

NARRATIVES OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE, REFLECTION, AND
TRANSFORMATION IN EXPERIENTIAL, CROSS-CULTURAL LEARNING

by

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Abstract

This study is an investigation of the process of experiential, cross-cultural learning. Through in-depth interviews, twelve U.S. undergraduate students discussed their experiences in semester-long experiential cultural immersion programs in non-industrialized countries approximately one year after returning home. They recounted their experiences and reflected on the ways in which these experiences led to personal transformation as a result of experiential, cross-cultural learning. The study also examined critical elements of this learning process and the conditions that led to an increase in the intensity of cultural immersion. Three main areas of the learning process were examined: 1) critical relationships developed during the time abroad that provided students with opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and emotional support 2) critical incidents and crises that challenged students' cultural values and meaning perspectives and created feelings of cultural marginality, and 3) consequent changes in students' meaning perspectives resulting from their experiences and critical reflection. Theories of experiential learning, experiential, cross-cultural learning, and Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning form the theoretical framework for this thesis.

This learning process is found to have significant formative and transformative effects on students. Some changes that students experienced included increased self-awareness, value clarification, improved levels of self-confidence, transformed meaning perspectives or world views, development of feelings of human and cultural reciprocity, and commitment to career goals. The analysis of this learning process of young adults leads to some modification of Mezirow's theory.

This study provides in-depth insight into the student viewpoint of the experiential, cross-cultural learning process, and informs the larger field of study abroad in terms of the experiential dynamics of all cultural immersion programs. In addition, this study sheds light on the application of Mezirow's transformation theory to the learning of young adults.

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Chapter One: Framing the Study

Introduction

This is the process whereby people become aware that the meaning system that they have imposed upon their life world is not the only system and that there are alternative systems of meaning. Having become aware that their original system is not necessarily the only one, or the best one for them, they might rethink their position and then try to act upon the world in order to transform it. (Jarvis, 1987, p. 204)

In the fall of 1990, during my junior year of college, I traveled to Zimbabwe to participate in the School for International Training's College Semester Abroad program. This was an enlightening and transformative experience. The personal growth and change that I experienced during this semester as a result of living, studying, and traveling abroad have intrigued me ever since. I find myself continually processing and reflecting on these experiences, even though four years have passed. I have developed an entirely new perspective and world view as a result of my relationships, encounters, and cross-cultural learning during my time abroad.

The intensity of this experience has led me to pursue a career in experiential education. I am particularly interested in experiential, cross-cultural learning as a result of my own experiences, and for this thesis, I have chosen to study the student perspective of this learning process. This research has allowed me to reflect further on my own learning experiences in Zimbabwe and has also functioned as a form of career training in cross-cultural education, particularly in terms of the student learning process. It has enabled me to reflect specifically on the role of an Academic Director in programs such as these, and to develop my own philosophy of teaching within that role.

This study poses two main questions:

- 1) As a result of an experiential, cross-cultural immersion experience in a non-industrialized country, what changes do U.S. undergraduate students undergo in relation to their ideas about:
a) the Third World and international issues, b) their own values, and c) their own life plans? If students are transformed by this learning process, what is the nature of this transformation?**

2) What elements of the experiential, cross-cultural immersion experience are crucial in the student's change process? In particular, under what circumstances do the emotional and interpersonal involvement of students in the host culture have a transformative effect on their intellectual and personal development? How do individual differences among students in background, knowledge, and values affect their experience of the change process? What effect does the process of re-entry and re-integration into the home culture have on the transformation process?

In order to research these questions, I interviewed 12 participants of the School for International Training College Semester Abroad programs in non-industrialized countries approximately one year after their return to the United States. This thesis is a discussion of these students' experiences as portrayed in these in-depth interviews.

A Theoretical Framework

The contemporary field of study abroad is composed of an assortment of educational programs. These programs vary in terms of learning objectives as well as format in attempting to meet the diverse needs of many kinds of students. Variety in types of instruction, location, length of the program, student ages and backgrounds, program activities, subject of study, the intensity of immersion, and academic requirements make each study abroad program unique. For example, some study abroad programs consist of study at a foreign institution with which the home university has an exchange contract. In other programs, a home university may have an extension program in a foreign country at which students can study. Still other programs operate as independent organizations specializing in study abroad, from which students can transfer their academic credits to their home university. In addition, students may enroll independently at universities or colleges abroad, and attempt to transfer credits to a home university. Travel-study programs focus on travel through one or a number of countries and students are exposed to a variety of new places, as opposed to other programs which focus on deep cultural immersion in one area (Freeman, 1964). Programs typically last anywhere from a few weeks to one semester to one year. Many institutions also have summer programs.

Students study abroad for a number of reasons, such as language immersion, to study a particular subject, or to broaden a liberal arts education. Some programs emphasize one academic subject, such as art, history, or regional studies, while others accentuate cross-cultural learning and personal growth. Programs also differ in the degree of cultural immersion within the host culture. Some students may be left alone in an isolated, new environment for a prolonged period of time, while others learn surrounded by the support of a group of students from their home culture, and the group experiences immersion in a host culture as a unit.

Goodwin and Nacht (1988) identify ten educational and social goals and potential accomplishments used to justify various study abroad programs. These objectives are: 1) to create "cultured" citizens and instill certain cultural attributes in young people of a particular social class, 2) to broaden the intellectual elite, 3) to foster personal growth through exposure to a foreign environment, 4) to fulfill a distinctive institutional mission, such as religious institutions, 5) to explore family roots, 6) to master a foreign language, 7) to study a specialized subject matter, 8) to gain self-insight, 9) to learn from others, and 10) to improve international relations.

Within the host cultural environment, study abroad programs may consist of academic study or structured, educative experiences. Commonly, a mixture of both of these approaches is used with emphasis on one or the other. This particular research study examines cross-cultural learning through experiential education which is enhanced by academic instruction. In particular, this study explores the nature and results of experiential, cross-cultural learning within the environment of a non-industrialized society in which a group of U.S. students are immersed as a unit, with some opportunities for short-term, isolated immersion.

Three learning theories form the theoretical basis of this study: experiential learning theory, experiential cross-cultural learning theory, and transformative learning theory. Each of these learning theories is applicable to a number of different learning situations; they are

concerned largely with the format and components of learning as opposed to the learning context.

Experiential Learning

Experiential education is even more diverse than the field of study abroad. Experiential learning can be used in the study of any subject matter, and can vary widely in the degree of intensity and structure of experience and reflection. In the midst of this ambiguity, many theorists have attempted to create an understanding and definition of experiential learning. John Dewey is considered to be one of the founding theorists of this concept. In Experience and Education (1938), Dewey discusses the organic connection between education and personal experience, and cautions educators to distinguish between educative and mis-educative experiences (p. 25). However, beyond the initial connection of experience and education and a discussion of standards, he does not formulate an actual definition of experiential learning.

More recent educators have endeavored to compose coherent definitions of experiential learning. Many theorists use stage theory to describe this learning process. While this is useful in understanding the various components of experiential learning, it does not imply that all students experience the learning process in the same order or without variety. Coleman (1976) distinguishes between information assimilation and experiential learning through stage theory. The information assimilation process begins with receiving information through a symbolic medium, such as a lecture or a book. Next, the information or general principle is assimilated by the learner. The learner then attempts to apply the general principle to a particular instance. Finally, the learner moves "from the cognitive and symbolic sphere to the sphere of action" (p. 51). The information or general principle is acted upon as it becomes practical in everyday life.

The process of experiential learning, in turn, is an almost reverse sequence of information assimilation. First, the learner has an experience, whether it be an action or observation of an event, and observes its effects. Next, the learner seeks to understand these

effects of the experience, and then seeks to understand the general principle behind the experience, to generalize about a number of related situations and instances. Finally, the learner applies this principle through action in new, related circumstances (Coleman, 1976, pp. 51-52). In spite of the differentiation between information assimilation and experiential learning for the purpose of definition, Coleman explains that the two are not mutually exclusive of one another, and that an appropriate mix must be found between the two forms of learning (Coleman, 1982, pp. 58-60).

Joplin (1981) presents a similar five part model of experiential learning. She specifies that experiential education by definition must provide the learner with an experience, as well as facilitate reflection on that experience. Both of these elements are essential to the experiential learning process. Joplin's five part model begins with the first element, focus. The student is focused on a certain task and prepared for acting on that task. In the second part, the student is immersed in a stressful, challenging, unavoidable situation, "often in an unfamiliar environment requiring new skills or the use of new knowledge" (p. 18). The third and fourth components, support and feedback, exist throughout the entire process to encourage and inform the student. In the final stage in the process, the student is debriefed, and the learning is recognized, articulated, evaluated, and reflected upon through discussion (Joplin, 1981, p. 19). Doherty, Mentkowski, and Conrad (1978) combine the stage theories of Kolb (1976a) and Argyris and Schon (1974) to present a five stage model of experiential learning in which 1) concrete experience, subjected to 2) observation and reflection reveals 3) a learner's theory in use, which through modification as a result of reflection on experience leads to 4) the development of a new espoused theory, followed by 5) the testing of the new espoused theory in new situations, leading back to concrete experience. In short, experiential education signifies a learning process composed of three major components: 1) experience and 2) reflection, resulting in 3) change.

Other researchers have articulated more succinct definitions of experiential learning. For example, Conrad and Hedin (1982) describe the process as one where, "students are in

new roles featuring significant tasks with real consequences, and where the emphasis is on learning by doing with associated reflection" (p. 58). Gager (1982) theorizes, "I believe that the process of learning by experience occurs when the learner is placed into a demanding reality context which necessitates the mastery of new applied skills followed immediately by responsible, challenging action coupled with an opportunity for critical analysis and reflection" (p. 33). Finally, Keeton and Tate (1978) define the process as, "learning in which the learner is directly in touch with the realities being studied. It is contrasted with learning in which the learner only reads about, talks about, or writes about these realities but never comes in contact with them as part of the learning process" (p. 2).

In addition to defining experiential learning, theorists have also described a number of conditions inherent in the experiential learning process. Experiential learning is process-centered as opposed to outcome-centered. Students learn from the process of learning in addition to learning about the subject matter (Joplin, 1981; Kolb, 1984; Proudman, 1992). It is a cyclical process which leads to the creation of a unique continuum of experience for each learner. The continuum of experience creates the outlook through which all other experiences are judged, learned, and understood (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning is a holistic process of adaption to the world, and it encourages learners to gain perspective on the "big picture" (Joplin, 1981; Kolb, 1984; Proudman, 1992; Wallace, 1977). It focuses on the students as opposed to the teacher. The teacher is not considered to be an expert, purveyor of truth, or mediator between the student and the world (Chapman, 1992; Joplin, 1981; Proudman, 1992). Experiential learning recognizes that students have multiple learning styles, and that they arrive at the learning situation with varying backgrounds and levels of readiness (Gager, 1982; Kolb, 1976b; Proudman, 1992). The process involves meaningful relationships between the learner and self, the learner and teacher, the learner and other learners, and the learner and the learning environment (Coleman, 1982; Kolb, 1984; Proudman, 1992). The student has a great deal of control over the learning process through initiative, responsibility, and decision making (Proudman, 1992).

Experience

There are a number of criteria for structuring experiences in experiential education. Experiences should be challenging, intense, and demanding, and should force students out of their comfort zones. Students should be placed in new roles where they must master new tasks and skills. They should be presented with conflicts that they must resolve, creating opportunities for personal transformational growth. Students should gain a feeling of mastery and improved self-esteem as a result of accomplishment (Coleman, 1982; Conrad and Hedin, 1982; Gager, 1982; Hansel and Grove, 1984; Kolb, 1984; Proudman, 1992; Wallace, 1977). These experiences should also be of a personal nature in order to create intrinsic motivation in the students. Students should be impelled into action by subject content which is relevant and meaningful to them. They should be emotionally engaged by purposeful endeavors that involve their minds, bodies, and feelings so that the learning is not easily forgotten (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985; Coleman, 1976; Gager, 1982; Joplin, 1981; Proudman, 1992; Wallace, 1977). Intellectual understanding should be combined with emotional and affective understanding (Sikkema and Niyekawa, 1987).

Experiential learning requires relationships to shape experience and reflection, and to provide support and feedback. The creation of these relationships promotes cooperation and trust among students and educators in a learning environment. As students discuss their learning experiences within these relationships, they can determine the creation of collective experience, which is built of a number of individual, personal experiences, and which can then be used as a basis for critical reflection and social change.

Reflection

Experience alone does not constitute experiential learning; reflection is a vital component in the process. Reflection can incorporate theory building, generalization, abstract conceptualization, dialogue, and the making of meaning. Reflection is shaped by the ideology of culture and society, and in turn, shapes that ideology in a cyclical process (Kemmis, 1985, p. 140). Optimally, reflection denotes a critical process of re-examination of the values and

social context which shape experience. Reflection is preferably moved and shaped by student perceptions, evaluations, and conclusions rather than by academic theory, and is an essential component of experiential learning (Boud, Keogh, and Walker, 1985; Chapman, 1992; Joplin, 1981; Proudman, 1992). Change resulting from experience and reflection entails the integration of new experience and meaning into a student's continuum of experience, resulting in a new understanding and world view, or meaning perspective. Change can refer to personal transformation or social transformation, or both. The social, historical, cultural, and political context of experience shapes the learning process. Culture can determine the content of experience and the ideology which shapes reflection.

In this study of crucial elements of the student change process in experiential cross-cultural learning, it is also interesting to examine the connection between personal reflection, in which students reflect on the meaning of an experience within the context of their personal lives, and critical reflection, in which students determine the place of the experience in larger social, political, historical, and cultural contexts. When transformative learning takes place, personal reflection and growth can in some instances be associated with critical reflection and the individual's participation in social change.

Reflection is a political and social process, as well as an individual process. It involves "contextually relevant" thinking which connects community members to one another, as well as to their culture and environment which give their lives meaning. This may result in praxis, or committed action informed by critical reflection (Kemmis, 1985, pp. 140-141).

Kemmis defines reflection as:

...a dialectical process: it looks inward at our thoughts and thought processes, and outward at the situation in which we find ourselves; when we consider the interaction of the internal and external, our reflection orients us for further thought and action. Reflection is thus 'meta-thinking' (thinking about thinking) in which we consider the relationship between our thoughts and action in a particular context....We pause to reflect because some issue arises which demands that we stop and take stock or consider before we act. We do so because the situation we are in requires consideration: how we act in it is a matter of some significance. We become aware of ourselves, in some small or large way, as agents of history; we become aware that how we act will influence the course of events, at least for ourselves and usually for others too. (p. 141)

Kemmis asserts six points about reflection and the study of reflection:

- 1) Reflection is not a purely 'internal', psychological process: it is action oriented and historically embedded.
- 2) Reflection is not a purely individual process: like language, it is a social process.
- 3) Reflection serves human interests; it is a political process.
- 4) Reflection is shaped by ideology; in turn, it shapes ideology.
- 5) Reflection is a practice which expresses our power to reconstitute social life by the way we participate in communication, decision-making and social action.
- 6) Research methods which fail to take into account these aspects of reflection are, at best, limited and , at worst, mistaken; to improve reflection, the study of reflection must explore the double dialectic of thought and action, the individual and society. (Kemmis, 1985, p. 140)

The danger of relativist reflection necessitates the distinction between reflection which connects personal experience with the collective, and reflection limited to one's own personal experience and identity.

Change

There are four main objectives among programs in the field of experiential education. These consist of personal development and growth in students; group consciousness raising, community development, and social change; changing the structures, purposes, and curricula of education; and assessment and accreditation of life and work experience in order to create new routes into higher education and employment opportunities for adults (Weil & McGill, 1989). These goals often overlap, and one program may subscribe to some or all of the given objectives.

The largest and most significant formal, quantitative research study conducted on experiential learning thus far is the "National Assessment of Experiential Education" (Conrad and Hedin, 1982). This U.S. study assessed 27 experience-based educational programs. It quantitatively measured the impact of these programs on the social, psychological, and intellectual development of secondary students, and demonstrates the third component of experiential learning: change. Program directors specified what they believed to be the effects of their programs from which the researchers developed a list of outcomes of experiential learning. Students then rated themselves concerning these outcomes on a questionnaire. The

study showed a significant positive impact on all three areas of development, more than that produced by classroom instruction alone. Concerning psychological development, students showed increase in their self-esteem and moral reasoning. In terms of social development, students exhibited gains in their sense of competence, social efficacy, and duty. They also moved towards taking responsible action as opposed to simply having responsible attitudes. These students developed more positive attitudes towards the people with whom they interacted, and strongly valued being active in the community as a result of the programs. Students also gained increased knowledge about work and career options. Considering intellectual development, a large majority of students reported that they learned more in the experiential program than in traditional classroom learning. Students also improved in their problem-solving abilities. In accordance with experiential learning theory, many students and practitioners attest to transformation resulting from experiential learning, and this study verifies that experiential learning has a positive and significant impact on students.

Experiential Cross-Cultural Learning

Experiential cross-cultural learning refers to the process of learning about a new culture through experiential learning and cultural immersion, where a student lives within a new cultural environment. Learning and living within a foreign culture help to expand the student's knowledge of both the host and home cultures. Experiential cross-cultural learning differs from study at a university in a foreign country, in which academic learning is emphasized, or from travel in a foreign country, in which a student makes mostly superficial personal contact with people of a new culture. It consists of structured experiences designed to challenge the student with a new culture and to facilitate cross-cultural dialogue. Through interaction with people of a different culture, a student can observe new communication codes, recognize his or her own, and develop relationships which personalize understanding of the host culture.

Experiential, cross-cultural learning also endeavors to create a global perspective in students. This perspective is invaluable for young adults in a modern world composed of global economic, political, and ecological systems (Kniep, 1987, p. 146). "If young people

are to be truly informed about their world, their education must engage them in inquiry about the causes, the effects, and the potential solutions to the global issues of our time" (Kniep, 1987, p. 151). These issues include development issues, such as subsistence and the economic growth of peoples and nations; peace and security issues of countries throughout the world; environmental issues, including the effects of human exploitation of the earth and human responsibility for the management of environmental resources; and human rights issues. Students must also learn about the history of the world in terms of the relations and interdependence of countries internationally (Kniep, 1987, p. 156). Ideally, this type of education leads to action as a "global citizen."

The challenge of global citizenship, then, is to engage Canadians in ways that are persuasive and to enlist their involvement in constructive change. The global citizen is informed, critical and active in community affairs, whether local, national, or global. He or she understands that in any community the dominant groups convey what it means to be a citizen, and he or she is willing to confront the power of those groups. (Schuyler and Schuyler, 1989, p. 160)

Experiential, cross-cultural learning is one way to generate global perspectives and citizenship in students. Neff (1981) explains the importance of cultural immersion in experiential, cross-cultural learning:

Cross-cultural experiential learning can be defined as the acquisition of skills, knowledge, and competencies through a learner's contact with and reflection upon the direct realities of a host society....Cross-cultural experiential education is preeminently integrative in nature. The student connects with the host culture at all levels of his being. Such programs offer opportunities for the acquisition of factual knowledge, for synthesizing data, determining patterns of meaning, developing powers of independent observation, and for the application of knowledge and understanding to the immediate situations at hand. At the same time, the student is provided opportunities for greater self-confidence, awareness, and understanding of his or her own culture and values; for the testing of effective patterns in interacting with people and situations; and a corresponding potential for the development of personal maturity and capacities in the learning process itself. (p. 3)

In conjunction with the development of a global perspective, students may also gain maturity and personal development through cultural immersion.

Cross-cultural learning experiences can be both structured and unstructured. Often programs initiate structured situations with the hope that these will spur unstructured learning experiences. Structured experiences include homestays, study tours, discussion panels, and

work camps. Unstructured experiences consist of unplanned interactions with people and events within the new cultural environment. Both structured and unstructured cross-cultural experiences challenge the student's own cultural understanding, beliefs, and behavior. They challenge students' previous experiences within their own cultures, causing them to re-evaluate previous reflection on those experiences. Cross-cultural experiential learning can also cause students to significantly modify their world views.

