullback to American culture that I wanted to resist." She further elaborated that, "I rejected those things previously, but I wanted to reject them more after I came back. But it is hard to do that, you kind of..., you become where you are."

Career Pathway

Participants talked about various ways in which the cultural immersion experience exposure helped them to discover new areas of personal and career interest. Expressing this notion, Lilly shared that, "I believe that the trip has changed me because now I'm more focused on what I want to do next in my life. Even for my personal, social and professional life, I now know what I want and how to work towards those goals." Likewise, Dennis indicated that his GSL trip had an impact on the professional decisions he made about his career choices. He said

that, “professionally, certainly, I developed an interest in service learning trips, kind of, I would like to be the kind of professor that will take students on these types of trips.” For Joe, the cultural immersion experience opened up an internship opportunity with an organization in an area of service that he became interested in during the GSL trip. He said that, “now, I’m planning to do their two years internship here in Los Angeles which I’m going to start next year.”

Some other participants talked about how the cultural immersion experiences provided important learning experiences that were transferable and useful in their academic and career development. Samantha explains that, “since I’m going for teaching and special education, this experience just helped me to understand why people are the way they are and why they are passionate about certain issues...” Similarly, after experiencing the cultural immersion process, Cassidy decided to change her major. She insinuated that after the cultural exposure, the reason for wanting to switch her major was because she wanted a career where she could use the new knowledge acquired from the immersion trip. Cassidy explained that, “I came back and I changed my major after completing the trip... I realized that I wanted to do something with more policy or something that I can use language and social interaction.” The data suggested that for some of the SAP and GSL participants, the learning experience acquired during cultural immersion became useful in discovering their academic and career interest, while for others, the experience did not make any difference in the career decisions they made.

The Reverse Culture Experience

When talking about the reverse culture experience, Amy highlighted the point that:

Coming back home, I was not prepared to be so angry, and you know I had issues..., and you know, my family and I are very close, my mom had to call me out one day, and she said that I was bitchy (laughter). She’s like ever since you got back you’ve just been kind

of bitchy. The fact that people don't take time for each other, to have a community, the fact that we spend more time on the freeways and on our phones and doing crap that doesn't really matter like that made me so angry, you know. So I spent a lot of time angry and frustrated, and I wasn't expecting that at all. (Amy's interview, 2017)

Many of the participants shared similar stories about their experiences with the reverse cultural shock when they returned from their cultural immersion trips. In Ella's viewpoint, the reverse shock was as tough as the culture shock itself and in most case unexpected. She explained that, "I lived in America my whole life....then you get back home, and it's like you have never been here before. Nobody warned me about the reverse culture shock. I did not even think about it." Katelyn experienced similar feelings, "I think for me the culture shock coming back home was as intense as the culture shock that I experienced being in China for the first time."

Another interesting point that some of the participants touched on was how isolated and disconnected they felt from friends and family during the initial period after they returned from the trip. Joe shared his experience, stating that, "when I first came back, I was not just sharing that ... just like the over-consumption of culture in the US, and having to be back with friends who don't have like a global perspective I think was challenging" For Doris, she said that "the return culture shock I think is the big thing.. I didn't like how wasteful we are... now, it is seven years after, and I'm like, mom, take me to the spa...we become immersed back into our normal life. The data indicated that on re-entry, participants experienced discontent (feeling of anger at the wasteful spending), but in order to not be seen as the deviant, overtime, these participants conformed to the expectations of their society.

The findings in this study confirm Mezirow's (2000) assumption that transformational learning happens in sequence. I noticed that it was hard for the participants to move past the

sequence of discontent (anger) because they did not understand how to put the new awareness into action. In light of this discovery, Pisco (2015) suggested that cultural immersion program designs include some form of “post trip” support piece to help participants continue the learning process when readjusting into their community on return from the trip. One of the faculty members who facilitates GSL programs explained this need, saying that:

Upon re-entry, students are frequently looking for tools to help them explain what they are thinking; theoretical tools can be helpful, but also, tools to deal with the emotional content. Often, they sense that there is a world they believe in, but it doesn't exist, and when they come to find out, it's far a letdown in ways that they find deeply troubling.
(Dr. Alex's interview, 2017)

The stories that Doris and Jane shared about the emotional challenge they faced upon their reentry to their community further illustrated the need for tools to help deal with the emotional change that participants encounter on their return from immersion trips. Doris shared how she managed the sense of depression she felt coming back home after three weeks in a GSL program:

When I came back, I went through a really, like I was kind of depressed for a while, the trip shined a light on a lot of things in the United States.... So, my friends really helped me through that reverse culture shock. I think that is another important part of the experience, you have to stay connected with your group when you get back cause they are the only ones who understand what you are going through to readjust back to life in the normal world, because nobody understood how changed I was by what had happened.
(Doris's interview, 2017)

Jane had a similar experience, which she shared:

I think an integration class is so necessary, when you get home from trips like that, they are all asking like oh, what was the most amazing part. I don't know, what do you want, you know, there is no way for people to understand, and sometimes they don't really want to know all of the garbage that you actually experienced and how you got into it. So, having a community of people who went through the same exact thing, the same ups and down, to talk about it, and they can actually understand. And they actually want to hear about it that really does a lot more than I ever thought it would do for your psyche. You need community. You can't bundle it up. You need people to talk to and people who understand you, so having that group of people, and somebody who has been there really helps....you make sense of the whole experience. (Jane's Interview, 2017)

The stories that the participants shared in many ways indicated that the cultural immersion experiences have an impact on the participants' view of things, especially on their return to the local community. The data suggests that in order for the initial transformational learning process to deepen, participants need to be able to progress beyond the feeling of dissonance and discontent that they experienced. Beyond the feeling of dissatisfaction with the structure of things in their community, participants should work toward the point where they are taking actions that are consistent to their new awareness from the cultural immersion exposure. Equally as important, this finding indicated that participants require support from cultural immersion programs and others to help them convert their immersion experience to transformational actions.

Generally, participants who took part in the SAP and GSL cultural immersion process reported many outcomes that were similar across programs. At the same time, the data suggested that there were some categories and themes, which were specifically associated with the SAP

participants and others with GSL participants. The next section will discuss the category that developed from the analysis of the data collected from the GSL program participants, followed by the category related to the SAP program participants.

Lessons From Global Service Learning

Interestingly, an additional category emerged from looking at the data of those participants who took part in a GSL program cultural immersion experience. The themes clustered in this category include the community, seeing the privilege, and unlearning the learned.

