The Perceived Influence of Participation in Undergraduate International Service-Learning on Recent United States College Graduates' Post-College Readiness

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my family—to my mother Rosaria, my father Paul, my brothers Paul and Peter, and especially to my grandmother Mary who had to end her education at a young age to support her large family of Italian immigrants. Your support and encouragement through my education elevated and helped me to complete this journey. This study is also dedicated to the college students, as well as any person, who cross borders with openness to change, in themselves and for others.

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Abstract

United States college graduates live and work in a rapidly changing and interdependent society (Benson et al., 2017; Komives & Wagner, 2017). Technological and other innovations make it possible for individuals to connect across international borders more than any other time in history (Milanovic, 2013; United Nations Human Development Program, 2020). Higher education institutions (HEIs) in the United States historically functioned to prepare the next generation for leadership in society (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019). In the 21st century, U.S. HEIs encounter increasing pressure to prepare undergraduate students for life after college in an interdependent society (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013). International service-learning (ISL) is a high-impact educational practice that correlates with personal and societal change (Bringle et al., 2011; Reid, 2018). Despite evidence of a transformative effect, few U.S. college students participate in ISL as undergraduates (Bringle et al., 2011; Institute of International Education, 2020). There is limited research on recent U.S. college graduates' perspectives on the influence of their undergraduate ISL experiences on their lives after college (Buschlen & Warner 2014; Candiff, 2015; Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Reid, 2018). This qualitative, phenomenological study examined the perceived effect of participation in undergraduate ISL on recent U.S. college graduates' post-college readiness through the lens of Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory. Findings indicate that ISL is a transformative educational experience for college undergraduates. Participants engaged in self-examination, dialogue, and skill development through an ISL experience, which resulted in changes that influenced their professional and personal lives after college.

Keywords: international service-learning, higher education in the United States, transformative learning theory, social justice pedagogy

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Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine. Henry David Thoreau, Civil

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United States college graduates live and work in a rapidly changing and interdependent

society (Komives & Wagner, 2017; Patton et al., 2016). In the 21st century, innovation is driving

human development at an unprecedented pace, accelerating advancements in the private sector,

civil society, and government (Chin & Trimble, 2015; Sachs, 2018; United Nations Human

Development Programme, 2020). Increased movement of people, goods, and ideas, as well as

advancements in technology, enable people to connect across borders more than at any time in

human history (Chin & Trimble, 2015; Sachs, 2018; UNDP, 2020). Simultaneously, the

inequality gap is widening within and among nations, and worldwide crises, such as climate

change, war, and poverty threaten progress (Milanovic, 2013; UNDP, 2020; World Bank Group,

2021). Social justice movements in the United States and globally aim to address systemic

barriers to equity (Adams et al., 2013; Ore, 2011; Sachs, 2018; UNDP, 2020). These efforts build

on 19th and 20th century movements for racial, gender, social, and economic justice (Adams et

al., 2013). In the context of changing social structures, the United States is becoming more

interdependent and diverse (Chin & Trimble, 2015; Frey, 2020; Sachs, 2018; UNDP, 2020).

With globalization, the coupling of social, economic, and ecological systems within and

among nations is tightening (Sachs, 2018; UNDP, 2020). Private sector, civil society, and

governmental leaders are called to meet the demands of globalism and multiculturalism (Chin &

Trimble, 2015; UNDP, 2020). U.S. higher education institutions (HEIs) historically function to

educate the rising generation of societal leaders (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Dewey, 1938;

Geiger, 2011; Kezar, 2004). The preparation of young adults for leadership and citizenship is

rooted in the founding functions of HEIs in the colonial era and early republic (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2011; Sax, 2004). In a 21st century context, U.S. HEIs are responding to the societal charge of preparing the next generation of leaders for citizenship in a complex, interdependent, and global society (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Chin & Trimble, 2015; Geiger, 2019; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011).

International education scholars (Altbach, 2015; Amblee, 2018; Aktas et al., 2017) refer to HEIs response to globalization as the internationalization of higher education. Although the internationalization of U.S. higher education began in the post-World War II era, it accelerated in the early-2000s (Altbach, 2015; Amblee, 2018; Byram, 2018; Geiger, 2019). Internationalization of higher education in the United States is characterized by increased participation of students and faculty in long or short-term education abroad programs, institutional strategies for global engagement, recruitment of international students and scholars, and international partnerships (Amblee, 2018; Aktas et al., 2017; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011).

In the context of internationalization, several scholars re-envisioned the traditional role of U.S. higher education in the 21st century as the preparation of young adults for global citizenship and life in an interdependent society (Amblee, 2018; Aktas et al., 2017; Benson et al., 2017; Bringle et al., 2011; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011; Wasner, 2016). At the same time, U.S. HEIs adopted a social function, developing service, economic development, and global engagement initiatives for the benefit of the institution, students, faculty, and society (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). This shift was in reaction to the private funding for, and increased cost of, higher education in the United States, which elevated individual and private interests (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

The social function of contemporary U.S. HEIs builds upon earlier movements in U.S. higher education (Benson et al., 2017; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Soria & Johnson, 2017). The notion of education for citizenship and social change originated with scholars including Dewey (1938) and Freire (1970). Although representing different philosophical positions, each advocated for education appropriate for the time and place that actively engages learners (Dewey, 1930; Freire, 1970). In the late-1990s and early-2000s, U.S. HEIs embraced the social function of higher education including by expanding programs and initiatives to benefit society, e.g., service-learning (Benson et al., 2017; Kezar, 2004; Soria & Johnson, 2017). Theories such as H. Astin and A. Astin's (1996) social change model of leadership development and Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory also built on the tradition of higher education as a vehicle for individual and social change.

Service-learning is "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Kendall, 1991, as cited in Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). Education abroad is a structured educational experience that "provides students with specific global learning opportunities to augment their understanding of multicultural and intercultural differences" (Haupt et al., 2018, p. 94). International service-learning (ISL) is a pedagogy that involves students participating in service abroad, incorporating elements of service-learning and study abroad (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Green & Johnson, 2011; Reid, 2018). Service-learning may incorporate balanced service and learning goals, or be oriented more toward service or learning, and it is often situated within an academic course in K-12 or higher education (Campus Compact, 2019; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco, 2000; Langhout & Gordon, 2021). Education abroad involves immersion in another country with

cultural exchange and learning through activities such as study abroad, international

volunteering, and travel courses (Aktas et al., 2017; IIE, 2020; Pipitone, 2018). As educational

practices both service-learning and education abroad are high-impact pedagogies associated with

personal transformation among college students (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Buschlen & Warner,

2014; Campus Compact, 2019; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Kuh, 2012; Reid, 2018; Stolley et al., 2017).

ISL participation during college affects individuals' cognitive and life skills development

(Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Participation in ISL during college

can influence college students' academic performance (A. Astin & Sax, 1998; Langhout &

Gordon, 2021), identity negotiation and self-exploration (Reid, 2018; Yang et al., 2016),

worldviews (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014), academic and career goals (Haines et

al., 2017; McNamara, 2012; Stolley et al., 2017), and awareness of social their change agency

(Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2017). Outcomes of

ISL participation during college include the development of socially responsible leaders

(Komives & Wagner, 2017), civic responsibility (A. Astin & Sax, 1998; Langhout & Gordon,

2021), social justice perspectives (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Cipolle, 2010), global

consciousness (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018), and multicultural competencies (Bringle &

Hatcher, 2011; Catlett & Proweller, 2016; Reid, 2018). Evidence in the literature also

demonstrates a social impact of ISL that extends to the service community (Langhout & Gordon,

2021; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

More qualitative phenomenological research is needed on the long-term, post-college

effects of participation in ISL during college (Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Mellon &

Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Through the theoretical lens of Mezirow's (1991, 2000)

transformative learning theory, this study examined recent U.S. college graduates' perceptions of

the effect of their participation in ISL as undergraduate students, and what effect, if any, they perceived it had on their post-college readiness. Findings from this study are relevant to the literature on U.S. higher education, international education, and ISL. They are also relevant to educational leaders at HEIs in the United States.

Problem Statement

Globalization and the coupling of social and economic structures is increasing interdependence among nations (Chin & Trimble, 2015; Sachs, 2018). In an interdependent world, global challenges including climate change, social instability, conflict, migration, and economic fragility affect the United States (Sachs, 2018; Milanovic, 2013; UNDP, 2020).

U.S. HEIs historically functioned to prepare the next generation for leadership in society (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Dewey, 1938; Geiger, 2011, 2019; Kezar, 2004; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). In the 21st century, U.S. HEIs operate in an increasingly complex, interdependent, and diverse society (Altbach, 2015; Bok, 2013; Patton et al., 2016). Coupled with economic strain and the rising cost of higher education, local and global forces motivated public demand for relevant higher education that prepares students for living and working in global and multicultural contexts (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Delbanco, 2012; Geiger, 2019; Patton et al., 2016). U.S. HEIs face increased pressure to account for their effectiveness in preparing students for life post-college (Delbanco, 2012; Fox, 2018; Tomlinson, 2018).

Responding to societal transformation, U.S. HEIs of the 21st century expanded their traditional functions of professional preparation, research, and liberal arts education to include economic, service, and global purposes (Bok, 2013; De Wit, 2002; Geiger, 2019). Despite the increased global focus of HEIs, a relatively low proportion of college students participate in education abroad (Altbach, 2015; IIE, 2020; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). A study by the Institute

of International Education (2020) found less than two percent of enrolled undergraduate students participated in education abroad, a small portion of which participated through ISL.

ISL is a high-impact, transformative education practice for college students (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) described the outcomes of ISL as extensive, robust, transformative, and distinctive, and argued that it is "a pedagogy … best suited to prepare college graduates to be active global citizens in the 21st century" (p. 3). Evidence in the literature suggests ISL participation during college shifted students' personal, academic, and professional worldviews and goals (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). More undergraduate students could benefit from cognitive, developmental, and professional outcomes of ISL participation during college as they emerge to live and work in an interdependent global society (Bringle et al., 2011; Candiff, 2016; Johnson & Green, 2014; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Reid, 2018). Communities, locally and globally, may also benefit from increased social engagement from U.S. HEIs (Benson et al., 2017; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Sax, 2004).

While some college students experience transformation through ISL, the effect is not always positive, and after completing service-learning, some students experience regression or struggle to convert their transformed perspectives into action (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2019). Kiely (2004) identified the chameleon complex, a process in which students who intend to pursue individual or social change action after participating in ISL during college struggle to transform intention to change into action upon their return to the United States where they often encounter tension from social groups. Other studies identified a struggle between intention to act for change or shift perspective and action or perspective shift among college students who participated in ISL (Candiff, 2016; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

Few studies examined the long-term influence of ISL participation among undergraduate students during college, including on the lives of recent U.S. college graduates (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Haines et al., 2017; McNamara, 2012). There is a need for more research to understand the long-term effects of undergraduate ISL participation on the lives of recent U.S. college graduates and their perceptions of the influence of ISL on their post-college readiness. Much of the available literature on ISL participation during college is outcomes-based, quantitative, and focused on the effect of ISL during college (Cox et al., 2014; De Leon, 2014; Kohlbry & Daugherty, 2015; Olson & Lawson, 2017; Wasner, 2016).

Purpose of the Study

Despite evidence of an effect on U.S. college students' lives during college, there is limited scholarship on the effect of participation in undergraduate ISL on recent U.S. college graduates' lives (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Haines et al., 2017; McNamara, 2012). No identified studies exist on the perceived influence of participation in ISL during college on recent U.S. college graduates' post-college readiness. Several studies (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018) identified the effect of ISL on U.S. college students' lives after college as an area for future research. Research in this area is especially important because evidence in the literature suggests U.S. college students need time to integrate ISL experiences into perspective and action post-experience and post-college (Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018).

There is a need for more qualitative research on the influence of participation in ISL during college (Candiff, 2016; DeLeon, 2014; Reid, 2018) and on the effect of participation in ISL as a college undergraduate on recent U.S. college graduates' lives and perceptions (Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study is to examine how recent U.S. college graduates perceive their participation in ISL as undergraduate students to have affected their post-college readiness. Findings inform international educators in higher education and educational leaders operating HEIs in an increasingly interdependent and complex society. They also contribute to the conversation on ISL as a transformative educational pedagogy.

Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory was the theoretical framework for the study. Concepts of constructivism, socialization, and social justice pedagogy also informed the study (Bowers, 1984; Dewey, 1938; Driscoll, 2009; Freire, 2000; Harro, 2000).

This study examined the phenomenon of recent U.S. college graduates' perceptions of how their experience in ISL as undergraduate students affected their post-college readiness. A qualitative phenomenological approach enabled participants to examine the essence of their experience with the phenomenon.

Research Question

To examine the perceived effect of participation in ISL during college on recent college graduates' lives post-college, the following research question was addressed:

How do recent U.S. college graduates perceive the effect of participating in

undergraduate international service-learning on their post-college readiness?

Theoretical Framework

This study examined recent U.S. college graduates' perception of an ISL experience as undergraduate students on their post-college readiness through the lens of Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory. Transformative learning theory is a framework for understanding how individuals make meaning of their experiences in educational contexts in adulthood (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Building on human development theories that identified

childhood education as a formative process, Mezirow (2000) described education in adulthood as a transformative process.

Several theories influenced Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory, including Kuhn's (1962) concept of a scientific paradigm and Freire's (1970) social justice pedagogy, specifically the concepts of praxis and critical reflection. Eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant's conception of critique and reflection as a method of self-formation, or meaning making, also informed the conception of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Based on the influence of social justice pedagogy and Kantian ethics, reflective dialogue factors centrally in the process of transformation (Mezirow, 2000).

Transformational learning theory developed from Mezirow's (2000) findings that individuals develop a frame of reference from their sociocultural and personal experiences, as well as broader societal paradigms and norms. In childhood, this framework is formative. In adulthood, frames of reference formed in childhood have the potential to stifle growth and development (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Therefore, learning in adulthood is potentially transformative (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

In the transformative learning processes, individuals move through 10 phases of meaning making, during which challenges to their existing frames of references potentially result in perspective transformation. Initiated by a disorienting dilemma, learners experience cognitive dissonance, which prompts reflection and self-assessment of their existing assumptions, or paradigms. Critical reflection can be challenging, resulting in feelings of anger, fear, guilt, shame, and potentially, recognition of discontent. After becoming critically aware of the influence of context on their assumptions, individuals test emergent assumptions, roles, and

goals. This phase builds necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence for learners to integrate new meaning, or perspective, into their lives (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Significance of the Study

The rising cost of higher education in the United States coupled with the college loan debt crisis increased the demand for education that prepares college students for life and work in the 21st century (Aktas et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Delbanco, 2012; Geiger, 2019). Responding to this demand, U.S. HEIs incorporated economic, service, and global functions into their institutional missions and strategies (Aktas et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). Evidence in the literature suggests participation in ISL as an undergraduate college student affects individuals' career goals, senses of citizenship, and senses of agency, or belief in their ability to contribute to positive social change (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004; Mather et al., 2012; Reid, 2018). By examining the perceived effect of ISL on the lives of recent U.S. college graduates, this study supports a case for global education through ISL as a high-impact, transformative educational pedagogy during college. This is relevant as U.S. HEIs face accountability demands from individuals paying the increased costs for higher education and often acquiring significant debt in the process (Delbanco, 2012; Fox, 2018; Tomlinson, 2018). It also contributes to research on social justice perspective, social change agency, and global consciousness among recent U.S. college graduates.

Evidence in the literature suggests ISL is a high-impact, transformative educational practice with positive learning, developmental, and professional outcomes for U.S. college students in the 21st century (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Kiely, 2004; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Education abroad, including through ISL, remains accessible to fewer than two percent of college students in the United States (IIE, 2020). More college students could benefit

from participation in ISL as undergraduates. This study provides insight on strategies for supporting undergraduate students who participated in ISL as they reintegrate to their social groups post-ISL experience. Findings also provide evidence to support recent U.S. college graduates who participated in ISL, including strategies for translating intention for action or change into action.

This study adds to the body of literature on ISL and student experiences in U.S. higher education. Several studies point to the need for more qualitative research on service-learning and ISL, identifying that the literature on ISL is predominantly outcomes-focused and quantitative (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Grain, 2019; Reid, 2018). As a qualitative phenomenology, this study contributes to this gap.

Particularly, the literature identifies the need for longitudinal studies of ISL participation during college or the effect of ISL on participants' lives post-college (Buschlen & Warner 2014; Candiff, 2015; Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Reid, 2018). ISL participation during college affects college students' worldviews, values, attitudes, identities, academic goals, and professional goals during college (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mather et al., 2012; Reid, 2018). Findings suggest a post-college effect from ISL experiences as a college undergraduate in the United States (Candiff, 2016; Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). The literature also suggests college students need time to integrate ISL experiences into perspective and action (Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018). Few studies examined the influence of ISL participation as an undergraduate college student in the United States on the lives of recent graduates (Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012). Kiely (2004, 2005) and McNamara (2012) utilized a longitudinal approach to explore post-college ISL outcomes, collecting data

pre-experience, post-experience, and post-college. No identified literature explored the perceived effect of ISL participation during college on recent U.S. college graduates' post-college readiness. This study contributes to the literature in this area with findings that provide evidence for a long-term transformative impact of undergraduate ISL participation after college, including in the development of relevant professional and personal skills.

Reid (2018) and others (Candiff, 2016; Grain 2019; Green & Johnson, 2014; Mellon & Herrera, 2014) identified a victory narrative in ISL literature, which focuses on positive outcomes. Evidence in the literature suggests the ISL experience is complex, with the potential to liberate or oppress participants (Green & Johnson, 2014; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). This study contributes to the literature in this area.

Broadly, this study adds to the literature on Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory. In particular, the study contributes to the literature on ISL as a transformative educational practice. Few studies on domestic service-learning (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Stolley et al., 2017) or ISL (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012) utilized transformative learning theory as a theoretical framework. Kiely (2004) grounded chameleon complex in transformative learning theory. Research on long-term effects of ISL post-college through the lens of transformative learning theory is even more limited (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012).

As society becomes more globally interdependent and diverse, all communities in the United States could benefit from a study of the perceived effect of participation in ISL during college on recent U.S. college graduates' post-college readiness. Findings related to the perceived post-college effect of ISL participation on recent U.S. college graduates' lives are relevant to global educators, student affairs professionals, and HEI leaders. The focus on post-college

outcomes is especially relevant to HEI educators and administrators, as they meet the demand of providing education and skill development for life in the 21st century. Finally, findings of this study inform undergraduate college students considering participation in ISL.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were used to discuss the perceived effects of participation in ISL during college on recent college graduates' lives post-college:

Chameleon complex—A concept defined by Kiely (2004) and characterized by the tension experienced by ISL participants during college between the intention to act for global social justice or change post-ISL and action. Kiely (2004) grounded the concept of chameleon complex in Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory. The concept is based on Kiely's (2004) findings that after participating in ISL during college, "students who initially expressed a willingness to change their lifestyle and work for social justice experienced ongoing conflict and struggle in their attempts to translate their critical awareness into meaningful action" (p. 5). Students experienced challenges reintegrating to their lives in the United States and incorporating their transformed perspectives into action as they encountered opposing social, cultural, and familial perspectives (Kiely, 2004).

Constructivism—A theory of learning that frames learning as knowledge construction, in which learners engage with content, actively participating in knowledge construction (Phillips, 1995; Piaget, 1957). Piaget's (1957) concept of cognitive development influenced Bruner's (as cited in Culatta, 2021) Constructivist Learning Theory. The context in which learning occurs is central to the constructivist concept of knowledge construction (Driscoll, 2009; Mezirow, 1991).

Disorienting dilemma—In Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory, the disorienting dilemma refers to the critical incident that prompts cognitive dissonance and initiates the 10 phases of meaning making.

Education Abroad—Education abroad is a high-impact educational practice (Kuh, 2012) that "provides students with specific global learning opportunities to augment their understanding of multicultural and intercultural differences" (Haupt et al., 2018, p. 94). Education abroad includes long and short-term global immersion experiences and may embed other high-impact educational practices such as service-learning and internships (Haupt et al., 2018; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Kuh, 2012; Pipitone, 2018).

Frame of reference—In Mezirow's (2000) transformative learning theory, the frame of reference refers to an individual's meaning perspective, i.e., the "structures of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions" (p. 16). A frame of reference includes two dimensions, a habit of mind, i.e., a set of assumptions, and a point of view through which habit of mind is expressed (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Globalism—Globalism is a philosophical response to globalization, or the increased interconnection of systems and people and tightening of social and economic structures around the world (Sachs, 2018).

Higher education institutions (HEIs)—Higher education institutions (HEIs), or colleges and universities, provide postsecondary education. The United States higher education system is large, diverse, and decentralized. HEIs in the United States include two-year community colleges, four-year undergraduate colleges, and research and comprehensive universities that offer undergraduate and graduate education. In addition, there is a growing sector of for-profit

HEIs. With no centralized governmental accrediting authority, HEIs in the United States have

varied missions and programs (Bok, 2013; U.S. Department of Education, 2005).

International service-learning—Kendall (1991, as cited in Jacoby, 1996, p. 5) defined

service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that

address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally

designed to promote student learning and development" (n. p.). International service-learning

(ISL) incorporates elements of service-learning and education abroad. Bringle and Hatcher

(2011) defined ISL as:

> A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in
>
> an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from
>
> direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the
>
> experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper
>
> understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host
>
> country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as
>
> citizens, locally and globally. (p. 19)

Internationalization—In higher education, internationalization refers to the policies and practices

of countries or HEIs to address globalism (Altbach, 2015).

Multiculturalism—Multiculturalism is a response to cultural diversity within a society, in which

various cultural groups maintain their identities while participating in the broader society

(Adams et al., 2013; Song, 2020).

Multiversity—Bok (2013) defined the multiversity as an HEI with multiple functions. The

emergence of the multiversity represented a shift from the traditional model for HEIs in the

United States, which typically focused their functions and missions in one of three areas, as

professional, liberal arts, or research institutions. In the 21st century, HEIs in the United States began to couple community and service functions with the traditional areas of focus, serving multiple purposes (Bok, 2013).

Objectivism—A theory of learning based on the understanding that knowledge and truth are objective. Individuals gain objective knowledge by observing reality and forming concepts (Carson, 2005). According to Carson (2005), "objectivism holds that there is one reality independent of anyone perceiving it" (p. 237). Scholarship often contrasts objectivism with constructivism (Carson, 2005; Driscoll, 2009).

Oppressed sociocultural backgrounds—In each society, oppressed, or subordinate, social groups that are systematically disadvantaged (Adams et al., 2013). Adams et al. (2013) identified seven social categories in U.S. society—race or ethnicity, gender, religious, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability. Subordinate groups experience systemic oppression in U.S. society in the form of racism, sexism, religious oppression/anti-Semitism, heterosexism, classism, ageism, and ableism (Adams et al., 2013).

Pedagogy of the Oppressed—Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed is a theoretical framework for a liberatory model of education. Freire's (1970) pedagogy critiqued the colonial banking model of education, in which students act as receptacles, or banks, for knowledge deposition, as a model that discourages dialogue and perpetuates oppressive social structures. Pedagogy of the oppressed is a social justice pedagogy that presents a liberatory model of education in which students actively participate in learning toward social and personal liberation. It is essential that oppressed people lead the process of liberatory education, with privileged social groups acting as allies (Freire, 1970).

Perspective shift—In Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory, perspective shift is a potential outcome of the 10 phases of transformational learning. Through the process of critical reflection and action, individuals may experience a transformation, developing a new perspective with which they reintegrate into their lives (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Privileged sociocultural backgrounds—In each society, there are privileged, or dominant, social groups that are systematically advantaged (Adams et al., 2013). Adams et al. (2013) identified seven social categories in U.S. society—race or ethnicity, gender, religious, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical or mental ability.