Hansel (1993) specifies nine stages of an adjustment cycle in the experiential, cross-cultural study abroad experience: 1) preparation, 2) arrival, 3) settling in, 4) deepening the relationship, 5) culture shock, 6) the holidays, 7) culture learning, 8) pre-departure, and, 9) readjustment. [Note: Stage 6 refers to winter Holidays in December, and is in reference to the application of this model to year-long programs.] These stages of experience are relatively standard for all students, but they vary in terms of the depth in which each stage occurs.

Hansel and Grove (1984) argue that cultural immersion accelerates learning and the growth of competence in students. As students are exposed to new ways of life, their physical senses are constantly discovering new information and stimulating the brain. This leads to an increase in learning and memory. Once students have gained knowledge about the host culture and the new way of life becomes familiar, they become more competent in living in the new culture, and therefore become more self-confident. This creates a positive attitude towards learning. Students also gain competence through making decisions and solving problems. They are confronted with a variety of options and solutions from which they are able to make wise and educated decisions. Since students are outsiders in the host culture, they are in a good position to learn through observation since they can observe things that are unnoticeable to cultural insiders. Finally, students are placed in a number of situations where they can develop relationships with people of the host culture, enabling them to engage in cultural and linguistic learning.

Cross-Cultural Dialogue

In an experiential cross-cultural learning situation, students often come to understand the experiences of people from a host culture, as well as the social, political, cultural, and historical contexts in which they occur, through dialogue. At the same time, students can explore the forces that shape their own past experiences and meaning perspectives. This process can lead to increased understanding and open dialogue across cultures. Significant relationships in the learning process facilitate this in-depth dialogue and reflection. Once students see similarities between themselves and others and develop emotional attachments to people in the host culture, they may become more apt to recognize and confront the social problems faced by those people. In addition, as students recognize differences between their own culture and the new culture, they may gain insight into themselves as they recognize how their own personal characteristics and values result from their cultural upbringing. This process can provoke perspective transformation.

Each person's individual experiences are significant within the social structure and the larger context of collective experience. Theoretically, the experiential, cross-cultural learning process facilitates acceptance of cultural diversity by generating continual cross-cultural dialogue. As students develop emotional and interpersonal relationships with people of a host country, both people in the relationship share experiences and engage in dialogue with one another, through which their principles and meaning perspectives are challenged.

The interconnection between experience and critical reflection must lead to and extend out of dialogue. Dialogue is an experience in itself, as well as a form of reflection, in which people meet on a common ground and speak in such a way as to transform one another (Bai, 1993). Freire (1972) describes the necessity of dialogue in both the creation of community and culture.

[N]o one can say a true word alone - nor can he [sic] say it *for* another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words....If it is in speaking their word that men [sic], by naming the world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which men achieve significance as men. Dialogue is thus an existential necessity....[D]ialogue is the encounter in which the united reflection and action of the dialoguers are addressed to the world which is to be transformed and

humanized...Self-sufficiency is incompatible with dialogue....I cannot think for others or without others, nor can others think for me. (Freire, 1972, p. 76-79)

Study abroad programs create opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue and the development of cross-cultural relationships so that both participants can reflect on their own experiences from the perspective of an outsider, possibly leading them to understand their own experiences within the context of the experiences of others. Reflection and dialogue can be considered to be of extreme importance in the learning process, as they lead from the understanding of personal experience to the understanding of human experience (Janeway, 1977, p. 7).

Students are transformed through critical reflection on their experiences and actions. By connecting personal experience with the experiences of people from a new culture, a student's self-concept and world view may be challenged or transformed. Change in the conception of self can include changes in the student's life plan or sense of purpose in life, improved self-understanding, better human relation skills, maturity, and enhanced decision-making skills. Through understanding the experiences of others, a student's world view, cultural values, and political outlook may change.

Cultural Marginality

There are a number of optimum conditions for effective experiential, cross-cultural learning. Most importantly, students should be placed into challenging situations within a network of support. Michael Paige (1993) describes cross-cultural education as psychologically challenging, both as a function of its content and as well as its pedagogy (p. 3). He describes a number of conditions which increase the psychological intensity of cross-cultural experiences. These include: 1) a high degree of cultural difference between the sojourner's home and host culture 2) a high degree to which the student negatively evaluates cultural differences 3) a high degree of ethnocentricity on the part of the student 4) a high degree of ethnocentric behavior on the part of the host culture 5) a high degree of racism, sexism, or other prejudice in the host culture 6) low language skills on the part of the student 7) a high degree to which language ability is essential to functioning in the host culture 8) a

high degree of immersion on the part of the student in the host culture 9) little access of students to their own culture group 10) little prior, in-depth cross-cultural experience on the part of the student 11) unrealistic student expectations of the host culture 12) being physically different from members of the host culture and feeling highly visible 13) feeling on the part of the student that part of his or her identity is invisible to the host culture 14) a feeling on the part of the student of disrespect or undeserved recognition from the host culture 15) a low degree of power or control over cross-cultural situations.

Many of these conditions can be described as cultural marginality. Mezirow (1991, p. 174-177) notes that perspective transformation often occurs during an experience of marginality. He cites Musgrove (1977) who defined marginality as:

...change from a former position which was accepted as self-evident and normal, which was taken for granted, and presented itself as not in need of further analysis. Change to a marginal position brings into question three basic ingredients of reality: time, typicality, and preconstituted (recipe) knowledge. Marginal situations, at least when first encountered, make time, types, and recipes problematic. (p. 7)

Musgrove's study of transformative learning through marginality is significant because of his emphasis on two factors: that transformation as a result of marginality occurs more frequently in young adults as they are more open to new experiences than older adults, and significant others are of overwhelming importance in the process of personal change, two points which Mezirow neglects to emphasize. Marginality places people in a standpoint from which they can learn about a culture partly from the perspective of an outsider and partly from the perspective of an insider. Through their relations with people of a host culture, students gain insight to the insider's view of the host culture, as well as an outsider's view of their home culture, allowing the student to gain insight on both, as well as on the abstract concept of culture itself. As Halsey (1990) explains, "When the process of dealing with cultural differences is part of a student's everyday life, 'culture' is no longer an abstract concept" (p. 205).

Transformation Learning Theory

Transformation theory, as defined by Jack Mezirow (1991), helps to clarify the various types of perspective transformation which can result from the cross-cultural, experiential learning process. Mezirow's transformation theory discusses mainly the learning of older adults, because adults of this age are more likely to have reached a certain stage of development in terms of context awareness, focus, goal awareness, critical reflectivity, and greater integration of the cognitive dimensions of learning. However, Mezirow's theory has some bearing on the experiential and transformative learning of young adults, and in this study I have applied transformation theory to a group of students in their early twenties.

Mezirow advanced this theory in order to amend what he viewed as a missing dimension of psychological adult learning theories: an explanation of the making of meaning from experience. He explores this phenomenon within the context of constructivism, critical theory, and deconstructivism in social theory. Constructivism assumes that, "meaning exists within ourselves...and that the personal meanings that we attribute to our experience are acquired and validated through human interaction and communication" (Mezirow, 1991, p. xiv). This assumption supports the assertion that what we make of the world is a function of our past personal experiences.

One principal goal of adult learning is:

[To] be able to 'name' our reality, to know it divorced from what has been taken for granted, to speak with our own voice. Thus it becomes crucial that the individual learn to negotiate meanings, purposes, and values critically, reflectively, and rationally instead of passively accepting the social realities defined by others. Transformation theory provides a description of the dynamics of the way adults learn to do this. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 3)

A major element of transformation learning theory is the concept of meaning perspectives. *Meaning perspectives* are frames of reference or selective codes which guide perception and comprehension. These function as a filter in the memory. The most significant form of transformation in learning is the transformation of meaning perspectives.

I have chosen the term *meaning perspective* to refer to the structure of assumptions within which one's past *experience assimilates and transforms new experience*. A meaning perspective is a habitual set of expectations that

constitutes an orienting frame of reference that we use in projecting our symbolic models and that serves as a (usually tacit) belief system for interpreting and evaluating the meaning of experience. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 42)

Mezirow distinguishes three types of meaning perspectives: epistemic (the way we know and how we use knowledge), sociolinguistic, and psychological. Each meaning perspective embodies a number of *meaning schemes*, or "specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, and feelings that constitute interpretations of experience" (p. 5-6). Meaning schemes are more open to transformation through reflection than meaning perspectives.

Experience functions to reinforce or challenge personal meaning perspectives.

Experience strengthens our personal meaning system by refocusing or extending our expectations about how things are supposed to be. We allow our meaning system to diminish our awareness of how things really are in order to avoid anxiety, creating a zone of blocked attention and self-deception. Overcoming limited, distorted, and arbitrarily selective modes of perception and cognition through reflection on assumptions that formerly have been accepted uncritically is central to development in adulthood.

A crucial dimension of adult learning involves the process of justifying or validating communicated ideas and the presuppositions of prior learning. Uncritically assimilated presuppositions may distort our ways of knowing, involving epistemic assumptions; our ways of believing, involving social norms, cultural or language codes, and social ideologies; and our ways of feeling, involving repressed parental prohibitions from childhood that control adult feelings and behavior through anxiety. It is within this process of consensually determining the conditions under which an expressed idea is true or valid that problematic meaning schemes (specific knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, or feelings involved in making a interpretation) are confirmed or negated and meaning perspectives (rule systems governing perception and cognition) are significantly restructured. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 5)

Once meaning schemes or perspectives are challenged through experience, their validity are tested through critical reflection. Critical reflection involves the rigorous assessment of students' assumptions, expectations, and values. If these are found to be mistaken or ill-founded, new, more comprehensive, meaning schemes or perspectives can be developed (Mezirow, 1991). Through critical reflection and interpretation, an old meaning perspective might be reconciled with new knowledge and experience, resulting in the formation of a new meaning perspective. The confrontation of distorted meaning perspectives can be considered emancipatory learning (Mezirow, 1991, p. 87).

All critical reflection is appraisive rather than prescriptive or designative. Emancipatory learning is often transformative. In emancipatory learning, the learner is presented with an alternative way of interpreting feelings and patterns of action; the old meaning scheme or perspective is negated and is either replaced or reorganized to incorporate new insights. In emancipatory learning we come to see our reality more inclusively, to understand it more clearly, and to integrate our experience better. Dramatic personal and social changes become possible when we become aware of the way that both our psychological and our cultural assumptions have created or contributed to our dependence on outside forces that we have regarded as unchangeable (Mezirow, 1991, p. 88).

This seems simple. An educator only needs to challenge a person's cultural assumptions in order to induce reflection and change. However, as Goleman (1985, p. 24) points out, "every act of perception is an act of selection," and the mind will resist and avoid anxiety as much as possible, resulting in selective perception and self-deception (cited in Mezirow, 1991, p. 18). If an experience becomes too intense or threatening to a student's way of thinking, it will be blocked out or misinterpreted. Therefore, support and feedback are integral elements in transformative learning.

In theory, it appears likely that a cross-cultural immersion experience would lead to the transformation of meaning perspectives. Cross-cultural students are confronted with foreign cultural norms and values which challenge their own personal and cultural meanings and perspectives. Students must adjust to a new culture and learn the cultural practices, beliefs, and local language. When they return to their home culture, they endeavor to reconcile this newly acquired knowledge and perspective with their previous cultural norms. This reconciliation can lead to the formation of new meaning perspectives. Cross-cultural immersion gives students new meanings from which to judge their home culture. Before studying abroad, students usually have only their home culture's values with which to judge their own culture and meaning perspectives. After returning, they are able to assess their home culture from an outside view. They have acquired new perspectives from which to judge their previous world views. In addition, these students are somewhat open to the anxiety essential for transformative learning. They have purposely placed themselves in a situation where their cultural norms and personal values will be challenged. One can assume that they are open to transformation.

Mezirow distinguishes four different levels of learning in transformation theory. The first level, *learning through established meaning schemes*, consists of the expansion and development of existing meaning schemes which are taken for granted. In other words, learning can be easily accommodated by established and accepted meaning schemes. The second level involves *incorporating new meaning schemes* which are in accordance with accepted meaning perspectives. The third level is *learning through the transformation of meaning schemes*, through which a person begins to reflect on and challenge assumptions and expectations previously taken for granted, but is not forced to alter meaning perspectives. The fourth level of learning, considered the most significant level by Mezirow, is *learning through perspective transformation*. At this level, a meaning perspective is distorted and a student becomes aware and must recreate this meaning perspective in order to reconcile new found contradictions (Mezirow, 1991).

While these levels are useful in distinguishing the components of transformative learning, Mezirow's four levels of learning become problematic when applied to the actual learning experiences of adults, as this is a hierarchical model which implies that unless a student "achieves" perspective transformation, the learning experience does not seem valuable. This model becomes especially problematic when applied to the experiences of young adults, since many of their learning experiences are formative as opposed to transformative, which may not be indicated when these experiences are evaluated by a system which focuses only on transformative learning. It is also extremely difficult to distinguish between meaning schemes and meaning perspectives.

Mezirow quotes Paulo Freire (1970), who discusses the process through which learners, "achieve a deepening awareness of both the sociocultural reality which shapes their lives and their capacity to transform that reality through action upon it," (p. 136). A condition for achieving transformative learning is not only personal transformation but also becoming aware of one's own capacity to transform the world.

Transformative learning involves an enhanced level of awareness of the context of one's beliefs and feelings, a critique of their assumptions and particularly

premises, an assessment of alternative perspectives, a decision to negate an old perspective in favor of a new one or to make a synthesis of old and new, an ability to take action based upon the new perspective, and a desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one's life. Perspective Transformation involves (a) an empowered sense of self, (b) more critical understanding of how one's social relationships and culture have shaped one's beliefs and feelings, and (c) more functional strategies and resources for taking action. Taking an action is an integral dimension of transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, p. 161).

Another criterion for perspective transformation entails a questioning of one's sense of self. Because perspectives include personal ideologies and deeply held beliefs upon which we base our lives and actions, this challenge can be quite painful and threatening (Mezirow, 1991). Although perspective transformation can result in profound changes of self, the power of such an experience can also have negative effects if the learner is unable to come to a resolution, and can result in immobilization rather than action (Mezirow, 1991).

Transformation theory states that uncritically assimilated meaning perspectives function as perceptual and interpretive codes in the construal of meaning. Experience reinforces personal meaning systems by extending expectations of the world. The process of overcoming limited, distorted or selective modes of perception through reflection is central to adult development. Reflection involves validity testing. When an experience is incompatible with an existing meaning system, it is difficult to integrate that experience into the continuum of past experience, and there exists the possibility of it becoming distorted. Movement towards a more inclusive, permeable, and integrated meaning perspective which is validated through dialogue and discourse contributes to adult learning and development (Mezirow, 1991, p. 4-7).

Mezirow's analysis of the process of transformation bears important resemblance to experiential learning theory. According to Mezirow (1991), "Transformative learning is learning through action, and the beginning of the action learning process is deciding to appropriate a different meaning perspective" (p. 56). Similarly, reflection and dialogue are important elements of both theories. In both, learners can challenge distorted meaning perspectives through critical reflection. Significantly, the study by Conrad and Hedin (1982)

demonstrated that experiential education leads to development in all three areas specified by Mezirow: epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological.

In addition, both theories agree on the importance of discomfort or crisis in the learning process. In experiential, cross-cultural learning, as students attempt to survive in a new culture, they make mistakes through the application of old cultural habits to new cultural situations. Through this process, students become aware of cultural influences which shape their own thought and behavior. Through culture shock, students realize that their old cultural frameworks are inapplicable. A student will remain in an uncomfortable and ambiguous situation until a new framework can be devised (Sikkema & Niyekawa, 1987, p. 17-18).

Gudykunst, Hammer, and Wiseman (1977) hypothesize that within this new cultural environment, students actually develop a third cultural perspective different from their home and host cultures (cited in Pearson, 1981, p. 25). This is an intermediary point of view, similar to Kniep's global perspective, and consists of:

...open-mindedness towards new ideas and experiences, the ability to empathize with people from other cultures, accuracy in perceiving differences and similarities between the sojourner's own culture and the host culture, being non-judgmental, being astute, noncritical observers in their own and other people's behavior, the ability to establish meaningful relationships with people in the host culture, and being less ethnocentric. (p. 384)

By placing students in a foreign environment in which they are ignorant of social, cultural, linguistic, and political meanings and values, experiential, cross-cultural learning compels students to confront and critically reflect on their own cultural values and social meanings. This stressful process gives students new tools for learning and reflection, and places them in challenging learning environments in which they must solve problems in order to survive. "The outcome for most people is a stretching of old capacities, a development of new skills, an increase in self-confidence, and an acceleration of the maturing process" (Hansel & Grove, 1984, p. 7). "Change in individuals occur in periods of discontinuity, displacement, and disjunction. New insights and revelations occur at points of disjunction, not in situations of equilibrium," (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 124).

A Review of Empirical Studies

Several quantitative studies were conducted throughout the 1970's examining the effects of study abroad for students. These studies have mixed findings. Few empirically verified significant attitude change in students, or found any relationship between personal change and study abroad. However, program directors and participants continually attest to significant personal growth resulting from cross-cultural experience. In addition, studies using questionnaire and interview methods do find a strong correlation between study abroad and personal growth (Sell, 1980; Kauffman et al., 1992). The inconclusiveness of this body of research could result from problematic measurement instruments, from a lack of theoretical basis, or from inconsistency in the specification of program components under study. It seems that standardized instruments inadequately measure the kinds of change which result from study abroad (Sell, 1980; Kauffman et al., 1992).

It would appear that the intertwining of the academic and the personal has remained hidden to researchers using standardized instruments, which goes far in explaining the discrepancy between the results of the standardized "objective" evaluation tools and self-report data. The standardized instruments are based on the conventional educational model (a model that assumes a dualism between the cognitive and the affective realms) that might more accurately reflect traditional, campus-based educational results than those of study abroad....Students express frustration with the evaluation instruments which fail to identify some of what they perceive to be the deeper and richer outcomes of study abroad (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 143).

There are a number of examples of standardized studies which have attempted to measure quantitatively the effects of study abroad. Kauffman et al. (1992) provides an extensive appendix outlining quantitative studies on study abroad. The following is an example of the confusion resulting from these studies. Nash (1976), evaluated the effect of a year of study abroad in France on the self-realization of undergraduate students. He hypothesized that study abroad would increase students' self-realization, which he defined as: (1) increased autonomy, (2) the expansion or differentiation of self, (3) increased tolerance and flexibility, (4) increased self-assurance and confidence, and (5) increased objectivity. The study made before and after assessments of students in an experimental group and those in a control group. Students filled out several standardized questionnaires at a time. Data resulting

from the study confirmed the hypotheses concerning increased autonomy and expansion and differentiation of self. However, the hypotheses about increased tolerance and flexibility and increased self-assurance and confidence were not confirmed. Data displayed grounds for a contrary hypothesis about self-confidence. Adequate data was not available for testing the hypothesis concerning increased objectivity because it was not possible to develop an adequate measuring technique. However, this construct might have proven to be problematic regardless. A more appropriate determinant of self-realization might have been increased awareness of one's own subjectivity.

Hensley and Sell (1979) showed different results. They assessed the effects of a study abroad program on the attitudes of students. The program studied was a semester program in Geneva for the study of international politics and organization. Researchers assessed the attitude change in regard to two internationalist attitudes: worldmindedness and support of the United Nations, and two psychological variables: self-esteem and the tolerance of ambiguity. A questionnaire was administered to both experimental and control groups. Data confirmed the hypothesis that self-esteem of students substantially increased as a result of study abroad. However, the study did not determine significant attitude change concerning worldmindedness, support for the UN, or tolerance of ambiguity. While both Nash (1976) and Hensley and Sell (1979) failed to discover increased tolerance as a result of study abroad, they had conflicting findings concerning self-confidence and self-esteem. While these two variables are not exactly the same, they are similar enough to find this contradiction in results problematic. A year later, Deborah Sell (1980) showed conflicting findings again. She discovered a significant increase in the tolerance of ambiguity resulting from study abroad, and a lack of significant change in self-esteem (Sell, 1980). These results are confusing and inconclusive.