The Impact of the Host Community

Participants shared about the experience of living in their host community, working on the service project, and the impact it had on the community. One participant described his experience in these words, “the way I view global service learning it’s like an exchange, and so, what happens is like you have individuals who are sharing their lives with you, their story, their culture, their language...” Douglas elaborated on his thought about the impact of the relationship between the participants and the community. He said that, “I think that us doing the service project for them and asking, this is the important part, you have to do it based on the need of the community.... we had that, and... the people were so happy.” Similarly, talking about the need for this type of community engagement, Dr. Alex explained that, “it is so important to figure out how to make the process of global service learning a learning experience not just for the students but also for the community, and the organizations that host these students.” The general notion suggested in these conversations is that during the cultural immersion, the exchange that occurred can be beneficial to the participants as well as the community.

Some participants talked about the language used to describe their host community during their pre-departure meetings and the image this conversation painted in their minds of the host community. Dennis shared that, “I was under the impression that it was going to be less developed than it actually was, so they had running water, electricity, and some areas had internet.” He explained the reason for why he felt this way, saying that, “I don’t know how much of it was from the way it was described or with my interpretation. You know, I envisaged a small, poor rural community.” Rebecca recounted her experience during one of the pre-departure meetings before her GSL trip. She shared that:

It was really interesting because when they told us that we would be going to this community, right...., oh.., I was sitting down there and I was thinking, and I don’t know why, but I was just thinking that this is a tribe (laughing). It felt like I was going to a tribe (laughing), and back into the stone age, and the way they...., and you know, the kind of euphemisms they used to describe this community, I really thought that...., I was like, well maybe this is going to be like, living in a hut of some sort. I don’t know, not really sure, but uh, much, much, more modern than uh, you know, than I had imagined.

(Rebecca’s interview, 2017)

Similarly, Jane reflected back on the communications she had before the trip and the reality she lived while in the host community, along with how it changed the initial perceptions she had of the host community and the situation. According to Jane, “understanding their reality and living it with them... they take cold showers...not like here, we think it’s weird because everybody here has a water heater...in your head if you don’t have hot water, you are poor.” The insinuation from these conversations indicated that before embarking on the GSL trip, the

language used to describe the program's location influenced the participants' expectations and view of the host community.

Other participants discussed their interactions and the relationship they had in the host community. The GSL participants shared that their host community created an atmosphere that gave them a feeling of welcome, a sense of friendship, and feeling of safety during the trip. Describing her experience, Doris said that, "we were well protected because our Global Service Learning brings money to the community. The community organizers there made sure that we were comfortable and never in any physical danger." Similarly, John affirmed the same feeling about his host community saying that, "I feel like the difference between a vacation, and this trip is that I felt like I was living there, although I was there for a short time, still, I felt like I was a part of the community, and the people were nice and welcoming." The major idea that came from the conversation from three of the GSL participants when talking about the interaction with the host community was that they experience, kindness, friendliness, and hospitality. This experience can be summarized in a quote by Donna saying that, "like getting there and meeting our host family, they were so warm and very welcoming, so, that kind of put a lot of my nerve at ease, and they really made us comfortable."

The feeling was not the same for Joe who said, "I also realized my [host] family didn't seem very interested in the relationship with me." He further elaborated on his experience, saying that, "maybe they were just more interested in the money that I was paying for rent there because they weren't very engaged or very interested in having a relationship with me." Although Joe indicated that the host culture was restrictive in the ways in which one can express emotion, he still said that he felt isolated in his host home. Similarly, Jane talked about the relationship building and the financial benefits. She spoke of what she felt during her trip, stating

that, “you know, just having to increase their monetary income, like financial income is important, but that is not like the point, it just makes you feel like you are the bigger [dominant] person.”

One of the faculty members interviewed shared some insight into this situation. Dr. Mary described the nature of relationships that develop between the community and the participants. She explained that:

Yes, they are forming these genuine relationships while they are there, but we have to look at it in terms of, what do we hold here? The community benefits tremendously financially from bringing students in and having that part of the discussion, like thinking about the economy of the community..., it’s important. The students don’t love that part of the reciprocity, but it’s an important reality for them. (Dr. Mary’s interview, 2017)

For Rebecca, she felt that the interactions that her GSL group experienced in the host community were restrictive. She recounts:

I mean in general ...I guess I should say, the people who were more prominent from the community, the adults who were more prominent, people who were having the homestay, uh, people who were kind of, involved in the tourist industry in that community were the ones that you saw most often. One of the things we found in this community was that we weren’t actually experiencing the totality of the community because, in the center where we were about three hundred people were living there, and at the outskirts of that, there were about another three hundred people. We never interacted with them at all, so the people that we saw and stuff like that were just the people who were actually in the very local vicinity, not these outskirts people. (Rebecca’s interview, 2017)

Generally, the data suggested that the host community and the participants both had an important part in the development of the relationship building that occurred during the service engagement. Although participants affirmed that the interaction with members of the host community was an essential aspect of the cross cultural immersion process, the findings showed that the community interactions were orchestrated and restricted to certain sections of people in the host community. Ironically, the participants alluded that this type of selective interaction limited their learning process because it created a gap in the knowledge received and the exposure to the reality of the everyday lives of people in this community.

Seeing the Privilege

Some of the participants discussed the feelings they experienced during the immersion trips when they saw firsthand the power and status attributed to their nationality and race. Jane talked about a situation where she felt that the people in the host community saw and treated the GSL group as western gods. She felt the power of her race whenever she encountered comments such as “mzungu, mzungu, (white person) give me dollar, mzungu, mzungu, marry me.” from members of host community as they go about their daily business on the street. Jane experienced a feeling of surprised at the way she was perceived by the people, stating that “I wasn’t just prepared for this idea of Americans on a pedestal, you know, and their idea of wealth, the idea of beauty, they looked at me, like, as if I was this western god in this community.” Doris, another GSL participant, shared similar experience:

I think being an American is a very strange thing to be. We were the visual minority in the country, but I think when you look at how minority and dominant groups work, it is not about the number. It is about power, so honestly, we were still the dominant group. So, I really felt that I learned more about privilege in my trip ..., than..., I mean, it felt

strange to me, it was a very strange feeling to sit with knowing that I will always have privilege in that situation because of my whiteness. (Doris's interview, 2017)

One other participant talked about experiencing stereotypes in the host community and the feelings and reactions he had to the situation. John said that "I was stereotyped all the time, if it happens in the context of the American experience, it would be seen differently, but in a place like Guatemala, those sociological rules, like use of language... doesn't apply." He noticed that this is the case even with highly educated people, who called "Asians chino." John rationalized this as something that is "built into the culture." He explained that, "although it is still stereotyping, it was never insulting or discriminating; but it was more of a cultural and language issue." Donna described a similar incident that occurred during her GSL trip. Narrating the incident, Donna said:

Some of our hosts had referred to other students as Anglos, and you know, they call like outsiders, white people, like Anglo-Saxons, that is just how it has always been. So they didn't mean it as an insult. But, the students were taking it as if they were stereotyped, that they were other. I was frustrated, because I was like, come on; this is the everyday reality of people of color and other minorities. (Donna's interview, 2017)

In situations where they had to deal with issues of privilege, the data seems to suggest a contrast in the way each of these participants reacted. Interestingly, it seems that those participants who had minority ethnic backgrounds interpreted the situation differently and found it easier to handle the shock of seeing the privilege that comes with their nationality. For those participants who identified as members of the dominant group, the data suggest that they found the experience surprising, distressing, and uncomfortable. They struggled to understand the

perceived privilege and power that were ascribed to them because of their racial and national identity.