Recent college graduate—In the United States, a recent college graduate is typically an individual who graduated from college within the last two to ten years (Kamas & Preston, 2020; Stolley et al., 2017; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, n.d.). Stolley et al. (2017) defined a recent college graduate as seven years after completing a bachelor's degree. Kamas and Preston (2020) defined a recent college graduate as five to seven years after graduation. For the purposes of this paper, a recent college graduate is defined as an individual who graduated from a college within the last six academic years, or between 2015 and 2021. This range of 2015 to 2021, or six academic years, was selected due to limited ISL participation in 2020 and 2021 during the novel corona virus pandemic, and in the context of previous research within the two-to-ten-year post-college range.

Social justice—A process, the goal of which is "equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped by their needs" (Adams et al., 2013, p. 21). Social justice is rooted in a theory of oppression, in which privileged and oppressed social groups experience systematic advantage or disadvantage based on their social categories (Adams et al., 2013). Social systems, which exist within and between countries, perpetuate structures of privilege and oppression (Adams et al.,

2013; Milanovic, 2013). The process of social justice aims to motivate action for social change and liberation for an equitable society (Adams et al., 2013; Komives & Wagner, 2017).

Socialization—A human development theory premised on the assumption that social reality is shared, maintained, and continuously negotiated through interaction and communication (Bowers, 1984). Individuals build a sense of self and make meaning of experiences through socialization, developing worldviews and assumptions (Bowers, 1984; Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Transformative learning theory—Transformative learning theory is theory of adult learning and cognition developed by Mezirow's (1991, 2000). According to Mezirow (1991, 2000), individuals develop a frame of reference from their sociocultural and personal experiences, as well as broader societal paradigms and norms. In childhood, this framework is formative; however, in adulthood it can stifle growth and development (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Therefore, learning in adulthood is potentially transformative (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Through the transformative learning processes, individuals move through 10 phases of meaning making, initiated by a disorienting dilemma, which challenge their frames of reference, potentially resulting in perspective transformation (Mezirow, 2000).

Victory narrative—Reid (2018) referred to the trend in the literature to focus on positive outcomes of ISL as the victory narrative. Other scholars also pointed to a trend in the ISL literature to focus on positive outcomes, while ignoring the challenges and complexities of the experience (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2005; Grain, 2019; Mellon & Herrera, 2014).

Summary

In the 21st century, U.S. HEIs are responding to globalization, diversity, and public accountability demands by implementing policy and curricular innovations for increased social and community engagement locally and globally (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019;

Komives & Wagner, 2017; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). ISL is a high-impact education practice incorporating elements of service-learning and study abroad (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Green & Johnson, 2011; Kuh, 2012; Reid, 2018). Fewer than two percent of U.S. college undergraduates participate in education abroad, a fraction of which through ISL (IIE, 2020). The ISL literature supports a transformative effect from ISL participation among U.S. college undergraduates (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Evidence in the literature suggests some students experience a negative effect, regress in their transformation, or experience challenges translating their intention to act or change into action post-ISL (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2019). Findings such as changed worldviews, career goals, academic goals, and intention to act for social change after ISL participation suggest a post-college effect (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Haines et al., 2017; McNamara, 2012). The literature also suggests U.S. college students need time to integrate ISL experiences into perspective and action post-experience (Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018). Limited research exists on the long-term effect of undergraduate ISL participation on recent U.S. graduate's post-college readiness. More individuals can benefit from participation in ISL during college. HEIs and local and global communities may also benefit. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological approach, this study examined the perceived effect of participation in ISL as a college undergraduate in the United States on recent graduates' post-college readiness through the lens of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory.

Chapter II: Review of the Literature

In this section, the review of the literature focuses on higher education in the United States, international service-learning, and transformative learning theory.

An overview of higher education in the United States, its history and purpose, situates this study in the higher education literature. The literature highlights the origins of higher education in the United States as education for democracy and social change, and the evolution of that function in the 21st century. I explore the service function of higher education, as well as the demographic transformation and internationalization of higher education in the 20th and 21st centuries. Student development during college is also examined.

International service-learning (ISL) is introduced and defined. I explore the origins of ISL in two types of experiential learning practices, i.e., service-learning and education abroad. The literature on ISL outcomes is analyzed. Specifically, I explore ISL as a transformative educational practice, with the potential to perpetuate liberation or oppression among undergraduate college student participants. Studies of ISL that incorporate transformative learning theory are also introduced.

Finally, Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory is reviewed as the theoretical framework for the study. The influence of constructivism, socialization, and Freire's (1970) social justice pedagogy are explored in the context of transformative learning. I also examine the literature on transformative education in higher education contexts.

Higher Education in the United States

Fostering civic and social values among future leaders for the benefit of society was central to the founding missions of many U.S. HEIs (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Boyer, 2016; Geiger, 2011). The first HEIs in the United States were founded to educate community

ministers, as well as to foster a shared culture and norms (Boyer, 2016; Geiger, 2011). HEIs

fulfilled a distinctly civic and public function in U.S. society, rooted in social change for the

common good (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Boyer, 2016; Geiger, 2011). John Eliot, a

founding member of the Massachusetts colony, reflected, "If we nourish not learning, both

church and commonwealth will sink" (Boyer, 1996, p. 19). With this sentiment, the

Massachusetts colonists established Harvard College in 1636; the first HEI in what would

become the United States (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2011). Similarly, the University of Pennsylvania

was founded in the 17th century with the express purpose of educating societal leaders and

benefiting the community or common good (Benson et al., 2017).

The role and function of higher education in the United States shifted with its changing

social structure (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2011, 2019). After the U.S.

Revolutionary War, the era of republican education emerged (Geiger, 2011). HEIs focused on the

development of "selflessness, patriotism, and virtue in the citizens and leaders of the new

republic" through education rooted in philosophical and legal curricula (Geiger, 2011, p. 43).

During this period, the founding missions of many HEIs included the development of societal

leaders, democratic values, and social improvement (Benson et al., 2017; Geiger, 2011).

In the mid-1800s at the height of the Civil War, the Morrill Land Grant Act made public

lands available for the founding of HEIs to aid in westward expansion, increase access to higher

education, and develop citizenship values (Benson et al., 2017; Geiger, 2011). The focus on

education for citizenship development and societal improvement continued through the

early-1900s (Benson et al., 2017).

Moving into the 20th century, World War I and World War II sparked government

investment and the expansion of U.S. higher education (Benson et al., 2017; Freeland, 1992;

Geiger 2011, 2019). HEIs established relationships with the Federal government through investments in research for the war efforts (Geiger, 2011). Objectivism within academic disciplines also marked this period (Benson et al., 2017; Geiger, 2019). Disillusioned by the world wars, academics of the period began to focus on advancing knowledge for individual and private ends, rather than benefiting the common good through knowledge and innovation (Benson et al., 2017).

Access to higher education expanded in the immediate years after World War II through the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or GI Bill (Freeland, 1992; Geiger, 2019). The U.S. Civil Rights Movements of the 1960s and 1970s further increased funding and access to higher education (Geiger, 2011, 2019). More women and students from historically underrepresented racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups began to access higher education due to new affirmative action and financial aid programs at the federal and state levels (Geiger, 2019). At the same time, the student movement, which peaked between 1967 and 1969, transformed U.S. higher education. College students confronted prominent social issues in the United States and globally, such as the Vietnam War, racial inequity, and Cold War-era nuclear proliferation (Benson et al., 2017; Geiger, 2011, 2019). During this period, the first programs encouraging domestic and international travel and service among college graduates were developed, e.g., the Peace Corps in 1961 and Volunteers in Service to America in 1965 (Candiff, 2016; Geiger, 2019).

Over time, images of student protests and incidences of violence resulted in a shift in the public perception of higher education (Geiger, 2011). College students and the public grew disillusioned after events such as the fatal clashes between the Ohio National Guard and student advocates at Kent and Jackson State Universities in 1970, the assassinations of civil rights

leaders including Martin Luther King Jr., the end of the Vietnam-era draft, and economic uncertainty (Benson et al., 2017; Geiger, 2019). The next generation of U.S. college students began to seek degrees deemed relevant, turning away from the liberal arts to professional and vocational disciplines (Geiger, 2011, 2019). Geiger (2011) characterized the desire to avoid irrelevance as "a Hallmark of the era" (p. 62). During this period students, faculty, and institutions developed more individualistic focuses (Benson et al., 2017; Geiger, 2011, 2019). For example, HEIs developed partnerships with businesses and other private institutions, and faculty received private research funding (Geiger, 2011; Altbach et al., 2011). Students focused on social mobility through higher education, which reflected in increased participation in social groups such as fraternities and sororities and professional degrees (Benson et al., 2017).

The 1980s and early-1990s in U.S. higher education experienced an even greater focus on research, independent funding, and individualistic aims (Delbanco, 2012; Geiger, 2019). With the privatization of higher education, costs were transferred from federal and state governments to parents and students, and higher education began to be viewed as a private good (Bok, 2013; Delbanco, 2012). The cost of higher education increased significantly in the 1990s and 2000s (Bok, 2013; Delbanco, 2012; Geiger, 2019). HEIs relied more on tuition for income, and thus became more dependent on parent, student, and private investments (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019). As private investment in higher education expanded, HEIs grew more interested in educating students for professional careers, meeting students' needs through campus infrastructure such as gymnasiums, and benefiting the economy (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019).

In reaction to this shift within HEIs and public disinvestment in higher education at the state and federal levels, U.S. HEIs reoriented to incorporate service and economic development functions in the 2000s (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). The

service and civic renewal in U.S. higher education began in the early-1990s with the founding of organizations such as the Campus Compact and governmental programs including the Learn and Serve America Higher Education (LSAHE) program (Benson et al., 2017; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Internationalization in higher education also expanded during the late-20th and early-21st centuries, as HEIs responded to meet the demands of globalism (Aktas et al., 2017; Amblee, 2018; Boni & Calabuig, 2017). The trends reflected a renewed interest in the United States for higher education to benefit society, or the common good, on both local and global levels (Benson et al., 2017; Kezar, 2004; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

Purposes of Higher Education in the United States in the 21st Century

Structurally, the U.S. higher education system is distinctive in comparison to its counterparts in Europe and other parts of the world (Bok, 2013; Kezar, 2004). It is characterized by—a large number of diverse HEIs, including research, comprehensive, four-year, community, and for-profit institutions; the prominence of private institutions and limited government control; competition among institutions for funding, students, and human resources; and high levels of private and public funding for research and student aid (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019). Higher education in the United States is also informed by the history of the nation and unique institutional missions (Dewey, 1938; Geiger, 2011, 2019; Kezar, 2004).

In the 21st century, higher education serves a unique function in the United States. Bok (2013) referred to the modern U.S. HEI as a multiversity, often serving multiple functions. At the most basic level, Bok (2013) described the function of higher education as undergraduate education, professional training, and research dissemination. Functionally, the purpose of higher education in the United States varies according to institutional type, history, and mission (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019).

Early HEIs of the colonial and republican era in the United States functioned to "educate an elite group of young men for the learned professions and positions of leadership in society" (Bok, 2013, pp. 28–29). Post-Civil War, the purpose of higher education in the United States evolved to include professional preparation, research, and liberal arts education (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019). HEIs oriented their missions and purpose in one of these three areas, i.e., as professional, research, or liberal arts institutions (Bok, 2013). Service and community economic development emerged, or re-emerged, as functions of higher education in the late-20th and early-21st centuries (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

Service Function. Benson et al. (2017) stated, "A civic purpose is evident in the founding documents of nearly every college and university in the United States" (p. 1728). A renewed community and service orientation emerged in U.S. higher education in the late-20th century, countering a move toward individualism in the academy and a declining interest in civics among college graduates (Astin & H. Antonio, 2004; Benson et al., 2017; Kezar, 2004; Geiger, 2019; Sax, 2004). After the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s, by the 1980s, the public view of HEIs in the United States was that of out of touch and self-directed ivory towers (Boyer, 2016; Kezar, 2004). Students entering college during this period rejected the student movement and embraced individualistic goals. HEIs mirrored this individualist shift by adopting a private focus (Geiger, 2019; Langhout & Gordon, 2021). In the early-1990s, Higher education leaders and scholars identified insufficient education for citizenship as a crisis in U.S. higher education (Benson et al., 2017; Boyer, 1996; Kezar, 2004).

HEIs in the late-20th and early-21st century returned to a traditional civic and social function (Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Saltmarsh and Zlotkowski (2011) referred to this period in U.S. higher education as the civic engagement movement. In

addition to the prominence of civic and service-oriented educational practices, the era of the civic engagement movement included the founding of organizations and initiatives such as Campus Compact, the Engaged Scholarship Consortium, and the LSAHE program (Benson et al., 2017; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011; Sax, 2004). For example, Campus Compact was founded by a group of HEIs in the United States with the goal of promoting civic engagement among college students through volunteerism, service-learning, and other community-based activities (Benson et al., 2017).

Community and Economic Development Function. Due to the nature of higher education in the United States, there is limited governmental control and it is difficult to develop national policy for higher education (Altbach et al., 2011; Bok, 2013). Consequently, funding sources including government, private corporations, and individuals, e.g., alumni, philanthropists, and student tuition, each influence institutional goals and strategies of U.S. HEIs (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2011, 2019).

In the 21st century, HEIs increasingly depend on private research funding and tuition income with the decline of governmental funding for education at the federal and state levels. Even public institutions, in many cases, received most of their funding from private sources by the early-2000s (Altbach et al., 2011; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019). Some scholars criticized this shift, noting that HEIs were focusing on private and economic goals, functioning as an industry, rather than social institutions that benefited individuals and society (Benson et al., 2017; Delbanco, 2012; Kezar, 2004). This motivated HEIs to invest in community and economic development in adjacent communities, as well as broadly at the national and global levels (Bok, 2013; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

Internationalization. Over several decades, higher education in the United States experienced a process of internationalization that accelerated in the 21st century in response to increased globalism and interdependence (Aktas et al., 2017; Amblee, 2018; Boni & Calabuig, 2017). In the post-World War II era, U.S. HEIs engage more with international institutions, scholars, and students (Geiger, 2019). For example, the 1966 International Education Act, the Fulbright Program, and Peace Corps provided opportunities for international engagement among college students and graduates (Candiff, 2016; Freeland, 1992; Geiger, 2019). The 1958 National Defense Education Act, which remained active through the Cold War era, provided funding for foreign language training programs (Candiff, 2016).

In the 21st century, the flow of students and faculty to and from the United States increased; more students participated in education abroad; and HEIs formed international partnerships with public and private institutions (Aktas et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; IIE, 2020). HEIs in the United States welcomed more international students than in any other country in the 2010s (Bok, 2013). Additionally, a demographic shift in the United States resulted in growing numbers of foreign-born students and/or students from whom English was not their first language (Bok, 2013; IIE, 2020).

Demographic Transformation

The United States underwent significant demographic and social changes since the founding of the first HEIs. Colonial era colleges were the domain of wealthy, White men (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2011). It was not until the mid-to late-20th century that women, racial and ethnic minorities, and economically marginalized students began to access higher education at significant rates (Geiger, 2011). With the GI Bill, civil rights legislation, women's movement, and the establishment of financial aid for individuals in economic need, access to higher

education in the United States expanded. Beginning in the 1960s, individuals from sociocultural backgrounds underrepresented in U.S. higher education began to access higher education at greater rates (Bok, 2013; Freeland, 1992; Geiger, 2011, 2019; Patton et al., 2016).

In the first two decades of the 21st century, college enrollments increased, growing by 26% between 2000 and 2018 (Hussar et al., 2020). It is important to note while enrollments grew overall over the past two decades, they began to decline after 2010, decreasing by eight percent between 2010 and 2018 (Hussar et al., 2020). During this 20-year period, demographic changes in U.S. higher education accelerated (Geiger, 2019; Hussar et al., 2020). Between 2000 and 2018, the proportion of 18- to 24-year-olds enrolled for postsecondary education in the United States increased from 35% to 41%, totaling more than 16 million undergraduates (Hussar et al., 2020). By 2018, women represented 56% of undergraduate enrollments (Hussar et al., 2020).

While students from White sociocultural backgrounds represented more than 50% of undergraduate enrollments, individuals from historically underrepresented racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender backgrounds accessed higher education at increased rates since 2000 (Altbach et al., 2011; Geiger, 2019; Hussar et al., 2020; Patton et al., 2016). Between 2000 and 2010, White enrollment increased by 21%, while Black enrollment increased by 73% (Hussar et al., 2020). Hispanic enrollment increased by 148% between 2000 and 2018, growing every year during this period even as enrollments overall declined (Hussar et al., 2020). Similarly, participation of nonresident alien students in higher education grew each year between 2000 and 2018 (Hussar et al., 2020).

In addition, more students, approximately 40%, are over the age of 24 and attend college part-time (Bok, 2013). With increased diversity, more college students identify as first-generation (Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2019; Patton et al., 2016). Among students who entered college in 2012,

32% reported their parents' highest level of education as high school or less, and 27% reported that their parents completed some postsecondary training but did not hold a four-year degree (Hill et al., 2016).

Student Development in College

Literature on student development is a cornerstone of the study of higher education in the United States. Influenced by sociology and psychology, literature on student development explores students' social, psychological, cognitive, structural, moral, and integrative development during college (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Patton et al., 2016). Studies on college student development also explore how students make meaning of content and experiences during college in relation to their worldviews and structural paradigms (Mezirow, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Patton et al., 2016).

College represents a transformative experience in human development (Bok, 2013; Mezirow, 1991; Patton et al., 2016; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). The literature suggests high-impact educational experiences during college prompt identity development and negotiation, even disrupting students' perspectives and worldviews (Kuh, 2012; Mezirow, 1991; Patton et al., 2016). Kuh (2012) identified high-impact educational experiences in college to include undergraduate research, global education, service-learning, internships, and collective learning experiences.

There is a trend in recent higher education literature to focus on holistic student development outcomes, rather than measures of academic performance, persistence, duration of degree completion, and job placement (Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Patton et al., 2016). This includes studies of higher education outcomes related to civic engagement, activism, social justice, global citizenship, and post-college readiness (Cipolle, 2010; International Association

for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement, 2016; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Patton et al.,

2016; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Moreover, scholars are interested in students' negotiation

of social power and privilege structures (Patton et al., 2016). Echoing the broader civic

engagement movement and shift in the function of U.S. higher education, these outcomes extend

beyond the individual to account for the impact of higher education on local, national, and global

communities (Bok, 2013; Kezar, 2004; Langhout & Gordon, 2021).

Social Justice Lens

As student demographics shifted, HEIs began to incorporate diversity, international, and

social justice curricula and programing (Geiger, 2019; Patton et al., 2016). For example, HEIs

developed core diversity curricula and student programming (Bok, 2013; Patton et al., 2016).

Beginning in the 1990s, student affairs professionals began to create spaces for students to

develop leadership, professional, and sociocultural skills during college through co-curricular

learning experiences (Klobassa, 2017; Patton et al., 2016).

The goal of social justice is "equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually

shaped by their needs" (Adams et al., 2013, p. 21). Social justice is achieved through a process

that is "democratic and participatory, inclusive and affirming of human agency and human

capacities for working collaboratively to create change" (Adams et al., 2011, p. 36). Social

justice literature incorporates a theory of oppression in which social systems privilege and

oppress individuals based on sociocultural categories; this structure exists not only within but

also between nations on a global scale (Adams et al., 2013; Freire, 1970; Milanovic, 2013).

Adams et al. (2013) identified seven categories of "otherness" experienced by individuals

in U.S. society—race or ethnicity, gender, religious, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status,

age, and physical or mental ability (p. 7). In each category, there is a dominant, or systematically

advantaged/privileged, and subordinate, or systematically disadvantaged/oppressed, social group (Adams et al., 2013). Globally, individuals from Western, high-development or high-income countries represent the systematically privileged social group, while individuals in low-development or low-income countries in the global South represent systematically oppressed social groups (Freire, 1970; Milanovic, 2013).

In the 21st century, based on the work of Crenshaw (1991), the literature expanded to incorporate the concept of intersectional identity development (Patton et al., 2016). Intersectionality is the concept that individuals hold multiple identities, with various intersections of power and privilege (Patton et al., 2016).

Scholars (Adams et al., 2011; Landreman, 2013) argued that education offers a unique space to start a conversation about inequality and oppression in social structures. Studies found that students benefit from interacting with peers who are different from themselves (Klobassa, 2017; Patton et al., 2016). These benefits include "appreciation of differences," "active thinking, engagement with learning, engaged citizenship," and "reduced stereotypes" (Landreman, 2013, p. 13).

Regarding social justice education, Klobassa (2017) observed the literature focuses on raising student awareness and consciousness of social inequality and recommended future research on the action phase of social justice, exploring the effect of students taking action for social change. Evidence in the literature that action for social change builds students' confidence in their ability to make change during and after college supports this recommendation (H. Astin & A. Astin, 1996; Komives & Wagner, 2017). Some studies suggest students develop a social change agent or activist identity through participation in critical experiences such as

service-learning (Karakas & Kavas, 2009; Klobassa, 2017; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Mobley, 2007; Pipitone, 2018; Reid, 2018; Yang et al., 2016; York, 2016).

International Service-Learning

U.S. HEIs incorporated community economic development, service, and global functions into their missions, strategies, and curricula in the 1990s and 2000s. ISL gained popularity during this period (Aktas et al., 2017; Bringle et al., 2011; Wasner, 2016). ISL incorporates elements of service-learning, study abroad, and global education (Bringle et al., 2011; Plater, 2011). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) defined ISL as:

> A structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally. (p. 19)

HEIs in the United States increasingly offer global immersion and ISL through faculty-led courses and co-curricular programs to address societal challenges, as well as student learning, development, and career readiness needs in the context of an interdependent global society (Bringle et al., 2011; Candiff, 2016; Johnson & Green, 2014; Reid, 2018). ISL differs from other types of study abroad and service-learning experiences in that it typically takes place in low development countries in the global South and involves service with community organizations (Bringle et al., 2011; Green & Johnson, 2014; Reid, 2018). Like traditional service-learning and education abroad, ISL participation rates increased in the 2000s; however,

participants continue to represent a fraction of college students in the United States (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Reid, 2018).

Bringle and Hatcher (2011) described ISL as one of the most transformative educational practices of the 21st century. ISL serves multiple purposes, providing opportunities for student, faculty, institutional, and societal transformation (Dugan, 2006; Green & Johnson, 2014; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Evidence in the literature suggests participation in ISL yields positive developmental and learning outcomes among college students (Aktas et al., 2017; Cox et al., 2014; De Leon, 2014; IIE, 2020; Wasner, 2016).

Experiential Learning

ISL is a form of experiential learning that combines elements of service-learning and education abroad (Bringle et al., 2011; Plater, 2011). Kuh (2012) identified service-learning and diversity/global learning as types of high-impact educational practices in higher education. High-impact learning practices positively benefit college students from varied sociocultural and academic backgrounds especially in relation to retention and engagement rates (Kuh, 2012; Soria & Johnson, 2017).

Although service-learning and education abroad rose in popularity in the 1990s and 2000s, they originated in a tradition of experiential education and the notion of education for democracy (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000; Boyer, 2016; Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). In the early-20th century, Dewey (1938) advocated for the role of experience in knowledge construction. Dewey (1938) offered a critique of traditional education, presenting a progressive alternative in which students were no longer passive receptacles of information but were actively engaged in the learning process. Similarly, Freire (1970) rejected the banking model of education in favor of a partnership between students and educators learning in real world contexts.

Dewey (1938) and Freire (1970) recognized the need for educational practices designed to prepare students for life in a complex system and to challenge dominant systems of knowledge and power (Dewey, 1938; Freire, 1970). To this end, Dewey (1938) critiqued traditional education models, reflecting:

> It is to a large extent the cultural product of societies that assumed the future would be much like the past, and yet it is used as educational food in a society where change is the rule, not the exception. (p. 19)

With the pace of change increasing and the world becoming more interdependent, this notion remains relevant in 21st century higher education contexts.