Hansel and Grove (1986) studied the effects of experiential, cross-cultural learning resulting from a homestay in a host culture. In their questionnaire, designed largely by students, experimental and control groups rated themselves with respect to 17 personal

characteristics, which had been identified by returnees, in both a pre-test and a post-test. The results of the study showed significant increases in all 17 characteristics for students who studied abroad, and large gains in 10 of the 17 characteristics. These gains were much larger than the gains by students who did not study abroad (Hansel & Grove, 1986). The 17 personal characteristics consisted of: adaptability, awareness and appreciation of home country and culture, awareness and appreciation of host country and culture, awareness of opportunities, critical thinking, foreign language appreciation and ability, independence and responsibility for self, international awareness, non-materialism, understanding of other cultures, appreciation of own family, communication with others, exchange of ideas, high standards for personal relationships, open-mindedness, personal growth and maturity, self-confidence. The first ten characteristics in this list were found to have very significant gains resulting from study abroad.

Another extensive study confirmed these positive results. Kauffman et al. (1992) interviewed students from three institutions in an effort to collect case histories of study abroad. Through these interviews and an extensive review of research in this field, they identified areas in which study abroad has considerable impact: intellectual development, expanded international perspectives, and personal development. In the area of intellectual development, growth occurred in foreign language learning, the expansion of learning in the major, and the increased general knowledge the student gained. Intellectual growth also appeared to incorporate new approaches toward learning. In terms of the development of an international perspective, students showed changes in their perceptions of host and home cultures and in their global understanding. Changes in students' attitudes towards their home culture were apparently inversely related to the attitudes developed toward the host culture. Three dimensions of global understanding are identified: knowledge acquisition, affective change, and changes in behavior. Finally, the study identified four areas of potential impact in personal development: intrapersonal understanding, interpersonal understanding, values, and life direction and goals. In terms of personal development, the study found that:

...students who can be described as less developmentally mature before they begin their study abroad are more likely to experience a greater magnitude of personal change than those who are more mature. Students who begin at a higher level of maturity are more likely to reach a sophisticated level of international understanding. Also, the less developmentally mature person who has only superficial contact with the host culture exhibits little change in either personal development or international awareness. Difficulty in re-entry into the home culture appears to be related to the magnitude of personal change and the attitudes of the sojourners and their families and friends. The greater the change, the more likely it is that the re-entry will be difficult (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 91-92).

Kauffman et al. (1992) also place the findings of this study in a theoretical framework of transformation. Living abroad is viewed as a powerful environment for self-transformation because of the unfamiliar setting, and because it forces a change in the students' network of belonging allowing students to reshape their self-images. A model of the transformational process is described, in which six aspects of personality, woven together, form a descriptive model of the path to maturation: autonomy, belonging, values, cognition, vocation, and world view (Kauffman et al., 1992, p. 127). Maturation in these six areas constitutes transformation.

Most researchers tend to agree that some form of transformation takes place in students as a result of study abroad. However, the nature of this transformation has not been agreed upon. Quantitative research in this area is vague and inconclusive. In studies where students are directly consulted on their transformation, direct and informative answers arise. It is important that researchers continue to tap this source of information concerning this learning process. The diversity of types of study abroad makes some research findings of these studies on the general construct of "study abroad" confusing and ill-founded. This study specifically investigates experiential, cross-cultural learning of U.S. students in the context of non-industrialized countries, and directly consults students in the study this learning process. By expressly focusing on the transformation process, this study clarifies the nature and elements of perspective transformation.

Chapter Outlines

The remainder of this thesis is composed of seven chapters. Chapter Two is a discussion of the methodology used for this study. In this chapter, I describe my research

design and discuss the methodological principles that inform this design. These principles include theories of feminist research and experiential research methodologies. In addition, I reflect on and discuss my own subjectivity in regard to this research study. As I am an alumna of the program and experience under investigation, my perception of experiential, cross-cultural learning has direct bearing on this study.

Chapter Three describes the history and background of the School for International Training's College Semester Abroad program, the study abroad program used in this study as a context through which to examine experiential, cross-cultural learning. I describe the history of the CSA program and discuss the various components of the program model.

Chapter Four consists of an introduction to the twelve participants in this study and their backgrounds. This and the following three chapters present narratives of student experience which are composed of excerpts from open-ended interviews with the participants, and excerpts from writing samples they provided. Chapter Five discusses important relationships of participants during their experiences abroad. These include relationships with homestay families, cross-cultural relationships, relationships with Academic Directors, and relationships with other SIT students. These relationships frame the students' experiences. Chapter Six is a discussion of critical incidents and reflection experienced by the participants during cultural immersion and re-entry into the United States. Chapter Seven examines the transformation that students experienced as a result of their experiences, both personally and in terms of their academic and career interests.

Chapter Eight confronts and discusses the initial research questions and draws conclusions on the research presented in this thesis. I examine Mezirow's (1991) transformation theory in terms of the phenomenon of experiential, cross-cultural learning to determine if perspective transformation is a direct result, and whether Mezirow's categories of learning are applicable to all the student experiences. Finally, I draw conclusions based on the research findings, and determine the implications of this study for the field of experiential study abroad.

Chapter Two: Methodology

Introduction

The kind of people we are is at the root of what, how and why we research. We bring our Self as a resource to our researching. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 19)

As I discussed earlier, this research project grew directly from my own experience as a student in Zimbabwe. I have used my own experiential knowledge to inform this study. In addition to bringing my self as a resource to my researching, it might also be accurate to say that this research functioned as a resource in my own personal growth. It helped me to reflect on and understand my own experiences. Through the study of experiential, cross-cultural learning, I have been able to build on my experiences abroad and integrate them further into my understanding of the world.

Description of Study

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to study the consequences and changes which U.S., undergraduate students experience as a result of an experiential, cross-cultural, immersion experience in a non-industrialized country. My own experience illustrates that a transformative effect can result from such an experience. The initial purpose of this study was to determine if transformation occurs, and to examine the nature of the outcomes of experiential, cross-cultural learning. This project investigated the elements of a transformative learning experience which are crucial to a student's change process, while encouraging students to reflect on the ways in which their personal backgrounds, knowledge, and values have affected their experiences abroad, as well as the process of change. Through the investigation of the progression and composition of transformative experiential learning, this study has endeavored to explore ways in which this type of learning can be used to lead students towards critical reflection and action as members of the global community.

In addition, this study aims to fill a gap in the literature on experiential education. I have not encountered any narratives of experiential learning as told from the student

perspective. Many narratives study life history and learning, but none explore stories of structured experiential education. They are noticeably absent in this field in particular, as we can only benefit from hearing the voices of students describe their processes of learning through action and reflection in order to improve on educational methods and techniques. Through this study, I have attempted to shed light on the use of narrative as a method to research experiential learning.

Site Selection

I chose to interview participants of the School for International Training's College Semester Abroad (CSA) program. Not only do I, as a researcher, have firsthand experience with this program, but it remains one of the few programs that provides post-secondary students with experiential cultural immersion experience in non-industrialized countries. In addition, the School for International Training (SIT) is part of a larger organization, World Learning (formerly the Experiment in International Living) which has offered study abroad programs for students since 1932. Thus, this is an established organization adept in conducting cultural immersion programs.

When I first proposed this research, I planned to accompany a group of students to Zimbabwe in order to study the process of learning as students experienced it. However, because of a lack of funding, potential logistical problems, and the possibility of disturbing the learning process, this was not an option. As an alternative, I opted to conduct a year-after study of program participants in order to study the long term effects of this program. I did not choose to study a Canadian study abroad organization because I wanted to triangulate my research with my own experience, which was with the SIT CSA program. Also, I was well acquainted with this organization, and I felt my familiarity with it would benefit my research. In spite of the fact that the home base of this organization is located in the United States, I feel that this study has many implications for Canadian study abroad programs that use this form of education, and many conclusions can be drawn from this study for any program of this sort.

Judging from my own experience, the intensity of cross-cultural experience in the setting of a developing country renders many possibilities for powerful, personal transformation for North American students. Students from western backgrounds are more challenged by life in non-industrialized countries, where they generally have to make more drastic adjustments in their way of life than they would in an industrialized host country. Therefore, I have chosen to interview students who participated in SIT programs in non-industrialized nations.

Selection of Participants

SIT provided me with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of all CSA students from the spring and fall programs of 1992 within non-industrialized countries around the world. I purposefully chose to interview students approximately one year after their study abroad experience in order to study the somewhat long term effects of this program on their lives. From this list, I selected 315 students, two thirds female and one third male. This gender balance was based on the gender ratio of SIT students overall. I sent a letter to the selected people introducing my study, a questionnaire, and an outline of the requirements for participation in the study. I sent questionnaires to students in two general areas of the United States in order to limit my own travel requirements for interviewing: California and New England. These are the two areas where SIT students were most concentrated, and they were convenient to me as a researcher. The questionnaire sought to acquire general information about the respondents and their experiences, to obtain updated information of addresses and phone numbers for SIT, and to inquire about the respondents' availability and desire to participate in the study.

Of the 315 questionnaires and letters distributed, 41 questionnaires were returned. This return rate can be explained by a number of factors of self-selection. Because the questionnaire functioned only as an introductory transaction and not as a source of data collection, I did not deem it necessary to send out reminder cards or to go to any measures to ensure a high return rate. Budget restrictions forced me to require respondents to provide their

own return postage. In addition, the addresses with which SIT supplied me were more than a year old. Some of these addresses were old college addresses of students, some were their parents' addresses, some people had moved, and still others did not get their mail forwarded to them from their parents' addresses to their school addresses. Some people were just finishing up school, and were facing final papers and exams, and others may have been engaging in additional travel or international work. In short, I was dealing with a transitory population.

I requested that people return the questionnaire to me within three weeks regardless of their decision to participate in the study. Of the 41 questionnaires returned, 31 agreed to participate in the study. From these 31 respondents, I chose 12 people to interview based on their availability and location. This number was chosen because it seemed manageable for the proposed research. The gender ratio of the chosen participants was similar to the gender ratio of students in this program. I was unable to choose participants on the basis of ethnic background in order to interview a diversity of students because the respondents were self-selected and I was restricted by the availability and location of the respondents. Of the 12 participants in the study, 11 were European-American and one was Chinese-American. I did not question participants about their socio-economic backgrounds because this information was beyond the scope of this study.

Data Collection

Before I began to conduct my research, I carried out an informal pilot study in order to practice my interview techniques, test the relevance of the interview questions, and bring to light relevant issues that I may have overlooked in the construction of the interview format. The pilot interview helped me to refine my interviewing style, and the interviewee collaborated with me on the interview structure and questions.

I conducted one, in-depth interview with each participant ranging from two to four hours in length. I also collected program assignments and journal entries written during the study abroad programs from students. Approximately half the respondents lived in New England, and half in California, so I set up two sets of interviews accordingly. When I initially

contacted respondents, I asked them to make photocopies of their program assignments and journal entries that they felt comfortable showing me, and I promised to reimburse them for the photocopy fees.

I also asked participants to write a description of their experience in the SIT program. If they were unable to do so, I asked them to provide an oral account of their experience during the interview. In the end, the oral format was more successful than the written description format, so I used this in all cases. Although I did not send participants a list of interview questions ahead of time, I did tell them the general nature of the questions so they could reflect on their answers before the interviews.

By a stroke of bad luck and some aging equipment, I lost the first two interviews because of a broken microphone. These were fascinating, so it was devastating to lose them. Because of their length and complexity, I was unable to reconstruct the content through memory. Therefore, I was left with the written work of these two participants, which has been used to inform the analysis. After I completed the interviews in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut, I returned to California where I conducted another five interviews. I conducted the last interview in Seattle.

I spent the next two months transcribing 25 90-minute interview tapes. From the transcripts, I constructed narratives of each participant's experience of cultural immersion. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym. I then sent them copies of their own narratives for approval. I asked them to check for accuracy and to comment on the way in which they were portrayed. Seven of the participants replied, and each updated and corrected mistakes in their narratives. None of the respondents expressed any major dissatisfaction with their narratives. Participants will receive a final copy of the thesis when it is completed. By obtaining this input from the participants of this study, I have attempted to create an atmosphere of participant inclusion in the research process. In addition to cooperating with my research, these students had an opportunity to explore and reflect on their own experiences, which may have been beneficial to their personal development.

Researcher Role

This study grew out of my own experience as a CSA student in Zimbabwe. Not only did I have an extremely positive experience in this program, but I attribute a large part of my career direction and personal growth to my experiences in Zimbabwe and my travel experiences after the program. The CSA Zimbabwe program can therefore be seen as a critical experience in my life. Through this research, I have attempted to conduct a theoretical examination of my own and others' experiences. Some schools of feminist methodology hold that theoretical examination should be rooted in the experience it endeavors to explain (Kirby and McKenna, 1989; Reinhartz, 1983; Mies, 1983). Because of the personal nature of experiential learning, I believe that experiential education can greatly benefit from the perspective of a researcher with an intimate understanding of the process being explored. As a previous participant in the SIT College Semester Abroad program, I have a direct understanding of the process of reflection and the construction of meaning resulting from cross-cultural experience. In the interviews, I encouraged participants to reflect on their experiences and the social context in which they occurred, while at the same time recording a narrative of the recollection of cross-cultural experience. I used the insight of my own experience to understand this process further. Indeed, listening to the reflections of other students helped me to further my own reflection. In this study, I played the role of researcher as well as the role of a participant in this program and a peer to the participants in this study.

While some may argue that my insight into the program gives added dimension to my study, others may distrust my researcher bias. I believe that my experience as a SIT alumna grounds me in the social context of the study. While I have strong emotions associated with this program, my experiential insight into the program gives me an added advantage. I have used disciplined subjectivity and analysis of my own values, ideology, and experiences in an attempt to control any distorting bias my experience might create (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 32). I see this as preferable to avoidance of my subjectivity in an attempt to appear unbiased in the collection and analysis of my data.

It should be noted that this study is not an evaluation of the SIT College Semester Abroad program. It is a study of the experiences and reflections of the program participants. While this involves some investigation into the program, it is not the main focus of this study. Aside from permission to conduct this study, my own connection with SIT is similar to that of the participants. I believe this equal footing encouraged an open and honest dialogue between the participants and myself.

Discussion of Methodological Principles

Feminist methodology and experiential methodology comprise the methodological principles which govern this study (Reinharz, 1979 & 1983). These two research models are analogous in many ways. For example, both models reject the positivist goal of objectivity and value neutrality in research, and the structural separation of theory and practice. These research models also critique hierarchical power relationships between the research subject and the research object (Kemmis, 1985; McCutcheon, 1990; Mies, 1983; Reinharz, 1979 & 1983; Tripp, 1990). They argue that these aspects of the positivist research tradition have been used as tools of repression against women and minorities. In order to give power to oppressed individuals and communities, these new research paradigms seek to explore and document the experiences of oppressed groups and groups who subsist on the margins of society (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 17). Feminist researchers have proposed to replace the value-free, "unbiased" positivist paradigm with "conscious partiality" or "disciplined subjectivity", in which researchers consciously explore and acknowledge their subjectivity and scrutinize the social context of their research. These researchers attempt to create relationships of trust between research participants and themselves.

Feminist methodology criticizes hierarchical research relationships and encourages research in collaboration with the people in the community under investigation. This functions to give people who were previously objects of research power over research tools and results. Feminist methodology expands the conscientization process (Freire, 1970) by emphasizing the exploration of personal and social history by individuals and groups of women. This enables

women to create their own history from their real experiences, which can then be collectivized for the creation of a diversified history based on the reality of its subjects (Mies, 1989, p. 128).

Ideas, meanings and understandings are conceived of as socially and historically constructed, and should be critically reflected upon in the analysis of experience (Kemmis, 1985). Critical reflexivity requires a dialectical process among, "a) the researcher's constructs, b) the informants' commonsense constructs, c) the research data, d) the researcher's ideological biases, and e) the structural and historical forces that informed the social construction under study," (Anderson, 1989, p. 254-255). I have attempted to create this process in my study through detailed discussion of researcher and informant constructs, the research data, and reflections on researcher subjectivity.

Theoretical examination must strongly root itself in the experience it claims to explain (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 20). Only through the analysis of social context can society be transformed (Anderson, 1989; Dudley, 1992; Kirby & McKenna, 1989). The collection and analysis of oral narrative of experience becomes a window on a broader social context (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 14). Through experiential learning, students develop theories based on their everyday action. In this study, participants were able to reflect on, theorize, and analyze their own experiences. In addition, analysis of these experiences led to critical reflection on the social context of experiential, cross-cultural learning.

Experiential research methodology parallels many aspects of feminist methodology. This methodology is based on the experiences of the researchers as well as the research participants. It attempts to close the gap between the experience of the world and the theory that explains it (Smith, 1974, p. 7, as cited in Reinharz, 1983, p. 166). Interviews and narrative used in conjunction with the ideology of experiential methodology allow participants the opportunity to tell their own stories on their own terms (Anderson, 1991, p. 11). In some cases, such as described by Heron (1981), experiential methodology requires a complete partnership in research development between the researcher and co-researchers. However, in this study I use the definition of Reinharz (1983), who describes a collaborator role for project

participants, in which they contribute significantly to the development of the research, but not to the point of partnership. In the case of my research, partnership would have required too much of a commitment from the participants. Therefore, I used a design in which participants voiced their opinions about the presentation of the research, without the requirement of the work or commitment involved for a research team. They discussed, reflected on, and analyzed their experiences in the interviews, and had the opportunity to voice their opinions on the presentation of the data in the thesis.

The effort to empower respondents and the study of their responses as narratives are closely linked. They are connected through the assumption...that one of the significant ways through which individuals make sense of and give meaning to their experiences is to organize them in a narrative form. As we shall see, various attempts to restructure the interviewee-interviewer relationship so as to empower respondents are designed to encourage them to find and speak in their own 'voices' (Mischler, 1986, p. 118, as cited in Anderson, 1989, p. 260).

This study utilizes a case study approach in the inquiry of cross-cultural, experiential education. A number of inherent features of experiential learning accommodate the case study approach. These features include: the uniqueness of each individual's experiences, highly interactive social settings and complex multiple realities that constitute student experiences, and the multidimensional objectives and goals of experiential learning programs and their students (Stevenson, 1985, p. 43). In this study, then, the phenomenon under investigation parallels the method of investigation.

Once the U.S. students arrive in a non-industrialized society, they are economically privileged, regardless of their position at home. These students are not marginal in the sense of suffering exploitation. The opportunity to study abroad is a privilege accorded to very few people in the world. However, they do experience cultural marginality in the way that many qualitative researchers experience marginality as foreigners. Indeed, they find themselves in a position similar to that of a privileged researcher working on the margins of society. Students must acquire cultural and communication skills, and conduct research in their own area of interest, all the while relying on the people of the country to enlighten them in their research. Students process and reflect on their new found skills, experiences, and information, often

through the use of journals. They develop meaningful relationships with the people of their new communities, and friendship creates a sense of reciprocity in the research relationship. Not only can these students better understand abstract concepts such as culture and social class through cross-cultural experience, they develop their own theory from experience in order to make sense of their observations and experiences. As students move from marginality to engagement, ideally they lose their ethnocentricity and develop a new perspective of their own society and self.

Researchers engaged in an experiential methodology undergo similar changes as a result of the research experience.

[E]xperiential study *depends on* the change or trauma occurring within the researcher. Such change is the penetration of the researcher by social reality. The explication of that penetration is experiential analysis. (Reinharz, 1979, p. 367)

It is evident from this comparison that the phenomenon and research methodology bear a great deal of resemblance to one another. I propose that this symmetry of the research question, the methodology, and the theoretical basis makes the methodology all the more appropriate for this study (Dudley, 1992, p. 327). "Methodology, theory, and ideology are intertwined. How you go about doing research is inextricably linked with how you see the world," (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 63). In fact, each of the participants in the study is a participant observer, and their observations constitute a kind of experiential research, not only on their host culture but on the phenomenon under study as well. As stated in the previous chapter, part of experiential learning is learning from the actual process of learning itself (Joplin, 1981; Kolb, 1984; Proudman, 1992).