Unlearning the Learned

Interestingly, during their GSL experiences participants began to realize that there was a limitation in the scope education they received from the school system before embarking on this trip. Many of the SAP and GSL participants talked about the idea that the immersion experience brought to their attention the gap in how they learned about history and other culture. Samantha illustrated this by saying that before studying aboard, she thought there was only one way of doing things. She explained that, “we were very much taught that the American way is the way, I went to the Netherlands, and I saw a completely different way of life, a completely different way of social policy and government interacting with their people.” Samantha described how this new awareness changed her understanding and viewpoint, she realized that “not only are we [American] backward in a lot of ways, but we are not even given the opportunity to see how other societies and other countries work with the type of information we are given.” Donna started questioning the way that she learned history. She said that the trip was “eye-opening in terms of how we learn history and how history has been taught to us, and from whose perspective it is coming.”

Similarly, during the GSL trip, John began to feel that his undergraduate education was restrictive. He expressed the point that, “I never really realized how polarized the American viewpoint is, like in America, it is so black and white...” He felt that the educational system portrayed “American issues as if they are worldwide issues...and only talk about global issues only if it applies to their issues.” John feels that although there is this gap in the system, he

believed that it was not intentional. The general ideas discussed by these participants is summed up in this quote:

I grew up around a lot of racism and a lot of prejudice, then I went on this trip, and I saw how backward a lot of the things we do in America could be. You know that is what travel and going out of your comfort zone does. You can look at things from an outsider's perspective, and you kind of see yourself and the bubble you grew up in from a different lens.... I think that is one of the biggest things about the global service learning program: it teaches you and pounds it into your head that it doesn't matter how much you think you know, you are going to go somewhere that will make you feel like you don't know anything. (Jane's interview, 2017)

For most of the GSL participants, they shared that they were able achieve this type of understanding through the traditional education process because the GSL program curriculum (pre-departure course, community engagement, and on-site reflective activities) allowed one to learn about their host through a different lens. Equally, Slimbach (2017) suggests that because the GSL program design gives the student the chance for self-directed learning (reflective process), the learning process leads to discovery of new information. In the next section, I will discuss the category and themes that developed from the data that relate specifically to participants who took part in a cultural immersion experience through the engagement in a SAP.

The Takeaways From Study Abroad

The participants who took part in study abroad programs shared stories that had some common threads that were unique to that experience forming two themes—local contact and friendship—clustered under this category.

Limited Local Contact

Participants discussed the interaction they had at the program location during their study abroad program. Some participants spoke about their program and the limited opportunity it provided for them to interact with the local people at the program site. The conversations shared by the study abroad participants suggest that they were living in the program location, but they did not actively engage with the local people and their cultures. Ella described the situation, saying that, “we had some local students, but we did not have any in our class, and since we like stayed in a hotel with just the American students, it was hard to make that connection... with the people from Barcelona.” Lilly talked about the local interaction in her conversation, “we were all from the same school...we stayed together, and studied together all the time. Although there were Indian students in the program, because we were in a group, our interaction with the local students was... limited.” For Katelyn, it was easier for her to interact with her group. She said that “I mainly stuck with the group because we were all doing the same thing. We all had the same schedule, and it was hard for me to say no to them and went with the local students.”

Other participants shared similar stories. Brianna talked about the challenge her group faced in this area, “so, how our program was structured was that our courses weren’t even on the university campus; it was like in a local business center with classrooms, so all of our courses were with other participants.” She further elaborated on the impact this program design had on her cultural experience: “I don’t think I got the full experience of the culture. I think I got a feel of the city, but as far as in the moment cultural relationships, I don’t think I really got to make that connection.” For Samantha, she felt that she did not get to make contact with the locals, “We lived in like a flat and our flat was in town, and not on the campus. So, I didn’t really get to be friends with anybody from the Netherlands.”

Friendship

Many of the participants talked about the friendships that they made during the study abroad trip and the impact those friendships had on their learning process. Debra's comment exemplifies this view, "definitely the experience goes with appreciating the friends you made, and how they were so nice and very accommodating. I wonder how I could have made it through without their support." Collin talked about his experience in the program and the friends he made by stating that, "I had some really great experiences, and I made friends. And some of my best friends from Japan, I still keep in contact with today." Ella had a similar experience that she shared: "I made some good friends over there, during the first few weeks everyone is nervous. You tend to look to one another for support and out of that experience came some friendships that became a part of my life." Other participants described the lesson about friendship that they learned from this experience. Samantha shared that, "it doesn't matter the language barrier, it doesn't matter what that is, and I think that was one of the biggest things, like wow! She explained that, "these people grew up in a completely different area, and atmosphere in a different country, language, everything, and I can still be like best friends with them. So that was huge." For Samantha, the experience was a revelation of what friendship means, "It kind of opened my eyes to being nice to people, the way I see human interaction and friendship." The common theme in all of the conversations is that the study abroad cultural immersion experiences created an opportunity for the participants to learn about multicultural friendship at the individual level, while interacting with SAP participants and members of the host university.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented the findings of the data analysis conducted. In the subsequent chapter, I discuss how these findings relate to the current literature on Global Service Learning

and Study Abroad cultural immersion. I also analyzed the findings using the theoretical framework provided by Mezirow's (2000) and Kiely's (2005) transformation learning models (the two theories that served as the guide for formulating the research question for this study). Additionally, I provided my analysis and interpretation of the meanings of these findings.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop global awareness, cultural tolerance, social justice consciousness, and how these transformational outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. Through the data analysis process, seven categories developed. In this chapter, I analyze and discuss the study findings in light of the two central research questions studied.

- How does the structure (curriculum, learning outcomes, location, housing, and length/extent of cultural immersion) of the cultural immersion program influence the participants' transformational outcomes?
- How do students' expectations about a cultural immersion program shape the way transformational outcomes impact their behaviors and attitudes towards others who are physically and culturally different from them?