Experiential learning through service and education abroad became increasingly popular in the 1990s and 2000s (Geiger, 2019; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). On a policy level, HEIs were encouraged to develop initiatives and programs to engage students in active learning. The Kellogg Commission on the Future of State and Land-Grant Universities (1999) recommended HEIs develop community partnerships and encouraged:

> Teaching methods that involve students in active learning, such as undergraduate research, service learning, and workplace internships should be viewed as among the most powerful of teaching procedures, if the teaching goal is lasting learning that can be used to shape students' lives and the world. (p. 19)

Service-learning, education abroad, and ISL embrace the type of active learning described by the Kellogg Commission (Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). These practices also serve the social, community development, and global functions of 21st century U.S. HEIs as they address public accountability demands for timely and relevant education (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Fox, 2018; Geiger, 2019; Stolley et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2018).

Service-learning. Service-learning is a type of experiential learning rooted in education for citizenship, democracy, and life skills, and promoted by 20th century educationalists including John Dewey (Campus Compact, 2019; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Plater, 2011; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011; Stolley et al., 2017). Broadly, service-learning is defined as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (Kendall, 1991, as cited in Jacoby, 1996, p. 5). In higher education contexts, service-learning is typically situated in a credit-bearing course (Campus Compact, 2019; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011).

In practice, service-learning may be weighted toward service, or learning (A. Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Furco, 2000; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Eyler and Giles (1999) described the ideal form of service as one that balances service and learning. Service-learning often includes a reflective component through writings, discussion, or class participation; direct engagement with faculty and peers; and service within the community (A. Astin & Sax, 1998; Campus Compact, 2019; Saltmarsh, 2011). Several scholars found environmental factors such as quality of placement, time spent in service, faculty engagement, and students' major area of study contributed to service-learning outcomes (Eyler & Giles, 2003; Mitchell, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Ideally, the benefits of service-learning extend beyond the student to include faculty, the community, and the HEI (Stolley et al., 2017).

Outcomes of service-learning participation during college have been measured in relation to the individual, e.g., academic, cognitive, and developmental, and the community, e.g., civic and society (Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Sax et al., 1999; Sax, 2004). Positive academic outcomes of service-learning participation have been measured in relation to GPA, persistence,

motivation to learn, career placement, and interest in post-graduate education (Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Sax, 2014). At the individual developmental level, outcomes of service-learning participation during college include identity negotiation, improved self-understanding (Langhout & Gordon, 2021), sense of belonging (York & Fernandez, 2018), and development of social and life skills (Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Sax, 2004; Sax, 2014). College students who participated in service-learning reported increased value for civic engagement and volunteerism (Eyler & Giles, 2003; Sax, 2014), positive views of pluralism (Soria & Johnson, 2017), and comfortability with leadership (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2017). They also developed critical thinking and other 21st century leadership skills including multicultural competency (De Leon, 2014; Langhout & Gordon, 2021; Perez & Shim, 2020), empathy (Soria & Johnson, 2017), and emerging global consciousness (Yang et al., 2016; York, 2016).

Findings identified service-learning as an educational practice for leadership development and social change agency (Astin & Astin, 1996; Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Karakas & Kavas, 2009; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Martel & Bhandari, 2016; Mobley, 2007; Moley & Ilustre, 2014; Shor et al., 2017). A. Astin and Sax (1998) found after service participation, individuals' belief in their ability to "bring about changes" in society grew (p. 256). Komives and Wagner (2017) described this effect in relation to the social change model of leadership development. As college students engage in activities such as service and witness change in action, they gain confidence in their ability to facilitate positive social change (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2017). At the same time, service activities challenge students' perspectives, and they develop leadership skills toward becoming social change agents (Komives & Wagner, 2017; Wasner, 2016).

Recent college graduates who participated in service-learning during college identified transferable skills gained from their service-learning experience including interpersonal, communication, leadership, teamwork, and multicultural skills, as well as comfortability working with diverse populations (Matthews et al., 2015; Stolley et al., 2017). Participation in service-learning during college also influenced the career pathways of college graduates (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2019). Post-college, service-learning participation correlates with the development or career skills, higher employment rates, and higher salaries (Matthews et al., 2015). College graduates who participated in service-learning during college report continued civic engagement, value of social responsibility, and broader worldviews (Matthews et al., 2015; Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2019; Richard, 2017; Richard et al., 2016; Stolley et al., 2017).

Education Abroad. As an educational practice, education abroad "provides students with specific global learning opportunities to augment their understanding of multicultural and intercultural differences" (Haupt et al., 2018, p. 94). Education abroad is among the high-impact educational practices described by Kuh (2012). Students and scholars have traveled abroad for educational purposes since the beginning of higher education in the United States and globally (Plater, 2011). Amid internationalization, U.S. HEIs in the 21st century offered more opportunities for education abroad (Aktas et al., 2017; IIE, 2020; Pipitone, 2018).

Education abroad during college takes many forms including study abroad, international volunteering, and ISL (Aktas et al., 2017). Increasingly, educators couple education abroad with other high-impact educational practices, e.g., service-learning, undergraduate research, and internships (Haupt et al., 2018). Short-term study abroad and global immersion programs are the most popular types of education abroad in the United States due to lower expenses and greater accessibility for participation (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Pipitone, 2018).

The majority of undergraduate college students who participate in study abroad travel to countries in Europe (IIE, 2020). Students who participate in education abroad through international volunteering or ISL typically participate in low-income countries in the global South (Johnson & Green, 2014).

Similar to service-learning, scholars measure the benefits of participation in education abroad during college in relation to academic and individual developmental outcomes (Cox et al., 2014; Pipitone, 2018). Students who participated in education abroad during college report higher persistence and graduation rates than their peers (Haupt et al., 2018; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Pipitone, 2018). Pipitone (2018) found participation in education abroad prompted self-exploration at various levels, e.g., individual values, goals, and worldviews. Benefits of global education programs include the development adaptability, self-awareness, curiosity, and confidence (Brown & Cope, 2013; IIE, 2018; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Pipitone, 2018; Yang et al., 2016; York, 2016).

Evidence in the literature also supports positive correlations between education abroad and the development of global consciousness, multicultural competency, and global citizenship among college students (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; Huckle, 2015; Quist-Adade, 2013; Pipitone, 2018). Through engagement with another place and culture, college students report positive views of pluralism and emergent social change agency after participation in education abroad (Pipitone, 2018; Reid, 2018). In an interdependent global economy, these competencies are increasingly relevant as college graduates in the United States live and work in global and multicultural contexts (Chin & Trimble, 2015; IIE, 2016; IIE, 2018).

Post-college findings in several European studies suggest individuals who participated in education abroad programs gained professional advantages including greater employability,

higher career placement rates, and increased wages (Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Liwiński, 2019; Trapani & Cassar, 2020). College graduates who participated in education abroad are also more likely to work or travel abroad after college (IIE, 2020; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Pipitone, 2018).

ISL Participation Rates

Participation in global education programs tripled in the first two decades of the 21st century (IIE, 2020; Reid, 2018). More students are pursuing higher education as international students outside of the United States, participating in study abroad for credit and noncredit travel courses, and pursuing scholarship through programs such as the Fulbright program (IIE, 2018; Petzold & Peter, 2015; Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011). In 2017, more than 300,000 students in the United States studied abroad for credit, an increase of more than two percent from the previous year (IIE, 2018). Another 40,000 students participated in non-credit travel programs (IIE, 2018).

Despite the growth in global immersion programs and education abroad, access is limited to less than two percent of enrolled undergraduate students, only a fraction of which participated through ISL (IIE, 2020). College students who participate in education aboard predominately identify as upper- and middle-class and predominantly White students (Rhoads & Szelenyi, 2011; IIE, 2020). For the academic year 2018–2019, 68.7% of undergraduate students in the United States who studied abroad identified as White (IIE, 2020). In this environment, forms of education abroad such as short-term travel and service-learning courses grew in popularity as less expensive alternatives to traditional study abroad (Cox et al., 2014; DeLeon, 2014). Nonetheless, students from underrepresented backgrounds who participated in education abroad during college often experience emotional, financial, familial, social, and logistic challenges to participation (Cope & Brown, 2013; Reid, 2018).

Participation in global immersion experiences is stratified based on racial, ethnic, gender, and socioeconomic background, with historically marginalized sociocultural groups accessing experiences at lower rates (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; IIE, 2020; Kiely, 2004; Reid, 2018). The most common profile among ISL participants is upper-to-middle class, White, female students (Kiely, 2004; Reid, 2018). Students from populations historically underrepresented in higher education encounter financial, cultural, and social barriers to experiential learning, including ISL (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; Reid, 2018). Scholars (Bocci, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012; Reid, 2018) critiqued ISL in U.S. higher education as a domain for privileged, predominantly white, upper-to-middle-class students.

ISL Outcomes

Quantitative, outcomes-focused studies dominate the literature on domestic service-learning and ISL (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Grain, 2019; Reid, 2018). Prior to the 2010s, few ISL studies explored student development and learning, and even fewer examined post-college outcomes (Bringle et al., 2011; Kiely, 2004). Early literature found positive correlations between ISL participation and intercultural competence, language development, tolerance for ambiguity, and emergent global consciousness, as well as academic, personal, and interpersonal development associated with traditional service-learning and education abroad (Bringle et al., 2011; DeLeon, 2014; Green & Johnson, 2014; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Kohlbry & Daugherty, 2015).

In the past two decades, several studies (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Johnson & Howell, 2017; Reid, 2018) identified significant personal transformation among ISL participants, including changing majors, planning a new career path, developing an advocacy mindset, emerging global consciousness, and changing worldviews or mindsets. Some findings suggested

while many students broaden or shifted their perspectives and experienced developmental gains through ISL participation, other students experienced deepening stereotypes of other cultures or perspective regression upon returning to the United States (Kiely, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). The transformative, both liberating and oppressive, outcomes of ISL are expanded on in the next section.

Several studies (M'Balia, 2013; McBride et al., 2012; Reid, 2018) found the positive effects of service-learning, and especially ISL, were amplified among college students from historically marginalized sociocultural backgrounds who are underrepresented in ISL and domestic service-learning (Kuh, 2012; Patton et al., 2016). In Cox et al.'s (2014) quantitative study of the worldviews of individuals who participated in ISL during college, with especially large effects among first-generation college students, Pell Grant recipients, and students who previously traveled abroad. Reid (2018) found students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds experienced a unique process of identity negotiation through ISL.

Regardless of the direction of its effect, there is evidence that individuals require time post-service to integrate their perspective of an ISL experience into their lives in the United States (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Haines et al., 2017; Reid, 2018). Although some studies incorporated individuals' post-service experiences (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Reid, 2018), few explored the integration of participants' ISL experiences and perspective shifts after college.

Scholars (Hartman & Rola, 2000; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018) pointed to post-college outcomes as an area for future research. Kiely (2004) observed, "The long-term impact of students' perspective transformation on their ability to change their lifestyle habits, resist cultural norms, and engage in social action is often ambiguous and problematic" (p. 5). Similarly,

Hartman and Rola (2000) concluded, "We do not know whether these changes continue throughout a lifetime, but the short-term changes are all positive" (p. 21).

ISL as a Vehicle for Liberation

Referring to the potential of ISL as a liberatory or oppressive practice, Green and Johnson (2014) concluded, "At its core, all service-learning and especially international service-learning is highly problematic and potentially transformative" (p. 9). As a pedagogy that incorporates elements of multiple high-impact educational practices, evidence in the literature supports ISL as a transformative educational practice. Consequently, ISL has been labeled a "pedagogy of interruption" (Bruce, 2013); a transformative education practice (Bringle et al., 2011; Green & Johnson, 2014); and source of disruption (Catlett & Proweller, 2016; Reid, 2018; Shor et al., 2017).

ISL experiences can disrupt participants, challenging their socialized worldviews and perceptions (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Findings indicate that service-learning experiences empower students as social change agents (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Buschlen & Warner, 2014). Active participation in service and witnessing social change in action "creates a sense of how to empower others, develop internal strength, understand the community, and develop value-based leadership" (Buschlen & Warner, 2014, p. 312). ISL is particularly interesting because findings indicate the more divergent a service-learning experience is from participants' worldviews and perspectives, the greater the potential effect on learning and development (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004).

In international contexts, the transformative effect of service-learning participation is significant, complex, and unique (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Kiely (2004, 2005) explored ISL through the lens of transformative learning theory, framing ISL as a disorienting dilemma that

prompts transformation. Other studies identified service-learning or ISL as a prompt for change at the personal or societal level (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Shor et al., 2017). Reflecting the intersection of transformative learning theory and the social change model of leadership development in a study of a natural disaster response service-learning program, Buschlen and Warner (2014) concluded, "Whether viewed as part of Mezirow's … disorienting dilemma or as the starting point for social change, this project shocked participants and forced them into action" (p. 318).

After completing ISL, there is evidence that students incorporated the experience into their actions, beliefs, perspectives, and values when they return to the United States (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018; Shor et al., 2017). In Kiely's (2004) phenomenological study of ISL, participants experienced a disruption through ISL and began to question their worldviews and identities. This prompted a phase of envisioning, in which participants planned or contemplated personal, academic, professional, and societal changes promoted by their experiences in ISL (Kiely, 2004). Participants experienced a perspective transformation in at least one or more of six dimensions—political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, or cultural (Kiely, 2004).

Candiff (2016) found action for social change through ISL increased students' confidence in their ability to make a difference in society. This change reflects in students' post-experience actions. Candiff (2016) concluded, "The increase in confidence enabled student participants' ability to perform new functions during their experience abroad and once they returned home" (p. 210). These findings align with other studies of service-learning and ISL that suggest the development of social change agency and a belief in one's ability to foster positive social change

post-experience (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Komives & Wagner, 2017). There is no evidence that these changes persisted after college.

Mellon and Herrera (2014) described the process of perspective transformation through ISL and reintegration post-experience as one of acculturation. They also identified the potential for the development of social change agency and a social justice perspective through ISL, writing:

> Given sufficient opportunities for interaction with stage-appropriate information, transformative experiences, and critical reflection, students have the potential to obtain a social justice perspective that reflects an integrated valuing of self and others in a united effort to make a difference in society. (Mellon & Herrera, 2014, p. 28)

Reid (2018) and others (Buschlen &Warner, 2014; Grain, 2019; Kiely, 2004, 2005) made similar conclusions about the development of social change agency through service-learning, and students' transformed perspective of their self-identity in sociocultural and global contexts.

Candiff (2016) framed their study in the social change model of leadership development and found evidence of positive individual and group-level changes among ISL participants. Interaction with stakeholders informed college students' perspective shifts through the ISL experience (Candiff, 2016). Candiff (2016) concluded, "Student participants' perceived communication with stakeholders caused a change in their beliefs, values, feelings, biases, and assumptions that challenged former ideas and frame of references" (p. 138). Faculty mentors also observed a "disorientation" among participants who experienced challenges to their values, beliefs, and worldviews (Candiff, 2016, p. 140).

There is evidence in the literature that transformation through ISL is not universal and that it is not always positive (Bringle et al., 2011; Green & Johnson, 2014; Kiely, 2004; Reid,

2018). Green and Johnson (2014) went as far as to label the outcomes of ISL as potentially oppressive, perpetuating a savior complex and a form of neo-colonialism whereby predominately White students serve individuals of color in post-colonial nations. In addition, several studies found that ISL participants experienced challenges with reintegration into U.S. society post-ISL, encountering resistance to their perspective transformation within their sociocultural communities at home (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

ISL as a Vehicle for Oppression

While there is consensus in the literature that supports the view of ISL as a transformative and high-impact educational practice, several studies point to a lack of nuanced discussion on the challenges of ISL (Bringle et al., 2011; Green & Johnson, 2014; Kiely, 2004; Reid, 2018). Scholars (Kiely, 2004; Grain, 2019; Reid, 2018) referred to a trend in the literature that focuses on the positive outcomes of ISL. Reid (2018) labeled the positive orientation of ISL literature as the victory narrative. Kiely (2004) critiqued the existing literature as tending to "assume transformation is uniformly positive" (p. 8). Despite the narrative, challenges of ISL include barriers to access among marginalized students, development of a savior complex, and the perpetuation of colonial archetypes, especially in ISL experiences situated in the global South (Grain, 2019; Green & Johnson, 2014; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Mitchell et al. (2012), for example, referred to service-learning as a pedagogy of Whiteness.

Literature critiquing the victory narrative and reviewing ISL through a more critical lens expanded in the 2010s and 2020s (Grain, 2019; Green & Johnson, 2014; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018). Mellon and Herrera (2014) identified the potential of participants to become stuck in their normative perspectives when confronted with other perspectives. Candiff (2016) similarly identified that some students were unable to "move through the pain" of the

disorientation caused by immersion in a new cultural context, especially given that ISL typically

takes place in low-income countries in the global South (p. 213).

According to Mellon and Herrera (2014), "Students frequently attempt to superimpose

their own cultural framework and paradigms over the practices of people they are interacting

with and judge them as inefficient, insufficient, primitive, or simply wrong" (p. 16). Faculty

mentors in Candiff's (2016) study similarly observed, while "students addressed bias and

assumptions during their experience" it was an "overwhelming process" for them and "students'

inability to navigate this phase successfully stunted their ability to learn and develop" (pp.

212–213). Students who encountered challenges in the early days of an ISL experience rarely

recovered from their negative experiences, and in some cases the experience of navigating

change negatively affected their perceptions of the experience and/or the culture in which they

were immersed (Candiff, 2016; Mellon & Herrera, 2014).

Community members at a service site often feel challenged or conflicted about the

resources and services provided by ISL participants (Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

Several scholars (Bocci, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2012; Reid, 2018; York, 2016) identified the

structure and context of ISL as problematic because it typically involves predominantly White

students of European descent serving people of color in post-colonial nations. Particularly, Reid

(2018) identified the development of a White savior complex, and Green and Johnson (2014), the

perpetuation of colonial archetypes, among ISL participants during college.

Reid (2018) found a difference in the identity negotiations of students from

traditionally-represented backgrounds compared to students from traditionally-underrepresented

backgrounds in ISL. Students from underrepresented backgrounds were less concerned with

being saviors during their service and identified with some of the challenges experienced by the community members (Reid, 2018).

Reflecting on the challenging dynamics of ISL, Green and Johnson (2014) reflected, "Like all powerful human experiences, international service-learning is complex and can injure as easily as transform and can oppress as easily as liberate" (p. 11). The notion of ISL as a complex and transformative educational process is reflected in Kiely's (2004) concept of the chameleon complex.

Chameleon Complex

While ISL can foster liberatory or oppressive outcomes among participants, it is often more complex than a positive or negative effect. ISL experiences immerse participants in new contexts and bring them into contact with individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds (Bringle et al., 2011; Kiely, 2004; Reid, 2018). Findings suggest this encounter with otherness challenges students' perspectives, worldviews, and social paradigms (Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). The experience also engages students in a process of identity negotiation and change (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

There is a tendency in the literature to minimize the tension individuals experience when their values, norms, and narratives were challenged in ISL through the disorienting dilemma (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

Referring to ISL as producing a "chameleon complex" in participants, Kiely (2004) identified internal and external tensions between the intention to act for global social justice or change post-experience and action. Participants reported challenges reintegrating to their lives in the United States upon returning home and incorporating their transformed lifestyle and perspective amid opposing sociocultural and familial perspectives (Kiely, 2004). Other studies

(Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018) also identified the challenge of reintegrating to life post-ISL experience. Few studies (Kiely, 2004, 2005) explored integration of the experience after college; however, Kiely (2004, 2005) and (Reid, 2018) recommended future longitudinal studies on ISL participants post-college.

Kiely (2004) identified the chameleon complex, describing a process in which participants experience disruption and perspective transformation through ISL and struggle to "translate their perspective transformation into meaningful action" when they return to the United States. The literature is conclusive that many ISL participants experience a transformation through the experience and make plans or envision making changes at a personal or societal level, e.g., changing their major or participating in future service (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

After experiencing a perspective transformation through ISL, individuals may encounter resistance among their familial and social groups in the United States (Kiely, 2004; Mellon & Herrera, 2014). They also experience challenges translating intention to act or change into action (Kiely, 2004). This can result in stalling or de-integration of their perspective transformation (Kiely, 2004). Describing chameleon complex, Kiely (2004) writes:

> Findings from post-trip interview data indicate students' emerging global consciousness is much more complex and problematic once they return and attempt to adjust to life in the United States … Chameleon complex represents the internal struggle between conforming to, and resisting, dominant norms, rituals, and practices in the United States. Students report numerous challenges associated with reintegrating, applying, and coming to terms with aspects of their emerging global consciousness. They describe difficulties communicating their international service-learning experience to others and maintaining

relationships when challenging dominant U.S. cultural norms, beliefs, and practices. (pp.

14–15)

Other studies suggest similar challenges experienced by individuals when they return to the

United States after ISL participation and there were no studies exploring integration of

perspective transformation post-ISL (Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). There is limited

empirical evidence that perspective transformation prompted through ISL maintains post-college

(Candiff, 2016; Hartman & Rola, 2000; Kiely, 2004; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018).

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow's (1978, 1991, 2000) transformative learning theory served as the framework to

study the perceived influence of participation in undergraduate ISL on recent U.S. college

graduates' post-college readiness. The concept of transformative perspective shift was

introduced by Mezirow (1978) in a study of women returning to college as adults after several

years removed from schooling. Mezirow (1991) further developed the concept of transformative

learning theory and situated it in the adult learning literature. Several studies of college-aged

students and adult learners incorporate transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 2000), as well

as a few studies of high school students (Pryle, 2020).

Making Meaning through Transformative Learning

Transformative learning theory examines how individuals experience making meaning in

educational contexts in adulthood (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow's (1991, 2000) conception of

learning is of individuals making, or constructing, meaning of information and experiences

through their frames of reference, which are informed by their historical, cultural, social, and

individual contexts. Concepts of socialization, constructivism, and context factored prominently

into transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991).

Mezirow (1991) defined learning as "the process of using prior interpretation to construct a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (p.12). In this conception, learning involves five contexts: (1) the frame of reference; (2) conditions of communication, e.g., language; (3) lines of action, or purpose and intention of the learner; (4) self-image of the learner; and (5) the situation, or external environment (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 13–14). Transformative learning describes a process of clarifying meaning through learning in particular contexts (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (1991) explained that it differs from other types of adult learning theories, which focus on information processing, cognition, and context by focusing on how individuals make meaning of, or interpret, experiences.

In transformative learning theory, learning filters through individuals' frames of reference, or sociocultural paradigms, also referred to as meaning perspectives (Mezirow, 1991). According to Mezirow (2000), a frame of reference represents an individual's meaning perspective, i.e., the "structures of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions" (p. 16). A frame of reference includes two dimensions: a habit of mind, i.e., a set of assumptions, and a point of view, through which habit of mind is expressed. Assumptions may be "epistemological, logical, ethical, psychological, ideological, social, cultural, economic, political, ecological, scientific, or spiritual, or may pertain to other aspects of experience" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 19). Mezirow (2000) defined a point of view as comprised of:

> Clusters of meaning schemes—sets of immediate specific expectations, beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and judgements—that tacitly direct and shape a specific interpretation and determine how we judge, typify objects, and attribute causality. Meaning schemes commonly operate outside of awareness … They suggest a line of action that we tend to follow automatically unless brought into critical reflection. (p. 18)

Individuals develop a foundational frame reference through the formative childhood learning and socialization processes (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). For example, frames of reference include cultural paradigms, social norms, and worldviews, representing dominant sociocultural paradigms (Mezirow, 1991). In Mezirow's (1991, 2000) definition of learning, individuals filter experiences through their frames of reference, where it is embedded.

In adulthood, as individuals become more independent and function in contexts outside their socialized norms, learning may challenge their existing frames of reference. This is the foundation of transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Critical reflection and memory play important roles in the process of shifting perspective and taking future action with the perspective (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Mezirow (1991) defined perspective transformation as:

> The process of becoming critically aware of how and why our presuppositions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about our world; of reformulating these assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable and integrative perspective; and of making decisions or otherwise acting on these new understandings. (p. 14)

According to Mezirow (1991, 2000) individuals experience transformation and make meaning through ten distinct phases in Transformative Learning (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Mezirow's Phases of Meaning Making in Transformational Learning

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1. A disorienting dilemma

2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame

3. A critical assessment of assumptions

4. Recognition of one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared

5.   Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions

6.   Planning a course of action

7.   Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans

8.   Provisional trying of new roles

9.   Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships

10.   A reintegration into one's life based on conditions dictated by one's new
         perspective

Note. Adapted from Mezirow (2000), p. 22.