It is important that the process of investigating the world not remain a specialized activity. Our everyday lives teach us skills which we use to observe and reflect on our experience. We focus on problems, ask questions, collect information, and analyze and interpret 'data'. We already 'do research' as we interact with the everyday world. In researching from the margins we are concerned with how research skills can enable people to create knowledge that will describe, explain, and help change the world in which they live. (Kirby & McKenna, 1989, p. 17)

Some of the elements of feminist research methodology have been excluded from this study. Feminist methodology usually focuses on the experiences of women, while this study

examines the experiences of both women and men. Further, feminist research methodology emphasizes research for social change, and social change as a result of this study is minimal. However, my own personal values emphasize community development and social change, and this study examines whether or not cross-cultural experiential learning catalyzes student participation in work towards community service and development. In addition, by encouraging critical reflection in the interview process, this study itself may have empowered students to consider their own roles in social change.

Methodological Validity and Reliability

In order to establish the credibility of the research design, it is critical to address the methodological considerations of reliability and validity. The first consideration is the reliability of the study, which refers to the factual accuracy of the data collection, as well as the consistency of the interpretation of the material. *Interobserver reliability* refers to the agreement between observers or researchers concerning the factual correctness of the data and interpretation. *External reliability* indicates the extent to which independent researchers could discover the same phenomena in the same or similar situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 188-189). The research design described in this study ensures reliability in a number of ways. Internal reliability is ensured by a committee's review of this thesis research.

The participants' review of the narratives and analysis helps to ensure factual description in the study. By asking students to show me their journal entries from abroad, I was able to determine the accuracy of their memory of events, and also understand their feelings at the time of experience. These journal entries often verified what each person was actually thinking at the time of their experiences in the host country. Other techniques used to enhance external reliability are critical reflection on the social context and researcher role, and specific descriptions of participant selection, data collection and analysis strategies, and analytical constructs and premises.

In qualitative research which explores the experiences of others, it is difficult to state the extent to which such studies can be replicated by other independent researchers.

Experience is as diverse as human beings. To generalize about experience is to dispute the variety of human life, for what is meaningful for one person can be senseless for another. Thus there exists an essential human conflict between acknowledging the diversity of experience and the tendency to generalize and compartmentalize experience and its many meanings. Data collected in this study is therefore limited in its application to other contexts of cross-cultural, experiential learning, and to the experiences and reflections of other students as well. However, there appear to be some experiential learning situations which are powerful for a majority of students. In addition, many students seem to have somewhat similar reactions to the program experience. Experiential learning and reflection are subjective processes. However, reflection is not merely a private act. It emerges from a cultural, political, and social context. This study endeavors to generate insights, seek understanding, and explain the phenomenon of experiential cross-cultural learning (Anderson, 1989, p. 253). Therefore, this study offers researchers insight into the reflection process of students in the experiential, cross-cultural context, as well as critical elements of structured, cross-cultural experience. It also increases the understanding of the diversity of experience that exists in the field.

The second major consideration of methodological credibility is the validity of the study. *Internal validity* of the research design, which resembles internal reliability, refers to the degree to which explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world. In other words, do researchers actually observe what they think they observe (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 191)?

There are a few limitations to this study in terms of internal validity. The study attempts to measure transformation in students over time. However, in the design of this study each participant is interviewed only once, and it relies on the self-reporting of each participant to determine whether or not change has occurred. This can result in weak evidence of the change process. In addition, at the time of the interview, approximately one year had passed since each participant had participated in the study abroad program. While this allowed

students to go through and reflect on the re-entry process, their memories may have been skewed to a certain extent regarding actual events. However, the scope of this study as well as logistical difficulties prevented me from triangulating this study with other ethnographic research techniques that might have increased its internal validity.

Another important consideration for the validity of this study is my own researcher bias. "One's subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed" (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). While I maintain that the understanding of experience is essential and irreplaceable to the study of experiential education, my enthusiasm towards the CSA program and my own experience may lead me to unconsciously disregard subjects' experiences and interpretations which contradict my own. In order to guard against any problematic subjectivity, I have reflected on my own experience as a CSA student in Zimbabwe and my own subjectivity in a section of this chapter. In this way, I have attempted to confront my partiality, and refrain from placing my own expectations and judgments on the experiences of others. I have been committed throughout the course of this research to present the experiences of the participants with as little bias as possible on my part. In addition to my own reflection, I made an effort to encourage participants to openly and honestly express their own thoughts and interpretations concerning their experiences.

Because of my experiential insight, I had the ability to relate with students in the language of experience, so to speak. I was able to understand certain emotions and situations to which a researcher without cross-cultural experience would be less likely to relate. These mutual meanings enhanced the clarity and candor of communication. I tried to facilitate an egalitarian relationship with the participants, and I believe our mutuality of experience contributed to this. I made an effort to create a dialogue between participants and myself, and shared some of my own experiences with them when it seemed appropriate. This study was not intended to evaluate the students or the CSA program. However, there was the danger of participants misinterpreting my intentions, thinking that I planned to assess their cultural sensitivity. To avoid this threat to internal validity, I told participants that I was interested in

all reflections on experience, negative as well as positive. This precaution hopefully reduced misunderstandings of my intentions and goals. In spite of this, it was impossible for me to feign objectivity, especially since I elicited certain responses from participants based solely on the structure of the interviews.

What the researcher is allowed to see and whom the researcher is allowed to meet depends on who the researcher is perceived to be....Because of the researcher's priorities and unavoidable omissions, these decisions result in data stamped with the researcher's imprint. (Peshkin, 1982, p. 52)

I also tried to maintain disciplined subjectivity throughout the writing of the narratives. Although I would have liked to include all of the approximately 1000 pages of data, it was only possible to include the parts that were relevant to this particular study.

The last issue of validity to consider in the research design is external validity. *External validity* indicates the extent to which the generalizations and constructs are applicable across groups. Will the findings of this study enable others to understand similar situations, and can the understandings generated by this study be extended to subsequent research? Also, are the theoretical constructs, such as transformative and cross-cultural learning theories, applied appropriately to the narratives of experience? Three issues are vital to the examination of external reliability: comparability, translatability, and construct validity (McMillan & Schumacher, 1989, p. 194).

Comparability is the degree to which the research components are accurately described and defined so as to extend the findings to other studies. One thing that should be noted in this particular study is the selection process. Students were self-selected on a voluntary basis to participate in this study. It is unlikely that non-reflective students or students who had negative experiences volunteered for the study. While some of these students might have wished to explore the reasons for the negativity of their experiences, I assume that most of them did not care to dwell on the bad memories. Therefore, students who volunteered for the study most likely included only those most reflective students with positive experiences, which are not completely representative of all of CSA students. As a result, the typicality of the

experiences described, and therefore the phenomenon under investigation, is difficult to determine.

Translatability is defined as the degree to which the theoretical frameworks and research strategies are understood by other researchers in the same and related disciplines. Construct validity refers to the extent that the study represents the underlying construct, and the clear definition of constructs. Translatability and construct validity are especially difficult to achieve in this study because of the ambiguous definition of experiential education that exists within the field. Cross-cultural experiential education is slightly more specific and easier to pin down. However, this construct can occur at varying degrees, causing possible confusion. For example, can a two week wildlife safari be compared with a six week homestay, or a two year volunteer program in a rural area of a non-industrialized nation? Through explicitly defining the underlying constructs of my study, I have attempted to increase the translatability and construct validity of my study.

Reflections on Researcher Subjectivity

Writing about my own experience abroad has caused me to empathize with the participants in this study. It can be discouraging to see meaningful experiences compartmentalized in sections and analyzed in terms of the learning they represent. This is indeed a danger of research on experiential education. Students are placed in situations and experiences where they are challenged, often by crisis or critical incidents. These experiences almost inevitably have a deep effect, and such an impact is very difficult to articulate adequately.

Nearly four years after my experiences in Zimbabwe, I am still in the process of reflection. This thesis has helped me to continue the learning process begun with my study abroad in Zimbabwe. I have learned a great deal about my own experience, as well as about experiential, cross-cultural learning, through this research study. I saw many of my own characteristics and experiences in the participants I interviewed. Seeing myself in others and hearing new perspectives and reflections on experiences similar to my own shed light on my

own perspective of my experience. This proved to be a very positive researcher-informant, and in fact student to student, exchange of ideas.

It is important to emphasize that six months have passed since these interviews took place, and the participants understandings of their experience may have changed as well. These stories and reflections are not written in stone, although they have been captured in text. I know from my own experience that I gain new insights on my experiences in Zimbabwe frequently, and my perceptions have changed over time.

A written document appears to stand still; the narrative appears finished. It has been written, character's lives constructed, social histories recorded, meaning expressed for all to see. Yet, anyone who has written a narrative knows that it, like life, is a continual unfolding where the narrative insights of today are the chronological events of tomorrow. Such writers know in advance that the task of conveying a sense that the narrative is unfinished and that stories will be retold and lives relived in new ways is likely to be completed in less than satisfactory ways. Furthermore, even when the writer is personally satisfied with the result he or she needs always to remember that readers may freeze the narrative with the result that the restorying life quality intended by the writer may become fixed as a print portrait by the reader. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 9)

I have had a deep emotional and personal investment in this study and have tried to be aware of it throughout the data collection and writing of this thesis. This emotional investment proved in many ways to be a positive asset to the research, because it afforded me a sensitivity towards the participants that other researchers might not have had. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe perceptively the way that this research has been a form of transformative learning for me:

As we engage in a reflective research process, our stories are often restoried and changed as we, as teachers and/or researchers, 'give back' to each other ways of seeing our stories. I tell you a researcher's story. You tell me what you heard and what it meant to you. I hadn't thought of it this way, am transformed in some important way, and tell the story differently the next time I encounter an interested listener or talk again with my participant. (p. 9)

Reflections on Narrative

A number of my personal values are evident in this thesis. These include an enthusiasm for the subject under study, and commitments to experiential education, community involvement, and social change. These commitments are clearly visible in my

analysis of the data. In addition to these values, my conception of narrative has significantly influenced my presentation of the data and analysis. Initially I set out to create a collection of stories of experience and reflection in cultural immersion. From the beginning of the study, I have been uncomfortable with the idea of an analysis of these stories. Granted, my bias already shapes the narratives because I have shaped the interview questions to which the participants responded, and I have chosen excerpts from the interview transcripts to include in the narratives. However, I felt very uncomfortable analyzing the experiences described by the participants in this study, and I felt strongly about letting the words of the participants speak for themselves. I endeavored to create these narratives holistically, in the form of a story, each participant's story told from beginning to end with as many of their words and as few of mine as possible. At the end of these narratives I wrote a cross-case analysis of these experiences separate from the narratives in order to create insight on the phenomenon under study.

However, this attempt at separation of the data and analysis created a dilemma between maintaining the stories told by participants and answering the research questions in a concise and analytical manner. My initial attempt at writing narrative can be described as an inductive mode of narrative, and the present format is characteristic of a demonstrative mode.

In the demonstrative mode, data tend not to speak for themselves but instead are used in exemplary ways to illustrate the thoughts of the narrative writer. In an inductive mode, data more clearly tell their own story. (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990, p. 11)

Thus, I faced a dilemma between letting the participants' stories and reflections be the heart of this research, and articulating my own thoughts and analysis on the data, which helped to clarify the research for the reader. The literature review, research question, and theoretical framework set up a goal that demanded a certain structure of narrative. In spite of my commitment to participant stories, I wrote the thesis in a demonstrative form of narrative for the sake of the coherence of the document. This was a dilemma I struggled with throughout the writing of the thesis.

These two forms of narrative are illustrated in two research studies done by Cruikshank (1990) and Haig-Brown (1991). Cruikshank writes in the inductive mode of narrative, while

Haig-Brown writes in a demonstrative mode. Personally, I am more drawn to Cruikshank's narrative portrayal of her participants' stories, where the researcher's analysis is separate from the participants' stories. Haig-Brown uses a methodology of storytelling. However, in the demonstrative mode of narrative that she uses, the words of the respondents are minimal, and the excerpts are disjointed and full of omissions. As a reader and a researcher, I found this frustrating. When I think of narrative, I expect to read the words and hear the voice of the subject of the narrative. "Demonstrative" narrative does not resemble my conception of narrative. However, I realize that this is a personal preference and not necessarily the most comprehensible in terms of the goals of educational research. While my goal may have been to present the stories of students' experiences and reflections, the research goal was to investigate an overall phenomenon. My focus was initially the individual stories, not the central analysis.

One example of a dilemma I had in the analysis and presentation of narrative arose in the writing of this thesis. As I explained earlier in this chapter, I sent participants copies of their narratives to check for accuracy and approval. In one participant's narrative, that of "Chris", my researcher bias was evident when I discussed his reflections on Nepalese gender relations. He made a number of statements regarding his attraction to Asian women, which I analyzed as cultural baggage typical of U.S. attitudes towards women of color. However, I had been tempted to let Chris's words stand on their own without analysis from me, and let the readers draw their own conclusions. When I received Chris's response in the mail, I was worried about his response to my portrayal of his experience. He was certainly kind and accepting of the narrative and did not mention my analysis, but I couldn't help but feel that our relationship had been damaged. During the interview, he had been very friendly, generous, and outgoing. I wondered if I had hurt our rapport by my comments. I questioned myself: "Was it really my place to determine and examine Chris's cultural baggage when he did not

have the same opportunity to challenge mine? Had he felt empowered enough in the research process to disagree if he felt this was an unfair analysis, and was this fair play on my part?" Something about this experience left me feeling very uncomfortable and discouraged with the research process. This was a recurring dilemma throughout the thesis in terms of my representation of the stories of other participants as well. Although I am still working through these methodological dilemmas, I have attempted to portray this research in a format that I feel comfortable with and which is representative of both individual and collective participant experience.

My Experience as an SIT Student in Zimbabwe

Background

Another important aspect of my subjectivity is my own experience as a CSA student in Zimbabwe. I will attempt to describe some of my experiences through the lens of the central themes in this thesis. It is difficult to recall my exact reasons for wanting to study abroad in Zimbabwe. My parents had always placed an emphasis on open-mindedness and interest in other cultures and lifestyles. As a family we often took excursions to explore new places. My family, consisting of my parents, my older sister, younger brother, and myself first traveled abroad in the summer of 1985, when we went to Europe for three weeks. I was fifteen at the time. During this trip we toured England, France, and Italy. This was my first real exposure to different cultures and lifestyles. Although this cross-cultural experience occurred in First World settings, and I interacted with cultures and people strictly as a tourist, I was thrilled to discover new places, people, and cultures. This trip resulted in significantly opening my mind to parts of the world different from my own.

I grew up in a very homogeneous community of Caucasian, upper middle class people. I rebelled against this homogeneity by attending the University of California at Berkeley, which was known for its diversity of culture, people, and opinions. This was an extremely rich environment, one that functioned to further broaden my world view and awareness of various cultural perspectives.

In 1988, my older sister traveled to Spain for a year-long study abroad program. This program, through the University of California system, enabled students to take classes for two semesters at a university in Barcelona. During winter vacation of that year, my family went to Spain to visit her, and we spent a month traveling around the country. This was my second major international experience, and my enthusiasm for learning about new cultures grew. After our visit with my sister, I felt some parental encouragement to study abroad. It seemed like a way to expand my college education. However, my sister had taken Spanish all through high school and college. She had advanced language skills. I had taken some French in high school, but I retained little and took no language courses in college. My options for studying abroad seemed limited by this. I was not particularly interested in studying in Europe, the most common site of study abroad programs. However, I had always been interested in Africa as a child, and used to romanticized going there as a Peace Corps volunteer.

When I returned from Spain I went to the study abroad office on campus. The University of California study abroad program had only a few programs in Africa, none of which appealed to me. Their programs were two semesters long and consisted of study at a university in a foreign country. I was hesitant to commit to a nine month study abroad program, especially in Africa which seemed so completely different from what I knew. It also seemed silly to go all the way to Africa just to study at a university in a city, without getting to know the people of a country, in addition to students and academics. Fortunately, I stumbled upon a brochure for SIT's College Semester Abroad program. SIT offered a number of programs in Africa consisting of cultural immersion, not just academic, university study. In addition, their programs were 15 weeks, or one semester long, an easier commitment than two semesters. I chose to apply for the Zimbabwe program almost completely based on my intuition. It just seemed like a "cool" place to go, and I knew very little about the country. My parents hesitated when I first told them about the program, but they agreed to let me apply. By the time I was accepted I was very enthusiastic about the program. Once my parents saw how

eager I was to participate in the program, they agreed to let me go and to help me with the tuition. Ultimately, my family was very supportive.

Important Relationships

An important relationship for me during my stay in Zimbabwe was with Neil, another SIT student with whom I became involved about one month into the program. In fact, the relationship and experience are intertwined in my mind and they are difficult to separate. Neil's openness to culture, experience, and people made a deep impression on me, and those were characteristics I endeavored to develop in myself. He was very charming, and people seemed drawn to him when they met him. The first night we arrived in Zimbabwe, a group of us decided to investigate the local beer garden and live music spot around the corner from where we were staying. I hadn't noticed Neil much beforehand, but on the walk over, we came across a man selling roasted caterpillars on the sidewalk. He asked us if we would like to buy some. Most of us hesitated, but Neil immediately stepped up and bought some. After he popped one in his mouth, he sat there with a look of disgust on his face, with saliva and caterpillar guts running down his face, and I was in complete awe. I had never seen someone so open and brave and ready to try new things.

In spite of my admiration, the relationship had its downside as well. Neil was emotionally abusive, which resulted in a severe loss of self-esteem for me, in spite of the fact that my self-confidence theoretically should have evolved as a result of the experience. In many ways my confidence did grow, but the relationship caused me to feel more and more inadequate as time went on, and this proved to be a negative force in my experience. It was confusing to be torn between these two forces of positive and negative reinforcement.

Another important relationship for me was my friendship with "Jenny", another student on the program. There were many qualities about Jenny that I admired. She once told me that, "Humility was not thinking less of yourself but thinking of yourself less." This seemed to be characteristic of Jenny. She seemed at peace with herself, and therefore was able to give a great deal of herself to other people. She was very giving, warm, and wise. Her friendship

and support was meaningful to me during my time in Zimbabwe and also after I returned to California.

Many Zimbabwean people made deep impressions on me as human beings and members of Shona culture. During the workcamp part of the program, I lived at a women's agricultural cooperative for a week and worked as a tutor and teacher at a local elementary school. I was moved by the strength, determination, and grace with which the women at the cooperative lived their lives, as well as that of Mrs. Zakeo, the teacher I worked with in Chikwaka. My host mother in my homestay family also impressed me in this way, as well as many other women I encountered in Zimbabwe. These women seemed to have a great deal of vitality, spirit, and determination. Other women students on the SIT program impressed me with their strength as women and feminists. These encounters eventually led me to a dedication to feminism.

During my ISP, I worked with a group of artists and art students. These people influenced me with their passion and reflectivity on their culture and artwork. Many people I came into contact with had a considerable impact on me. I was at an open and receptive point in my life, and this resulted not only in my impressionability but also in drastic change for myself.

Critical Incident

About one month into the program, we took a four day trip to a number of places around Zimbabwe. This was a trip of extremes and contradictions. Within a short time we were exposed to a multitude of aspects of Zimbabwean life. First, we went to Lake Kyle, a popular National Wildlife Park, where we went on our first few game drives. This was a thrill, and we all took snapshots like crazy. It seemed surreal to be driving down the road and suddenly come across a random zebra or giraffe running along side our bus. Next, we visited the Great Zimbabwe. The Great Zimbabwe are the ancient ruins of a civilization similar to the Egyptian pyramids. For many years under white rule, the country's colonizers tried to cover

up evidence that a black civilization had built the Great Zimbabwe. Thus, the ruins became a symbol for the colonization of the Zimbabwean people (Frederikse, 1982).

After leaving the Great Zimbabwe, we visited two mission secondary schools. The last part of the trip consisted of an overnight visit to the Vukuzenzele Agricultural Co-operative. We toured the co-op, learned about its history, and split up into pairs to have dinner with some of the families. The next day, we had tea with Garfield Todd, a former Prime Minister of Rhodesia who aided the Zimbabwean rebels in the liberation struggle. This contrast of experiences threw in to question some of my own beliefs and values. I wrote about this crisis in a cultural analysis paper while I was in Zimbabwe. The following quote contains excerpts from this paper. [Note: our assignment was to write these papers in a description, interpretation, evaluation format.]