Additionally, I analyze the findings of this study using the theoretical framework of Mezirow's (2000) Transformational Learning Model and Kiely's (2005) Transformational Service Learning Process Model. I also connect the findings from this study to the literature I reviewed in chapter two. Additionally, I connect the findings to other studies in SAP and GSL in order to situate my findings in current conversation in the field. In the concluding section of this chapter, I discuss the relevant aspect of this research and how the study findings are useful to the planning of cultural immersion programs.

Program Structure and Transformational Outcomes

In answering the first research questions, I discuss the themes clustered under the following categories: experiencing cultural immersion, program structure, and design, and learning is multidimensional. Each of these themes shared insight into the meanings participants attributed to their cultural immersion experience and the influence that, this had on the transformational outcomes gained. In this section, I summarize the findings and showed how they related to the first central question in this study. In chapter four, I gave a detailed explanation of the findings under each of these categories.

Participants' Views of Experiencing Cultural Immersion

In analyzing the extents to which the program structures influenced the outcome, the data suggested that participants developed different strategies to manage the anxieties associated with leaving their comfort zones and entering situations that were unfamiliar. The themes, Preparation, Never Enough, and Discomfort and then Comfort, describe and provide insight to the various means used by these participants to transform excitements, challenges and changes experienced during the cultural immersion into useful outcomes. The study findings suggest that the pre-departure preparation plays an important role in the learning process that occurs during the cultural immersion.

Although participants indicated that one could never be prepared enough for these types of cultural encounters, they noted that the pre-departure preparation (the information and readings included in the program curriculum and other personal research conducted about the host location) was essential and critical to their learning process on site. In this study, many SAP and GSL participants insinuated that the pre-departure preparation was helpful in determining how they handled the situations that occurred during the cultural immersion process, and, in turn,

how they converted those uncomfortable incidences into learning experiences. In some instances, participants reported that they had to manage uncomfortable situations by stepping back to focus on the larger purpose of the trip rather than the immediate discomfort. This study finding is consistent with Slimbach's (2016) suggestions that adequate preparation before cultural immersion is needed before the trip to help the students set clear goals and plans. The goals and plans made prior to the trip enabled the participants to adequately prepare themselves for uncomfortable situations, which in turn, made for quality learning moments.

The Program Structure and Design

Similarly, the findings seem to suggest that the program, location, housing, learning outcomes, and student engagement to a large extent influenced the intensity of the cultural experiences and outcomes that the participants achieved. Some of the students reported that the essential aspect of the cultural immersion experiences was the opportunity to live with the host family and experience their everyday life. Others shared that just staying with fellow participants who were going through the same situation made the trip a learning process. Some participants even suggested that their learning experience would not have occurred if they had not lived within their host community. Additionally, students who participated in the GSL program indicated that the service component of the program was a huge element that allowed them to connect directly with people from the host community. In turn, many students reported that those connections and the interactions that ensued served as a means to help them see and realize how people are similar in the things they need and want even in different cultures.

Learning is Multidimensional

As a result of the learning that occurred during the program preparation and the cultural immersion process, many of the participants indicated that they achieved outcomes such as self-

awareness, appreciating culture, and recognizing our humanity. The study findings suggested that, during the cultural immersion process, once the participants began to look past the negative feelings of their discomfort, they could reach the point where they could reassess how they viewed their particular situation. For the participants, the process led to the unlearning of old assumptions, and in turn, resulted in an openness and willingness to engage in the learning process. This finding is consistent with the prior research that found that the transformational learning process occurred in stages. (Kiely, 2004; Merizow, 2000). The learning process is evident from the stories recounted in chapter four by the participants who spoke about their personal experiences.

The students' testimonies insinuated that the learning that occurred during the immersion process was multidimensional and applicable in multi-situations. The participants indicated that the outcomes achieved from the immersion process are relevant in navigating multicultural situations. The findings from this study suggest that each element of the program structure (curriculum, program location, housing, and length and intensity of immersion) directly impacted the learning process of participants in this study and the outcomes that they reportedly achieved. For instance, participants testified that the learning process was different for those who took part in SAP/GSL programs that were located in developing countries. Additionally, because of the variation in the GSL and SAP program curriculum, location, and intensity of immersion, even where participants were exposed to similar situations, the experience resulted in different learning processes and outcomes for the GSL and SAP participants.

Students' Expectations About Cultural Immersion and Transformational Outcomes

In answering the second research question (how do students' expectations about a cultural immersion program shape the way transformational outcomes impact their attitude and

behavior towards others who are physically and culturally different from them?), I discuss how the relationship observed between the three themes clustered under this category (participant worldview, program expectation, and the impact of the experience coming back home) provides insight to answer the research question. Surprisingly, the study findings show that there is a connection between the participant's worldview and the reason for choosing to participate in SAP or GSL program. Additionally, the study findings indicated that the extent to which participants transform the outcomes achieved from the immersion experience into behavioral change is influenced by the student's expectation of the program and their decision to participate in the specific program.

Patton (2002) explained that although people perceive and interpret experiences differently, certain patterns that connect these experiences can exist in qualitative data. In my study, the data suggest that participants self-selected into SAP or GSL program based on their worldviews (beliefs, principles, and values), which in turn influenced their reasons for participating in cultural immersion experiences and their program expectations. For instance, the participants who said that they view the world from a point of scarcity, power, struggle, and injustice showed interest in and participated in the GSL program. This was because of the opportunity that the GSL program offered to them to engage in community service. Similarly, those participants who view the world as a global village believed that the SAP offered them the opportunity to experience life in other parts of the world. Figure 1 shows the pattern of relationship that exists between the participants' worldview, reasons for participating, program expectations, and outcomes.



Figure 1. The connections between the participants’ worldviews (beliefs, principles, and values), the reasons for participating, expectations program, and outcomes.

The study findings suggest that on reentry, SAP and GSL participants who had set goals that are aligned with their worldview, reason for participating, and program expectations, before their cultural immersion trip found it easier to convert the learning experience and outcome into actions that support multicultural interactions. Equally, the data indicated that SAP and GSL participants who did not set clear goals before and during the immersion trip found it difficult to maintain the transformational learning process on reentry into their community. Essentially, the finding implies that beyond the need for program facilitators to create programs that intentionally support transformational learning process (the external factor) the participants equally share a critical role in the transformational process (individual factor). This finding is consistent with Slimbach’s (2017) perspective of the deep global learning model. In that perspective, Slimbach argues that in order for global service learning to result in transformational experience the students need to engage in the process.

Transformational Learning

Throughout this study, Mezirow's transformational learning model and Kiely's transformational service learning process model provides the frameworks used to develop the research questions, as well as the lens to analyze the data. In this section, I review the central assumptions of these theories with the sole aim of using these theories to analyze the research findings.