Initiated by a disorienting dilemma, in the transformational learning process individuals engage

in reframing their existing assumptions through self-examination and critical reflection,

ultimately taking action and experiencing perspective shifts with which they must reintegrate

into their existing lives (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Reframing assumptions occurs through objective

and subjective processes, whereby individuals critically engage with their assumptions internally

and in the context of others (Mezirow, 2000).

         Transformational learning is a reflective and didactic process through which individuals

engage in self and group examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognition of

discontent, and exploration of new roles. It also involves action and practice of new roles and

skills to build competence and confidence (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). The action phase may result

in immediate action, delayed action, or reaffirmation of existing action patterns and roles

(Mezirow, 2000). Individuals often experience challenges when they reintegrate into their lives

with a new perspective and may stall or regress in their transformation (Kiely, 2004; Mellon &

Herrera, 2014; Mezirow, 2000).

         Transformation reflects in expanding existing frames of reference, learning new frames

of reference, transforming points of view, or transforming habits of mind (Mezirow, 2000). In a

metanalysis of recent literature on transformative learning, Hoggan (2016a, 2016b) identified six types of change individuals experience in the transformative learning process—changes in (1) worldview, (2) self, (3) epistemology, i.e., the way individuals understand knowledge and knowledge construction, (4) ontology, i.e., the way an individual exists in or experiences the world, (5) behavior, and (5) capacity. Individuals' experiences degrees of change in the learning process and not all learning qualifies as transformative (Hogan, 2016).

Foundations in Adult Learning Theory

Transformative learning theory distinguished adult learning as a transformative process from childhood learning and development as a formative process. Describing the grounding of transformative learning theory in adult learning theory, Taylor (2000) explained:

> Meaning perspectives are often acquired uncritically in the course of childhood through socialization and acculturation, most frequently during significant experiences with teachers, parents, and mentors. Only in adulthood are meaning structures clearly formed and developed and the revision of established meaning structures takes place. (p. 288)

There is evidence that significant experiences in childhood such as participation in an international or cultural exchange program or the death of a loved one can prompt transformative learning (Pryle, 2020; Taylor, 2000). In adulthood, development can be stifled as individuals maintain childhood perspectives and/or make decisions based on or to conform to their socialized perspectives (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Transformative learning is a liberatory process in which adult learners exhibit their free will and autonomy, through an independently constructed perspective (Mezirow, 2000).

The process of reframing and critically reflecting can be an "intensely threatening emotional experience" for individuals (Mezirow, 2000, p. 6). Socially, individuals are rewarded

for meeting the expectations and assumptions of their dominant cultural, social, peer, and familial groups. Transferring new perspective into action is a challenging process that involves overcoming social, cultural, emotional, and other constraints. Individuals often delay action or reaffirm existing systems; however, many actualize their plans and reintegrate with a new perspective, even with the presence of backlash (Mezirow, 2000; Mellon & Herrera, 2014).

Constructivism

Transformative learning theory describes learning as a process of constructing and actively reframing meaning through critical reflection and action (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). It aligns with constructivism, a worldview based on the epistemological assumption that learners construct knowledge as they make meaning of their experiences (Driscoll, 2009; Phillips, 1995). Regarding learning, constructivist theories argue that learners construct knowledge by actively engaging with content; therefore, actively participating in knowledge construction (Phillips, 1995; Piaget, 1957). The context in which learning occurs is central to the constructivist concept of knowledge construction (Driscoll, 2009; Mezirow, 1991).

Constructivism contrasts with objectivism, which assumes knowledge exists independently of the individual and through experience learners come closer to objective knowledge (Driscoll, 2009). Freire (1970) and Dewey (1938), represent constructivist theories, each emphasizing the active role of the learner in knowledge construction, contrasting with the conception of the learner as a bank in which knowledge is deposited. Constructivist theories of learning position learning as an active and didactic process in which individuals engage in self-reflection, dialogue, and action through a meaning making process (Freire, 1970; Dewey, 1938). This concept is rooted in eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant's concept of critique and reflection as a method of self-formation, or meaning making (Mezirow, 2000).

Mezirow (1991, 2000) identified the influence of constructivism and deconstructivism theories in the development of transformative learning theory. Describing the influence of constructivism on transformative learning, Mezirow (1991) explained:

Specific constructivists assumptions underlying transformation theory include a conviction that meaning exists within ourselves rather than in external forms such as books and that the personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication …These meanings are handled and modified through an interpretive process … As far as a particular individual is concerned, the nature of a thing or event consists of the meaning that that individual gives to it. This does not negate the existence of a world external to us but only asserts that what we make of that world is entirely a function of our past personal experiences. (p. xiv)

Influence of Socialization

Mezirow (1991) emphasized the centrality of socialization, particularly the influence of family and cultural context, to transformative learning. The opening line of Mezirow's (1991) *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning* is: "As adult learners, we are caught in our own histories" (p. 1). Learning through socialization begins as a formative process in childhood through formal, i.e., education, and informal means, e.g., familial, social, and cultural norms and structures (Mezirow, 1991). As adults, individuals receive social rewards for conforming to sociocultural norms and structures learned in childhood. According to Mezirow (1991), "Approved ways of seeing and understanding, shaped by our language, culture, and personal experience, collaborate to set limits to our future learning" (p. 1).

Mezirow (1991) described socialization as inherently inequitable. Cultural capital, or characteristics and value systems expressed through "speech, attitudes, knowledge and behaviors," is transferred to individuals from communities and families (Jury et al., 2015). Cultural capital is transferred to individuals at institutional and social levels, reflecting the dominant culture and replicating inequalities within a society, i.e., privilege begets privilege (Bourdieu, 1986; Ore, 2011).

Through transformative learning in adulthood, individuals engage in a process of critical assessment and reflection regarding their frames of reference, or meaning perspectives, which may result in a perspective shift or transformation (Belenky & Stanton, 2000; Mezirow, 1991, 2000). This is a transformative and liberatory process because it involves the choice to move forward in a new direction and exist as an individual who is critically aware of the social structure within which they exist (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Mezirow (1991) referenced Bowers' (1984) work on education and cultural change in reference to socialization and the cultural context of learning. Bowers' (1984) premised their conception of socialization on the assumption that social reality is shared, maintained, and continuously negotiated through interaction and communication. Individuals build a sense of self and make meaning of experiences through the socialization process, ultimately taking for granted their assumptions and worldviews (Bowers, 1984; Mezirow, 1991, 2000). In transformative learning, Mezirow (1991, 2000) argued that as adults, learners encounter a rapidly changing society and diverse perspectives that contrast with their formative frames of reference, causing cognitive dissonance, which may prompt critical reflection, assessment, discontent, and ultimately a perspective shift.

Several human development theories (H. Astin & A. Astin, 1996; Freire, 1970; Harro, 2013; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Mezirow, 1991, 2000) identified a moment of perspective shift, in which individuals move toward social change, developing a sense of agency and urgency to act for positive social change at the local or global level. Building on the concept of socialization, Harro's (2013) cycle of liberation described a process of socialization in which individuals develop social change agency. The liberatory process describes a disruption in the cycle of socialization by a critical incident, or disorienting dilemma (Harro, 2013). The initiating incident prompts cognitive dissonance and a process of critical self-reflection and action, potentially motivating an individual to pursue action for positive social change (Harro, 2013). Through the cycle, individuals dismantle oppressive assumptions, reach out, build community, coalesce, and create change, while developing competence and commitment to maintain their social change agency (Harro, 2013).

Influence of Social justice Pedagogy

Freire's (1970) social justice pedagogy influenced Mezirow's (1991) conceptualization of transformative learning theory. Specifically, Mezirow (1991) cited the influence of critical theory in the development of transformative learning theory. Building on the influence of constructivism and socialization, Mezirow (1991) contended that "culture can encourage or discourage transformative thought" (p. 3). Individuals received social rewards for conformity with dominant social norms; however, conformity can stifle independence and development, as well as perpetuate structural oppression within society (Mezirow, 1991, 2000).

Transformative learning theory is an action-based and liberatory model for adult learning (Mezirow, 2000). The influence of Freire's (1970) social justice pedagogy is evident in the development of transformative learning. Both frameworks explore personal and social liberation,

or transformation, through critical educational practices (Freire, 1970; Mezirow, 2000). By challenging dominant structures through the transformative learning process, individuals critically examine their assumptions, values, and worldviews, leading to personal and societal change (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow (2000) explained:

> Transformative learning has both individual and social dimensions and implications. It demands that we be aware of how we come to our knowledge and as aware as we can be about the values that lead us to our perspectives. Cultural canon, socioeconomic structures, ideologies, and beliefs about ourselves, and the practices they support often conspire to foster conformity and impede development of responsible agency. (p. 8)

Rose (as cited in Hoggan, 2016a), a research assistant and program manager for Mezirow during his foundational research on transformative learning theory, expanded on the social dimensions of the theory, recalling, "His starting point was "How do we effect social change" and what kind of individual change is demanded for social change to occur" (p. 13).

Mezirow (1991) cited Freire's (1970) concept of conscientization as foundational to transformative learning theory and acknowledged the role of transformative learning in motivating individual and social change through social action. Freire (1970) defined conscientization as the process through which learners "achieve a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it" (p. 27). Through critical reflection and action by the oppressed and their allies, educators and students re-create knowledge, breaking structures perpetuated by dominant social groups (Freire, 1970). Freire's (1970) pedagogy of the oppressed is especially relevant to education that occurs in nations shaped by colonial norms and structures. Particularly, Freire (1970) argued that the banking concept of education, through which students act as receptacles,

or banks, for knowledge deposition, discourages dialogue and perpetuates oppressive social structures.

Perception of oppression is central to the Freire's (1970) social justice pedagogy. Similarly, to Mezirow's (1991, 2000) disorienting dilemma, an individual's path to liberation in the social justice pedagogy begins with "critical awareness of oppression" (Freire, 1970, p. 51). Awareness of oppression alone cannot result in the re-creation of knowledge and social reality; rather, change occurs through the coupling of reflection with action (Freire, 1970). Freire's (1970) concept of praxis described the combination of reflection and action. Mezirow (1991, 2000) incorporated praxis in transformative learning theory. In this model, as opposed to the banking concept of education, students and educators engage in critical dialogue and action to co-create knowledge (Freire, 1970).

The pedagogy is equally relevant to an examination of students from dominant and subordinate, or oppressed, social groups. According to Freire (1970), the social order dehumanizes the privileged and oppressed. It is a fundamentally humanist and constructivist framework interested in the liberation of all people in their becoming and in the development of an equitable and just social order co-created by historically subordinate and dominant social groups (Freire, 1970).

Transformative Learning in Higher Education

Transformative learning theory is situated in the broader category of adult learning theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). The theory emerged from Mezirow's (1978) study of adult women who returned to college after a period away from education. It is consequently situated as a theory of adult education and has been applied to traditionally college-aged students (Crabtree, 2008; Daloz, 2000; Kiely, 2004; Mezirow, 2000), as well as adolescent learners (Pryle, 2020). Studies

of transformative learning typically involve adults between the ages of 17 and 70 (Taylor, 2000). This range incorporates traditionally college-aged students, as well as nontraditional adult learners (Patton et al., 2016). As such, there are several studies in the higher education literature which incorporate a transformative learning theory framework (Taylor, 2000).

College is typically a time of personal transformation during which individuals encounter new experiences, ideas, individuals from different backgrounds, and environments (Patton et al., 2016). In higher education, educators often intentionally developed pedagogies and educational experiences to prompt the transformation and cognitive dissonance (Komives & Wagner, 2017; Patton et al., 2016). For example, H. Astin and A. Astin (1996) developed the social change model of leadership development as a curricular model with two primary goals: (1) to enhance student learning and development in the areas of self-knowledge and leadership competency; and (2) to facilitate positive social change at the institution and in the community (p. 19).

Many curricular and co-curricular educational models in higher education intentionally incorporate a social justice framework or critical lens to prompt reflection, dialogue, and perspective shifts among college students (Klobassa, 2017; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Melchior, 2017). Klobassa (2017), for example, studied the development of social justice activist identity development during college.

Higher education scholars have utilized transformative learning theory to examine education abroad (Chwialkowska, 2020; Conceição, 2021; Onosu, 2020; Walters et al., 2017), faculty development (Allen, 2017; Hutchins & Hode, 2019), and program-specific curriculum such as nursing, counseling, and teacher education programs (Campbell & Brysiewicz, 2018; Harris et al., 2008; Owen, 2016). Daloz (2000) examined transformative learning theory as a medium to study education for social change. Other studies have explored specific aspects of

transformative learning. For example, Hyde (2021) examined the concepts of critical dialogue and reflection.

Studies identified service-learning as a disorienting dilemma in the transformative learning process (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Pryle, 2020; Shor et al., 2017). The studies, which were detailed in the section on ISL, explored both domestic (Buschlen & Warner, 2014) and international (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Shor et al., 2017) service-learning experiences during college. There was consensus in the studies that service-learning can initiate the disorienting dilemma necessary for the transformative learning process (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Pryle, 2020; Shor et al., 2017). Collectively, the studies identified transformative learning in service-learning experiences as a complex process, through which individuals transform, regress, or stall in their liberation process (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Kiely, 2004, 2005).

Summary

A review of the literature on higher education revealed HEIs in the United States face increased accountability demands to prepare undergraduate students for life after college, especially in the context of rising tuition costs and student debt (Bok, 2013; Delbanco, 2012; Geiger, 2019). In addition, HEIs in the United States face public pressure to demonstrate a social function (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Kezar, 2004; Komives & Wagner, 2017). This represents a shift in the purposes of HEIs in the United States to include service and community development functions in addition to research and professional development (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013). The tradition of higher education as a pathway to develop leaders for the benefit of society is rooted in the original focus of U.S. higher education (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Geiger, 2011).

The literature on ISL as a high-impact pedagogy in higher education demonstrated that ISL might have a transformative effect on students and society. ISL outcomes are complex and findings in the literature reveal a potential to positively transform students and/or perpetuate oppressive social structures (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Candiff, 2016; Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; McNamara, 2012; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Post-ISL experience, evidence suggests individuals may experience a positive transformative effect, while others struggle to translate the intention to change into action as they encounter barriers and resistance from social groups when they return home (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2019). Despite the transformative influence of ISL participation during college, few undergraduate students in the United States participate in any form of education abroad, including ISL (IIE, 2020). In addition, few studies examined the post-college effect of undergraduate ISL participation on recent U.S. college graduates (Kiely, 2004; Reid, 2018).

The study utilized transformative learning theory to examine recent U.S. college graduates' perceptions of the effect of participating in ISL as an undergraduate on their post-college readiness. Transformative learning theory is an adult learning theory that describes adult education as transformative. Educational experiences in adulthood have the potential to shift the perspective of learners toward personal liberation and social transformation (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Findings contribute to the literature on ISL in U.S. higher education, as well as to practices and strategies to prepare undergraduate students for life after college. The following chapter describes the methodology for this study.

Chapter III: Methodology

A qualitative, phenomenological approach was used to examine the research question, "How do recent U.S. college graduates perceive the effect of participating in undergraduate international service-learning on their post-college readiness?" Phenomenological inquiry was an appropriate methodology in relation to the research question and the purpose of the study, which is to understand the phenomenon of the perceived effect of undergraduate ISL participation on the post-college readiness of recent U.S. college graduates. The design and methods enable participants to describe the essence of their lived experiences with the phenomenon.

Rationale for Approach

Qualitative research was identified as the approach for the study due to the nature of the research. Qualitative research involves narrative data collected in a natural setting. Furthermore, it involves participants' meaning making and perceptions in the context of a phenomenon and specific setting (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data include transcribed interviews and documentary artifacts, rather than numeric content (Creswell, 2014).

This study examined the experiences of recent U.S. college graduates who participated in ISL as undergraduates and how they perceived the effect of that experience on their lives after college. The purpose of the study is inherently qualitative as it addresses "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 8). Perception is a uniquely human experience that develops through individual experience in social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). A qualitative approach and design are ideal for collecting and analyzing data about human experience that occurs in a natural environment,

as was the case with this study (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Research questions and data collection procedures flow inductively from the problem and purpose. As typical of qualitative research, I, as the researcher, was the primary instrument of data collection and analysis for this study. Long interviews were the primary form of data collection (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Themes and subthemes inductively emerged from transcribed qualitative interview data during the data analysis phase (Creswell, 2014). These formed the basis for the findings and conclusions of this study in Chapters IV and V.

A qualitative, phenomenological approach emerged as the ideal design for this study based on the research problem, theoretical framework, and research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The phenomenon, i.e., the perceived effect of undergraduate ISL participation on the post-college readiness of recent U.S. college graduates, was the primary unit of analysis (Moustakas, 1994). Through the phenomenon, the study examined how recent U.S. college graduates perceived the effect, if any, of an undergraduate ISL experience on their post-college readiness (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). The shared meaning of participants with the phenomenon emerged from themes identified through analysis of participant interview transcripts (Moustakas, 1994).

Research Design

The goal of phenomenological inquiry is to understand the essence of the experience of individuals with a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994). Patton (2015) established that phenomenological studies are premised

on the assumption that "there is an essence or essences to shared experience" (p. 116). Therefore, phenomenological research focuses on the essence of individuals' experiences with a phenomenon and the transformation of experience into consciousness (Bevan, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The phenomenon, or an object of human experience, is the primary unit of analysis in phenomenological inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Consciousness and perception are central to phenomenological inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) described perception as "the primary source of knowledge" in the phenomenological approach to research (p. 52). In phenomenological studies, transformation of consciousness, or meaning making, among a group of individuals is explored in the context of a shared experience, or phenomenon (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through the process of detailing multiple individuals' perceptions of an experience, a common meaning emerges that transcends the individual, representing the essence, or essences, of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

Intuition and intentionality also form a basis for identifying the common essence, or essences, of a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The basis for knowledge in the phenomenological tradition is human intuition, which transforms the essences or meanings associated with an experience into knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Intuition involves an internal reflective process whereby the meaning of things becomes clear (Moustakas, 1994). Knowledge, therefore, is subjective and dependent on context and individual perception (Moustakas, 1994). Intentionality refers to the act of being conscious of something (Moustakas, 1994). In phenomenological inquiry, Moustakas (1994) wrote, "In the grasping of the meaning of experience, we are engaging in the process of functioning intentionally; we uncover the

meanings of phenomena, deliver them the anonymity of the natural attitude, move them toward

inclusive totality of consciousness" (p. 31). Shared meaning emerges from individual meaning,

derived through intuitive perceptions and intentional consciousness of a common experience

with a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

In a typical phenomenological design, data are collected through interviews of

individuals who experienced the phenomenon. Interview transcripts are thematically analyzed

for significant statements and descriptions of the essences of the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014;

Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Long interviews, which enable the individual

to return to the self as a source of knowledge, are the primary means of data collection (Creswell,

2014; Moustakas, 1994). Through a process of phenomenological reduction, each participants'

total experience with a phenomenon is treated singularly, and separated from the researcher's

background and knowledge, to "derive a textual description of the meanings and essences of the

phenomenon, the constituents that comprise the experience of the consciousness" (p. 34).

Phenomenological reports include a rich description of the phenomenon with reference to

significant statements and structural descriptions about the essences of a phenomenon, organized

thematically (Creswell, 2014).

The purpose of this study was to understand how recent U.S. college graduates perceive

the effect, if any, of an undergraduate ISL experience on their post-college readiness (Bevan,

2014; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A phenomenological approach was

appropriate because the study was rooted in a description of the phenomenon. Individuals with a

shared experience of the phenomenon were sampled for the study. Participants were sampled

from a single site. The decision to use a single site was based on Creswell and Poth's (2018)

cautioning regarding phenomenological research that "the more diverse the characteristics of the individuals, the more difficult it will be for the research to find common experiences, themes, and the overall essence of the experience for all participants" (p. 153). A qualitative phenomenological approach was appropriate considering the characteristics and purpose of this study.

Site and Sample Selection

Selection of a site and sampling participants represent critical factors in qualitative research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The selected site for the study and sample are described below.

Site

This site for the study was a U.S. HEI that offers undergraduate ISL, referred to as Global University in this study. Global University is a private university in the U.S. Northeast. Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended utilizing a single site in qualitative phenomenological studies as a means of controlling environmental factors to facilitate the identification of common experiences and the essence of the phenomenon. Interviews were conducted virtually using the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Participants

Participants for this study were recent U.S. college graduates who participated in faculty-led global immersion courses with an ISL component at Global University. The faculty-led global immersion courses with ISL are referred to as Collaborative ISL Courses. Global University's Collaborative ISL Courses are part of a faculty-led global immersion program in which students complete one of two discipline-specific three-credit courses. The Collaborative ISL Courses include a joint two-week education abroad experience with cultural

immersion, service, experiential, and educational components in a country in Eastern Africa. Prior to travel, students engaged in curricular and co-curricular learning in preparation for the global immersion experience. In this study, a recent U.S. college graduate was defined as an individual who graduated from a U.S. HEI in the last six academic years, or between 2015 and 2021. Based on standards for phenomenological research, seven participants were recruited to participate in the study. Phenomenological studies typically include samples in the range of 5 to 25 participants; however, studies have been published with smaller or larger sample sizes (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Participants were recruited for this study using criterion and snowball sampling. A recruitment email was sent to potential participants (Appendix A). A faculty-leader for the Collaborative ISL Courses was identified as gatekeeper for the study to provide support in participant recruitment. The gatekeeper shared the recruitment letter to individuals who met the criteria for participation. Two criteria formed the basis for criterion sampling: (1) participation in one of the undergraduate global immersion courses with ISL, and (2) graduation from college in the last six academic years, or between 2015 and 2021. In addition, snowball sampling was used to identify potential participants who met the criteria for the study. Snowball sampling is a sampling method in which potential participants recommend other potential participants who meet the criteria for participation in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This is often an effective approach because participants may have access to and rapport with other individuals who meet the criteria for the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The recruitment letter included a statement that potential participants may forward the recruitment email to other potential participants based on the criteria; however, to maintain anonymity individuals were directed in the letter to only contact the researcher to express interest in participation. Six

participants were recruited through the recruitment letter sent by the gatekeeper and one

participant was recruited through snowball sampling at the recommendation of another potential

participant. Participants were only known to the research and were not identified to the

gatekeeper or other participants.

Individuals interested in participating in the study were directed in the recruitment letter

to only contact the researcher. Participants were only known to the researcher and were made

known to the gatekeeper or to each other. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their

anonymity.

Consent

Prior to participating in the study, each participant received an informed consent letter.

The letter detailed the confidential and voluntary nature of the study, as well as the known risks

and benefits of participation. To qualify for participation, all participants consented to participate

in the study by reviewing, signing, and returning the informed consent letter to the researcher.

Because interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom, informed consent letters were emailed to

all participants. Participants were required to electronically sign the informed consent letter

forms and return them via email to the researcher (Appendix C). As this study involves a sample

of recent U.S. college graduates, all participants were over the age of 18.

Confidentiality

Participants in this study were each assigned a pseudonym and number. A master

database linking participant pseudonyms and numbers to actual names was created using

Microsoft Excel. Audio files, transcriptions, and other participant data were saved using the

coded numbers associated with participant pseudonyms. A master database of all the data was

created using Microsoft Excel. All files were securely saved on my personal MacBook Pro

laptop and in an external hard drive in encrypted and password protected files. Participants were

known only to the researcher. Participants had no interaction with one another and were not

made known to one another or the gatekeeper. All interviews occurred virtually through Zoom

video conferencing, and participants were sent unique Zoom links.