Cultural Analysis Paper

Description:

Three separate discussions have culminated in my mind to make me question my reactions to Zimbabwe, both its people and culture. The first conversation occurred during dinner with the ex-freedom fighters at the agricultural co-op. The second incident was out discussion with Sir Garfield and Lady Grace Todd. The third conversation occurred in our debriefing discussion after we returned from Masvingo. Each of these situations sparked different reactions from me which I feel are indicative of my interpretation of Shona culture.

At the Vukuzenzele Ex-Freedom Fighters Agricultural Coop [sic] we had all gotten together in a group to be dropped off at various houses in pairs for dinner....The walls, ceiling and floor were all made of cement. Almost nothing hung from the walls. A few objects rested on the mantelpiece, but for the most part the room was barren. The sun was setting and the room got progressively darker as time went on. One candle lit the room....From the moment I entered the house, I switched into a quiet listening and observing mode. I tried to listen to what the family had to say. Joyce's husband told us about Garfield Todd and all the help that the Todds had given the co-op as well as his own family. His son had meningitis and was only able to get medical attention after the Todds intervened....He expressed a lot of admiration and respect for Garfield Todd....The next day we left the co-op of went to the Todds' house for tea. We received a very friendly greeting from them as well. They live in a luxurious home with a beautiful garden and view of the river, quite a contrast from the co-op. They served us an elaborate tea with pate and cookies and Garfield Todd spoke about his efforts during the liberation struggle and how the people respected him and his property....On Tuesday morning we all gathered at Ranche House College to discuss the trip, our experiences, questions, and impressions. The contrast between the co-op and the Todds' residence was brought up. One person expressed disdain at the lifestyle of the Todds and asked how they 'excuse themselves' for the lifestyle they live.

Another person brought up the fact that they had donated the land that the agricultural co-op had been built on. The response was that the Todds were simply giving back to the people land that was rightfully theirs. The true character of the Todds was never decided by the group as a whole.

Interpretation and Explanation:

I don't know exactly why I was so quiet when Todd and I ate dinner at Joyce's house....I think I may have been in shock and I think that while I was so quiet and trying hard to listen to what they had to say, I absorbed little of what was said and done. It was almost as if I drifted in and out of consciousness and just took in bits and pieces of what was going on. I think that in actuality I didn't want to know or hear or understand the conditions in which they were living. I felt in shock. The fact that they had no electricity and that they lived in darkness really blew me away....However, I didn't and still don't know how to react to the lifestyle of Joyce's family. On the one hand, I have so much admiration for those people. Their perseverance, determination and spirit really impressed me. However, from the standards of American culture their lifestyle was to be pitied. I felt it was something that I couldn't understand and that made me uncomfortable. I don't understand how people with such clear, determined, righteous paths in front of them could be living in stone houses in the dark. If I really let myself feel for and think about these people I feel terrible about the stone houses, the lack of electricity and the rotting crops. My question is: Where the hell do they get such quiet vitality? What if I'm placing western judgments on them while they are accustomed to dark stone houses and 'hardship'? Then my feelings are completely invalid. I even hope that that is true because I could picture less suffering, were that the case. I resent feeling pity for people so obviously stronger, more vibrant, and powerful than myself.

When I got to the Todds I was comforted by the luxury, the view, the tea and the pate, and the comfort and ease of the Todds' lifestyle. I was open and eager to hear all about the Todds noble exploits. I immediately romanticized the Todds and their lifestyle. I felt so at ease, relaxed and happy after the visit with them and I felt like they were truly good people.

The next day when asked what I liked about the weekend I mentioned that I really enjoyed meeting the Todds, which sparked the debate about whether or not their efforts to help the Zimbabwean people were truly noble or merely trivial. When the question was raised of how the Todds' excuse themselves' for their lifestyle I became very angry. I thought to myself, 'How hypocritical! It's not right for us to ask other people more accomplished than ourselves to justify their lifestyle, especially when each of us has just spent a great deal of money for one semester of our education.' I resented someone confronting the Todds, the people who I thought of as noble and great. The more I thought about it, however, the more confused I became. I wondered how the co-op members really felt about the Todds' contributions to the co-ops and I wondered about the actual motives behind the Todds' efforts during the liberation struggle.

Most of all I wondered about my own psychological workings and impressions. Why did I shut out the people of the co-op, try to ignore them and turn them off, while I so readily put the Todds up on a pedestal? Was this my reaction to the wealth of each family? Why did I ignore the real issues at stake? I really wonder what it was that I wasn't ready to confront at the co-op. And of course I wonder if I am really that shallow or if there is more cultural baggage and emotion behind my reactions.

I am fascinated with the ability of the Shona people to be so incredibly polite and respectful. I admire the Shona philosophies of human relations. The

Shona fully acknowledge and gratify the contributions of the Todds and could be too polite to say that those contributions originally were rightfully theirs. The Shona people are the noble ones and to feel pity for them seems like such a contradiction in terms. I don't want to feel pity for the people at the co-ops. I only want to feel admiration. At the moment, with the rotting crops, so much of the co-op accomplishments seem lost. It's so easy to admire the Todds' accomplishments. They make it so easy. Regardless, I think that both the co-op members as well as the Todds are to be commended and respected, and I feel unqualified to make judgments on their character and motivations. It would be too self-righteous of myself or anyone else to confront anyone concerning excuses and justifications of their own lifestyles.

This is a good example of how cross-cultural experiences can challenge a person's value system and meaning perspectives. It is also an example of emotionally engaged learning. My identity was tied to my perceptions of the Todds, and when someone questioned their right to their lifestyle, it forced me to question my own. Through experiences such as these and various readings and group discussions we had, I started to realize that the ease and luxury of my lifestyle was directly related to the poverty and hardship faced by the people at the agricultural cooperative, which was tied in to international relations between First and Third World countries, and global economics and politics.

Transformations

There were many striking characteristics of Shona culture that I recognized and admired. I respected the importance of kinship and family support, and the way people were taught to treat one another with kindness, hospitality and generosity. However, this was drastically contrasted with the ten year anniversary of the liberation struggle through which the country gained its independence from white colonial rule. The anniversary called up memories of this violent and bloody war, and it was powerful to meet people who had literally fought for the liberation of their country and people. There were many instances when I was struck by the inner strength of the people I met. I was also impressed with the reflexivity of Shona people on culture and the influence of westernization on their lives. The many writers and artists that I met in Zimbabwe drove this point home, and I continue to struggle with the complex concepts of culture, westernization, and mental and physical colonization.

My experiences in Zimbabwe opened my mind in many ways. Most significantly, they changed my understanding of education. I had decided long ago that I wanted to work with children in my career. However, I was disillusioned with the field of education because I had had many terrible experiences with incompetent teachers, and I feared having such a negative impact on children myself. I decided before I went to Zimbabwe that I would never become a teacher. However, through my experiences as a tutor and teacher in the workcamp and my reflections on education, I started to consider becoming a teacher, and I realized that there were alternative ways of making education a positive force rather than a oppressive one. I felt very at home with experiential education. SIT was one of my first introductions to this form of learning, and I was intrigued by it. For me it was a potent way to learn, and through experiential education I learned lessons that I will never forget.

One concept in particular changed the way in which I conceptualize education. Through the Life and Culture seminar we had a number of readings and speakers on education in Zimbabwe, specifically on the concepts of mental colonization and decolonization. We learned how the colonial government had used the education system as a way to control the masses and stay in power by using tactics such as creating elites, encouraging competition, and inculcating inferiority, among others. During the liberation struggle and after liberation, Zimbabweans created their own education system to counteract the effects of mental colonization (Chung, 1987). This was my first exposure to the idea that education can be used to end oppression in society. It seemed completely contradictory to my own understanding of the goals of education, and it revolutionized my ideology as well as my career goals. I began to see many similarities between the principles of experiential education and those of mental decolonization, and I realized that both could be used for emancipation and the advancement of democracy and equality in society.

Conclusion

I have chosen four relevant areas of the experiences of participants for discussion in this thesis: student backgrounds, important relationships, critical incidents and crisis, and

transformations. I have divided the discussion of my own experience into these sections as well. By examining the background of each participant, the reader can comprehend the ways in which background has influenced students' decisions to study abroad. Likewise, because relationships have such an important bearing on experiential learning, by exploring important relationships of each participant during the semester abroad the reader can understand ways in which these relationships shaped students' experiences, reflections and transformations. The chapter on critical incidents and crisis describes significant experiences students had and their reflections on these experiences. The chapter on transformation describes and discusses ways in which students changed as a result of these experiences.

Before examining the experiential, cross-cultural learning process, it is important to understand the format of the study abroad program in which the students were involved. The following chapter is an introduction to the organization World Learning. It gives a brief history of the organization, and describes the various elements of the program. This description of logistics sets the stage for the discussion of the learning process.

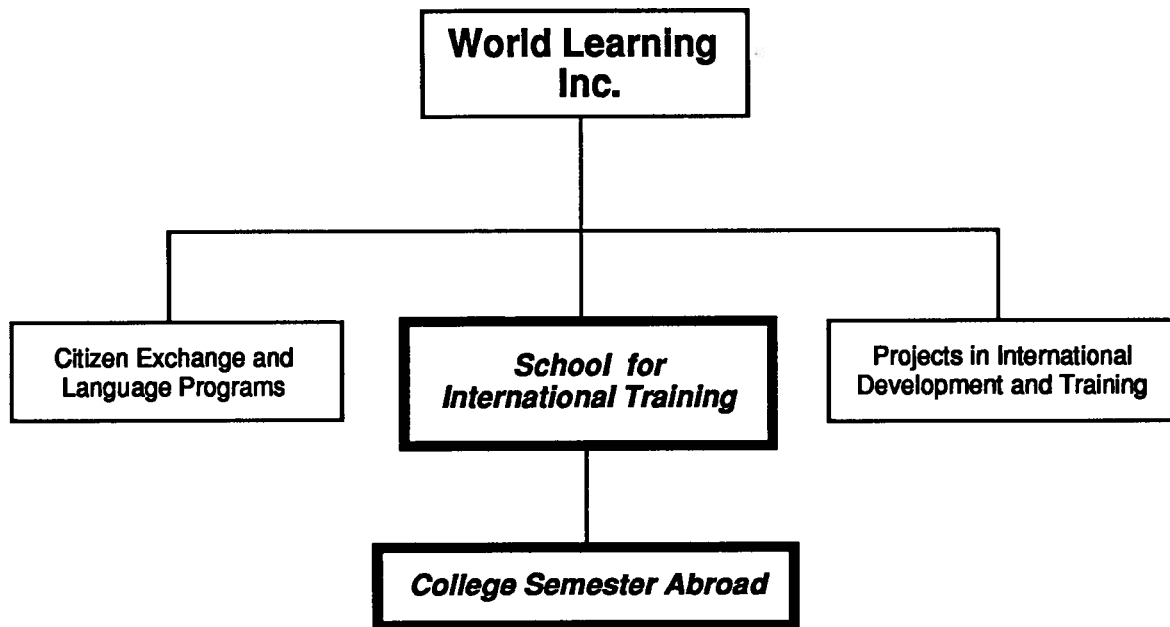
Chapter Three: The School for International Training's College Semester Abroad Program

Introduction

The School for International Training's (SIT) College Semester Abroad (CSA) program is used as a framework in this study through which to research experiential, cross-cultural learning. While this thesis is not a program evaluation of the College Semester Abroad program, CSA provides a context within which to examine this learning process. All of the students interviewed for this study participated in CSA programs around the world. This chapter presents background information on the organization which shaped and directed both my own and the students' experiences.

The Organization

The Experiment in International Living was founded in 1932. It was renamed "World Learning" on the sixtieth anniversary of the organization in 1992. The Experiment was founded in an attempt to further peace and understanding between various cultures and nations by sending small groups of Americans overseas to live with families. Today, World Learning is composed of three main divisions: the School for International Training, Citizen Exchange and Language Programs, and Projects in International Development and Training. The Citizen Exchange and Language Programs division stems from the original concept of The Experiment in International Living, and its programs are based on the "homestay" concept of cross-cultural exchange. The School for International Training was founded in 1964, as the academic arm of the organization. This department is geared towards allowing university students to earn academic credit, while also incorporating the homestay concept. The focus of this study is the College Semester Abroad program, which falls within the division of the School for International Training. The division of Projects in International Development and Training, which manages international development projects, was established in 1977 (World Learning, 1993). [See Appendix I for a list of programs in each division.] The following is an outline of World Learning's organizational structure:



Since 1932, World Learning has had more than one million participants in its international education programs. Currently, the organization offers 260 programs in nearly 70 nations with more than 54,000 participants (World Learning, 1993). The School for International Training's CSA program offers 47 programs in 35 countries around the world. Approximately 70 percent of the undergraduates in SIT study in developing nations (SIT, 1993).

World Learning is a member organization of the Federation of National Representations of The Experiment in International Living, which was established in Switzerland in 1954. "The Federation has held consultative status with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization since 1958, with the United Nations Economic and Social Council since 1978, and with the Council of Europe since 1981" (World Learning, 1993).

The founding concept of The Experiment was "to learn the culture and language of another country by living as a member of one of its families" (World Learning 1993). The mission statement of World Learning is "to enable participants to develop the knowledge,

skills, and attitudes needed to contribute effectively to international understanding and global development" (World Learning, 1993). This continues to be the central focus of the organization.

History

The Experiment in International Living was founded by Donald Watt in an attempt to test the hypothesis that human relationships between cultures, based on the knowledge of various ways of living and thinking, could result in mutual understanding and peace between nations. He hoped to create groups of potential leaders in countries around the world who knew from personal experience that international understanding on a personal level was conceivable. Watt's own cross-cultural experience included work as a YMCA secretary in the British Indian Army in Mesopotamia, and travel, study, and work in Europe. Watt experimented with his theory in the summer of 1932 by taking a group of 14 boys from the United States to live with approximately 35 Belgian, German, Swiss, Chinese, and French boys at a boys' summer camp in Switzerland. The boys ranged in age from nine to nineteen (Peters, 1957).

After observing the interaction between the boys of different nationalities during that summer, Watt deemed his first experiment a failure. He had expected the American boys to improve in fluency of the European languages they were studying. However, since there were other speakers of each boy's native language in residence, cross-language communication was not a necessity. Therefore, groups of friends based on nationality and culture formed within the camp. Watt observed that when a large number of boys participated in activities together, nationality cliques were more likely to form than when two or three boys of different nationalities participated in an activity isolated from the rest of the group. From the first experiment, Watt concluded that three languages were too many within a group to establish complex communication, and that the camp environment was not conducive to his objectives. He decided these problems could be solved by placing a group of Americans individually in private homes in a town in one European country. Watt pictured families which included

young people of approximately the same age as the Americans, so that they would have the opportunity to develop close friendships. Ideally, this environment would force students to learn the language of their host families more quickly than in a classroom or camp environment. The family environment would teach students the cultural influences, customs, and way of life of a country.

The second experiment took place in the summer of 1933, and was remarkably different from the first. The new experiment involved both young women and men of high school and college age, and consisted of smaller groups of ten students with one leader. Within the new experiment, individual members of a small group of students were placed in "homestays" with families in the country of study. Thus The Experiment in International Living became the originator of the homestay concept, in which a student studies the culture, language, and politics of a country by living with a local family. The second experiment was considered a success by Watt, and became the model for future programs. Members of this group managed to overcome language barriers, and generally focused on creating cross-cultural friendships instead of enclosing themselves in groups determined by nationality. The Experiment was much more than intellectual schooling, but an emotionally engaging experience. Watt's goal was to create the type of experience that would be influential throughout the student's life (Peters, 1957).

Although Watt was working outside of the traditional academic world, he considered The Experiment to be a form of education. However, The Experiment was largely ignored by educators because traditional educational practices, such as lectures, textbooks, and exams, were not used in its programs. Educators also distinguished between intellectual and emotional education, and viewed The Experiment as the latter. Watt's criterion for a successful program was whether or not the student had a good time. This was an unacceptable method of evaluation from the standpoint of traditional educators. Watt also faced defeat when he attempted to convince the United States army during World War II of the value of The Experiment. In reaction to the rumors of strife between American servicemen and people

of other countries in which the U.S. army was present, Watt tried to persuade the government to take advantage of The Experiment in order to improve international relations. However, he was unable to convince any influential governmental figures of his ideas (Peters, 1957).

Watt's experiment again faced opposition from outsiders when the politics of Americans conflicted with those of the country of study. For example, in the 1930's, The Experiment had a program in Germany. However, many people in the United States opposed Hitler's Nazi regime, and felt it was morally wrong for The Experiment to have a German program. Opponents argued that young people had difficulty distinguishing between propaganda and truth and could be in danger of indoctrination, that it was wrong to spend U.S. dollars in Germany, and that the program in Germany could be interpreted as support for Hitler's regime. However, Watt maintained that "if you want to make peace, start to create understanding where misunderstanding is greatest," (Peters, 1957, p. 116). In spite of Watt's intentions, he was suspected of being a Nazi sympathizer. Interestingly, one of The Experimenters in Germany in 1934 was Robert Sargent Shriver, who went on to become the president of Chicago's Board of Education and the founder of the Peace Corps. In 1936, Shriver returned to Germany as an assistant leader of an Experiment group, and continued his connections with The Experiment (Peters, 1957; Leitch, 1993). As The Experiment in International Living grew, it became well-known for its language and cross-cultural training. In 1961, Shriver joined efforts with the president of The Experiment at the time, Gordon Bryce, in the development of the Peace Corps. Once the Peace Corps was established, The Experiment became the training ground for language and cultural training for new Peace Corps volunteers. Many of these languages had never before been written down. As the Peace Corps developed, volunteers began to go to the actual country for orientation and training (Leitch, 1993).

In the summer of 1939, war broke out in Europe, and The Experiment's students in Europe were swiftly evacuated. As Europe was now inaccessible to The Experiment, Watt began to explore Central and South America for possible host countries for Experimenters.

Watt initially received discouragement from Americans, who believed that people from the United States were too different from Latin Americans to enjoy the cross-cultural experience. They feared revolutions, disease, and lack of sanitation, stereotypes of Latin America. However, Watt persisted and was able to make connections in several Latin American countries.

Watt also set about recruiting students for The Experiment's programs. Thus far, recruiting had been a difficult task. Many students were interested in going to Europe, but only as tourists covering as many countries as possible, not as students in one country. Therefore, Watt relied on word of mouth and friends of old Experimenters to fill his programs. The summer of 1940, The Experiment sent groups to Mexico, Peru, and Japan. In addition, five language camps were set up in the United States and Canada. The following summer, in 1941, groups were also introduced to Guatemala, Brazil, and Colombia. With the establishment of these programs, it was proven that The Experiment was able to succeed in Latin America (Peters, 1957).

As The Experiment grew, Watt continued to face opposition when American politics conflicted with those of a country in which there were Experimenters. In 1951, at the peak of anti-communism in the United States, The Experiment sent its first group of students to Yugoslavia, a communist country. Watt encountered a great deal of resistance, but he argued that The Experiment was no longer an American organization, as it had offices all over the world. Therefore, it could not comply with the foreign policy of any one country. Each country's citizens were limited only to the countries for which their governments would grant passports. The Experiment began to adopt the outlook of an international organization, and claimed that subservience to the foreign policies of any one country was wrong for an organization that promoted peace and harmony among nations (Peters, 1957).

Eventually, Watt gained deserved recognition. In 1951, The Experiment signed a contract with the State Department to provide U.S. homestays for German and Austrian Fulbright scholars. In 1952, the Ford Foundation awarded The Experiment a grant for the

Community Ambassador division of the organization, which provided for community exchange between different countries. In 1954, Watt was awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from the University of Vermont (Peters, 1957).

In addition to Peace Corps cultural and language training, the Experiment also assisted various colleges and universities in the development of their own study abroad programs. The Experiment helped institutions by setting up contacts and host families in a given country and by providing guidance in program structure, language training, and student orientation for overseas programs. Once a study abroad program was established, The Experiment pulled out to allow the institution to run its own program (Wallace, 1990).