Mezirow's Transformational Learning Model

The main tenet of this theory is that whenever a person experiences an event, s/he tends to develop knowledge from the interpretations and reinterpretations of the meaning given to the situation (Mezirow, 1991). Hence, Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning model theory assumes that humans function from a set of "habitual expectations" (p.169) which he called "perspectives" (p.169). Whenever people are in contact with others, the habitual expectations serve as the filter that guides their view of self and other. Mezirow argues that it is through the process of socialization that one's perspectives get developed, and in turn, perspectives shape a person's beliefs, values, ideas, and worldview. In a study, he found that whenever people experience situations that cause "disorientating situations," they are forced to reflect on their held beliefs and values. The reflection tends to trigger a process that leads to the reevaluation of old perspectives. Essentially, this process of perspectives transformation allows one to become aware of how and why long-held assumptions can constrain the learning of new ideas (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow, 2000).

Some of the themes that made up the categories in my study align with the assumptions made in the Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning model theory. Particularly, the themes that align with Mezirow's theory include recognizing our humanity, appreciating culture, and

unlearning the learned. The data suggest that because these participants step out of the familiar into the unfamiliar territories, they were challenged in ways that allowed the process of reevaluation of old perspectives to occur. Many of the participants shared stories about uncomfortable situations during the cultural immersion trip that forced them to reflect and reevaluate their position. Through this process, they developed new values that currently guide their thinking, attitude, and behavior.

In some other aspects, the findings from my study vary from the assumptions of Mezirow's transformational learning model. Mezirow (2000) claims that when a person experiences a dramatic situation (in the content of this study, students reported that during the cultural immersion process they encountered situations that caused discomfort), they became open to trying new roles, building competence, and self-confidence, when they reintegrated into their community. Some participants reported that initially, on return to their community, they desperately wanted to make changes to their lifestyle to fit their new way of thinking. However, over time, these participants insinuated that they found it difficult to maintain this desire because of the homogenous nature of the community in which they lived. In that situation, having a mindset that was different from the rest of their community caused a sense of separation. In other words, to believe in values that are consistent with global citizenship and social justice, these participants might have to deviate from their societal norms. Asserting this meaning one participant said, "with time you just become aware that your culture is a strong force, and it's ingrained in us." Ethnic minority participants, particularly those who tended to engage in multicultural interaction, were more capable of making changes and to following up on them because they were used to having diversity of opinions and ideas.

Kiely's Transformational Service Learning Process Model

Unlike Mezirow's (2000) transformational learning model that looks at general situations, the tenets of the Kiely's (2005) transformational service learning process shares insight into how learning occurs during cultural immersion processes. Kiely proposed that the learning process during a cultural immersion/ service learning experience happens in five dimensions. These include "contextual border crossing", "dissonance", "personalizing", "processing", and "connecting" (p 8). He explained that contextual border crossing describes how personal, structural, historical, and programmatic elements of service learning experiences influence the learning process in a way that can promote or deter transformational learning outcomes (Kiely, 2004). Furthermore, dissonance is the difference between the previous frames of reference and the new experiences (Kiely 2005). Personalizing is how individuals respond and learn from dissonance. The reflective learning process, social, dialogic learning process, and connecting all represent the point where an individual begins to adequately understand and empathize with the learning experience (Kiely, 2005).

Participants recounted experiences that shared similar patterns with the five dimensions (contextual border, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting) mentioned by Kiely (2004) in his description of the process of transformational learning during service learning trips. The contextual border crossing describes the impact of the personal, structural, historical, and programmatic elements of the transformational learning process during cultural immersion experiences. The personal elements include personality, beliefs, values system, prior knowledge, expectations, and motivation on the transformational learning process before, during, and after service learning experiences (Kiely, 2005). Evidently, in this study, the data suggest a connection between the participant's worldview, the reason for participating, the program selected, program

expectations, and the learning process and the outcome achieved before, during, and after the cultural immersion experiences.

Regarding the structural element which include race, class, gender, religion, and nationality, the findings from this study suggest that individuals from minority backgrounds were more understanding of the cultural context in situations in host communities engaging in name calling, such as when John described chino for Asians, as well as Anglo-Saxon and Mzungu for Caucasians. Similarly, the GSL participants indicated that they became aware of the power and privilege that was associated with their race and nationality and how this position shaped their relationship with the host community. Many of the participants reported that this experience was strange and shocking, and it caused a realization that forced most of the participants to reassess their positions in the host community. Equally, participants talked about their experiences that described the other four dimensions of transformational learning: dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting. In the next section, I summarize the existing literature presented in chapter two on cultural immersion, and how these related to Study Abroad and Global Service Learning. Then, I discuss the relationship between the study findings and the literature.

Discussion

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of the data resulted in the development of seven categories. Five of these categories relates to themes and findings that show the similarity between the SAP and GSL cultural immersion programs (participant worldview and program expectation, experiencing cultural immersion, the program structure and design, learning is multidimensional, the Impact of the experience coming back home). Then, the other two categories specifically highlight differences between GSL (lessons from global service learning) and SAP (the takeaways from study abroad). First, I discuss the themes that are general to SAP

and GSL program participation, and then I examine those themes that are specific SAP and GSL programs.

General Themes That Apply to SAP and GSL Programs

Although technically the SAP and GSL programs are tailored toward different objectives, there are areas where these programs share some similarities. The literature shows that, generally, the SAP and GSL programs use the cultural immersion process to expose the participants to environments and situations that can cause disorientating dilemmas (in this instance, discomfort and then comfort). The disorientating dilemma then creates opportunities that allow participants to become reflective and reexamine long held perspectives (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 2000). Based on the analysis of the data collected from the SAP and GSL programs, I analyze the following themes: self-awareness, and, appreciating culture.

Self-Awareness

Many of the conversations that the participants shared about their activities during and after the cultural immersion experiences suggest that these encounters enhanced the awareness of self and other. The findings are consistent with those of several other studies in the literature that examined other aspects of SAP and GSL programs (Blake-Campbell, 2014; Clark et al., 2009; Graham & Crawford, 2012; Kiely, 2005). In each of these studies, it was SAP and GSL participants who acknowledged and reported that they gained self-awareness from the immersion process. Importantly, the study data indicate that it was through the process of going through the cycle of discomfort and then comfort that helped the participants to discover qualities about self and other. Other studies have previously alluded to this observation, arguing that the cultural interaction alone without embedding the participants in unfamiliar situations in the host community will not lead to the desired outcomes (MacNab et al., 2012; Pederson, 2010;

Rohmann et al., 2014). This finding gives new insight into the way the immersion process influences the learning experience and in turn, results in transformational outcomes.