Data Collection Procedures

The following processes were used for data collection and security.

Access

After approval from the Wilkes University Institutional Review Board (IRB), I secured

permission to conduct the study from Global University, following required processes. An email

was sent to a faculty-leader for one of the Collaborative ISL Courses, a faculty member at Global

University, to request permission to conduct the study (Appendix D). Prior to receiving

permission to conduct the study, I was required to complete Global University's IRB review.

After receiving IRB approval from Global University through an expedited review process and

permission to conduct the study from the Collaborative ISL faculty, a faculty-leader for the

Collaborative ISL Courses was recruited as a gatekeeper for the study. An email was sent to

recruit the gatekeeper (Appendix E). In this study, the gatekeeper supported recruitment of

participants, extending their existing rapport with potential participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Schedule

Interviews were scheduled for one hour with each participant. Based on participant

availability, a date and time for a one-hour interview was identified and scheduled via email

between the researcher and participant. Interviews were conducted between May 13 to May 26,

2022, and ranged in duration from 23 to 61 minutes, averaging 44 minutes. Participants were

informed that they may be contacted for an optional follow-up interview; however, no follow-up

interviews were necessary. The research sent interview transcriptions and initial findings for

review as a validation strategy, i.e., member checks. The total time obligation for the interview

was two to three hours.

Interview Protocol

After greeting each participant, sharing necessary information, and establishing consent

to record, I began taping. Prior to recording, participants were given time to review the consent

form previously signed and returned via email, as well as to ask any questions related to the

study. I asked each participant several questions using an interview protocol (Appendix F).

Reflective and meditative pauses were intentionally included in the interview protocol to focus

on the experiences and perceptions of participants in relation to the phenomenon (Moustakas,

1994).

Based on phenomenological standards, questions were designed to contextualize the

participants' experiences in their biographies and to allow for descriptive and natural responses

in relation to their experiences with the phenomenon (Bevan, 2014). Questions consisted of

broad open-ended questions. Emergent probing questions were asked to clarify the phenomenon

based on participants' responses to broad open-ended questions (Bevan, 2014). In addition,

optional closed-ended demographic questions were included as a concluding section of the

interview protocol. I informed all participants that they could select to not answer all or some of

the questions in the demographic section by stating no response. As the researcher, I practiced

phenomenological reduction, bracketing my existing knowledge of the content and literature

(Bevan, 2014; Moustakas, 1994).

Additional Data, Artifacts, and Observations

All data were collected through qualitative interviews. Due to the scope of this study and its phenomenological focus, no additional data, artifacts, or observations were collected. Long interviews were the primary means of data collection for this study, as is typical of phenomenological inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994).

Recording

Interviews were recorded using Voice Memo, an iPhone app. According to best practices, a back-up high quality audio recorder, extra batteries, pen, and paper were available during each interview in the event of technological issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Storage

After each interview, audio files were downloaded to my personal MacBook Pro laptop, saved in encrypted and password protected folders, and removed from my personal cell phone. Interview audio files, interview transcripts, participant databases, and any other documents were saved in my personal MacBook Pro and in an external hard drive backup in encrypted and password protected files. Participants were given pseudonyms and associated numbers. All data files were saved according to participants assigned coded numbers. I am the only person with access to the laptop, which is password protected. The physical hard drive is password protected and is stored in a locked cabinet which I own, and that is only accessible to me. According to federal regulations for human subjects research, the data will remain stored in secure locations for at least three years and accessible for review.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues considered for the student included participant identity protection.

Participant Identity Protection

Before participating in the study, individuals received an informed consent letter. The letter detailed the confidential and voluntary nature of participation, as well as the known risks and benefits of participation. As a requirement of participation in the study, all participants signed the informed consent letter, affirming their understanding of its contents and agreement to participate (Appendix A).

Participants were known only to the researcher. They were not made known to other participants or the gatekeeper. The recruitment letter advised potential participants only to contact the researcher to express their interest in participation in the study. All interviews occurred virtually, and participants were sent a unique Zoom link.

All participant data were deidentified for data storage and reporting. Participants were assigned a coded number for data storage and a pseudonym for reporting. A master database of all deidentified participant data was created using Microsoft Excel. All data files were securely stored on a personal MacBook and external hard drive in encrypted and password protected files only accessible to the researcher. The data will be stored on these devices for three years.

In addition, as the researcher, I completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) social and behavioral research certificate (Appendix B). This training provided skills and knowledge that facilitated participant protection through the study.

Data Analysis

Data analysis included transcription of qualitative interviews, member checking, and analysis using NVivo software.

Transcription

For this study, interviews were the primary source of data. Participant interviews were transcribed with Otter.ai, an automated transcription service that converts audio files into searchable and editable transcripts. After each audio file was transcribed through the automated system, the transcriptions were reviewed and edited for accuracy. Transcriptions and transcript editing were completed one to four days after each interview to ensure accuracy. Memos conducted during data collection and recorded using the memo function in NVivo were used to support data analysis and interpretation.

Member Checking

Member checking, or respondent validation, was used to facilitate data analysis and to enhance the validity of the study. To ensure the accuracy of the data and that the analysis aligned with the participants' understanding of the phenomenon, participants were engaged prior to and after data analysis for member checking. Transcripts of interviews were emailed to each participant approximately one week after the interview for review prior to analysis. Participants were given the opportunity to review and clarify statements if desired, after which the researcher began data analysis. Two participants responded to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts. After analysis, participants were provided with a narrative draft of the findings and interpretive conclusions and were given the opportunity to provide feedback regarding their accuracy and relevance. Three participants responded affirmatively to the draft narrative findings and conclusions. One participant made a correction to their undergraduate major and one participant made a correction on the location of their pre-experience travel.

Analysis with NVivo

Interview transcriptions were analyzed using the most recent version of NVivo software

program, NVivo 1.0 for Mac. NVivo annotation tools were utilized to take notes and memos

during analysis. Data were coded based on emergent themes and subthemes, referred to as codes

and sub-codes in NVivo. Typical of phenomenological inquiry, the data were analyzed for

"descriptions of the essence" of the phenomenon and significant statements. To identify themes

related to the essences of the experience, codes were developed based on common experiences

among the participants. Open coding of interview transcriptions yielded an initial set of 103

codes, which were grouped thematically. Codes were narrowed and re-coded until a final set of

three themes, described in Chapter IV, emerged. These formed the basis for the findings and

conclusions in Chapter V.

Role of the Researcher

In qualitative research, the researcher plays a central role as the primary instrument of

data collection and analysis. I work at a HEI in the United States in an office that implements

international education programs in Africa. I also hold a master's degree in higher education

administration. My professional role consists of grant-writing, evaluation, and partnership

management for an international education program. I have participated in undergraduate

domestic service-learning as a student and as a staff/faculty mentor but have no direct experience

with undergraduate ISL as a student or staff/faculty mentor. My department at the HEI offers an

undergraduate ISL program for U.S. college students; however, management of the program

does not fall within my responsibilities.

I have a previous affiliation with the HEI, Global University, that was the site for this study. I did not participate in the Global University's Collaborative ISL Courses in any capacity and have no existing relationship with the program. I did not identify my previous affiliation to Global University with participants at any point in the study and had no prior relationship with any of the participants. My prior affiliation with Global University did not affect the data. Each participant was encouraged to respond to questions honestly and thoroughly.

Based on my academic background and professional work, I have a positive view of globalism and pluralism. In addition, in my professional capacity, I have traveled extensively internationally for research and program development, including to the country in East Africa that students traveled to through the faculty-led global immersion program associated with the Collaborative ISL Courses at Global University. I have also traveled internationally in my personal life. These international experiences were transformative in shaping my perspective and worldview, which informed my interest in the topic of this study. My related worldview and experiences did not affect the data.

Phenomenological inquiry requires the researcher to reflect on and set aside his or her own experience with and/or existing knowledge of the phenomenon, or epoche. Prior to data collection and analysis, I utilized epoche techniques to bracket, or set aside my "prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" about the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). To bracket my experience and knowledge, I wrote an account of related personal experience, existing knowledge, and worldview in relation to the phenomenon. Before each interview I used meditation techniques to separate out related experiences, knowledge, worldview, and philosophical assumptions. In addition, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the process

of data collection and analysis to record personal reflections and check for potential emergent biases.

Validity and Reliability

In qualitative research, validity is the extent to which research findings are credible in the context of the data, and reliability is an assessment of the consistency of the findings with the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Several strategies were used to ensure the validity and reliability of the data and findings in this study. Validity measures included the use of epoche to set aside my related experience with the phenomenon and existing understanding of the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). Member checks of interview transcripts and research findings were also used as a validation strategy. Study participants were asked to review and validate their transcribed interviews and the initial findings and conclusions of the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Reliability, or the credibility of the findings, included the use of participants' voices through quotes and rich, thick descriptions of the data. I also maintain an audit trail to support the reliability of the study. An audit trail is a detailed accounting for the methods, procedures, and decision-making points. This included procedures for recording and storing participant data, as well as the use of memos and field notes to ensure the integrity and accuracy of the data. Member checks of transcriptions and findings also supported the reliability of the study by ensuring the transcriptions were accurate and findings were consistent with participant experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Summary

This qualitative, phenomenological study examined the research questions, "How do recent U.S. college graduates perceive the effect of participating in undergraduate international service-learning on their post-college readiness?" Recent U.S. college graduates were sampled from a faculty-global immersion program with ISL at an HEI in the United States. A phenomenological design including open-ended interview questions and close-ended demographic questions that allowed participants to describe their experiences with the phenomenon. Interview data were examined using NVivo to identify themes related to the essences of participants' experiences with the phenomenon. Validity and reliability strategies including member checking were utilized to facilitate analysis accurate to participants' experiences. Findings and conclusions emerged from the data and are detailed in Chapters IV and V (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Moustakas, 1994).

Chapter IV: Findings

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine how recent U.S. college graduates perceive their participation in ISL as undergraduate students to have affected their post-college readiness through the theoretical lens of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory.

Research Question

To examine the perceived effect of participation in ISL during college on recent U.S. college graduates' lives post-college, the following research question was addressed:

How do recent U.S. college graduates perceive the effect of participating in

undergraduate international service-learning on their post-college readiness?

Research Findings and Major Themes with Supporting Evidence

Several themes emerged from the qualitative data. The themes, which are described after a description of the participants, focused on the participants experiences in the global immersion course with ISL, their processing of the experience, and their views of the experience as an anchor in their lives after college. Participants described their experience with the ISL course, including their motivation to participate and perceptions of engaging in experiential learning through service in a different cultural context. Processing the experience also emerged as a theme. Participants described processing what they experienced and integrating it into their perspectives. While some participants returned to their lives in the United States with limited disruption, others described challenges reintegrating to their lives or delayed processing of the experience. Finally, participants described their ISL experiences as an anchor in their lives after college, professionally and personally. All participants described experiencing change or

transformation through their participation in ISL as undergraduate college students, with some effect on their lives after college.

Participants

Each participant is described below and referred to with their assigned pseudonym. All participants were alumni of Global University and participated in a Collaborative ISL Course as college undergraduates. They graduated from college between 2016 and 2020. Descriptions include information about the participants' backgrounds as college undergraduates and of their lives after college.

Oliver. Oliver graduated from Global University in 2016 on a pre-med track with a bachelor's degree in biology. He participated in a Collaborative ISL Course in 2016 as a senior in college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2016. The course, which focused on Christianity in Africa, counted towards a theology/religious studies minor. Oliver is currently a medical student. He also received a master's degree from Global University, through which he traveled to East Africa a second time as a student mentor for a graduate-level Collaborative ISL Courses, which he helped design.

Violet. Violet graduated from Global University in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in nursing. She completed a Collaborative ISL Course in 2017 as a senior in college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2017. The course, which focused on healthcare in Africa, counted as a major elective toward her nursing degree. Violet currently works as a registered nurse and intends to complete a graduate degree.

Jared. Jared graduated from Global University in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in nursing. He completed a Collaborative ISL Course in 2017 as a senior in college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2017. The course,

which focused on healthcare in Africa, counted as a major elective toward his nursing degree. Jared currently works as a registered nurse and is pursuing a master's degree in nursing. Jared is a veteran of the U.S. military. He identified as a nontraditional college student, including living and working off campus.

Ashton. Ashton graduated from Global University in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in english, theology/religious studies, and philosophy. He participated in a Collaborative ISL Course in 2017 as a junior in college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2017. The course, which focused on Christianity in Africa, counted as a major elective toward his degree. Ashton is currently a teacher and completed a master's degree in education.

Lily. Lily graduated from Global University in 2019 with a bachelor's degree in journalism and philosophy. She completed a Collaborative ISL Course in 2019 as a senior in college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2019. The course, which focused on Christianity in Africa, counted as a general education elective toward her degree. Lily currently works as a nonprofit consultant and completed a master's degree in nonprofit management.

Iris. Iris graduated from Global University in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in nursing. She completed a Collaborative ISL Course in 2019 as a junior in college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2020. The course, which focused on healthcare in Africa, counted as a major elective toward her nursing degree. Iris currently works as a registered nurse in a home healthcare setting.

Reed. Reed graduated from Global University in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in biology and bioinformatics. He participated in a Collaborative ISL Course in 2020 as a senior in

college and traveled to a country in East Africa for approximately two-and-half weeks in January 2020. The course, which focused on Christianity in Africa, counted as a general education elective toward his degree. Reed is currently a veterinary technician and is enrolling in a graduate program to become a veterinarian in August 2022.

Experience in Global Immersion Course with International Service-Learning

Participants shared common characteristics and experiences prior to enrolling in a Collaborative ISL Course. They discussed their motivation for enrolling in the course as well their experiences participating in global immersion with ISL.

Participant Characteristics. A common social and academic profile emerged among the participants.

Socioeconomic Backgrounds. All participants identified as White. Violet, Lily, and Iris identified as women and Ashton, Reed, Oliver, and Jared, as men. Violet, Lily, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, and Iris were traditional college students. At the time of their participation in a Collaborative ISL Course, they ranged in age from 20-21, and the majority, except for Reed, lived on campus. Only Jared, who was 24 at the time of his participation in the ISL course, identified as a nontraditional student. Jared is a veteran of the U.S. military who lived and worked off campus during his time as a college undergraduate.

In terms of socioeconomic background, six participants identified as upper middle class or middle class, and one identified as working low income. Oliver, Reed, and Jared mentioned financial constraints to participating in the ISL course; however, each described overcoming the constraints. Oliver and Reed identified as first-generation college graduates, and all other participants identified at least one parent with a bachelor's degree or higher.

High Academically Achieving and Engaging. Most participants identified as being highly involved in academic and student activities as college undergraduates. Violet, Lily, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, and Jared described themselves as academically high achieving students. In addition, Lily, Reed, Ashton, Oliver, and Jared were enrolled in an honors program at Global University. Of his college experience, Reed shared, "I was a very diligent student. I studied well, I studied hard, and I did well in all of my classes." Lily echoed, "I was always very academically oriented, like … first in the class, over a 4.0 GPA. Academics were everything to me." After college Lily, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, and Jared completed or are pursuing graduate degrees, and Violet and Iris expressed intentions to pursue further education at the graduate level.

Violet, Lily, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, and Iris described themselves as highly involved in student activities, including student organizations, volunteering, and student leadership. Jared lived and worked off campus as an emergency medical technician (EMT) during college. Among the participants, there was some indication student involvement is part of the culture at Global University. Ashton explained of his college undergraduate experience at Global University, "it was kind of the culture to be very involved and to orient yourself toward service."

Previous Travel Experience. All participants recounted international travel prior to participating in the ISL course either professionally, academically, or with family. Participants described a variety of travel experiences. Violet, Lily, Reed, Oliver, and Jared participated in global education through study abroad or international research prior to enrolling in a Collaborative ISL Course. Ashton, Oliver, and Iris each traveled abroad with family prior to participating in the ISL course. Jared traveled internationally through his military service. Many participants described prior travel to European countries. In addition, Violet and Jared previously

traveled to countries in the Middle East, Oliver traveled to Central America and Africa, and Reed to Southeast Asia.

Some participants described travel as part of their family cultures. Oliver explained, "Travel was always kind of a big thing … I think I was in seventh grade, my dad, brother, and I went over to Africa for the first time." Iris traveled internationally with her mother who traveled frequently for work. Ashton, who identified his father as an immigrant, previously traveled to Europe to visit family. Other participants began traveling internationally in high school or college. "My whole mentality as a college student was, let me get in and let me get out and having as much fun and learning as much as possible," Lily explained. Several participants shared this sentiment.

Open Mindedness. All participants expressed a pre-existing openness to new experiences. Ashton, Oliver, and Iris described outgoing and social personalities. Lily and Ashton explicitly stated a desire for transformation through the ISL experience. Lily shared of her decision to join the course, "I really wanted to expand my perspective." Reflecting on a discussion about the Collaborative ISL Course with a friend who participated the previous year, Ashton shared:

> She said it was so transformative. She … came back … notably touched, and whenever she spoke about it … her eyes lit up … I couldn't tell how but I could tell that she was … changed by this experience somehow and deeply affected. So that's what kind of … piqued my initial interest.

Motivation to participate. In addition to a desire to expand their perspectives, participants were motivated to participate in the course by peers and faculty mentors. The logistics of the Collaborative ISL Course were also described as motivating factors.

Recommendation of Faculty and Peers. Most participants described learning about the Collaborative ISL Courses in a classroom setting from a faculty member. Oliver and Reed described encouragement from a faculty mentor for one of the courses to participate. Ashton and Iris described learning about or discussing the Collaborative ISL Course with a friend or mentor who participated in a previous year.

Course Content and Duration. All participants were enrolled in one of two Collaborative ISL Courses. Course A focused on healthcare in Africa and Course B focused on Christianity in Africa. Among the study participants, Violet, Jared, and Iris were nursing majors who participated in Course A. Lily, Ashton, Reed, and Oliver were enrolled in Course B. Ashton triple majored in english, theology/religious studies, and philosophy, and Oliver was a theology/religious studies minor. For participants with a major or minor in nursing or theology/religious studies, the course counted as a major or minor elective. Lily and Reed completed the course as a core general education elective in theology/religious studies.

Reflecting on their motivation to participate in the course, many participants identified the course designation as a major, minor, or general education elective as appealing. The duration of travel, i.e., approximately two and half weeks during an intersession semester, was also a motivating factor for participants. Iris explained, "As a nursing course … I just thought it'd be really a cool experience to see what healthcare is like there … and compare." In addition, as a short-term global immersion course with ISL, the course offered participants an opportunity to participate in education abroad without taking a full semester abroad.

Pre-existing Interest in Travel. All participants described a motivation to travel, to see another part of the world, and/or interest in experiencing another way of life as a factor in their participation. Violet described tourism as a motivating factor. Initially, Violet explained, "Going

to Africa going, to the southern hemisphere … of perceiving a whole new … country and perspective and way of life interested me more from like a tourist … perspective rather than a particularly existential one." In the global immersion experience, and the more she interacted with people in the host country, her focus shifted to cultural immersion.

The nontraditional host country in East Africa was also identified as a motivating factor by Lily, Ashton, Oliver, and Jared. Lily explained, "I grew up in a Hallmark town. That's not what life is like, for the most part. So yeah … My main thought was I would just like to see the world and go to a place that I might not go alone." Oliver reflected, "I don't know if I would have ever had the opportunity to go again, even thinking about the future."

Ashton summed up several of these factors in his decision to enroll in the course, explaining:

> Logistically, the course was a theology course … and it factored into my major. It counted as one of my electives. So practically, it worked out … One of my goals in college was to travel and this seemed like a nontraditional way to travel because I think the normal narrative of American students studying elsewhere is like going to Europe for four months and getting a little bit experience in every single country that they can go to, and just having fun, and it seems … very, I don't know, surface level, touristy. I kind of wanted something more in depth and this checked those boxes. Even if it was for a shorter period of time, it seemed like something that would impact me as a person and not just be like, well, that was fun. I wanted something substantive and something personally rewarding.

Experience in the ISL Course. Participants were asked to recount the activities they participated in the Collaborative ISL Courses. They described many aspects of the Collaborative

ISL Courses, including learning about the culture and history of the host country, observing and being present with the people in the country, and participating in active learning, service learning, and tourism. Participants also described experiences of feeling welcome by the people of the host country, as well as moments of discomfort in the global immersion and service activities. Finally, they described developing relationships with peers, faculty mentors, and individuals in the host country.

   Cultural Immersion. The Collaborative ISL Courses included several components. Students participated in learning through cultural immersion and tourism. All participants described the experience of learning about the culture of the host country in East Africa. Jared recounted, "The focus of the class wasn't really about the assignments; it was about being fully involved in the immersion experience." Sharing the experience of cultural immersion Oliver explained, "We really did immerse ourselves in their rules over there … I tried to speak the language and by … the end of the three weeks … I was able to carry a very basic conversation about myself and my family." Iris echoed, "Every place we went people lined up and sang to us and had a meal for us … They're just happy … to share their culture with us."

   All participants identified tourism as a component of the experience. They described visiting the capital city of the host country in East Africa and learning about its history. Due to the content of the courses, healthcare and religion were focuses of tourism and learning during the global immersion. Participants also described experiencing the natural beauty of the country through a safari, hikes, and other activities. Many participants expressed a positive experience with tourist activities while emphasizing that tourism was not the focus of the trip. Oliver explained, "The touristy stuff like it was nice to see … But that wasn't … the highlight of the trip for me by any stretch of the imagination."

Violet, who was motivated to participate in the Collaborative ISL Course out of an interest in tourism and seeing the world, shifted her perspective of the experience to focus on cultural immersion and learning. After a short time interacting with people in the host country, she explained:

I remember feeling that very quickly … I don't want to be … like a tourist in this because I feel like these people are going to be welcoming and kind to me … I didn't want to feel like … just a passive … acceptor of that when I feel like I didn't deserve it … I felt like I had value in perspective … and things to offer as a friend, as a colleague, as a nurse, as a woman, to these people … beyond just the fact that I was paying money to be a tourist in this country.

All participants described a positive or mixed view of the culture. Violet, Lily, Ashton, Oliver, and Iris expressed positive views of the place, the people, and the culture. Ashton shared:

My relationship with the place … was just deepened with every conversation that I had, because I felt so welcomed and valued and every person spoke to you with such intentionality and such kindness that wherever we went I just became more and more grateful to be in that place … I'm a fairly gregarious person, I don't easily get homesick, and I wasn't at all because I was just so happy to be there and to be amongst not only the beautiful land, but also to have the privilege of meeting so many amazing people.

Reed and Jared described mixed views of the culture, describing moments of feeling welcome, as well as discomfort and tension in their exchanges with others. Reed explained:

I regret that I think back sometimes on the experience, and I focus so much on the way that the people rubbed me the wrong way … The people were trying to get more than what we would give them when we would donate the bread, and the sugar, and the soap.

They'd hide it and they try and get more. That really rubbed me the wrong way and it

really broke my heart … I have to just remember that these people are in a state of

desperation, and hunger, that it's a fight for survival … And in that regard, it makes me

so thankful that I am in a place where I don't have to worry about stuff like that.

Many participants described feelings of discomfort and/or culture shock in the global

immersion experience. Culture shock will be described in more detail in another section. In

addition, participants expressed discomfort standing out as White, American college students,

and/or with praise received for their presence. Violet recalled:

I remember at some point standing out not only just as Americans, but as Caucasian

Americans. You stick out as a sore thumb, and I remember that being very jarring in the

beginning and becoming very uncomfortable, very quickly with the feeling that we

almost were … like a motorcade … We would roll up in this giant bus, we'd all pile out,

and we were almost like celebrities. People would want to come talk to us, and we'd be

waving from the bus … This kind of notoriety that I didn't feel like we deserved …

We're receiving it because we were different and other.

While distributing food and supplies at a hospital, Ashton shared a similar observation,

explaining, "They greeted us with applause. It was very intense, and a lot of us felt like it was

unmerited … Experiences like that were very sobering."