In the early 1960's, three demands from students and the international community were recognized by The Experiment. First, as the organization expanded, short-term, summer exchange programs became less attractive to college students, and The Experiment began to be dominated by high school students. College students began to look for study abroad programs for which they could receive academic credit. Second, there was a demand by former Experimenters and Peace Corps volunteers for a graduate program based on the goals of The Experiment. Third, The Experiment received requests from organizations such as UNICEF for recommendations of well-trained people who were interested in working in the international community. In response to these demands, the School for International Training (SIT) was founded as a branch of The Experiment in International Living in 1964. What began as a master's program in International Career Training later evolved into a master's program in Intercultural Administration in 1970. At the same time, a Master's of Arts in Teaching program was initiated for the training of language teachers. After both master's programs were well established, in 1972, the World Issues program was started for undergraduates. This two year program was the equivalent of the International Career Training program, but at the undergraduate level. The College Semester Abroad program was also developed through SIT to offer opportunities for college students to earn academic credit through study abroad (Wallace, 1990).

Although the organization had long before proven Watt's original hypothesis, educators considered each student's experience abroad to be an "experiment", and hence the organization's original name remained intact for 60 years. However, on its sixtieth anniversary in 1992, the name was changed to "World Learning" to better reflect the diversity of the organization's activities. The name "The Experiment in International Living" continues to be used today to describe the traditional homestay-based programs.

College Semester Abroad

The College Semester Abroad is a 16 college credit, international, and interdisciplinary program, which offers experiential immersion in countries throughout the world. The program uses both academic and experiential instruction techniques in order to promote international competence in its students. Each program contains six to 25 students, and is composed of seven main, inter-related components for the study of a specific country and its culture, society, politics, economics, and language. These components are: cross-cultural orientation, intensive language training, one or more homestays, a Life and Culture Seminar, a Methods and Techniques in Field Study Seminar, an independent study project, and program evaluation.

Cross-cultural orientation introduces students to the host culture, the concept of experiential learning, and cross-cultural understanding and communication. The orientation begins with packets of reading material and writing exercises for the students during pre-departure and travel time to the country. Students are given country-specific information to read, as well as a number of articles to advance reflection on their own culture from the perspective of an outsider, thus beginning the process of challenging the meaning perspectives of the students. During this time, students learn the academic requirements of the program, review their own program goals, and become familiar with the group. Secondly, the students receive intensive language training during the program. This helps students to participate in and learn about their host culture. The language training consists of formal classroom instruction from three to six hours per day for two to five weeks, as well as practice in the field.

The homestay plays a central role in the program. Students temporarily join a family from the host culture, with whom they develop personal relationships, learn to function in everyday life and culture, and practice language skills. This aspect of the program relies entirely on experiential learning. The length of the homestay varies, and sometimes there are a couple of homestays to contrast rural and urban life. The Life and Culture Seminar instructs students in the history, politics, geography, economics, arts, humanities, and social anthropology of the host country. This is a rigorous academic aspect of the program. The fifth program component, the Methods and Techniques of Field Study Seminar, teaches students to conduct field study within the country's setting for the independent study project. This seminar trains students in the practice of field study, giving them methods for investigation for the independent study project. Students write cultural analysis papers concerning their reflections on cross-cultural interactions they have within the host culture.

The independent study project allows students to conduct a field study on any topic of choice concerning the host country. The project requires written and oral presentation of the completed project. Some CSA programs also include a work camp and a study tour. During the work camp, students live in a rural area and contribute their efforts to projects initiated by local citizens. An educational tour permits students to explore new parts of the country, enabling them to understand the variety of life styles within the country. The final part of the program is the program evaluation. This includes the directors' evaluation of the student, the students' evaluation of the program, and each student's evaluation of her or his own work. Students have the opportunity to reflect on and assess their program experience, and to discuss the implications of their return home (SIT College Semester Abroad Catalog, 1991-92). While most CSA programs are general studies of life and culture in a particular region or country, some programs are specialized. Some examples of specialized programs are the Wildlife Ecology and Conservation program in Tanzania, the Comparative Ecology program in Ecuador, the Women and Development program in Jamaica, the Peace and Conflict Studies program in Ireland, and others.

This brief chapter provides a context for the students' experiences presented in the next four chapters. Furthermore, the explanation of the CSA program should clarify some of the references made by the students. We now turn to the backgrounds of the participants in this study, focusing on the reasons behind their decisions to study abroad.

Chapter Four: Participant Backgrounds

Introduction

This chapter is a review of the backgrounds of each of the participants in this study. It helps to familiarize the reader with each student, their country of study, and a brief personal history, and frames the discussion of the learning process in the following four chapters. Participant backgrounds are significant in understanding these learning experiences, because each learner brings a continuum of experience and meaning perspectives to any given learning situation upon which to base reflection and perspective transformation. Although the scope of this study precludes observation of meaning perspectives previous to the study abroad experiences, an examination of student backgrounds allows the reader to recognize the identity of each participant from which to understand their experiences. Individual identity is a vital to an understanding of experiential learning; the individual cannot be separated from the experience.

Table 1: A Summary of General Information of Participants

NAME	COUNTRY	GENDER	BACKGROUND	HOMESTAY	ISP TOPIC	MAJOR	CAREER INTERESTS
Susan	Tanzania	Female	Strong family ties; Hosted exchange students	3 weeks, Arusha	Turtle Conservation Project	Environmental Studies (Anthropology)	Environmental Education
Megan	Ecuador	Female	No previous travel experience	3.5 weeks, Ibarra 3.5 weeks, Quito	Single Mothers in Rural Ecuador	Anthropology	Women's Health
Greg	Ecuador	Male	Summer Language Immersion in Mexico	3 weeks, Ibarra 3.5 weeks, Quito	Ranger for Dry Tropical Forest Reserve	Latin American Studies, (Env. Geology)	Environmental Conservation
Lisa	Kenya	Female	No previous travel experience	3 weeks, Nairobi	Muslim Girls' Education, Kenyan Coast	Sociology and Anthropology	Social Work
Angela	Bali	Female	First member of family to go abroad	8 weeks, Peliatan	Observations of a Hindu Priestess	Music, Women Studies	Career Counseling
Brian	Tibetan Studies	Male	Parents emigrated from China, siblings studied abroad, no travel exp.	2 weeks, Dharamsala 1 week, Kathmandu 4 weeks, W. Nepal	Observations of Tibetan Traditional Doctor	Religion	Medicine
Emily	Bolivia	Female	Summer Experiment program in Mexico	8 weeks Cochabamba	The Mormon Church in Bolivia	Religion and Int'l Studies	Int'l Relations / Teaching
Danielle	Morocco	Female	Summer Experiment program, Switzerland	3 months, Rabat	Moroccan Women's Cooperatives	Anthropology	Law and Anthropology
Nicole	Zimbabwe	Female	1 year AFS program in Ghana	6 weeks, Harare 6 weeks, Chikwaka	Zimbabwe's Rural Secondary School System	Social Studies, African Studies	Secondary Education
Jodie	Cameroon	Female	1 year AFS program in Turkey	6 weeks, Dschang 2 weeks, Yaounde	The Bikutsi Music Tradition	Anthropology	Music / Comm. Development
James	India	Male	Travel experience as tourist	10 days, Udaipur	The Hindu Deity Ganesha	Religion	Elementary Education
Chris	Nepal	Male	1 summer in England	1 week, Taplejung 5 weeks, Kathmandu	Cultural Study Paper of Nepalese Village	Philosophy	Int'l Development / Env. Conservation

Susan

Susan participated in the CSA Wildlife Ecology program in Tanzania during the fall semester of her senior year in college. She recently graduated from the University of Vermont (UVM) in Burlington with a major in environmental studies and a minor in anthropology. Susan grew up on a farm in a small town in Massachusetts. Throughout her upbringing, Susan has had a number of supportive and intimate relationships. She has a very close relationship with her family, which includes two sisters, one older and one younger. In addition, during the time of the interview, she had been involved in a significant relationship with her boyfriend, Ben, for five years. Ben sat in on the interview with us, which took place in Susan's family home. This was a warm and comfortable setting for both of us. Her upbringing has had a deep effect on her entire life, including her decision to study abroad.

I just feel that because I didn't move around when I was younger and I grew up here on the same property, and my family is very strong, my immediate family. My mom and dad are very, very happily married going on 26 years. Just a really solid, strong background. I'm not saying that this is perfect for everybody, but for me this has been a real pillar, a base in my life that has made it easier, it made me more capable to go and attempt things that I don't know if I would necessarily feel comfortable or secure doing. So in a way it can prove as a benefit, or a negative effect. It was really hard for me to leave to go to Vermont. The only two moves I've made really were Vermont and then Africa. And it was really hard for me to leave here because of it. But at the same time, I found it as a strength to leave because I know that it will be here when I come back, just having a home to come back to no matter where I go. It's been really reassuring. It's like another one of those things that it's hard to figure out how much it effects me in my everyday life, and how much I would be different if I didn't have such a strong sense of place growing up. But I definitely find that living here, you can't tell now, but you can't see any other houses from this house. This is 40 acres of property, and my parents grew up farming. And there's sheep and animals out back. And I definitely feel like that gave me my environmental tilt. For a career, leaning towards environmental education because I grew up appreciating it more on a one to one basis than I think other people have the opportunity to do. And then becoming familiar with one particular area of forest, and then there's two huge lakes like a mile down the street. I've used them for drinking water a couple times, and there's no trespassing on them and they're really peaceful. I walk around down there, and it's a really strong connection that I've made. (Susan, p. 24-25)

Susan's decision to participate in an SIT program was influenced by a number of factors. The program is very popular at the University of Vermont, especially in the environmental studies department. Susan also mentioned that the fact that her hometown is

primarily a Caucasian, homogeneous community led her to seek out different places and cultures. Finally, her family had a history of hosting foreign exchange students. Their support of cross-cultural learning and study abroad encouraged Susan to participate in a program herself.

I definitely had had the influence earlier. We had a number of exchange students who lived here. My sister had been an exchange student. When I was younger, my sister's two years older than me, well one of them. And she went to the Philippines for a year. And then we had a Filipino man come and live here for a year when she was gone. And after that there were about two others that followed. French and Norwegian exchange students. So I had had cross-cultural experiences already. But it was definitely a much different step, me leaving and going somewhere else....And now my little sister's an exchange student in France. Not right now, but they have this program. My high school's really involved in it. She goes two weeks every year for her sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school. When she's gone, she's staying at a family's house, and then the same family's daughter is staying with us at a different time. (p. 2)

Because of her strong ties to home, leaving the "nest" was a gradual process for Susan. She took small steps away from home until she felt secure enough to leave the country, her familiar surroundings, and her culture.

I was just ready for change. I was just ready to take that step I guess. I grew up here, I went to U. Mass., Dartmouth which is a half an hour away. So I never really left home for my first two years of college. And I had been with Ben since my senior year in high school. Then I moved to Vermont. And I think moving to Vermont was the first step, it was the first kind of break I made. And it was somewhat passive because I could come home. It's only a four hour drive. And I gained some independence, but I was still somewhat secure. And then I think being up there for a year kind of built up my independence a little bit and my strength to feel like I could take the step to do something more drastic, which I just chose to go to Africa. Kind of out of the blue I think. Like inside I was building up to it, but no one really knew about it. but I knew inside that it was something I wanted to do. And I also felt like if I didn't do it now, I'd never get to do it. I felt like I needed to do it within my college experience. I didn't want to do it my senior year, so I ended up being a senior for three semesters, and my first senior semester was abroad. So I definitely built up to being able to be ready to take that first step. But now that I've done that, I feel like I could do it again, no problem. It wouldn't be no problem, but I'd feel confident in the decision. Where as before, even after I made the decision, I kept questioning myself as it came closer. (p. 40-41)

When I spoke with Susan, she was preparing to write her senior thesis on children's environmental literature. The main highlights of Susan's program were a three week homestay in Arusha, a one week workcamp during which students build a water system for a village,

three weeks of field study in the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, Zanzibar, Dar-es-Salaam, Mt. Kilimanjaro, and Mt. Meru, and a month-long Independent Study Project which Susan spent working with a turtle conservation project in Zanzibar.

Megan

Like Susan, Megan participated in a specialized SIT program, the CSA Comparative Ecology program in Ecuador. Megan grew up on Long Island, New York, and recently graduated from the University of Vermont (UVM) in Burlington with a degree in anthropology. We met for the interview in a busy Long Island cafe. She initially became interested in SIT her first year in college, when she enrolled in an environmental studies course. The teaching assistant for the course had recently returned from the CSA Comparative Ecology program in Ecuador, and Megan was inspired by the stories of his experiences. Megan herself was interested in visiting a country where she could practice her Spanish, and she wanted to learn more about life in a non-industrialized country. She also had an urge to get away from her college campus. She knew early on that she wanted to participate in the CSA Comparative Ecology program in Ecuador, and began to plan far in advance.

Megan's family had little travel or cross-cultural experience when she made the decision to go abroad. She has one brother who is three years older than her, whom she describes as conservative and, "scared to go out of the country." Megan recalled her parent's reaction to her decision to go to Ecuador:

So I told my parents I was going to apply, and I wasn't allowed to go. I was absolutely NOT allowed to go. I could go to Europe, and I could go to Costa Rica, but I could not go. And I remember I had this one conversation sophomore year on the phone with my father and, it was one of those annual huge fights. I was crying, like, 'You have to let me do this!' And my father was like, 'I'm sorry you can't.' It was beyond my control. There was nothing I could do. They're like, 'You can't go.' So they came up to visit, and we [took] 'Jim', my TA, out for lunch and they were gonna talk to him. By this time though they had already researched. My dad had called all the State departments....And I can see now, in retrospect, in speaking to people and telling them I'm going and hearing their reactions, I can see why my parents reacted the way they did. (Megan, p. 2-3)

So they came, and we went out to lunch, and it was great. [Jim] talked about it in a very practical way, and I think, I guess dissuaded some of their views. And then we went back to his place and he showed us some of his slides, and I

remember he had a picture of his homestay family and they were like so normal. His mother was a doctor I think. And they were well dressed, and they just looked very cosmopolitan. That surprised me as well as my parents. I think that shot really helped. My dad was like, 'Oh my gosh, the people look like us a little bit. Maybe it's normal.' And she was a doctor. She was a DOCTOR. You didn't hear in the States of women being a doctor, which is sort of like highly esteemed to a certain extent in Ecuador. So pretty much after that I never asked again. It was just like I was going. I just talked about when I was going. It was just never an issue again. It was really nice. (p. 3)

At the time of the interview, Megan was preparing to return to Ecuador for an extended period of time to travel and study Spanish. Some of the highlights of Megan's program were two homestays, each three and a half weeks long in Ibarra and Quito, a field study in the Ecuadorian Amazon rain forest, the cloud forest, and the Galapagos, and an ISP on single mothers in rural Ecuador. Megan spent two weeks traveling in Ecuador after her program ended.

Greg

Greg was also a participant in the CSA Comparative Ecology program in Ecuador, although the semester before Megan. He majored in Latin American studies with a minor in environmental geology at Bucknell University in Pennsylvania. Greg grew up in southern California. There was not much emphasis on international affairs or culture in Greg's family; it was, however, a personal interest he developed as he grew up. "It always seemed natural to me" (Greg, preliminary questionnaire). He started taking Spanish his sophomore year in college, and the following summer he participated in a Spanish immersion program in Mexico for one month. He said that the Mexico program helped him to improve his Spanish dramatically, and he was far ahead of his classmates when he returned to the United States. When Greg discovered the CSA Comparative Ecology program in Ecuador, he decided that it would be a perfect opportunity for him to further his two main academic interests. He participated in the program the first semester of his senior year. I met Greg at his parents' home in southern California. He discussed his interest in his major:

Well, I was a Japanese major my freshman year. And I did that for a year, and it was really difficult. I reevaluated why I was studying Japanese and I what I wanted out of my learning experience, my educational experience, my educational goals. And I decided that I really didn't want to learn Japanese

anymore because Japanese only opens up a lot of opportunities for business and money making. And I decided that I wanted to get into Third World development and I wanted to try to do something with my life to help other people and to be a little more selfless. I wanted to learn another language, though. I thought that was very important in the world. And so I decided to learn Spanish. And I could have either majored in IR, International Relations or like Econ., or Latin American Studies. And I liked Latin American Studies the most because it concentrated more on cross-cultural aspects. It concentrated more on history, even though you got your economics and stuff like that. But it was a lot less Poli. Sci. and it was more language and more culture and I got to study religion and lots of different things. It was a really good major. (Greg, p. 2-3)

Like Megan, Greg had two homestays in Ecuador, each three and a half weeks long, in Ibarra and Quito. He also had a field study in the Ecuadorian Amazon rain forest, the cloud forest, and the Galapagos. For his ISP, he worked as a park ranger for a dry tropical forest reserve.

Lisa

Lisa participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Kenya in her junior year of college. She recently graduated from college with a degree in sociology and anthropology. At the time of this interview, she lived in Connecticut with her parents and was working as an intern in an office for Human Services. The interview took place in Lisa's attic bedroom of her family's home. Her main reason for studying abroad was to challenge her personal limits.

I was just getting really sick of school here and I just wanted to do something more hands on. Just learning directly and not going to classes and not having someone tell me what I should be learning. So there was that part of it, like academically or educationally, but I also wanted to just go to kind of find out about another culture and challenge myself and I guess just do all those stereotypical things. I wanted to live out of a backpack and just get away from America and see what I, personally, could do. I guess that's the main reason. Most of it though is wanting to get away from school and just do something totally different. (Lisa, p. 1-2)

Lisa's parents were very supportive of her decision to study abroad in Kenya. Although Lisa and her younger brother had never done any traveling, her parents traveled extensively when they were younger. While Lisa was in Kenya, her brother spent two weeks on a high school trip to Belize. In spite of their concurrent cross-cultural experiences, they had difficulty communicating with one another about their trips.

[W]e were really not together that much to talk about it. And we sort of tried to talk about it but I think it was very different. He went with three of his best friends and about 10 kids from high school, so he knew everyone. Plus they were only there for two weeks. And I just think that makes a big difference. I felt like whenever I would be talking about it, I was sort of overpowering him. It's like, 'Well, I was there for four months and it was in Africa and it was just so much worse,' or whatever, you know. [laugh] (p. 2)

Lisa does not consider much about her background to be relevant to her decision to study abroad. She is presently involved in the field of social work. When I interviewed Lisa, she was working as an intern for a Voluntary Action Center recruiting community volunteers for a Human Services Office. She also worked as a program assistant at an inner city after school program for "at risk" sixth and seventh graders. In January, she began a master's of social work part time at Columbia University in New York. She recently decided to postpone graduate school for a year in order to work and travel in Europe.

Some of the highlights of Lisa's stay in Kenya were a three week homestay in Nairobi, a 12 day workcamp in which students built a series of dams to improve a village's water supply, and an Independent Study Project on Muslim girls' education on the Kenyan coast.

Angela

Like Lisa and Megan, Angela had no previous cross-cultural experience. In fact, she was the first member of her family to travel abroad and obtain a passport. Angela graduated from Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island in May of 1993 with a double major in music and women's studies. After finishing her degree, she moved to Oakland, California and recently started a job as a program assistant for women in skilled trades, through which she does career development work for a program which trains women to enter non-traditional careers. She is interested in starting a career in career counseling. I met with Angela in a cafe in Oakland. In the first semester of her senior year of college, Angela participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Bali. This decision grew out of her enthusiasm for experiential learning.

I wanted to go basically because I'd sort of followed a pattern in my college career. The fall of my sophomore year, I spent a semester in Chicago. And I really liked that....I worked in a musical theater producing company....So that was very fun, and I liked sort of the experiential learning. So I get back to

Brown for the spring and I was like, 'Oh man! Here I am back at Brown and it's February and the weather's really cold, and I'm really not interested in my classes,' and so forth....Rhode Island is a small, and, I don't know. I spent four years there, and it's a nice enough place. Providence is a small city, considering it's the capital city. So, I hadn't entered college with the idea of studying abroad, and in fact going to Bali was the first time I'd been out of the country. Anyways, after coming back from Chicago I had this interest in possibly doing experiential learning elsewhere and getting credit for it this time....I don't know how or when I put the name to it. I had internships basically every summer in college, and I always thought of that as experiential learning. I really like learning outside the classroom. I like writing papers but I don't like sitting in class and I don't like taking tests or preparing for them or doing boring assignments or stuff like that. And it was really having my summer experiences that made me want to take a semester off from Brown and then the subsequent semester off. I know that when I wrote the SIT application that I described being in Chicago in an experiential learning period. So, I don't know where I came up with the term. So I decided to go to Bali chiefly because one of my majors was music, and we had studied Indonesian music in several ethnomusicology courses....And it just seemed like a very interesting place. I had no desire to go to Europe, for instance. And I had taken some courses in Hinduism and things like that which related to the culture. And it turned out that I could fulfill all my requirements in both majors still by studying abroad. And I could probably combine my interests in music and Women's Studies over there to do my ISP, which didn't really end up happening but it seemed like it could. And it just seemed like the right thing to do. So it wasn't something I'd been planning for years. I basically planned it in a month. (Angela, p. 3-4)

Angela recalled that her family regarded the idea as "another one of Angela's adventures" (p. 5). Two of the main highlights of her semester were a eight week homestay in Peliatan, and observation of the work of a Hindu priestess during her ISP.