Appreciating Culture

One sentence that resonated throughout the conversations with the participants who took part in either the SAP or GSL is that “the experience gave me a new appreciation for other people’s culture.” Many of the previous studies described this concept as cultural awareness (the ability to recognize the existence of other cultures and be aware of the differences that exist between cultures) (Norton et al., 2014; Pederson, 2010). Some called it cultural sensitivity (the ability to appreciate and respect other cultures) (Lumkes et al., 2012). Others used the term intercultural competence (someone’s ability to recognize, value, and respect other cultures) (Deardorff, 2006; Stebleton et al., 2013). Previous studies suggested that participants reported that they experienced different stages of cultural awareness during their programs. However, after the immersion experiences, there was no clear evidence to show the extent to which they translated the cultural awareness outcome into behavioral changes that led to open-mindedness when relating with people from other cultures (Kiely, 2005; Lumkes et al., 2012;). The findings from my study suggest that the cultural immersion experience process allowed the participants to rethink culture and how it defines people. The new awareness caused them to be more open to interacting with others who are culturally different. Many of the participants reported that after the cultural immersion experience, they gained levels of confidence that enabled them to engage in multicultural interactions.

Themes That Are Specific to SAP and GSL Programs

Although some similarities exist between the SAP and GSL programs and their outcomes, there are also differences that set these programs apart. The GSL program focuses on reciprocal relationships with community as a main outcome (Kiely, 2004; Slimbach, 2017).

Additionally, GSL programs involve total immersion in the culture and the environment in which the learning is occurring. In most cases, the participants live among the host community and engage in community service work. In contrast, the SAP uses content learning to teach participants about the host culture in settings that may or may not include direct contact with members of the host community (Hanouille et al., 2001; Slimbach, 2017). The findings from this study highlight these difference between the programs.

The analysis of the participants' experiences who took part in the GSL programs suggests that the most useful element of their cultural immersion process was the opportunity they had in the program to live with the host community. Participants reported that this encounter allowed them to see and feel, first hand, how the issues of power, privilege, and injustice impact some of these communities. According to the participants, this experience forced them to reflect on and question some of their prior knowledge of social issues. Similarly, the data analysis of the interviews of participants who took part in the SAP shows that the programs were directed heavily towards academic activities. Many participants talked about having little or no interaction with the local community. Participants reported that most of the interactions they had were with other SAP participants who were part of the program.

The impact of this difference in program structure of the SAP and GSL programs is evident in how these participants viewed the outcomes gained during the experiences. A common thread noticed among the SAP and GSL participants is that when they discussed the general outcomes such as self-awareness and seeing our humanity, it was evident that GSL participants understood this concept from the point of power and privilege in their host community, while the SAP participants understand the idea through the friendships they developed with the other students in their program. Evidently, this insight is significant because

it highlights how the difference in the structure and design of each of these programs influence the type of learning achieved by the participants.

Summary of the Chapter

In this chapter, I presented a summary of the study findings and then discussed how these findings related to the current literature on Global Service Learning and Study Abroad cultural immersion experiences. Additionally, I used the two theoretical frameworks that guided the formation of the research questions (Mezirow's transformational learning model and Kiely's service learning transformational models) to analyze the study findings. Then, I discussed my analysis of the meanings of the findings. In the next chapter, I discussed the policy recommendations based on the study findings, questions for further research, the study limitations, and the conclusions.

CHAPTER 6

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I present a recap of the purpose of this study, and I summarize the findings. I then discuss the policy recommendations based on the study findings and address questions for further research. Finally, I discuss the study limitations and conclude with a summary of the study.

A Recap of the Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to understand how the cultural immersion program structure impacts the learning processes in which students develop transformational outcomes (e.g., global awareness, cultural tolerance, and social justice consciousness) and how these transformational outcomes influence students' attitudes and behaviors towards others who are physically and culturally different from them. To accomplish the purpose of this study, I examined the following questions:

- How does the structure (curriculum, learning outcomes, location, housing, and length/extent of cultural immersion) of cultural immersion program influence the participants' transformational outcomes?
- How do students' expectations about a cultural immersion program shape the way transformational outcomes impact their behaviors and attitudes towards others who are physically and culturally different from them?

Findings

The initial coding of the data generated seven categories. Five of these categories relate to themes and findings that show the similarity between the SAP and GSL cultural immersion program (participant worldview and program expectation, experiencing cultural immersion, program structure, and design, learning is multidimensional; the impact of the experience coming

back home). The other two categories include themes that are specific to global service learning programs (lessons from global service learning) and to study abroad programs (takeaways from study abroad) and that illustrates the differences between the program. Based on the analysis of these findings, in the next section of this chapter, I discuss five specific recommendations that might support participants' abilities to develop the transformational outcomes in the cultural immersion process.

Recommendations

During the interviews for this study, participants spoke of aspects of the program that were beneficial to their learning processes and other areas that could be made more effective and useful to their cultural experiences. Based on the participants' suggestions and my analysis of the themes, I briefly discuss five specific recommendations for cultural immersion programs that will be useful to future program participants, program coordinators, and facilitators. These five areas include the older participant experience, downtime, support group, language, and SAP host community.

The Older Participant Experience

Several of the older participants talked about their experiences and the struggles they had during the program. The struggle was due to the fact that they were unprepared for the transition of living close to other participants who were younger than them. Repeatedly, some of the older participants mentioned that the cultural immersion process required them to give up much of their personal independence, and that made the experience stressful. Based on this finding, it might be helpful to talk with the older participant during the pre-departure meeting about any concerns about sharing space with others to get them prepared for the experience at the host location.

Down Time

Another difficulty that participants repeatedly spoke about was the issue of not having private time between the program activities. Many of the participants acknowledge that because of the short amount of time they had to spend in the program location, the events had to be structured. They noted that, outside of the time allocated for the group reflections, it was essential to have some down time for themselves where they could be alone to process and reflect on the experience and what it meant for them. Some of the participants believe that having such a personal exchange during the trip would lead to a more robust reflection process during and after the trip.

Support Group

A common phrase that appeared in the data was “nobody warned me about the reverse culture shock.” Participants talked about the intensity of the culture shock on reentry into their local communities. Some participants suggest that the SAP and GSL programs should educate the students about this reality and provide some reentry support and coursework to help students manage the change process they may undergo on their return. Jane, one of the participants indicated that being part of a community where one can speak about one’s experience to people who are willing to listen and understand, “really does a lot more than I ever thought it would do for your psyche.” Pisco (2015) believes that although the impact of post-trip support has not gained much attention in the literature, the post trip support is needed to help students transform their cultural immersion learning experience to other areas of their lives when they get back home.