Experiential Learning. All participants described their experiences with experiential

learning, including through service activities. The Collaborative ISL Courses included

experiential learning for nursing students and service activities such as donation distribution,

food distribution, and infrastructure projects. Lily recalled, "We built a house out of like some

kind of mud clay type thing one day. That was a really rewarding experience, very difficult."

Describing the experience of distributing donations, Violet shared, "That was just a really fun experience … to see … all these things that you brought over literally from a different continent … to be seen and used and appreciated."

Due to the designation of the courses as major/minor electives, participants described engaging in active learning related to their professional fields of study. Violet, Jared, and Iris explained opportunities to observe the healthcare system, interact with nursing students, and engage in professional learning related to their studies. Violet reflected, "We actually did get to see a C-section performed at the hospital … It was cool … getting to kind of shadow the nurses there and see how their day-to-day tasks and job goes about." All three nurses also appreciated the opportunity to learn about healthcare in another country. For Jared, the experiences "definitely opened my eyes more about the healthcare system." Ashton, who later became an educator, similarly described his experiences observing the education system in the country.

Participants described an overall positive experience with their engagement in experiential learning, including through service. Ashton commented on his experience engaging in service activities at a school and interacting with students, explaining:

> It was so amazing to see their faces light up. Because again, their thirst for knowledge is so real. It's just impeded by a logistical lack of resources. And so, to be able to say here's how you can grow, and I have something to help you, that's a good feeling.

Some participants described moments of challenge or discomfort during service activities. Oliver and Jared expressed concern about the sustainability of the service activities, particularly the distribution of resource donations and food. Jared explained, "I remember talking with … my professors … and some of my colleagues shared similar thoughts, like what are we

really doing by dropping stuff off? … It didn't really feel to me like it had a lot of longevity."

Oliver elaborated:

> It just seems like we're sweeping through, we're helping them for that day or that hour or
>
> whatever it is. We're with them. And then we're just moving on our merry way. And,
>
> sure we come back every year, and sure we revisit a lot of the same places every year.
>
> But what's the lasting impact? And that just kind of bothered me … And I know like it's
>
> better than nothing and I know doing any kind of lasting impact is expensive and very
>
> hard, especially in today's society, very hard to develop and sustain. But it was … it's still
>
> hard for me to articulate what the discomfort was. It just felt … so fleeting.

Other participants grappled with the reality of service activities which provided support but failed to address systemic change. Ashton explained:

> We see problems and we want to do something about it. But then to be able to do a small
>
> thing in that moment to address the problem is really great because it's easy to look at a
>
> problem and be so overwhelmed by its immensity … But to be able to address it in a
>
> small way right then and there is I think … all of what a lot of us can do right? We can
>
> hope and try to push … bigger systemic change through … civic actions … but to be able
>
> to say like … a kid learned his multiplication tables better because the notebook a guy
>
> gave him, that's pretty cool.

> Lily, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, Jared, and Iris described the experience of being an observer

or being present with people at service and learning sites. Ashton recounted one such experience:

> I remember we visited a few elderly nuns … at a convent during the first half of the trip.
>
> And there was just this one blind nun, that I don't remember her name, I don't think she

told me. But I just sat there. And she held my hand and I held hers and just kind of talked

about ourselves. And it was very simple.

Development of Relationships. Participants developed relationships with peers, faculty

mentors, and individuals in the host country, many of which were maintained after college.

Violet and Jared described close friendships with peers developed through the Collaborative ISL

Courses. During the experience, Violet "made one best friend actually … a fellow student who I

never would have met." "She's amazing, we still talk all the time," she added. Other students

described camaraderie among students and faculty. Reflecting on the development of

connections among students, Reed shared, "That was a beautiful experience because I definitely

felt like we were able to make quick friends and very deep friends really fast because of what we

were experiencing, especially some of the heartbreak."

Students also deepened bonds with faculty mentors. Violet observed, "My professors …

were also incredible. They were humanized … on that trip. Like they kind of stepped away from

their role … at the lectern." Oliver added of his experience with the faculty mentors, "They are

right there on the ground with us, as immersed as we are … even if that means making fools of

themselves. They dance with us; they sing with us." Faculty guided reflection and provided a

sense of safety. Iris explained, "Anytime there was a situation that was really tough … they were

the greatest. You could tell them like, oh, man, that really bothered me, and they felt like your

friend, you know, like your confidant."

Participants described relating to individuals they met in the host country. As a nursing

student, Violet described sharing with students studying at a nursing school in the host country:

In the beginning, we would talk about … the differences … then what kind of nursing we

want to do, and then eventually the conversation would quickly switch into just, what

kind of movies do you like, does anyone like dating …more kind of personal, friendly,

casual conversations … The moment that switch happened for me, it … settled me much

more comfortably and made the trip that much more enjoyable.

 Violet, Lily, and Ashton described remaining in touch with friends they made in the host country

after college. Lily explained, "I have many friends … I still connect with on Facebook." Oliver

remains in communication with several nursing students in the host country. He shared, "I still

talk to a lot of the nursing students over there … They're talking to me about becoming a doctor.

I'm talking about them being nurses … We still talk … all the time." Although he no longer

remains in communication on a personal level with any individuals in the host country, Jared

described connecting the nursing school he visited in the country with the U.S. National Registry

of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). He "got their permission to be able to send

essentially that information [a trauma interaction checkoff list] … to the nursing school that we

worked with, so they have a more guided practice."

Participants also described continued interaction with the Collaborative ISL Courses at

Global University. Oliver participated in the program for a second time as a graduate student

mentor. He also shared his experience in information sessions with students considering

participation in subsequent years. Jared described "earmarking" his donations to Global

University for the Collaborative ISL Courses, describing it as one of the "best" programs Global

University offers to undergraduate students.

Processing and Integrating the Experience

All participants described their experiences processing and integrating their perspective

of the ISL experience after returning to the United States and after college. They described

experiencing a period of self-examination, highlighting culture shock and recognition of their

privileged identities. Participants processed the disruptive experience through reflective discourse, including through journaling, reflection, and discussion with peers and individuals in their social groups. They integrated new perspectives at various stages during and after the experience, ultimately experiencing perspective shifts and transformation.

Self-Examination. Participants described being disrupted or shaken during and after their ISL experiences. Through their experiences in the Collaborative ISL Courses and discourse with themselves and others, participants engaged in an examination of their worldviews and perspectives. They described experiencing culture shock and recognizing their privileged identities in a global context.

Culture Shock and Discomfort. Most participants described a feeling of culture shock or feeling out of their comfort zones during the ISL experience. Violet, who participated in study abroad in Europe prior to the Collaborative ISL Course, described her experience traveling to the host country through the Collaborative ISL Course as "the first kind of experience where I felt like it was a true culture shock." She added, "I felt very … plucked from my comfort zone … which [was] at first … jarring … but ended up being a really wonderful, interesting, great experience." Reed, who previously participated in research in Southeast Asia, described the experience as "shell shocking."

Due to his background as a U.S. military veteran and EMT, Jared observed in comparison to his peers, "I think, I was less worried." Relating to his experience working as a rural EMT in the United States during college, he added, "I wasn't extremely shocked by a lot. I wouldn't say like oh my god, I can't believe people live like this … especially if you work in more rural communities there's … already poverty that you see out there."

Participants described processing and overcoming their discomfort at various levels. Violet recalled, "At some point, it switched from me from being … a passive observer of this country and this whole new world … [to] more … immersive and making genuine personal connections with people." Reed described the experience of culture shock and discomfort as an opportunity for growth, a sentiment expressed by many participants. He explained:

I think part of the human condition is a lot of anxiety toward the unknown. Everybody is afraid of the unknown because they don't know what's going to happen. They want to be secure. They want to have everything planned out. So, I think one of the greatest … parts of that experience was how scary it was … When you really get down to it … it was a scary experience because you're on a 14-hour plane ride … just rolling with the punches … and letting go, and just being present. I think … any service trip … any trip … whenever you're going somewhere that's out of your comfort zone, that is a priceless opportunity to grow.

Recognition of Privilege. Participants described an emergent recognition of their privileged identities through their experiences in the Collaborative ISL Courses. Violet, Lily, Ashton, Reed, and Iris explicitly referred to their privilege. Oliver and others described feelings of guilt, shame, and gratitude associated with global inequality and poverty in contrast to their lives in the United States.

Lily reflected on her privilege in the context of poverty in the host country: "In my mind, I had a very privileged, beautiful life … That was in my mind the whole time. Like, just wow, there really is injustice." Iris recalled feelings of guilt witnessing poverty and suffering among the people of the host country, recalling, "You see people kind of just lying there and shrivel to

the bone because they don't have food and it's kind of traumatic … You almost don't want to feel … it yourself because you feel guilty feeling something when it's them … feeling."

Violet, Ashton, Reed, and Oliver observed resource limitations in the country, especially in healthcare and education settings. In this context, Violet reflected on healthcare in the United States, "You know, I feel like we are very wasteful in the hospitals." As an educator, Ashton often recalls his experience in the ISL course with his students and tries "to bring them to the awareness that there are children who literally walk miles to school, or who do not have supplies at all, but they really desire to learn, and they decided to be in a classroom." Oliver observed, "Water is … a precious commodity over there," adding of his experience working in healthcare in the United States, "the water we use to scrub into surgeries with, we give to patients to drink, we used to sterilize equipment, over here, you don't think about it." Oliver also reflected on the resources available at Global University in comparison to the schools he interacted with during the Collaborative ISL Course.

Many participants grappled with witnessing suffering and poverty coupled with joy among the people of the country and beauty in the landscape and culture. Ashton shared:

> I believe I wrote my paper for that class on the concept of joy in suffering. And how … typically it's thought of like … we're joyful when suffering isn't present. Yet, my experience in [the ISL course] kind of disproved that. Joy is most appropriate when there is suffering … We should choose [joy] and … it's available to us.

Iris shared a similar experience, reflecting on the people she engaged with in the host county, "It's very poor, people are suffering, but … so happy and so happy to meet you … And it was just eye opening to see how we in such a developed country are miserable." Lily observed of her

experience with and perception of the host country, "There's of course all this beauty, but then also the suffering."

In the context of privilege, the feeling of gratitude emerged as a shared experience among the participants. Reed recalled, "A few weeks after getting back to the United States … I would look around and see different things that would stress me out and different things that would worry me, and I think to myself, this is nothing compared to what they are experiencing." He added, "They need to fight for their survival, and in that regard, it makes me so thankful that I am in a place where I don't have to worry … about food, and freshwater, and clothing." Violet found that the experience gave her a "good perspective" and continues to serve as "a good resource to … be able to put everything into context," recalling, "I just remember thinking … how lucky am I." Iris shared that the experience encouraged her to, "Be happy with what you have, and don't always be wanting more, because more is not always better."

Referencing feelings of bitterness about the disparity he witnessed in relation to his privilege, Ashton recalled the advice of a faculty mentor who urged him to "turn that bitterness into gratitude for what you have, and to just kind of work for a world where eventually that disparity is not a reality." With this perspective, Ashton noted, "Even today when I find myself complaining about something that in the grand scheme of things is not a problem … I'm able to say … just be grateful for what you have."

Reflective Discourse. Reflective discourse, through formal and informal journaling and discussion, emerged as a means for participants to process their experiences in the Collaborative ISL Courses. Participants described personal, internal discourse, as well as discussion with peers and individuals in their social groups.

Journaling. The Collaborative ISL Courses incorporated journaling as course assignments. Many participants referenced journaling in the ISL course. Ashton shared, "I started to journal more, and to reflect because that's something that … we had to do for the class, but I just found myself really getting a lot out of it." He added, "Once the memories were on the page … I could sort out how I felt about everything. And I can sort through some of those difficult moments." Reed described journaling about "different things I saw when I felt certain things related to the course."

Violet, Lily, and Ashton described regularly returning to their journals in their lives after college. Violet explained, "I was flipping through them the last time I was home a couple of weeks ago. And there's so many things in there … just little anecdotes and exchanges with people that I met that I didn't remember until I reread them in that book." Ashton shared that he returns to pictures frequently and to his course journals "every few months." Describing his experiences revisiting journals, he said, "I think if I go back to the journaling, I get to grapple with those more complicated feelings and thoughts that I had at the time."

Ashton continues journaling to process his experience in his life after college and attributes the habit to his experience with the Collaborative ISL Course. He shared of his journaling practice:

> I remembered how powerful it was … and I was like, I don't want to forget these special
> moments … At night, I write down my highs of the day, things that I want to look back
> on and smile and reflect upon, and my lows, and things that I want to pray for. I am
> definitely grateful for my trip … for reminding me or to teaching me how powerful it can
> be to process your day because you kind of get to like live through it again a second time,
> but … more intentional and with a clear mind or a clear heart.

Discussion with Peers. Group discussion was a component of the Collaborative ISL Courses. In reflective discussions during and after the courses, participants described feeling validation from peers who participated in the experience with them or who had a similar experience or perspectives. Reed explained:

> That was a big part of processing, when we would sit and we would talk … because if I thought that I was feeling something, it was nice to hear somebody say that they were feeling the same way … Then I knew that I wasn't alone in the heartache, or the excitement, or whatever the feeling.

Similarly, Oliver described the validation that came from sharing an experience with the group, recalling, "When we all reflected at the end of the day, a lot of us had the same emotions or same thoughts about things."

After returning to the United States, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, and Iris described greater comfortability discussing their experiences with peers who shared the experience with them or who had similar experiences. Oliver recalled, "I kept a lot of stuff to myself. The only people I talked to were people that also went or the faculty members." Ashton and Reed both identified challenges communicating difficult components of the experience, e.g., witnessing poverty, with individuals in external social groups. Ashton explained:

> I found myself talking a lot to the people who I went on the trip with because all I wanted to do was talk about the trip, because I had so much to say, so much to reflect upon. But people who hadn't gone come with some preconceived notions, understandably, because I had them too before I went … I wanted to not have to teach it, I wanted someone to live it with me, so I would talk to people who got it, either who went with me who are gone previously … or people who had gone through a similar experience.

Similarly, Reed reflected:

> It's easy to talk about the fun things and the good things, seeing the elephants, seeing the
>
> hippos, the food, you know, all the fresh fruit and everything … But as far as digging
>
> deeper and bringing up the poverty, the hurt people, the people who were dying in the
>
> hospitals from AIDS, or from severe burns … that was difficult to process and talk about,
>
> and I honestly, I still don't think that I fully divulge a lot of that to people that hadn't
>
> gone … because, it's hard to talk about one, and two, they wouldn't really understand
>
> because they weren't there. They didn't see it.

Violet, Lily, Reed, and Iris described holding back or limiting what they shared with external social groups due to discomfort or fear of the perception of others. Violet explained in sharing her experience, she did not want to appear "condescending." Lily held back in sharing because she did not want to "flaunt my experience in front of others."

Sharing with Social Groups. Many participants struggled to share their experiences or held back sharing with their family and social groups after returning to the United States. Participants who shared their experiences with external social groups in the United States described positive, mixed, or negative reactions. Lily and Jared experienced positive reactions when sharing their experience with her family and social groups. Both found "curious" recipients. Lily reflected, "People wanted to hear more." Ashton found peers in his own age group were "more receptive to it because maybe they were having similar experiences or discerning going on similar experiences." He added of sharing the experience with peers, "Regardless, I just knew we were at a developmental point where we were discovering more about the world."

As highlighted in participants' gravitation to share with individuals with whom they shared the experience, or who had similar experiences, many described fearing the reactions of individuals in their family and social groups who did not understand the experiences. Ashton explained, "Some family members were like, why don't you just go to Europe." Some participants experienced tension in sharing their experiences with individuals who focused on the tourism components of the experience or who expressed cultural ignorance.

Oliver described instances of sharing his experience in which individuals in his social groups were "disrespectful of my experience" and/or focused on "superficial" components of the experience. Describing sharing about the ISL experience with his family, Oliver recalled:

> They wanted to focus on the lions and the gorillas. And when they when I told them about the whole bowing down kind of thing, like when you're shaking someone's hand, they're like … they're bowing down and they're worshiping you, and that's what they would tell people. I'm like that, like, you guys are so ignorant; it's disgusting.

Reed described the mixed emotions of tension around ignorant responses and the opportunity to inform others about the reality of the experience. He explained:

> This was a frustrating response that I would get, like a lot of people when they hear Africa, they have this … notion of danger, of wildness, of … animalistic behavior … They think that the people over there are … less than us, you know, that they're less than human … Well, you know, I can't believe you went to Africa. That's so scary. It's such a scary place. So, it was frustrating to hear all of that. But it was also beautiful because then I had the opportunity to explain those notions away … Being able to change people's minds as far as that … was good.

Perspective Shift. Through the process of self-examination and reflective discourse, many participants described experiencing a perspective shift or transformation. Some participants clearly identified experiencing a shift in perspective or change. Violet recalled:

I just remember … walking away from the trip dealing with a shift in perspective about how I should kind of perceive … my own privilege and opportunities and luck, for lack of a better word, you know, growing up as a White woman … upper middle class.

She later added, "How I perceive certain situations, how I react to certain situations, changed, I think, for the better after having been exposed to … a different way of life." Ashton reflected on writing in his journal on the return flight to the United States that he "will always think of my life in three different phases," before, during, and after the experience. Lily, Oliver, Reed, and Iris also described being "changed" by the experience or developing a new "outlook on life."

The perspective shifts that occurred in each participant were unique; however, common experiences emerge. These will be explored in the next section, which examines the experience as an anchor in participants' lives after college.

Struggle to Reintegrate. Having experienced a personal change, some participants described an initial culture shock returning to the United States after participating in the global immersion component of the Collaborative ISL Courses. Other participants identified an experience of delayed processing, identifying that they have a better understanding of how the experience influenced them several years removed from it.

Violet, Lily, Reed, and Jared described a relatively smooth return to their lives as students in the United States after their ISL experiences, although with changed perspectives. After returning home, Reed struggled with the resource disparity when comparing his experience in the host country to his life in the United States, explaining, "For the first couple of weeks after being

back that always played in my head … Seeing what I threw out that I felt bad about throwing out

because … somebody else across the world could use that." Otherwise, he described returning to

his life with limited disruption. Violet and Lily, who were seniors when they participated in ISL,

reflected on returning to busy schedules going into their final semesters as college

undergraduates with limited time for deep reflection on the experience.

After returning to the United States, some participants struggled to reintegrate. Reed

observed peers he participated in the ISL experience with struggled to reintegrate after returning

to the United States. He shared, "A lot of them were a bit depressed or really sad. They would

cry. I didn't really feel that … I mean, don't get me wrong, it is heartbreaking."

Oliver referred to experiencing "culture shock" and depression after returning to the

United States. He shared:

> I was just really depressed for a very long time after I came back … Everything just made
>
> me angry. Like, I was an RA when I came back, and … my residents who were used to
>
> my door open, we used to hang out all the time, I wanted nothing to do with anyone.

Sharing his experience with students participating in a later cohort, Oliver was open about the

difficult transition back to life in the United States, telling them, "You're going to hate

everything. You're going to hate pizza … You're going to hate everything you used to enjoy. So,

you kind of have to inch back into it."

Ashton experienced moments of bitterness and discomfort after returning to the United

States. He reflected:

> Transitioning back like there were those moments of bitterness, where I was like, why are
>
> these people complaining about this? Why are these people complaining about getting an
>
> education when I met so many kids who go to such extremes to get an education? And

this person is complaining about waking up for an 8:00 a.m. class. So that was really, really tough. But again, I tried to just turn that bitterness into gratitude and kind of come back with the understanding of … they haven't really had this experience to have that perspective, and that's something that I kind of still carry with me. To this day, whenever I complain about something, I just think like, is this worth complaining about?

In addition, some participants described a delayed processing of their ISL experiences. Oliver described an approximately three-month period during which he struggled to process the experience. Lily explained that she did not have time to sit with the experience after returning to the United States, reflecting, "As much as I wanted to be like super nostalgic and wish I could be back, I also knew because I was going to get my Master's in August that there were all of these other things that had to be done."

Iris described the experience of delayed processing most clearly, explaining of her integration of the ISL experience into perspective:

The impact was huge, even while I was there, but I feel like … when I was there, the impact was not as great as me sitting here talking about it now … Like, I think as soon as I would have come back, I don't think I would have been able to do this interview.

She elaborated on her slow processing of the experience after returning to the United States, also noting that it was a common experience among participants in previous cohorts:

They told us it was going to be like this … because I guess a lot of people have this reaction. But I really didn't want to talk about it … I showed some pictures … I didn't really want to talk about some of the real experiences, right away … When I came back, I just kind of was right back into my life, wanted to get back to school, and just keep going. I mean, I knew how much of an impact that it made, but I didn't like feel it yet …

I think it took a lot of time to … allow my brain to figure out what had just happened …

over those few weeks … I almost didn't want to talk to anybody, because … I knew they

weren't going to get as deep as I could have with the people when I was there.

As they struggled to reintegrate to life in the United States, Ashton, Oliver, and Iris relied

on peers who participated in the experience and faculty mentors. This was highlighted in a

previous section.

Experience as an Anchor in Life Post-College

Ashton described his ISL experience as an "anchor" in his life after college, reflecting,

"It's kind of like an anchor to bring me back from when I get too involved in technology, drama,

complaints, despair. I have this experience to draw from." Many participants described returning

to their ISL experiences and referred to it as an anchor or reference point in their lives after

college. Violet identified her ISL experience as a "good resource to kind of sit back and look

back and be able to put everything into context." Similarly, commenting on her career, Lily

wondered, "How can I take that spirit that I found there and put it into my life?"

Participants described the influence of their ISL experiences in terms of their careers and

personal worldview.

Influence on Career. The ISL experience influenced various aspects of participants'

career pathways and professional skills. Lily explained that her experience with the

Collaborative ISL Course "changed the trajectory of my career, and actually led me to get my

master's degree." After participating in January of her senior year as a double major in

journalism and philosophy, Lily pursued a master's degree in nonprofit management. She

explained, "I knew that if I could have been a professional volunteer, I would have been. I said,

okay, what is a professional volunteer that gets paid?" Today, Lily works as a nonprofit consultant in a major city in the United States.

Lily is the only participant who attributed her ISL experience to determining their current profession. Violet, Ashton, Reed, Oliver, Jared, and Iris maintained their professional goals throughout college; however, many described the influence of the ISL experience on their career pathways. For Ashton, the experience influenced his selection of a master's degree program in education that included work in under-resourced communities. Oliver, who is currently in medical school noted, "One of the criteria … for my residency program is I want the ability to go abroad, specifically Africa." Although medical school was always his goal, Oliver explained that his experiences with children during the ISL course "soften the heart," adding "now I want to go into pediatric surgery." He also attributed an interest in "reflective medicine" and "academic medicine" to his ISL experience.

All participants described professional skills or perspectives developed through their ISL and global immersion experiences.

Development of Professional Skills. In their lives after college, participants related skills developed through their ISL experiences to their careers. Many described the development of relevant professional skills. Iris, reflected, "The more I talk about it, the more I realize that it really was eye opening to see, it really prepared me for being a home health nurse and seeing people in really poor conditions." Participants also described the development of specific professional skills or perspectives, particularly empathy, confidence, and global mindedness.

Empathy. All participants described developing empathy, or the ability to consider the perspectives of others, through their ISL experiences. After college, many participants, especially those working in healthcare careers, described using empathy in professional contexts.

Several participants described empathy in relation to working with individuals from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Reflecting on his ability to discern and consider other perspectives, Ashton assessed, of his ISL experience, "I do think it made me a better professional." Violet, a registered nurse, found that "the biggest thing" the ISL experience gave her was "perspective and understanding about … focusing on having an open ear and not being quick to judge just because people are different than you or have a different background … than you." Oliver, Iris, and Jared also described their use of empathy in healthcare settings. Oliver shared, "I just connect with everyone differently … I'm great with patients because I go in there with absolutely no thoughts or judgments or anything about them." Similarly, Iris reflected on her ISL experience in the context of her work as a home health nurse, explaining, "When people are telling you, I don't have money … I'm sick … I think just being understanding and not shocked … that's … how it's affected me."