Brian

Brian is another student who had no travel experience outside of North America before his semester abroad. Brian grew up in a small town in New York. He majored in religion at Columbia University in New York, and is now a medical student at Yale University in Connecticut. In spite of his lack of previous travel experience, he came from a family and background with a strong international and cross-cultural emphasis. Although Brian was born in the United States, his parents emigrated from China after they were married in order to escape persecution by the communist government. He has two older brothers and an older sister. Two of Brian's siblings have also studied abroad. His sister participated in the Experiment in International Living in China when she was in high school, and also has done medical relief work in Nicaragua. Presently, one of his older brothers is a Peace Corps worker

in Thailand. Brian and I met at his apartment in New Haven. He discussed his personal reasons for wanting to participate in the CSA Tibetan Studies Life and Culture program:

A lot of reasons made me want to go abroad. The kind of things, things about convenience and security and having a social network that's so readily available and something that's so familiar to you that you never feel out of control. Then there's also the issue of money. Irvington is a very, very homogenous community, that's very wealthy. It's a kind of thing where like the senior high school, like ninety percent of your class drives to school or the cars are just like unbelievable in the parking lot, more nice than the teachers' cars, kind of thing. So I grew up there all my life. Now looking back and being in the Third World and stuff I realize what a warped perception of the world that was....I didn't really have a clear cut definition of why I wanted to go. It's the kind of thing where I grew up in Irvington, I went to school in Manhattan at Columbia, and I had family five blocks away from me....And so I guess I can kind of say that I kind of thought that there might more to life out there, there might be more understanding of the world that I should know about. And I'm sure you've talked to so many other people and you know about wanting to go and put yourself out on a limb, kind of test yourself to experience a Third World country, to see poverty, to see war, to see that type of suffering that you don't grow up with too much in the States and especially in a kind of really nurtured, protected upbringing that I had. And so when I actually left, I didn't have definite reasons of why I wanted to be on the Tibet program as opposed to another program. And I didn't have definite reasons of why I wanted to go away. I just knew I wanted to go away and I wanted to experience something else, I wanted to have good experiences, and it actually turned out really well that I went to the Tibetan program because it brought in a lot of things about my identity as being Chinese. It brought in through my ISP, my interest in medicine. In undergrad, I was a religion major and I studied a lot of Tibetan Buddhism. And it all actually integrated really well, and things worked out much better than I could possibly hope for. (Brian, p. 1)

Brian had few expectations of the program before he left. In fact, he knew little about the program or the places he was going to study. Once he arrived, a major cause of his culture shock stemmed from his feeling of loss of control.

Getting off the plane and having an Indian military guard point a sub machine gun on you with a big dagger in the front yelling at me that I was going the wrong direction, and I was petrified. You know, that sense of instantly losing control and instantly losing the safety and security that I've been used to. Not being able to communicate. (p.31)

For Brian, control and security were constant issues throughout the SIT program and his travels following the program. Brian had many exciting experiences during his program and his travels afterwards. He had a two week homestay in Dharamsala, India and a one week homestay in Kathmandu, Nepal. He spent two weeks traveling through Tibet on a study tour. During his ISP he lived and studied with a traditional Tibetan doctor. Finally, after the

program ended he spent two months traveling through Nepal, Tibet, and China to explore his heritage and family's roots.

Emily

Emily grew up in Connecticut, and recently graduated from Kenyon College in Ohio with a double major in religion and international studies. In her junior year of college, Emily participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Bolivia. Her international studies major required that she study abroad in her area of focus, which was Latin America. Emily had many anxieties about living in a non-industrialized country, especially Bolivia.

It was required for my International Studies major for me to study abroad for a minimum of a semester. And I didn't choose Bolivia. I chose Ecuador. At the last minute, the Ecuador program asked that I go to Bolivia because the Ecuador program was so full. I started studying Spanish when I was 12. So I just kept it up through college. But I was very highly functional by the time I got there. So I was required to go and I went. I went with a lot of anxiety, [laugh] because I'm really big on hot showers and electricity. I'm not that big on no running water. And that's the only thing I knew of Bolivia at the time was that the water was really toxic and that the infant mortality rate was high, and that it was Third World and that it was dangerous. That people stole things out of your luggage when you went through customs. I had to get all these shots before I went. I had to get yellow fever and typhoid and cholera and hepatitis, and all these shots before I left. (Emily, p. 1)

My mom cried constantly about it....She was really afraid of me going to Bolivia especially. There's something in Peru called Shining Path....It's really dangerous....Really dangerous, though, my parents thought. They really haven't done that much. They've infiltrated through parts of Bolivia, but it's not really a major problem for the Bolivians. It's a major problem for the Peruvians. My parents had read every report. When I was there there was a cholera epidemic. A friend of mine got cholera. Another friend of mine got Typhoid fever. I got rabies. There's a lot of disease in this country. Her fear was, I mean she had cause. (p. 2)

Emily's interest in Latin America and international studies began when she was in high school, when she participated in an Experiment in International Living program in Mexico. This experience has shaped her personal and academic interests ever since.

When I entered Kenyon I knew I wanted to be an International Studies major and I knew I wanted to have a Latin American Studies concentration. And I knew I wanted to use Spanish in some context. And I'm coming out of Kenyon, and I want to work in an international context. And I want to work in Latin America, or work in the United States and be able to travel to Latin America. And I know I want to use my Spanish. So Bolivia reinforced it, but I knew, when I went to Mexico when I was 15, basically the choice was made....My parents said I either had to work that summer or I had to do something

educational. So I said, 'Okay. I'll go to Mexico and live there for awhile.' They were like, 'Okay. That's educational.' (p. 37)

In spite of her experiences in Mexico, Emily was still apprehensive about studying abroad.

I wasn't that confident to go down to Bolivia. It was too far away. It was the difference of five years. You go to Mexico when you're 15, and it was very different than going to Bolivia at 20 for four months and going to Mexico at 15 for two months. Or a month and a half even. I don't remember what it was. It's really different. I did feel like I knew what was coming next. Like for the homestay, I knew I would have my own bed and I knew how SIT worked, because it was an SIT program, a high school program....The Experiment for International Living. I felt like I had a good grasp on what was going to come next. And I wasn't scared of the shots. One of the things that frightens people so much, that I never realized was the shots you have to go through. The yellow fever and cholera and typhoid. I think their total is like nine or ten that you have, when you get all the shots of them. And then rabies is three. (p. 38)

My Spanish level was really good. That was mostly from public school, actually. I just had an outstanding languages program. I was always in honors classes for languages. I have a good aptitude for languages. It's pretty easy for me to learn. Definitely. I couldn't have done it without that. It gives you all the confidence in the world to be able to get into a taxi and just tell them where you want to go. And have them understand you and take you there. And you go back to, 'If I can do this, anytime I come down here now, I can get a taxi.' (p. 42-43)

Emily had an eight week homestay in Cochabamba, and wrote her ISP on the Mormon church in Bolivia.

Danielle

Like Emily, Danielle also participated in a summer Experiment in International Living program in Switzerland in high school and had some cross-cultural experience before her semester abroad. Danielle recently graduated from Williams College in Massachusetts with a degree in anthropology. She now works for a District Attorney's office in the Labor Racketeering Unit. In her junior year of college, Danielle participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Morocco. I met Danielle in her dorm room at school. She discussed her background and what initially led to her interest in studying abroad:

I think all my life, I've always thought that I was a little bit different. I went to private school in Connecticut. I have a real WASP-y background. My parents are teachers so they're kind of the black sheep because my grandparents have a lot of money. You know, they're not bankers in other words. They're kind of the different people in my family. My parents and I get along really well, and

have a really great relationship. But my larger family is really very blind and WASP-y. Just generally the dominant majority in so many ways. They don't even think twice. Very racist and sexist without even thinking about it. So I kind of feel like I'm this transplant or something, because I have all these friends, none of my friends went to private school. Which in New England, a lot of people I know went to private school. All of my friends are either international students or people who have lived in another culture, or have cultural questions....So I always feel like the people that I'm really, really close to, and generally, like in a sustained way, are people who are dealing with issues of multiple identity in some way. And I think I'm like that. And I don't understand why. I don't have much time to think [laugh] because I've been so busy. But I do really wonder what it is about me that makes me feel like an outsider. In a positive way, that's given me the sense of multiplicity that I think these people have. Even though I've never had any essentially cross-cultural experience. I mean, except for going to Morocco. My mother's handicapped. She's deaf. So I've always been really conscious of the idea of translating. And having to be aware that there's people who don't always understand what's going on because they're in their own little world like my mom. [laugh] She functions fine, but she just can be really funny....And being kind of an outsider in elementary school. I guess this is probably getting into psychology, and I'm not sure where the origins of this come from, but my dad was the principal in my school for a long time, and so I was just this major faculty brat. I was smart, which is a really bad combination. So they're like, 'Oh, you're dad gives you grades!' Crushed, you know. So I felt like an outsider for the good part of my younger years. (Danielle, p. 4-5)

Danielle's dissatisfaction with college and her life at home also influenced her desire to study abroad.

I was really dissatisfied. I used to be a religion major. I was really, really dissatisfied with that. I've been dating the same man for like three years. But the first year and a half was so bad. I don't know why we stuck it out. But I think I really wanted to get away as soon as possible from him. It sounds really weird, but it was really important, sort of proving to myself that I could be away. And testing the relationship, and testing my friendships and stuff. And I knew I wanted to go in the fall. And then I applied to the Antioch College program in India, monastery type thing. And then I realized that I really didn't want to go to India, number one. And number two, I didn't feel like sitting in a Zen monastery for four months, and that just seemed really stupid. I don't know why I thought it was so cool, for like a week. [laugh]....I wanted to go to the Third World....Actually my advisor, the study abroad advisor here picked Morocco for me. She didn't pick it, she just suggested it. But she said, 'You want to practice your French,' that was another major thing. So I speak almost fluently, following that trip. I studied Arabic. But my family was really bourgeoisie. So we spoke French all the time. [laugh] Wanted to be European. So I wanted to speak French. I was a religion major, so I wanted to go to a religious country, which was very interesting, actually. (p. 6-7)

Danielle stayed with her homestay family in Rabat for approximately three months on and off throughout the program. She wrote her ISP on Moroccan women's cooperatives.

Nicole

Nicole spent a summer abroad in high school with the American Field Service (AFS) program in high school. In her junior year of college, Nicole participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Zimbabwe. Nicole is now a master's student in education at Stanford's teacher education program, and at the time of the interview was simultaneously taking classes and working on her practicum. She recently graduated from Harvard with a degree in social studies and a certificate in African studies. I met with Nicole at her apartment in California. She described her experience with her homestay family as a student in Ghana, and how her interest in African studies developed:

I had gone to Ghana in high school on an AFS program in the summer for two months. And I was fascinated. I spent some time there in a homestay in Takarati, which is a small-sized town, and stayed with a family who had three children of their own but also had several other children who were sort of hangers on, adopted children. Not formally adopted, but had just sort of been taken in. And it was a very weird situation for me in a lot of ways because the father couldn't decide whether I was his date or his daughter. So I was taken out to bars a lot by him, and the kids were too young really to speak English. A couple of the older ones did a little bit but not much, and I didn't know any Twi. And I wasn't in school, so I didn't get to meet many people my own age. I ended up volunteering with a preschool. That was fun. I really liked the other teachers. A nice group of people. And the mother, I really liked her, but she didn't speak any English and I didn't speak any Twi. So we sort of had this weird communication. It worked, and we knew we liked each other, but it was also very limited in terms of how much you could do. And they also had this whole hospitality thing, where, 'You are the guest. We will serve you.' Which was very, very strong. I found it much stronger there than I did in Zimbabwe. And, as a result, it took me forever to convince them that I didn't want to be served by myself in front of the TV in the main room while everybody else ate in the kitchen on the floor, except for the father. So I kind of worked my way into getting them to let me do laundry and let me help with the cooking. And it took them awhile to help me find something that I could do to their satisfaction. My knuckles were dry from laundry, and I didn't grind things up enough when I was cooking. And I ended up with ironing. I ironed everything. It's tropical, so they had to iron things in order to get the eggs of the bugs out. They ironed baby diapers and socks. But I ended up doing that like five hours a day kind of thing. And eventually I got to the point where they were starting to accept me into the family. But at the same point I got malaria....They treated me with Chloriquin which is what I had been taking to prevent getting malaria. And Chloriquin has no effect on that kind of malaria. So I was essentially getting no treatment for a month. And I stayed out for the rest of my stay....So I came back, and my parents live in San Diego. And they took me to the hospital and the doctors were like, 'We can't believe you're still alive!' Because I convinced myself I was getting better. I blacked out for the first week. And then after that I tried everyday to get a little bit of strength back to the point where I could walk around the market circle. And it took me a long time to be able to walk

around the market circle....Then I came back and there was this whole big issue because, why didn't AFS notify my parents that I was sick. And people got very angry and AFS ended up closing its Africa programs for the next year which I was very upset about. Mainly because of financial reasons. They believe and I agree, one of the things I wish would happen on SIT more, is that if you send students to another country you should take students from that country. So it's a reciprocal exchange program, not just one way. And that was one thing I kept asking the SIT directors, 'Why are there just American students here? Why aren't there students from many different countries so that we can learn from each other as well as from the country that we're in?' (Nicole, p. 2-3)

This experience in Ghana led Nicole to major in African studies in college, and eventually led to her studying abroad again as an undergraduate.

Watching people's reactions, my experience there where I felt like I had just begun to start to get a handle on things and all the sudden was shut away because of this disease. Even though I was still there, it wasn't much of an experience after that in terms of a cultural education experience. So that and watching people's reactions after I got back of, 'Oh, it's a foreign place. They don't know any better. Of course you would have died.' And that made me very angry. I felt like they had treated me as best they could. And if anything, I got much better treatment because I am white, because I'm female, because I'm American. Probably not the female, but definitely the white and American. And watching all of that go on and feeling like I'd missed something that I really wanted to explore more, led me to study Africa in college....My major was Social Studies because Harvard doesn't have African Studies. Well, they have an African Studies department but you can't get a degree in it. So I got one of the first four certificates in African Studies in addition to a degree in Social Studies. Which is a mixture of economics, history, government, and that has a very heavy dose of social theory. (p. 3)

So I decided I wanted to go away. And also at that point I was debating whether I wanted to go into international work, development work as a career and deciding whether or not I really wanted to do that and feeling slightly overwhelmed. In the junior fall, [semester] I was taking five courses, I was running a homeless shelter and an after-school program which ran daily, and had a part-time job....And so it was kind of an escape, because I just felt slightly overwhelmed by all of that, and wondered, were those things I wanted to do once I graduated, working in social service in this country or did I want to work in social service abroad or working in international development or did I need some time for exploration, as well as recognizing that I wanted to do it for my academics for my thesis. I brought all these things together. (p. 4)

Some of the highlights of Nicole's stay in Zimbabwe were a six week homestay in Harare, a week-long workcamp during which Nicole worked as a teacher in a secondary school, ISP research and subsequent thesis research on Zimbabwe's rural secondary school system after the program ended.

Jodie

Jodie recently graduated from the University of California, Santa Cruz with a degree in anthropology. In the fall of her junior year, she participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Cameroon. Like Nicole, a main influence in Jodie's decision to go to Cameroon was a previous study abroad experience she had with the American Field Service (AFS) in Turkey after she graduated from high school. She spent a year in Turkey, during which time she lived in a homestay with a Turkish family, attended classes at a Turkish school, and learned to speak Turkish. Her decision to go to Turkey was based on a desire to visit a non-western country, and to learn about a culture dramatically different from her own. Jodie's previous participation in a high school study abroad program appears to have provided her with a basis of cultural reflexivity from which to approach her experience with SIT in Cameroon. It gave her the opportunity to explore basic issues of culture and cross-cultural relations, such that she was able to engage in more complex thought on these issues during her time in Cameroon.

I met Jodie at her apartment in Santa Cruz. She was a cultural anthropology major and is very interested and involved in music. She often combines these interests in her life, and is intrigued by the dynamics of culture and cultural boundaries, and how these are articulated in music. She chose to study in Cameroon because of her interests in musical traditions which come out of West Africa, such as jazz and salsa. She also was interested in studying in a French-speaking country in order to improve her French. She studied French in high school, and continued to study it in college when she realized her interest in going to West Africa. Jodie reflected on how her upbringing influenced her desire to study abroad:

I was raised in a pretty neat way and I think I've grown to appreciate that more the more stuff like this I do, and the more I realize that it wasn't traditionally, typically WASP American or whatever, the way I was raised. And I value that a lot and just want to continue that. Not that that's bad or anything, but there are some parts that I realized that made sense to me about being in Cameroon that because I kind of grew up like that, like in this really old house that we rented way out in the country that didn't have, like I had a high tolerance for discomfort because my parents were kind of, I don't know, just have a different way of life. So that kind of thing. I don't know, we grew up in this dump of a house, way out, and the pump was always breaking down for the toilet, not a lot

of modern things, a pretty low consumer lifestyle. I grew up camping a lot so I had a lot of ability to adapt to things that were going on in Cameroon like washing my clothes by hand. It was no big deal, bugs and things like that. It was like I grew up in this house, bugs, bugs. And like my mom's bilingualism has always been an important force in my life, about my relationship with other languages in other communities, in other cultures. Stuff like that. Storytelling. Storytelling is a really big part of the way I grew up. Because my mom's, she's a second grade teacher and is really creative. And my dad was a teacher for a long time and he's now getting his MA and going into Field Biology. And so the way they taught me to relate to nature and the way they taught me to relate to culture and human beings and stuff is pretty special I think. (Jodie, p. 38)

Jodie had two homestays during her stay in Cameroon, one for six weeks in Dschang and one for two weeks in Yaounde. For her ISP she studied the Bikutsi music tradition. After the program ended, she traveled to Kenya, Turkey, and western Europe with friends before returning home.

James

James participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in India the semester after he finished college. He is presently working as an instructional assistant in a first grade classroom in Seattle, Washington. He grew up on Long Island, New York, and graduated from Tufts University with a bachelor's in religion, which has been a well-defined interest of his throughout his life. James and I met in a cafe in Seattle. He described what he considers unique about himself and his background:

I have an extremely open mind and a strong appreciation of life and its wonders, although these don't make me unique, just uncommon perhaps. I won't flatter myself and say I'm unique. Only my fingerprints. I enjoy trying to open others' minds, as well as my own even more. I grew up as a Reform Jew, and have become very interested in Buddhism as something I can use in my life, to bring peace to myself, and to others. (James, preliminary questionnaire)

Since he was young, James was torn between two career choices, to be a rabbi or to be a teacher. In college, he chose to major in religion, and considered becoming a college professor in religious studies. As he took courses in comparative religion, he developed an interest in Eastern religions. In his sophomore year in college, James met a student who had participated in the SIT Nepal program, and was inspired through her to participate in an SIT program in India after he graduated from college. He was also motivated to study abroad by his interest in religion.

I started to become a lot more interested in other religions, so I took courses in Asian religions. Buddhism really interested me a lot. As did Hindu. Where I am now, I'm much more interested in Buddhism than Hinduism. But then, Hinduism seemed more interesting. There are several different religions which are common in India, which are basically inextricable from the society itself. I decided to go to India. Like in the United States you go to church on Sundays. And the other six days is secular. There's a definite schism between religion and secular. And in India it's not that way at all. (James, p. 2)

Hinduism was more interesting to me from a sociological perspective I guess. Because Hinduism is inextricable from the entire country. It's everywhere. The caste system is everything. I mean everything from your occupation to who you marry to where you live to, I mean this caste system is just in most of India. (p. 3)

Finally, James felt the need to challenge himself with new cultural surroundings.