Language

Some of the GSL participants expressed concerns about how the language used to describe their host community during their pre-departure meetings impacted their perception of the environment and expectations. For these participants, they stated that, upon arrival at the location, the description of the location was not consistent with the reality. Recognizing the power of language and how it can perpetuate stereotypes and privilege, program organizers have to be cognizant of use of language when preparing materials and other messages to share with the students during pre-departure sessions. Being aware of the influence of language-use and its power is important in order to avoid situations that are counterproductive to the GSL goals.

SAP Host Community

Many of the SAP participants shared how the design of their program isolated them from having contact and interaction with the local community. Several of these participants believe that, if they could have had the opportunity to mingle with people from the host community, the process would have enriched their cultural experiences during the SAP trip. John, one of the participants said that, “I felt like I was on vacation. It did not feel like a cultural, educational trip.” It will be helpful for SAP planners and coordinators to consider including activities that will create opportunities for SAP participants to interact with their host communities to address the issue.

Areas of Considerations for Future Research

During the process of conducting the interviews for this study, some of the participants raise some rhetorical questions about their observations during and after their immersion trips that were beyond the scope this study but are important to the field. In the following section, I highlight these questions that can be considered in future research.

Maintaining the Transformation

The findings from this study as well as other studies from the literature suggest that participants who engaged in cultural immersion trips tended to experience discomfort at some point of the process when faced with unfamiliar events (Kiely, 2004). One study suggests that ultimately, this discomfort leads the individual to take actions that support their learning process (Kiely, 2005). For instance, when the participants become uncomfortable during the trip, the discomfort forced them to reevaluate the even happening and thus adjust their viewpoint. Unlike previous studies, this research focused on SAP and GSL participants who have completed their programs and reentered their community for at least a period of one or more years. Study findings suggest that participants experienced self-transformational outcomes, during, and after the trip. Upon their return to their community after a period of time, most of the participants realized that they could not sustain the attitudes and behaviors learned during their trip in their societies (reversed reaction). The study findings are consistent with the findings from Kiely's (2000) longitudinal case study that examined the experience of GSL participants on their return from a program in Nicaragua.

The question that remains unanswered is why these participants are unable to sustain behavioral change? Some of the participants think that the reversed reaction is a response to cultural forces in their environment. On the contrary, Dr. Daniel, one of the faculty members interviewed, said that this reaction is evidence of a deeper structural problem. To him, this stems from the participants' desire to stay in their comfort zone rather than immersing themselves in any form of disturbing realities. Hence, the transformation witnessed during those types of shallow immersions are superficial and will eventually fade away. In order to further understand why the participants experience the reversed reaction, future research is needed in this area.

Our Neighbors

One of the findings from this study suggests that beyond the interaction that occurs during the cultural immersion trips, a transformational learning process is activated when one experiences an uncomfortable situation. Based on this information, while interviewing Dr. Daniel, he asked the question “why do you need to travel long distances abroad when you can meet the others right in your backyard?” He questioned further, “as a matter of fact, a lot of students travel abroad to meet people they avoid at home.” He elaborates further, “what I mean is that students will travel for a study abroad program to Accra, Ghana to meet Africans but avoid the African Americans two miles away at home. What do you think is responsible for this attitude?” The question of why and what is preventing people from using the multicultural resources that are readily available on most college campuses is one that is of importance in the cultural immersion discourse. Because this question is beyond the scope of this study, I hope that, in the future, researchers will examine this question and provide insight into this phenomenon. In the next section of this chapter, I discuss the limitations of my study.

Study Limitations

As previously stated, this study seeks to understand the impact of program structure on participants’ learning processes during and after the immersion trip. Despite this intent, there are certain aspects of the research design that posed limitations to the research outcomes.

The three sources of limitations in this study were the method of sampling, the sample size, and the variations in the different types of programs participants attended. Because the snowball sampling approach involves using individual participants to identify new participants, it creates the danger of selecting a homogenous group that might not be an accurate representation of the study population. Some of the participants that I contacted declined the request to

participate in the study. I noticed that those who responded to the invitation were excited about the opportunity to share their story, and they did it willingly. To reduce the effect of this limitation on the findings of this study, I used multiple data sources to triangulate the data. Particularly, I used the themes generated from the data collected from faculty members to compare findings from the other interviews coded and the documents analyzed.

Another limitation of this study is the size [30] of the participants interviewed. Although qualitative research typically focuses on using smaller populations for the in-depth study of concepts, the use of a small population sometimes raises the question of generalizability and transferability of the qualitative research findings. To minimize the effect of this limitation, I created analytical memos and used member checking. I used this process to ensure that the data analysis process was reflective and that the themes developed directly from the participants' perspectives (Saldana, 2011; Saldana, 2013). Another limitation in this study is how the different types of SAP and GSL programs that the participants attended varied in structure and design. To reduce this effect, I ensured that I only collected data from students who participated in a short-term (two to sixteen weeks), credit-based, curriculum faculty-led SAP and faculty-led GSL programs.

Conclusion

In this study, the participants shared in-depth information about their experiences during their cultural immersion trips. The analysis of the data suggests that in many cases, participants who engage in cultural immersion processes such as Study Abroad and Global Service learning programs encounter uncomfortable situations. The experience led to a process of self-reflection and transformational outcomes that resulted in the alteration of attitudes and behaviors, during and after the program. Additionally, the findings suggest that different elements such as the

program structure, design, locations, and intensity of immersion have all worked together to create the transformational learning process. Furthermore, the findings from this study indicate that on reentering their local communities, over time, some of the participants struggled to keep up with their new behaviors, and in some instances, the participants eventually reverted to their old behaviors.

For others, the cultural immersion experience signified the start of a transformational journey. One of the faculty member interviewed for this study, Dr. Mary, explains that transformational learning during cultural immersion experience is not a unilateral process and is different for each person, in other words, on the “personal pathway that each student has to take, they will end up in different places.” Similarly, Dr. Helen describes the process as one that involves an individual decision, “I’m giving them some new tools and information. But it is still that they are autonomous human beings, and it is their place to decide the meaning it has for them and what they want to do with it.” In answering the central research question, my study findings clearly show the importance of the external factors (program structure) and the individual factors (participants’ expectations and set goal) in defining the extent to which the participants transform the learning process and the outcomes into actions that can have a lasting effect on behaviors and attitudes after the immersion experience.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

This is an invitation for you to participate in this qualitative study. This information is provided to help make an informed decision whether you will like to participate in this study or not. You were selected to be a part of this study because you have participated in a cultural immersion experience through the Study Abroad Program or Global Service learning Program. The purpose of this study is to understand how the cultural immersion program structure influences the learning processes in which students translate cultural immersion experiences into transformational outcomes.