Violet, Iris, and Jared each connected their ISL experiences to their work with diverse populations, describing the development of cultural empathy. Of working in a diverse community, Violet explained:

> Sometimes we have patients that may not speak English or don't speak English to a fluent enough proficiency that they can … receive their health care information … in English … Being able to step back and zoom out and kind of put the shoe on the other foot and be able to kind of center yourself to that person's perspective and have a little bit more, if it's one more inch of patience, if it's … a little bit … of kindness, I think it goes a long way and is overall helpful for everyone involved.

Similarly, Iris related her experience working with people living in poverty in the host country

though the Collaborative ISL Course to her career as a home health nurse:

> The big thing that I'm noticing now is how … my experience with underprivileged
>
> people, poor people, how it's coming through when I see a poor person in their home in
>
> my nursing career … I'm … I don't want to even say compassion, but just like
>
> understanding of … maybe they're not miserable, maybe they just need help.

Finally, Jared shared a similar connection to the ISL experience and his work as a nurse in the

United States:

> It gave me a chance in dealing with people, especially people that are medically
>
> inexperienced and things like that … Now working in this area of the Southeast …
>
> people don't really have a lot of medical knowledge at all. They literally come in with
>
> like 30 years of no medicine at all. It just helps being more patient with talking to patients
>
> or family members.

> *Confidence*. Several participants described the development of confidence in relation to

their professional and personal lives. In a professional context, Lily described emerging

confidence developed through her ISL experience, which anchors her work as an independent

nonprofit consultant. She explained:

> I think there is a thing about traveling abroad, especially when you're an undergrad. It's a
>
> very independent thing. You have to be a little bit of a self-starter, not too afraid of the
>
> unknown … Right now, I work for myself as a consultant, and I don't feel like I would
>
> have had that bravery, or that trust, or faith in myself, if I didn't take myself super out of
>
> the comfort zone and live a completely different life … I knew … of course I can work
>
> for myself. I took care of myself in a country that I was never in before, and I made it out

alive, so why would it be any different to take a risk here? … I was so afraid before I got

on the plane each time I've traveled, and then you know, you get there and it's amazing.

As a home health nurse, Iris attributed the skill of confidence in uncertain situations to her ISL

experience. She shared, "It's made me more comfortable with those kinds of things that are

uncomfortable."

Global-Mindedness. Participants identified a global perspective, developed through their

ISL experiences as a skill desired in academic and professional contexts. Reed explained, "I

think it greatly influenced my life in the sense that it made me a worldly person … From the

perspective of an employer, or from the perspective of an admissions committee, it makes me a

more well-rounded … person."

As a nonprofit consultant, Lily reflected on her ISL experience, "I feel like I was armed

with lots of knowledge for the nonprofit space because when I talk about prior experiences, and

what I've seen … I can talk about all the times I've been out of the country." She added, "It

seems they … want people on the team that have seen things that are a little bit different to bring

a different perspective to the work because nonprofits … oftentimes have programs that funnel

internationally."

Influence on Personal Growth. Outside of career and academics, participants described

internal growth on a personal level. After college, their ISL experience continues to serve as an

anchor for their values and worldview. Violet explained:

> Whenever I feel like I kind of have a moment of … I guess ego is the umbrella word …
>
> for whatever reason … maybe I'm stressed out, maybe I … had an odd exchange with
>
> someone, I … sometimes need to give myself an attitude check by looking back at my
>
> time [in the host country] and thinking about the people there.

Ashton similarly described the ISL experience as a source of grounding in his personal life:

>I consider myself to have a fairly well rounded … view of the world that I think a lot of people lack because they've never really stepped out of it … I've had the opportunity to step out of my every day, and not just … go on a vacation and sit on the beach, but to live with people who were on the other side of the globe, who have an entirely different set of problems than I do. I think it really did change how I perceive the world in that I should be grateful for some things that I used to complain about, or just focusing on relationships and not letting … certain things get in the way … These are really the lessons that I learned, and they keep appearing in different aspects of my life. So, I think I'm able to take a step back and evaluate and prioritize my own goals, my beliefs, my commitment, and to notice when I'm being dragged back to a person I was before I went there … I'm able to kind of check myself and be like, alright you're forgetting what you have learned.

Among the participants, common areas of personal growth emerged including mindfulness, globalism, and change agency. Due to the focus of one of the Collaborative ISL Courses, some participants also described the influence of the ISL experience on their religious faith.

Mindfulness. All participants described personal growth that included the development of mindfulness. Immediately after the experience and post-college, participants continued reflective practices they learned during their ISL experiences. Building on the lessons of gratitude described earlier, as well as the experiences of discomfort in a new culture and overcoming challenges in that context, they described an ability to "take a step back" in moments of their lives and to be present personally, in relationships, and in their professional lives.

Ashton continued journaling in his life after college because of his ISL experience. Mindfulness also took hold in Ashton's life post-college by "slowing down a little bit more …

putting my phone away." In addition, he explained, "I definitely try to just be present and talk to the people around me." Reed found that his ISL experience taught him, "Don't try to be in control of everything all the time." He elaborated, "Any service trip … is a good opportunity to grow because of how you just have to let go and just take it." Iris reflected that the experience taught her to be present and "try to enjoy where you're at." Finally, Jared, who participated in the experience as a nontraditional student, explained, "I think that experience has led me to be … a calmer person … I was in the military for seven years. It is pretty high strung … I think that [the ISL experience] led me to be more leveled out."

Violet, Ashton, and Jared also described bringing mindfulness into their relationships with others. Jared shared, "I got engaged since then." Of his ISL experience, he added, "It's helped me have a more global perspective with my significant other." Similarly, Violet found that her experience with ISL made her "a better listener, a better friend, a better teammate, from being able to take a step back and be open … to those experiences."

Ashton observed relational differences among the people of the host country during his ISL experience compared to the United States. He explained:

> Their priorities are so different from ours … Even timeliness, like we so value being on time, like to the minute, but for them, they don't care if they're half hour late … If they were talking to someone, they're not going to cut off a conversation just to make a schedule fit … The ends and the means of their life are relationships with each other.

Transferring the experience to his life in the United States, Ashton often reflects, "What's getting between me and this person? What's preventing the genuine conversation from occurring?" In addition, he makes an intentional effort to "eliminate … obstacles" to connection with others.

Oliver and Iris both incorporated mindfulness into their professional lives. As a medical student, Oliver described his motivation to participate in reflective medicine, a practice which includes reflective discussion and writing. He explained, before the ISL experience, "I don't do feelings … but two trips over there, it's definitely something I do now. And it's something … we need to do." Iris described being present and practicing mindfulness in her work as a nurse, a skill she attributed to her ISL experience. In her work as a nurse, Iris described incorporating, "being present" by "listening and just being there rather than just … I'm here to do this, get it done."

Global Consciousness. As previously described, participants identified global mindedness as a desirable professional skill. Participants also expressed an understanding of global inequality and privilege, which was examined in another section. After college, participants manifested global consciousness in their personal lives in the United States in a variety of ways, including through changed worldviews and actions.

Several participants reflected on and made life changes in relation to resource usage and waste as a result of their experiences with poverty and limited resource availability in the host country during the ISL experience. As a nurse in a "hospital setting," Violet observed, "how much money that must go into … our hospital system and … the technology and the resources and everything that we have that is … more available to us as a wealthy nation." Oliver developed a consciousness about his water usage, sharing, "Over there … a lot of places didn't have hot water. So, you use cold water … you use it sparingly. I still do that here."

In addition, many participants traveled internationally in their lives after participating in the ISL experience. Inspired by his experience in the Collaborative ISL Course, Ashton, who

was a junior when he participated, enrolled in two international service trips during his senior

year in college, traveling to Central America. He explained of the Collaborative ISL Course:

> It showed me part of the world that wasn't really greatly known, at least in the Western
>
> world … I had a desire to see more of the world that was like that; that wasn't necessarily
>
> portrayed in an accurate way. So that inspired me to travel to two Central American
>
> countries.

Violet and Oliver reflected on international travel experiences post-college. Violet shared, "I still

travel, I'm actually leaving on a trip tomorrow." She explained that her ISL experience made her

more open to "traveling to places that are … particularly different than what I am used to, but

also having a more updated interest in learning about different cultures."

All other participants expressed a comfortability traveling internationally and/or interest

in future travel. Lily noted the disruption in international travel post-college due to the novel

coronavirus pandemic. She explained, "I would totally get on a plane to anywhere … Before I

went on these trips, I always thought … I have to plan it out a long time … and maybe go once."

Lily, Oliver, and Jared also expressed goals to travel back to Africa.

Change Agency and Action. Lily, Ashton, and Oliver attributed a desire to live or work

in capacities that make a difference, or that are meaningful, to their ISL experiences. Ashton

described witnessing students eager to learn with limited resources during the experience as

giving "meaning" to his work as an educator in the United States. He explained:

> To see the love of education in a place that doesn't have the resources contrasted with a
>
> place that sometimes loads education with many resources is … something that I draw
>
> strength from … It gives my life work so much more meaning.

After witnessing suffering and poverty through her experience with the Collaborative ISL Course, Lily described the motivation for her career shift from journalism to nonprofit management, recounting her thought process, "I can be a journalist … I love social media work. And I was like, there's a void of meaning here. I wanted to synergize … both sides of my brain and nonprofit seemed the most ethical for me."

Oliver continued volunteering and service work post-college, including as a graduate and medical student. As described earlier, he participated in the Collaborative ISL Courses a second time as a graduate student. In his second ISL experience, he helped develop a master's level ISL course for health administration students at Global University and acted as a mentor. Oliver further expressed an interest in returning to Africa, especially in a teaching capacity. Commenting on the medical infrastructure challenges he observed in Africa and the need for improvements, Oliver explained, "You need teaching to do this. And that's something I can do." He added, "My goal to go into academic medicine is because of my experience over there."

Jared also expressed an interest in returning to the host country to teach, adding, that is "where my impact would be." As mentioned earlier, after returning to the United States from his ISL experience, Jared made connections to share EMT trauma interaction guidelines with a nursing school in the host country. He also continues to donate to the Collaborative ISL Course as an alumnus.

Influence of Faith. Due to the content of Collaborative ISL Course B, i.e., Christianity in Africa, some participants reflected on their observations or relationships with faith because of the ISL experience. Reed commented on the displays of faith among individuals he encountered in the host country, reflecting, "They have so much faith that God is good that he's, you know, he provides, even though they have so little … That was … eye opening." Oliver, who was raised

Catholic, shared, "I felt like I was getting too smart for religion …. But going back over there … it felt more spiritual, and it was something I could connect with more."

Ashton was the only participant who identified the influence of his ISL experience on his faith after college. He shared:

> Since I went there through the lens of faith, my own personal spiritual life was also rather simplified … I stripped away a lot of the complexities and just focused on the relationships in my life. I realize how important those were … and in my faith journey, my relationship with God as well.

Conclusion

This study focused on the undergraduate ISL experiences of recent U.S. college graduates to examine its influence on their post-college readiness. Each participant identified as an academically high achieving and/or highly involved student during college. Participants were primarily traditional college students from White, middle-class backgrounds. One participant identified as a nontraditional student. They selected to participate in ISL for various reasons; however, the logistics of the course as a major/minor elective, pre-existing interest in travel, and openness to new experiences emerged as motivating factors. During their ISL experiences, participants were immersed in another culture and participated in experiential learning, including through ISL. Although participants described a positive experience with ISL, some expressed concern regarding the longevity of the impact of experiential and service activities in the host country. They developed long-term relationships with others including peers, faculty, and individuals in the host country.

Participants described their ISL experiences as disruptive or eye opening. Many struggled to process their encounters with poverty and suffering, coupled with a welcoming culture. They

engaged in self-examination around their privileged identities and global inequality, describing group discussion and journaling as reflective tools.

Participants described perspective shifts or personal changes related to their ISL experiences. When they returned to the United States, participants described a preference to share their experiences with peers from the ISL course or in their social peer groups. Some participants struggled to reintegrate or identified a delayed processing of the experience. Post-college, several participants identified their ISL experience as an "anchor" or reference point in their lives, describing it as an experience to which they frequently return and reflect. Participants described the influence of their ISL experiences in their professional and personal lives. Many described the influence of the experience on their career pathways or transferable skills developed in the experience, e.g., empathy. Participants also described personal growth and development through their ISL experiences. They gained new perspectives related to mindfulness, globalism, and faith.

Chapter V: Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological study was to examine how recent U.S. college graduates perceive their participation in ISL as undergraduate students to have affected their post-college readiness. Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory was the theoretical lens through which this question was assessed.

Study participants were seven recent graduates of an HEI in the U.S. Northeast, referred to as Global University, who graduated between 2016 and 2020. All participants engaged in undergraduate ISL through one of two faculty-led Collaborative ISL Courses at Global University. The courses were three-credit courses in theology/religious study and nursing with a joint global immersion component in a host country in East Africa. Experiential learning, including through ISL, was incorporated in the global immersion component of the course. Each participant was interviewed separately through Zoom video conferencing. Interview questions were primarily open-ended and designed to facilitate reflection. Interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed for themes using phenomenological methods. Participants engaged in member checking of their transcripts and the study findings to ensure the validity and reliability of the study.

Analysis of interview transcripts yielded common experiences with the phenomenon among participants that transcended individual perceptions, or the essences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The findings that emerged from analysis of the data focused on the participants ISL experience, their processing of the ISL experience, and the ISL experience as an anchor in their lives after college.

Participants described similar backgrounds at the time they participated in ISL. All participants identified as White and most identified as upper-middle class to middle class. All

participants described themselves as highly academically achieving and/or highly involved in extracurricular activities as college students. Five participants were members of an honors program at Global University. All participants traveled internationally prior to participating in the ISL experience. Participants were motivated to participate in ISL for various reasons; however, several pointed to the duration of the Collaborative ISL Courses and the designation of the courses as a major/minor elective. Some participants were motivated by faculty/peer recommendations and pre-existing interests in international travel. Each participant described their ISL experiences as multifaceted, including elements of global/cultural immersion, experiential learning, and tourism. All participants described a positive or mixed view of the culture they were immersed in during the experience. They described positive experiences participating in experiential learning, including ISL; however, some participants expressed concerns with the long-term sustainability of service projects. All participants developed positive relationships with faculty, peers, or individuals in the host country, many of which continued post-college.

Participants described processing their experiences in the ISL course, which they identified as a disorienting dilemma. Each participant described a process of self-examination involving engagement in internal and external dialogue to process the experience and integrate it into their perspectives and worldviews. They described the experience of discomfort and culture shock when immersed in a country and culture different from their own. Witnessing poverty and injustice, they grappled with their privileged identities in a global context, identifying feelings of guilt, gratitude, and change agency. Many participants referenced journaling as a method of reflectively processing their experiences. Others identified group discussion as central to their processing. Through the experience of disruption and reflective discourse, each participant

identified a perspective shift or personal change to varying levels as a result of their ISL experiences. Several participants described a struggle to reintegrate when they returned to the United States, and some identified delayed processing and integration of their ISL experiences into their lives.

Post-college, several participants described their experience participating in ISL as college undergraduates as an "anchor" or reference point in their lives. Participants described areas in which their ISL experiences influenced them professionally and personally after college. Professionally, participants described the development of career-relevant skills including empathy, confidence, and global mindedness. For some participants, their ISL experiences served as a demonstration of their abilities to acknowledge the perspective of others, to be independent, and/or to survive in new or complex contexts. In terms of personal growth, participants described the development of mindfulness, global consciousness, and social change agency. Some participants also described the influence of the experience on their faith.

Shared experiences emerged from the qualitative data forming the basis of the findings. In the context of the broader literature, findings align with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory and the existing literature on ISL in higher education in the United States. These findings have implications for educational practices and future research.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this study align with Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Evidence suggests participants engaged in the phases of meaning-making described by Mezirow (1991), initiated by the disorienting dilemma of their participation in ISL as college undergraduates. Ultimately, the perspective shifts experienced by many participants resulted in the development of relevant professional skills and personal growth. Participants also described

an emerging social justice perspective. During and after their ISL experiences, they engaged in internal and group dialogue related to their privileged identities, especially in a global context. They described comfortability sharing their experiences with peers who shared the experience and struggled to share, or experienced tension sharing, with external social groups. Finally, participants identified areas of professional and personal growth from their ISL experiences that prepared them for life after college. Several participants described their experiences participating in ISL as a college undergraduate as an "anchor" in their lives after college.

Transformative Learning Theory

Mezirow (1991, 2000), established transformational learning as a process of learning in adulthood in which learners' socialized frames of reference are challenged as they become more independent and engage in contexts outside of their childhood communities and social groups. Higher education in the United States offers college students opportunities to engage with diverse individuals and learn in different contexts. Therefore, college can be a highly transformative experience (Komives & Wagner, 2017; Patton et al., 2016).

Participants in this study described the phases of meaning making established in Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory. Transformational learning is initiated by a disorienting dilemma challenging the frames of reference developed in childhood and reinforced in their social groups. For most participants, their experience in the Collaborative ISL Courses acted as a disorienting dilemma, causing cognitive dissonance which prompted awareness, reflection, and dialogue related to their existing frames of reference.

Participants described self-examination through processing and reflectively examining their ISL experiences at individual and social levels with faculty mentors, peers, individuals in the host country, and in their social and familial groups. Reflective discourse occurred in formal

and informal settings. In their discourse, participants critically assessed their assumptions and worldviews. All participants described an experience of recognizing their privileged identities and struggling with their witness to poverty and suffering in the host country. They expressed feelings of guilt for their privilege and gratitude for their access to resources in the United States, as well as confusion in observing joy in suffering. Several participants positively described sharing and dialogue with faculty and students in the ISL course. Many identified positive experiences of validation in sharing emerging perspective changes and observations, and recognizing their feelings of and experiences with discomfort, discontent, and transformation in the ISL experience were shared with others.

Through the Collaborative ISL Courses, participants engaged in global immersion and experiential learning, including through service learning. During and after their ISL experiences, participants explored new roles, relationships, and actions. All participants discussed the development of relationships with faculty, peers, and individuals in the host country. They also described considering and implementing plans of action in their professional and personal lives and acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing their plans. For many participants, the Collaborative ISL Courses counted as a major/minor elective. Experiential learning, including through service learning, enabled participants to participate in new actions and gain new skills related to their professional fields of study. The action of exploring skills and relationships proved especially relevant for participants who identified as nursing majors and those who were contemplating careers in healthcare.

During and after their ISL experiences, participants provisionally tried new roles. This opportunity to develop and test new skills and perspectives influenced students when they returned to the United States and after college. Participants described exploring roles including

nurse, educator, observer, and confidant, and testing skills such as empathy and reflection. Some participants described examining their faith, contemplating alternative career pathways, or adjusting life plans. In the process of engaging in new activities in a new context, especially one so divergent from their norms as college students in the United States, participants described building comfortability and self-confidence in new roles and relationships. Many attributed their experiences successfully traveling to another country and experiencing a new culture to their decisions to take professional and personal risks in their lives after college. One participant shared, "I think one of the greatest … parts of that experience was how scary it was … Whenever you're going somewhere that's out of your comfort zone, that is a priceless opportunity to grow."

Learning in transformational learning is defined as "the process of using prior interpretation to construct a new or a revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action" (Mezirow, 1991, p.12). After returning to the United States, participants began the process of reintegrating to their lives with new perspectives. All participants described the experience of a perspective shift or transformation at various levels. The experience influenced participants' career pathways and prompted personal growth. While some participants reintegrated to their lives with ease, others described a struggle to reintegrate or the experience of delayed processing and integration of their experiences into perspective. Many participants described the experience as an "anchor" in their lives after college.

Chameleon Complex. Findings also align with Keily's (2004) "chameleon complex," a concept rooted in transformative learning theory. Chameleon complex describes "the internal struggle between conforming to, and resisting, dominant norms, rituals, and practices in the United States" after experiencing a perspective shift through ISL (Kiely, 2004, p. 14). Similarly

to the participants in Kiely's (2004) study, participants in this study described "difficulties communicating their experiences to others and maintaining relationships when challenging dominant U.S. cultural norms, beliefs, and practices" or translating their intention to act/change into action (p. 15). Challenges reintegrating to life in the United States typically emerged as participants' new perspectives conflicted with the frames of reference in their social groups, e.g., family and friends, and in some cases resulted in tense conversations or misunderstandings. Some participants described experiences of depression, guilt, and confusion after returning to the United States. They preferred to share their new perspectives and experiences with individuals who shared the experience, or who had similar experiences, fearing others would "not understand."

According to Kiely (2004), as they struggle to reintegrate after an ISL experience, college students sometimes experience a stalling or de-integration of their perspective transformations. Many participants in this study described the experience of a delayed processing and integration of the experiences. Several studies identified the reintegration period after participating in ISL as an area of challenge among college students (Kiely, 2004; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). While Kiely (2004), Mellon and Herrera (2014) and Reid (2018), examined the experiences of U.S. college students immediately after participating in ISL, this study explored the experiences of recent college graduates. Evidence in this study suggests despite periods of stalling or regression in their perspective transformations, participants maintained some level of perspective transformation developed during their ISL experiences in their lives after college.

Transformative Learning in Higher Education. This study contributes to the literature on transformational learning in higher education, particularly as a framework for service learning and education abroad. As a theory of adult learning, transformative learning theory (Mezirow,

1991) has been used in studies of college students (Mezirow, 2000), including in studies of education abroad (Chwialkowska, 2020; Conceição, 2021; Walters et al., 2017) and service-learning (Buschlen & Warner, 2014; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Shor et al., 2017).

Social Justice Perspective

Many participants described recognizing and reflecting on their privileged identities as White, middle class, American college students in the context of witnessing poverty and suffering during the global immersion component of the Collaborative ISL Courses. They also described developing a critical awareness of privilege and incorporating it into their lives after college. Many participants described their recognition of a shared humanity despite differences in culture, socioeconomic status, or resource availability. They developed lasting relationships with individuals in the host country and continue to connect with them after college. These findings align with Freire's (1970) social justice pedagogy.

Freire (1970) argued that an individual's path to liberation, as oppressed or allies to the oppressed, begins with "critical awareness of oppression" (Freire, 1970, p. 51). Critical awareness prompts reflection and ultimately action, i.e., praxis, through which individuals recognize "their capacity to transform … reality through action upon it" (p. 27). Many participants described the development of a social change agency after their ISL experiences. One participant changed their career to nonprofit management. Others described incorporating a social justice perspective in their career goals or professional work. For example, a nurse practicing empathy with patients from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, a teacher sharing the perspective of privilege with their students, or graduate students/professionals continuing to engage in service.

Evidence suggests transformative learning is a process of individual and social change (Daloz, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). Change at the individual level extends through the individual to change in society. Reflecting on their growing awareness of oppression and inequality, one participant was encouraged to "turn that bitterness into gratitude for what you have, and to just kind of work for a world where eventually that disparity is not a reality."

These findings add to the existing literature which supports ISL as a pedagogy for social justice education and social change (Buschlen & Reusch, 2016; Candiff, 2016; Daloz, 2000; Komives & Wagner, 2017; Pipitone, 2018; Reid, 2018). In addition, the findings support previous scholars who argued ISL experiences highly divergent from participants' existing frames of reference resulted in more significant transformation (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2005). In a longitudinal study of ISL participation among U.S. college students, Kiely (2005) found that experiences in which students experience a high level of dissonance, e.g., encountering extreme poverty, translated to perspective shift and long-term transformation when compared to students who participated in experiences with a low-level of dissonance. Specifically, Kiely (2005) found students continued to "draw on the dissonant experiences as reminders and inspiration for maintaining their newly formed critical awareness" (p. 15). Participants in this study described their ISL experience as an "anchor" or reference point to which they often return to in moments of struggle or gratitude in their lives after college.