The insight from this study will shed light on how students make sense of cultural immersion experience and translate these experiences into transformational outcomes that influence their everyday lives. Your decision to participate in this study is strictly voluntary, and you will not receive any financial compensation participating in this study. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be asked to participate in an approximately 1 to 2-hour in-depth interview sessions to share answers to questions that relate to your cultural immersion experience. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw your participation at any time by simply informing the researcher. Your withdrawal will not cause any form of loss to you or the research. Upon request to withdraw, the researcher will destroy all information about you. If you choose to participate in this study, all information will be kept confidential. The information obtained in this study is subject to publication in scientific journals or presentations at scientific meetings, but your identity will remain confidential. If you are willing to participate in this study, please sign the statement below and return this form in the attached self-address stamp envelope included with this form.

Researcher: Oghenebruphiyo Gloria Onosu, Doctoral Student, Department of Sociology, 102 McElhaney Hall, Indiana University, Indiana PA 15701.
Dissertation Chair: Melanie Hildebrandt, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology 112C McElhaney Hall, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana PA 15705

This project has been approved by Indiana University of Pennsylvania Institutional Review Board for the protection of Human Subject (Phone: 724-357-7730).

I have read and understood the information on the form, and I consent to volunteer to be a subject in this study. I understand that my responses are completely confidential and that I have the right to withdraw at any time. I have received an unsigned copy of this Informed Consent Form to keep in my possession.

Name

Signature

Date

Phone where you can be reached: _____ Best day/time to reach you: _____

I certify that I have explained to the above individual nature and purpose, the potential and benefit and possible risks associated with participating in this research study, have answered any questions that have raised, and have verified the above signature.

Name

Signature

Date

Appendix B

Interview Guide for Student

Demographic/Background Questions

What is your age?

What is your sex?

What is your academic major and year of study?

Tell me about where you are from.

Please tell me about any previous international experience or cultural immersion experience you have had before participating in SAP/GSL program.

What do you think are the most influential ideas that have shaped your understanding of the world up to the time you participated in SAP/GSL program?

Question about Participant expectations and Preparation

Before this trip, what were the principles that guided your behavior and your interactions with others?

So tell me, what inspired/attracted you to participate in SAP/GSL program?

What were you expecting from this trip? Did your expectation influence the considerations you made in selecting this program?

I would like to hear about the preparation process you had in the program before departing for your trip.

Do you think the preparation you received prepared you for the things you experienced during the program? If so, how did this affect your learning?

Questions about the SAP/GSL Experience

Please tell me about the experience of living in an environment that was culturally different from what you were accustomed.

What did you appreciate most about this experience and what was it that you did not appreciate the experience?

Where there times during this trip when you experience actions that surprised/ shocked you?

Tell me about your reaction to these situations.

What did you learn about yourself from experience?

So tell me, did the cultural immersion experience alter your understanding of the world in any way? How please explain? Is there anything else about your cultural experiences that you would like to tell me about?

Questions about Using Outcomes

Reflecting on your experience, would you say that you gained a deeper understanding of the people from other culture because of this exposure? If yes or no, please explain.

What do you think was the most important aspect of the program that helped you come to this understanding? If the answer is nothing, probing question (What do you think would have made this experience more useful to your understanding of the people?).

Tell me, in what ways have you found is knowledge useful in interacting and relating to others who are culturally and physically different from you?

Is there anything else about how your cultural experiences have influenced your thinking that you would like to talk about? Thank you for your time.

Appendix C

Short Student Demographic Survey Questionnaire

Where do you call home? _____

What is your racial/ethnic identity? _____

How old are you? 18-25 years 26-49 years 50-64 years 65 and other

What is your gender identity? _____

What is your social class identity? _____

What is your academic major and year of study? _____

What other cities or countries have you visited before your Study Abroad or Global Service

Learning experience? _____

How long had it been since you participated in the Study Abroad or Global Service

Learning experience? _____

Appendix D

Interview Guide for Faculty Member

Demographic/Background Questions

Tell me about where you are from?

How long have you been teaching?

What attracted you to SAP/GSL pedagogy?

Please tell me about any previous international experience or cultural immersion experience you have had before the decision to facilitate SAP/GSL program?

How supportive/interested in your department/ Institution in SAP/GSL curriculum?

What do you think is the benefit of SAP/ GSL pedagogy to social and academic development?

Questions Program Transformational Outcomes

What do you think is the significant difference between the SAP/GSL pedagogy and traditional learning?

Tell me about some of the outcomes you hope to achieve with SAP/GSL pedagogy?

What are the tools that you use to advance these outcomes?

Questions about Program Structure

What are the things that you put into consideration when choosing the program location and partnership?

Based on your experience with SAP/GSL, to what extent do you think the program design influences participants' learning process. How?

What are the challenges you see with the students in how they engage with the curriculum?

Tell me about the learning tools that you incorporate into the program design to support participants' transformational learning processes during the cultural immersion experience?

Where do you see the transformation happening during the cultural immersion experience?

Is there anything else about your experiences facilitating SAP/GSL program that you would like to share with me? Thank you for your time.

Appendix E

Faculty Demography Survey Questionnaire

Where do you call home? _____

What is your racial/ethnic identity? _____

How old are you? 18-25 years 26-49 years 50-64 years 65 and other

What is your gender identity? _____

What is your social class identity? _____

How long have you been teaching? _____

What other cities or countries have you visited before facilitating Study Abroad Program/Global?

Service Learning? _____

Appendix F

Sample Copy of Analytical Memo

Example of Analytical Memo

During the interview with the participant, I took note of phrase that she repeatedly used to describe her experience. Immediately after the interview, I listen to the recorded conversations again, and then I write down my thought about our session. Please find below an example of my comment after interviewing one of the student participants.

Personal Note

October 10, 2017: Self-Awareness (After a Zoom interview with Jane (pseudonym))

Talking to Jane about her cultural immersion experience, I sense that she saw her trip as a learning process and a chance to discover herself as a part of a larger society. She frequently uses sentences such as “One thing, I have always wanted to do because I believe that there is so much more out there” to describe this feeling.

Jane talked about how she had always had the desire to travel and exploit other places. She felt this need to discover because of how her early learning experiences only address the topics that related to her local environment, which made the learning restrictive.

“All my life I grew up in America and I was forced to take Mississippi studies in high school four times, I never learned about the rest of the world, I never learned about different culture, I never learned about how you know, other cultures and societies do things elsewhere.”

Key Words

Discovering Others

Restrictive learning

Cultural knowledge