Post-College Readiness

Participants described the influence of their ISL experiences on their professional and personal lives after college. Findings support ISL as a pedagogy that prepares students for life after college. This adds to related literature on the influence of service learning and education abroad on post-college readiness. Previous studies found students who participated in types of

experiential learning such as ISL and education abroad developed relevant skills for life after

college including global consciousness, cultural empathy, interpersonal communication,

leadership, and teamwork (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; Huckle, 2015;

Matthews et al., 2015; Quist-Adade, 2013; Pipitone, 2018; Stolley et al., 2017). They are also

more likely to travel or work abroad after college (IIE, 2020; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Pipitone,

2018).

All participants in this study identified their ISL experiences as influencing their career

pathways or developing relevant professional skills and perspectives. Participants described

developing relevant professional skills including empathy and confidence. The development of

empathy was especially highlighted among participants in healthcare professions. Many

described practicing empathy with patients, including individuals living in poverty and from

backgrounds different from their own. Some participants also developed a global mindedness

which they described as a professionally desirable perspective.

In addition, participants described the development of skills related to their personal

growth and development, and which they carried into their lives after college. Areas of personal

growth that emerged included mindfulness, global consciousness, and social change agency.

Participants described incorporating these skills into their relationships and worldviews. Some

participants also described the influence of the experience on their faith.

Regardless of the type of effect, all participants described being influenced or

transformed at some level through their ISL experiences. One participant, who currently works

as a teacher, shared, "I will always think of my life in three different phases," before, during, and

after the experience. Findings support prior research that identified service learning, education

abroad, and ISL, as high impact, transformative educational practices, including Bringle and

Hatcher's (2011) assessment of ISL as "a pedagogy … best suited to prepare college graduates to be active global citizens in the 21st century" (p. 3).

Limitations of the Study

This study examined the influence of undergraduate ISL participation on recent graduates' post-college readiness. The findings add to the literature on global education and ISL as transformative education pedagogies in U.S. higher education. Limitations of the study include the demographic composition of the sample and the approach of sampling from one site. Both limitations have implications for the generalizability of the study.

The sample of participants was relatively homogeneous. Reflecting on their time as college students, all participants described themselves as academically high achieving and/or highly involved in student activities. For example, five of the seven participants were members of an honors program at the HEI. All participants identified as White, and most identified as upper-middle class to middle class, traditionally aged college students. Only one participant, who was a veteran, identified as a nontraditional student, and they described a somewhat unique experience with the ISL course. The relative homogeneity of the participant sample in this study affects the generalizability of the study to a more diverse college student population.

The approach of sampling participants from one site is also a potential limitation of the study. Evidence in the findings suggests the HEI from which participants were sampled has a culture of involvement and service. In addition, the location of the global immersion component of the ISL course, i.e., a country in East Africa, is a limiting factor regarding the site. The literature suggests an increased effect from ISL in contexts that create high levels of dissonance, e.g., low development countries with high poverty (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004). Sampling from multiple sites might add additional perspective to examining the influence of undergraduate ISL

participation on post-college readiness, factoring in institutional culture and type, as well as location of ISL; thus, increasing the generalizability of the study.

Implications of the Study's Results

The study provides evidence that ISL participation at the college undergraduate level is a high impact transformative educational experience, with the potential to influence college undergraduates in the United States lives after college. Findings of the study have implications for higher education administrators in the United States. U.S. HEIs increasingly face pressure to provide relevant education that prepares students for life after college in an interdependent and diverse society. Faculty who are developing courses with ISL, and college students who are considering participation in ISL could also benefit from the study.

Recommendations for Practice

Participants in this study described similar social backgrounds during college, i.e., White, middle class, traditional students. In addition, participants predominantly identify as academically high achieving and highly involved in student activities, and all participants previously traveled or studied abroad. Only one participant, a U.S. miliary veteran who lived and worked off campus, identified as a nontraditional student. The demographics of participants in this study align with broader trends in global education at HEIs in the United States (Grain, 2019; Green & Johnson, 2014; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Mitchell et al. (2012), for example, described ISL as a pedagogy of Whiteness. Existing literature identifies financial, cultural, and social barriers to participation in global education and service-learning experiences among students from marginalized backgrounds in U.S. higher education (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; Reid, 2018). HEIs in the United States should make global

education and ISL experiences more accessible to students underrepresented in these experiences.

Several participants described the ISL experience as disruptive, with some identifying struggles with depression and intense emotions and/or tensions in their external familial and social groups after returning to the United States. In this study and others, the period of reintegration, or integrating new perspectives into their home context, emerged as a particular area of challenge for participants post-ISL (Kiely, 2004; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). These findings indicate a need for scaffolding to support undergraduate students as they process disruptive ISL experiences through group discussion and reflective journaling. In addition, faculty or ISL administrators may benefit from collaboration with available mental health support and counseling to educate students on available resources prior to, during, and after their ISL experiences.

The importance of reflective processing before, during, and after ISL experiences emerged as an effective practice in this study. Provision of structured opportunities to process ISL experiences was emphasized in the findings. This finding supports Kiely's (2005) assessment that:

> Students' transformational learning is more apt to occur and persist over the long-term if there are structured opportunities for participants to engage in reflective (i.e., processing) and nonreflective (i.e., personalizing and connecting) learning processes with peers, faculty, and community members. (17)

In this study, several participants identified reflective and mindfulness skills in their lives after college as a result of their ISL experiences.

After returning to the United States, participants described a gravitation to sharing their experiences in the ISL course with faculty mentors and peers who participated in the course or individuals who had similar experiences. They described struggles sharing the experience, especially challenging moments witnessing poverty and suffering, with external social groups, including family. Several participants also described delayed processing of the experience. These findings support the incorporation of group processing discussions or meetings after an ISL or transformative education experience, especially several months removed from the experience (Candiff, 2016; Hyde, 2021; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Pryle, 2020; Reid, 2018; Richard et al., 2016). Alumni of ISL courses and programs could also benefit from a network or ongoing support space post-college.

All participants described the influence of their ISL experiences on their lives after college, with many describing their experiences as an "anchor" in their professional or personal lives. In addition, many participants completed the ISL course as a major/minor elective, describing the elective designation as a motivating factor in their participation. Findings add to literature on the effect of undergraduate ISL participation post-college. Although few studies (Kiely, 2004) examined the influence of ISL participation on college undergraduates' lives after college, previous findings such as students changing majors or expressing intentions to act for social change after ISL participation indicated a post-college effect (Candiff, 2016; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Johnson & Howell, 2017; Reid, 2018). Evidence that undergraduate ISL participation prepares students for life after college, professionally and personally, has implications for higher education administrators and faculty who lead and develop ISL experiences. It is also relevant for college undergraduates considering participation in ISL.

Finally, this study supported previous findings that participation in ISL in contexts that create high dissonance or that are significantly different from the lived contexts of participants, e.g., low-income countries with high poverty, has a more significant, long-term impact on college undergraduate students (Candiff, 2016; IIE, 2020; Kiely, 2004, 2005). Traditional education abroad experiences among undergraduate college students in the United States involve travel to and study in European countries (IIE, 2020). ISL experiences typically occur in low-income countries in the global South (Bringle et al., 2011; Green & Johnson, 2014; IIE, 2020; Reid, 2018). Findings suggest some students seek transformative and nontraditional global education experiences, such as experiences provided through ISL. These findings support the development of undergraduate ISL courses in nontraditional education abroad contexts.

Recommendations for Future Research

Few studies (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Haines et al., 2017; McNamara, 2012) examined the experiences of recent college graduates who participated in ISL as undergraduates. Finding in this study indicated that participants take time to process their experiences, develop new perspectives, and integrate perspective into their lives. Some participants even described a delayed processing, only recognizing the full impact of their ISL experiences after college. These findings align with other studies that suggest it takes time for individuals to integrate transformative experiences into their perspectives and actions post-experience (Haines et al., 2017; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Reid, 2018). More research is needed on the influence of undergraduate ISL participation post-college. In addition, there is a need for longitudinal research that examines individuals' experiences and perspective before, during, and after ISL, as well as post-college (Kiely, 2004). Future research may also examine the influence of undergraduate ISL

participation on the lives of individuals more than six academic years after they graduated from college.

Participants in this study shared similar social backgrounds. Only one participant identified as a nontraditional college student, and they described a unique experience in the ISL course. Unlike their peers in the ISL experience, they described not being shocked by poverty or the difference in culture during the global immersion component of the ISL course. More research is needed on the experiences of underrepresented and nontraditional college undergraduates in ISL. Previous studies also identified this gap (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; Reid, 2018). In addition, there is potential for comparative research on the experiences of privileged/traditional and marginalized/nontraditional students, including college students with military veteran backgrounds.

All participants in this study described international travel, study abroad, or international research experiences prior to participating in ISL. More research is needed to explore the ISL experiences of undergraduate college students with limited or no prior international travel experiences.

Few studies explore the influence of ISL participation on graduate students. One participant described involvement in a graduate-level ISL course after participating in the Collaborative ISL Course. Short-term study abroad through ISL courses is a growing area of global education at HEIs in the United States (Lightfoot & Lee, 2015). Graduate-level ISL incorporates professional and global learning experiences and offers the potential for transformational learning (Cho & Gulley, 2017; Lightfoot & Lee, 2015). More research is needed on the experience and effect of ISL participation among graduate students in the United States.

Conclusion

Colleges and universities in the United States historically functioned to educate the rising generation of leaders for life, work, and citizenship (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Dewey, 1938; Geiger, 2011, 2019; Kezar, 2004; Saltmarsh & Zlotkowski, 2011). Individuals graduating from college in the 21st century United States live and work in an increasingly interdependent society. Globalization tightened the social, economic, and ecological linkages among nations. In this context, U.S. HEIs face societal pressure to prepare individuals for global citizenship and life in a multicultural and interdependent society after college (Altbach, 2015; Bok, 2013; Patton et al., 2016).

The demand for education for post-college readiness grew as the cost of higher education in the United States increased and shifted from public to private sources, weighting the bargaining power of parents and students (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; Delbanco, 2012; Geiger, 2019; Patton et al., 2016). Educational leaders in U.S. higher education are addressing the demand for timely and relevant education in part by offering transformational educational opportunities through experiential and active learning, including globally, based on findings that high-impact learning practices enhance students' post-college readiness (Candiff, 2016; Kellogg Commission, 1999; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Kuh, 2012; Mellon & Herrera, 2014; Reid, 2018). Through educational practices such as education abroad, service learning, and ISL, HEIs also fulfill their historic social functions and engage in mutually beneficial activities benefiting the institution, students, faculty, and society, locally and globally (Benson et al., 2017; Bok, 2013; De Wit, 2002; Kuh, 2012; Geiger, 2019; Haupt et al., 2018; Kato & Suzuki, 2019; Stolley et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2018).

Bringle and Hatcher (2011) described ISL as extensive, robust, transformative, and distinctive, and argued that it is "a pedagogy … best suited to prepare college graduates to be active global citizens in the 21st century" (p. 3). Findings in this study support the conclusion that undergraduate ISL is a high impact, transformative educational practice that prepares individuals for life in an interdependent, global, and diverse society after college (Bringle et al., 2011; Candiff, 2016; Haines et al., 2017; IIE, 2020; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Kuh, 2012; Reid, 2018). During their ISL experiences, participants positively described their engagement with another culture and recalled moments of culture shock and discomfort as they witnessed poverty and suffering. They also described awareness and self-examination related to their privileged identities, and feelings of discomfort, guilt, and gratitude.

Although some participants struggled to reintegrate to their lives in the United States after their ISL experiences, all described levels of perspective shift and transformation. As participants engaged in contexts outside of their social groups, they described the experiencing the 10 phases of meaning making in Mezirow's (1991, 2000) transformative learning theory. Previous research suggested a post-college effect from undergraduate ISL participation; however, few studies examined its influence on recent college graduates' lives after college (Kiely, 2004, 2005; Haines et al., 2017; McNamara, 2012).

Participants in this study described professional and personal development through their ISL experiences. Many described the ISL experience as an "anchor" in their lives after college. Their experiences informed their professional lives and worldviews, with many participants highlighting development in areas including reflection, mindfulness, confidence, empathy, and professional competency. This finding supports evidence of a long-term effect of undergraduate

ISL participation in individuals lives after college, despite periods of perspective regression or stalling.

Based on post-college readiness outcomes, HEIs in the United States have an interest in expanding opportunities for education abroad and experiential learning, including through ISL. Administrators, faculty, students, and communities collectively benefit from ISL. HEIs in the United States should expand access to ISL participation among underrepresented and marginalized student groups, as well as across academic disciplines and at the graduate level (Boni & Calabuig, 2017; Brown & Cope, 2013; Reid, 2018). Future research should continue to examine the influence of undergraduate ISL participation on recent college graduates' lives after college. Transformational global education offers a liberatory model of education with effects that may lead to institutional, individual, and social change.

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Appendix A

Draft Participant Recruitment Email

To:	Alumni of Undergraduate Global Immersion Course with International Service-learning
From:	Gatekeeper
cc:	Rosemary Shaver

Subject: Opportunity to Participate in a Research Study

Dear Alumni,

You are invited to participate in a study on the perceived effect of the undergraduate international service-learning and post-college readiness. Participants are being recruited among Global University alumni who graduated between 2015 to 2021 and who participated in a global immersion course with international service-learning through the global immersion course with international service-learning. The study is entitled, "The Perceived Influence of Participation in Undergraduate International Service-Learning on Recent U.S. College Graduates' Post-College Readiness."

The purpose of this study is to understand how individuals who participated in international service-learning as college undergraduates perceive the experience influenced their post-college readiness.
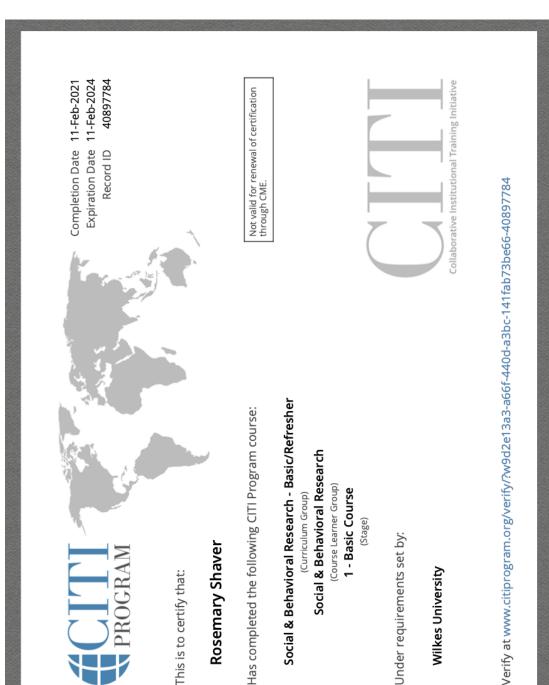
The study will be conducted by Rosemary Shaver, M.Ed., as part of a doctoral dissertation. Rosemary is a student in the Doctor of Education Program at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

Participation in the study is voluntary and results of the study will be confidential. Pseudonyms will be given to all participants, and they will remain anonymous. If you agree to participate, informed consent documents will be provided and must be signed to prior to joining the study. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, all interviews will be conducted virtually via Zoom video conferencing. One interview of approximately one-hour will be conducted with each participant. The researcher may also contact you for an optional follow-up interview. Study participants will be asked to participate in member checks of the researcher's analysis and provided an opportunity to offer feedback on the researcher's findings, as well as assess if the findings align with their experiences.

If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact the researcher, Rosemary Shaver, at email address.

In addition, you may forward this recruitment letter to other potential participants. To ensure anonymity, participants should only contact the researcher and participants will only be known to the researcher.

Best regards,
Gatekeeper

Appendix B

CITI Social and Behavioral Research Certificate

Appendix C

Participant Letter of Informed Consent

Study name: The Perceived Influence of Participation in Undergraduate
                                    International Service-Learning on Recent U.S. College Graduates'
                                    Post-College Readiness

Principal Investigator: Rosemary Shaver

Phone number:

Email:

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a research study as part of a doctoral dissertation. The study is being conducted by Rosemary Shaver, a graduate student in the Doctor of Education program at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. You should read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand before deciding to participate. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to sign this form, and you will be given a copy of the form.

The purpose of this study is to understand how recent U.S. college graduates perceive participation in undergraduate international service-learning influenced their post-college readiness. Participants will include individuals who graduated from the University between 2015 and 2021 and who participated in international service-learning as undergraduates.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed by me for approximately one-hour. You may also be contacted to participate in an optional follow-up interview. All interviews will take place through the Zoom video conferencing platform. In addition, you will be provided the opportunity to give feedback on interview transcriptions and the findings of the study. Total participation in this study will range from two to three hours.

This study has potential benefits related to policy and practice on global immersion and undergraduate international service-learning in U.S. higher education. It may also inform understanding of post-college readiness. There is limited risk associated with participating in this study. During the study, you may revisit challenging experiences related to your experience as an undergraduate participating in international service-learning or your experiences in the U.S. higher education system. At any point in the process, you may withdraw from the study or request to take a break from the interview. I will make all reasonable accommodations to ensure your comfortability participating in this study.

To ensure your confidentiality, you will be given a pseudonym and your data will be entered according to that pseudonym. Identifying information will not be reported in the study findings.

A master database of all participant data will be created and separately stored from the deidentified data files. Audio will be stored in an encrypted and password protected file on the researcher's personal laptop. The laptop is only accessible to the researcher and is password protected. Additionally, the data will be stored on a password protected external hard drive. The hard drive will be stored in a locked cabinet owned by the researcher and only accessible to the researcher. Data files will be stored in a secure location for three years.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You can choose not to participate. There is no future compensation or payment to participants as a result of this study.

If you have any questions or concerns about this research study, contact the principal investigator, Rosemary Shaver, phone #, email, or Dr. Ty Frederickson, phone #, email, who is the Wilkes University faculty member supervising this research.

In addition, if you have questions, concerns, or feel your rights have been violated as a research participant, you may contact the chair of the Wilkes University Institutional Review Board (IRB), Dr. Karim Medico Letwinsky, at phone #, email, or IRB@wilkes.edu, and the University of Scranton Institutional Review Board (IRB) Administrator, Dr. Tabbi Miller-Scandle, phone #, email.

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and agree to participate.

Signature _____ **Date:** _____

Name (Print) _____

_____ I agree to be audio-recorded.

_____ I do not agree to be audio-recorded.

Name (Print) _____

Signature _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D

Draft Permission to Conduct a Study Request Email

To: Faculty Global Immersion Course Leader

From: Rosemary Shaver

Subject: Permission to conduct a study with alumni of undergraduate global immersion course with international service-learning

Dear Faculty Global Immersion Course Leader,

I am writing to request permission to conduct a study involving the faculty-led global immersion courses with international service-learning at your institution. The proposed study will be conducted for doctoral dissertation, completed in partial fulfillment of the requirements of a Doctor of Education program at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, PA. It is entitled, "The Perceived Influence of Participation in Undergraduate International Service-Learning on Recent U.S. College Graduates' Post-College Readiness."

I am requesting your permission to allow recruitment of alumni who graduated between 2015 to 2021 and who participated in the global immersion course with international service-learning. If approval is granted, 5 to 10 individuals who meet the criteria will be recruited to participate in the study. Due to the covid-19 pandemic, all interviews will be conducted virtually via the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Participation in the study will be voluntary and results of the study will be confidential. Individuals who volunteer to participate will be informed of the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study, as well as the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. Informed consent documents will be provided to voluntary participants, who must consent prior to joining the study. A copy of the participant informed consent document is attached for your review.

If you agree to grant permission, please write back via email affirming your approval, or provide a signed document verifying permission. In addition, if you have any questions or concerns about this research study, please contact myself, the principal investigator, Rosemary Shaver, phone #, email, or Dr. Ty Frederickson, phone #, email, who is the faculty member supervising this research.

Best regards,

Rosemary Shaver

Appendix E

Draft Gatekeeper Recruitment Email

To: Faculty Global Immersion Course Leader

From: Rosemary Shaver

Subject: Request to serve as a gatekeeper for a study with alumni of undergraduate global
             immersion course with international service-learning

Dear Faculty Global Immersion Course Leader,

I hope this message finds you well. My name is Rosemary Shaver, a student in the
Doctor of Education Program at Wilkes University in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. I
received permission to recruit alumni of the global immersion course with
international service-learning to conduct a qualitative research study entitled
"The Perceived Influence of Participation in Undergraduate International
Service-Learning on Recent U.S. College Graduates' Post-College Readiness." The
study is for a doctoral dissertation, completed in partial fulfillment of the Doctor
of Education program at Wilkes University.

You were identified as a potential gatekeeper for the study. The role of the
gatekeeper is to support recruitment of 5 to 10 participants for the study.
Participants must be alumni of the University who graduated between 2015 to
2021 and who participated in the global immersion course with international
service-learning. As part of the study, participants will be asked to participate in
qualitative interviews via the Zoom video conferencing platform. A copy of the
draft participant recruitment email and informed consent form is attached for
reference.

If you are interested and willing to serve as gatekeeper in this study, I would
greatly appreciate it. You can reach me via email at email or phone at phone #.
You may also contact Dr. Ty Frederickson, phone #, email, who is the faculty
member supervising this research.

Best regards,

Rosemary Shaver

Appendix F

Interview Protocol

_____

TOPIC: The Perceived Influence of Participation in Undergraduate
                            International Service-Learning on Recent U.S. College Graduates'
                            Post-College Readiness

RESEARCHER: *Rosemary Shaver*

PARTICIPANT #:   _____

DATE: _____   *TIME:* _____   *PLACE*: _____

_____

Procedure

- *Explain the purpose of the study to the participant.*

- *State that the interview will be audio recorded only and that minimal handwritten notes may be taken during the interview.*

- *Provide an estimate of the duration of the interview.*

- *Explain strategies for protecting data integrity and protecting their confidentiality.*

- *State that they may be contacted after the interview for a follow-up interview and for member checks, a validation process that will involve reviewing and providing feedback on their responses and the data analysis.*

- *Request permission to begin recording.*

- *Encourage the participant to reflect on the experience and moments of awareness and/or impact before, during and after the experience before answering the questions.*

Questions	*Notes*

Think back to yourself as a college undergraduate. ● *Tell me about yourself as an undergraduate student in college.* ● *Describe your family and social background when you were an undergraduate student in college.* ● *Describe your goals for life after college when you were an undergraduate student in college.*	
Reflect on your time participating in the global immersion course with international service-learning. ● *Tell me about what led you to participate in the global immersion course with international service-learning when you were an undergraduate college student.* ● *Describe the place you participated in the experience.* ● *Describe the activities you participated in in the experience.* ● *Describe your interactions and relationships with others during the experience.* ● *Describe what you learned during the experience.*	
Reflect on your life after returning to the U.S. from participating in the global immersion course with international service-learning. ● *Tell me about your experience returning to the U.S. after participating in the program.* ● *Describe, how, if at all, did the experience influence you after returning to the U.S.?* ● *Describe how you shared your experience with others.*	
Reflect on your life after graduating from college. ● *Tell me about your life after college.* ● *Describe how, if at all, did your experience participating in the global immersion course*	

with international service-learning during college influenced you after college. ● *Describe how, if at all, you incorporated what you learned from the experience into your life after college.*	
Before we conclude, I will ask several optional background demographic questions if they were not already addressed in your responses. This section of the interview is optional. If you select to not answer a question, please state such. ● *When did you participate in the program? What year? What year of college?* ● *When did you graduate?* ● *What was the name of the course you enrolled in through the program?* ● *Over how many weeks or months were you engaged in the program?* ● *Where did you travel during the program?* ● *What was your major during college?* ● *At what age were you when you participated in the program?* ● *How would you describe your race?* ● *How would you describe your gender?* ● *Did your parents or guardians attend college?* ● *How would you describe your socioeconomic status during the time you were in college?* ● *How would you describe your current profession and/or career?* ● *Is there anything else you would like to share about your background?*	

Closing

● *Thank the participant for their cooperation and participation in the interview.*

● *Reiterate that they may be contacted for a follow-up interview and/or for member checks of their responses and the data analysis.*

- *Reiterate and assure them of the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality of their responses.*