I very much wanted to get out of the United States and go to another country that was sort of different from where I had lived my entire life. I've traveled a bit, because my parents like to travel. My dad goes on business. So I've traveled to different countries, but I went as a tourist and always a pretty westernized, quote unquote westernized or modernized country. I've never been someplace like the royal villages of India before. I wanted to go to someplace that would kind of shake my foundations, or open my eyes to a totally different way of life. And it did....All I'd ever known was the United States. I was very comfortable with the United States. Other than visiting here or there as a tourist, I was very comfortable with it. It seemed to get stale, I guess. I wanted to get out. I needed a change, something that would refresh me in it's uniqueness. Not uniqueness, but infinite quality of difference. I needed something, I needed to learn something different and get out of what was becoming very old, and very boring. I mean, I don't mean to say boring. When I say boring, I don't mean to criticize and say United States is a boring country. It's not. There's so much richness and beauty and wealth in every aspect. But where I was, I guess I wasn't enjoying it as fully as I could have been. And I wanted, I don't really know exactly. It wasn't something that I can really put my finger on why, but I knew I wanted to get to someplace different. Learn about a totally new place. I've always been very interested in learning about other peoples, and I've always been very open and welcoming to people of every whatever. And, so I've always been interested in the other, or in the different. And that was a pretty different, other country to go to. The other side of the planet, and it's worlds away. (p.5)

Unlike most students, James waited until the semester after he graduated from Tufts to participate in the SIT program. He had originally planned to spend a semester of his junior year in Israel, but the Gulf War broke out at that time so his plans were canceled. However, in spite of the cancellation, he maintained his interest in study abroad, as well as his interest in experiential education.

I've always been critical of teachers and professors of mine. Because I've always been very interested in education. I've always been interested in methods of teaching. So when I've had teachers who were dull and boring, you know, I thought about why. And I thought about what they could do to make it better....And I knew that if I went to India or if I went to Spain, or Nepal, or where ever, I would learn a heck of a lot more. Because I could study Hinduism, and I could read about India, but it would still be in the pages. And now I've seen different castes in action in the social hierarchy. And I've seen the way that religion really is everywhere in India. It's not just, you drive down the road and you see a church in Seattle. There are Hindu temples and Muslim mosques, but beside that there's religion everywhere. You see it everywhere. And so I learned a heck of a lot more than I could have just by reading. That's a big reason for my going in the first place. (p. 6)

James had a ten day homestay in Udaipur. He wrote his ISP on a Hindu deity called Ganesha. After his program ended, James spent one month traveling around India on his own before he returned home.

Chris

Chris grew up in southern New York. His father is a Catholic priest. He recently graduated from college with a bachelor's in philosophy. At the time of the interview Chris lived at home with his parents in New York state and was working as a substitute teacher. He now works at an inn in Maine. In the first semester of his senior year, Chris participated in the CSA Life and Culture program in Nepal. I met with Chris at his parents' home in New York. He described his reasons for studying in Nepal:

Well, I'd always wanted to see Himalayas, and I've always had this interest over there and sort of interest in eastern spirituality and stuff like that. And I'd done a lot of reading in philosophy. That was always my area of interest, but at a Catholic school I didn't get much academic exposure. It was something I explored on my own and I thought, 'Wow, wouldn't it be great to actually go to where Buddhism was founded and see what it's like over there and see what the people are like?' I just love the mountains, too. So I wanted to be there to see the mountains and I thought that it was an interesting place to go. I had originally wanted to go to Tibet but when I did more research on the environment of Tibet, and the geography and how it's really kind of closed to the public now because of the Chinese takeover. And then I did some reading and I'd never really heard of Nepal, maybe just vaguely heard of it, but didn't really realize. A lot of people don't know where it is. They think it's a part of India. And I was like, 'Oh, wow, this seems like a cooler place because it's on the front side of the rain, so Tibet's in a rain shadow and it's desert and dry and high and flat.' Whereas Nepal is lush and green and jungles and the mountains and I thought that that would just be a more interesting environment to be in because I generally don't like deserts and barren. I like trees and forest and stuff like that and Nepal is like that. (Chris, p. 1)

I just thought it was an interesting place, you know the mountains and just the geography seemed neat. Also what interested me was well, Tibet is primarily uni-culture, all Tibetans whatever. Nepal tends to be Indians and Indian culture in the south to Tibetan branch cultures in the north. So you got Indian people and Asian people and every shade in between. And then with the mountains and the jungles and stuff like that, people are a lot more separated in Nepal than they are in Tibet where a lot of people can sort of move around. It's just an easier place to travel around in. So you have these little pocket cultures in Nepal. And it just seemed like a very condensed place where there's a lot of different cultures. I mean you have cultures that were Buddhism and cultures that were Hindu and cultures that couldn't determine which they were. They were just sort of somewhere in-between. They're also separated by the forests and jungles and the mountains and stuff like that that it just makes for really an interesting place in such a compact, small area....I didn't study it that extensively. But I got a good feel for what it would be like. And I was like, 'Well, geez, this sounds more interesting than Tibet. I want to go there.' (p. 1-2)

Chris had a strong religious upbringing. His interest in religion significantly influenced his decision to go to Nepal.

They [my parents] never pushed religion, they were never like strict like, 'You guys have to be Catholic.' I just guess the whole sort of whether it's upbringing or whether it's genetic, the whole interest in spirituality and stuff like that apparently that's where it comes from. He's a priest and I'm interested in philosophy and religion. Different religions. I wouldn't necessarily subscribe to any particular religion because I have this tendency of finding difficulties with everyone I explore. This is wrong and that's wrong. There's always something wrong. My big thing right now is just to find commonalities and take what I can find from those commonalities and learn from them. But my dad being of a different generation, back in the time when it was just rigid and dogmatic and this is what you do and this is the way that church is and you follow this. It kind of lends itself to make it easier for a person to become one religion and stick to it. Whereas today I think we're so exposed to so many different things just from the media and everything else that we're just sort of out there like, 'Well, geez, there's this and there's that,' and it's really hard to be part of one religion, which I don't think is necessarily a bad thing. So I think that's probably where the interest comes from. I don't know how it started with eastern religions. I remember when I was little thinking, I remember I asked my Dad one time. I said, 'Well, you know, say someone was raised in some far away country and was never exposed to Christianity, when they died and went to heaven, would they go to hell? What would happen to them because they never had a chance to...?' So I always had difficulties growing up with the ideas of the Christian faith as taught by the Catholic church. So then I started looking in other directions and I guess just sort of haphazardly came upon eastern religion spirituality and stuff like that. So exploring that a bit. More Buddhism than Hinduism because Hinduism is just really too complex to grasp. To try and like study it, it's just all over the place. At least with Buddhism, or Tibetan Buddhism, there's sort of some rigid doctrines. I mean you can read something that says it is this way and it is that way. It's easier to focus on, a religion that's laid down the law like that. That's why I'm interested in that. (p. 2)

It's like an interest, it's like a hobby. But I don't really see it as a career. I think that there's so many other important things that have to be done that it kind of takes a back seat. Religion is one of those things that you can worry about and deal with when things are going well enough that you have time to deal with it. My world view is that there's so many things that are just falling apart and messed up that we'll worry about religion once we get ourselves straightened out. In an ideal world I might be happy to be involved in religion or be a teacher or something. But right now there's so many other problems that have to be taken care of first. I just would have a hard time putting my energies in that direction, you know, watching everything fall apart around me. (p. 4)

Chris had not done much traveling abroad before he went to Nepal, excepting a summer he spent in England. However, he has always had a fascination with other cultures.

It's always been there. I remember when I was really little I was always interested in watching National Geographic. My favorite show when I was a kid was 'In Search Of' because they'd always do all these cool things about Easter Island or all these weird things and different cultures. Then like the National Geographic specials and stuff like that. (p. 50)

Chris had two homestays, one week in Taplejung and five weeks in Kathmandu. The first homestay required the group to trek through the Himalayas, which was one of the highlights of the trip for Chris. For his ISP, Chris conducted a cultural study paper of a western Nepalese village.

Conclusion

There are a number of significant elements in these student backgrounds. Five of these students had never traveled abroad before their semester abroad, and only four students had previous experience living in non-industrialized countries. Most students' parents and families were supportive of their decisions to study abroad, but some were concerned by the foreign cultures, living conditions, and distance of the countries in which their children wanted to study. Many students anticipated the opportunity to challenge their personal limits, and to do something different from the norm. All students related the CSA program to their academic majors, and saw this program as a way to contribute to their university education.

In addition to backgrounds, relationships shape the experience, reflection, and change that students undergo in the experiential, cross-cultural learning process. Academic Directors shape the structured experiences, which students often go through as a group. Debriefing sessions, discussion, and emotional support also happen often within the realm of the student

group. These relationships have a strong bearing on the formation of experience and reflection. Furthermore, the students' relationships with people of the host culture create the cross-cultural dialogue which can challenge students' meaning perspectives and lead to perspective transformation.

Chapter Five: Relationships and Emotionally engaged Learning

Introduction

Relationships are a crucial factor in experiential learning. They can determine the level of cultural immersion achieved by students, as well as their support network. They create the basis from which cross-cultural learning occurs. In the interviews, I asked students to describe important relationships they developed, and to reflect on the effect these relationships had on them. There were four main categories of relationships that students formed during their time abroad: relationships with people in their homestays, cross-cultural relationships with people of the host culture, relationships with Academic Directors, and relationships with other SIT students in the program.

Homestays

Five of the participants interviewed for this study developed significant relationships with their homestay families. Three of these students developed these relationships with their initial homestay families, and two developed relationships with host families they stayed with during the Independent Study Project.

Jodie is an example of a student who developed a close relationship with her homestay family. Jodie's host father was a high school teacher of Comparative Literature and her host mother cared for the family. They had four children of their own, but there were about five or six other children from the extended family who also lived with them. She developed a close relationship with the whole family, but she had a great deal of respect for her homestay father. She especially admired the fact that he had studied in Britain for his M.A. and yet had a commitment to traditional Cameroonian life.

He was an amazing man. The more I got to know him, the more I really respected him. He had processed the two worlds that he was a part of, the kind of more western, having received his M.A. in Britain and stuff like that, and yet coming from a traditional background and with really a commitment to that. He's just one of those people, he just processed, you know. And he helped me do that a lot because I was like trying to figure out what I was doing there and why I was there and if it was okay that I was there and all that shit and the politics of it all. Not the kind of politics of the country, but in other sense, the power dynamics, being an American, being white. And he was really

helpful....He was the main organizer of the French classes that we all took together, the language classes. And he was good friends with 'Karen' and so we'd walk to school everyday together because he taught our French classes. And when we walked to school, we just talked about everything. I remember one time he was telling me to do the Peace Corps so I could come back, because he was also the Peace Corps coordinator for Cameroon. He did their language training. He had his fingers in a million things, but still was a good dad. He was so cool. Busy though. And so I was like, 'Well, I don't know if I can believe in what the Peace Corps does, and I don't know if I can really be a part of something with the kind of paternalistic assumptions that they hold.' And he was like, 'Yeah, but Jodie, you don't hold those.' 'Yeah, but you know, it's my government.' He was like, 'Oh, just come. You take things too seriously. If you have the opportunity then you should do it.' But he was also really political. We would talk about Langston Hughes and compare it to movements in literature. He was a quiet revolutionary. He'd always whisper when we talked about politics. It always freaked me out, man. And he would talk a lot in metaphor. He would say, 'Well the climate is very cold right now for change.'....I don't know if it's even direct or just him making me feel welcome, and the fact that I could discuss stuff like that with him. Issues of race, issues of politics, issues of America's relationship with Cameroon. (Jodie, p. 12-13)

Jodie's close relationship with her host father enabled her to reflect deeply on her role as a European-American student in Cameroon and to see herself through the eyes of a Cameroonian. This is an example of how cross-cultural dialogue can be part of critical reflection. It seems that Jodie's host father had developed his own "third cultural perspective" described by Gudykunst, Hammer, and Wiseman (1977) as a result of his own cross-cultural experience in Britain, and he helped Jodie to do the same. Through this relationship, Jodie gained the benefit of an insider's view of Cameroonian culture, an outsider's view of her own culture, and an insider's view of the third cultural perspective.

Part of Jodie's closeness with her homestay family can be attributed to the fact that she was very adaptable to their way of life.

And just the fact that the family just welcomed me so wholeheartedly but it wasn't artificial or based on misguided assumptions, from what I felt. A real honest relationship. So that was cool. My host mother too. We had some really good talks....It just clicked. It's so amazing, and the kids were just phenomenal. They told me I was simple a lot....They meant I think that I was adaptable to their way of life. Doing my laundry by hand, pounding plantains and cooking outside and stuff. I don't know, I guess one of their other students freaked out. She bought jam because she liked jam on her bread. And that was fine with them and they understood, but it was like one of those things where what they had wasn't good enough. And so she had brought in jam, which was like a little thing. And they never held it against her or anything but they were just telling me, they'd be like, 'Oh, you know, you don't even need jam on your

bread, you just eat the bread.' I think it made sense that I felt really comfortable being there and was really happy about it. So it was like a mutual response thing. (p. 13-14)

The fact that Jodie developed close relationships with the members of her host family enabled her to immerse and integrate herself deeply into the culture, and consequently caused her to build stronger ties with the community, the culture, and the country. One of the reasons she was able to form these close relationships was because of her adaptability resulting from her upbringing and previous cross-cultural experience. She continues to write to her homestay family, and is hoping that her host family will be able to send one of their children to the U.S. to study. Jodie's U.S. family has offered to host the student if this works out.

In addition to the main, six week homestay in Dschang, Jodie had a two week homestay in Yaounde, the capital of Cameroon. Since the first homestay was in a rural area, this gave her the chance to experience life in a Cameroonian city. Jodie and another SIT student stayed with a business man, his two children, and his wife's sister. His wife was away studying in the Ivory Coast.

[He] had been to France and he was an example of somebody who I felt had not made a kind of graceful weaving together of his past to his present, and his time in France vs. his roots in Cameroon. Kind of a Francophile. He used to say some really weird things sometimes like 'I'm just a little black man' and stuff like that....So it was like the ideal kind of contrast from my Dschang family. That was when I actually felt homesick, but I was homesick for Dschang, not for California. 'I want to go back to my family.' (Jodie, p. 17)

There were hard interactions with my homestay father of that family I lived with just for two weeks in Yaounde. That was for me a really trying experience because it stressed me out to be there. I missed my other family. And it stressed me out because I didn't always get to see eye to eye with him on these things. And he was really, you know, he was in many ways quite a generous and warm person and wanted to really give us a good time. The ways that he chose to show that were hard for me. (p. 23-24)

Jodie told a story of a night when she was feeling very ill, and her host father wanted to take her and the other student out to some bars. They ended up going to a strip show, and Jodie faced a lot of discomfort in her repulsion towards the objectification of women and yet wanted to accept her host father's generosity in showing her a good time and buying her drinks.

And he was trying to be generous, yeah. And I think he was honestly friendly and also wanted to show these American girls a good time. And not in a sleazy sense, but definitely in a sense that was less true or less the way that I related to people than with my family in Dschang. It wasn't the people that I met in Dschang. He's definitely a more city swinging upper class wheeling / dealing and somewhat business-y, you know. Things that I associate with more superficial, you know. But I think he was a good man. But I don't think he had any other aims or anything. That was just his world. That was kind of an interesting thing, to face up to the fact that there was a lot of different sides to this place that I was having such a great time in, and in many ways had held up and kind of pedestalized, like my host family and my experience in Dschang. I'm sure if I'd stayed longer I would realize that there's stuff about that host family that was not perfect or whatever and I'm sure that at some points the pedestals have to come down. And I try not to do that too much. (p. 24-25)

This second homestay allowed Jodie to challenge the concepts of Cameroonian culture that she had developed up to that point. Her Dschang host family represented an ideal to her which was dispelled by her experiences in the Yaounde homestay. She made an almost direct comparison between her two homestay fathers, one who had, in her opinion, created a balance between traditional Cameroonian and western culture, and one who had not. This gave her the opportunity to consider on the impact of western colonization on a group of people and their culture and lifestyle whom she had grown to care about deeply.

Two other students had significant relationships with their homestay families, Emily and Danielle. Emily was placed into a four week homestay in Cochabamba, Bolivia. She lived with an older couple who had four grown children, and Emily referred to them as her grandparents. Although Emily was homesick, she liked her homestay grandparents and stayed with them after the homestay period was completed. She was relieved to discover that they had some of the comforts of her own home. She was also impressed with the hardships they had overcome in their lives.

When I met them, I liked them and I felt comfortable around them. They told me, I was so glad, that I would have my own room. They were very affluent. They had three TV's in their house. Which is almost unheard of....They had three daughters living in Philadelphia who were sending them stuff. They sent their daughters there to get educated. Which was amazing because they both came from the outback of Bolivia. They were both Indians who didn't know any Spanish when they got married. They didn't speak any Spanish, they weren't mainstreamed into Bolivian society. They weren't mainstreamed into modern city society. They were living in the countryside on a farm. And when they got married they decided that they didn't want their children to have to live the same way. They moved into the city, sold everything they had and bought a

big truck. And the man from his late 20's until his late 60's drove the truck from Cochabamba to La Paz to Buenos Aires to Santiago to Rio, to anywhere doing deliveries and picking up supplies. And he was paid for it. And I guess it was very prosperous. And they could afford to send their daughters to colleges in Bolivia where they met American men and married American men and moved to the United States. (Emily, p. 10-11)

Emily wrote a letter home to her parents in which she described her homestay family. In it, she seems to describe the family through U.S. cultural standards. On one level, she felt like she could relate to them well because of their familiarity with her own country and culture.

These people have 4 [sic] children (3 of whom live in the U.S. with their husbands in Philadelphia.) One daughter is a doctor, two daughters are teachers with master's degrees, and their son is an architect. They have visited the U.S. 4 different times, and been to Phili., NY, NJ, Baltimore, Virginia (Williamsburg) and Disneyworld. They LOVE Disneyworld! They're really good stock though. (Emily, letter to parents, September 10, 1992)

Emily enjoyed her homestay and liked her host parents. However, as the homestay progressed, her personal freedom became a major cultural issue between her host parents and herself.

I explained to them straight off, that in the United States I'm allowed to choose my friends, and I'm allowed to choose what time I come home, which they did try to comply with. [laugh] They didn't find much success. It was very frustrating to them not to know where I was, with whom I was, why wasn't I with friends of the family. And then I tried to explain that I was not part of their culture and in my culture I can go out with who I want to. In my culture I choose my friends and I choose where I go with them and what I do. And if I get in trouble I take the consequences. And it was not too acceptable after awhile. But Diana, my program advisor, she was real good. She said, 'If you feel claustrophobic, you say, 'Diana's having a party tonight. I have to go to it.' ' Diana, because Diana's name was first in charge after an emergency. Anything that happened to us, Diana was the final word. Not our host parents. If I suddenly wanted to move out of my homestay, my host parents can't say a thing about it if Diana says it's fine. Which eventually happened to me. And Diana's attitude was not 'I'm your leader, listen to what I say.' Her attitude was, 'In the United States, you're old enough to vote and drink. You go do what you want. If you feel as though you need to move out, you move out. If you want to stay, you stay. You want to do this, you do this. You are adults. You take the consequences of your actions.' Which is how my parents view the world which made it a lot easier. Because if I said, 'Diana, I can't stand living here anymore,' she said, 'Okay, you're an adult. Go find a hotel and move in. Tell me where you are, tell me when you leave. Tell me when you move in. If there's a big blow up, then let me talk to them on the phone or I'll come over.' (p. 14)

Emily's decision to leave her homestay occurred during the Independent Study Project. She had made arrangements to stay there during this last month of the program, and was

paying them a fee to cover her room and board. However, during this time Emily met and started dating a Bolivian man. This set off a major cross-cultural conflict, as her host parents attempted to limit her interactions with him.

[M]y host mother had a talk with me and she said, 'You keep going out with the same boy and he calls here.' And I said 'Yes, he calls here when he wants to speak to me.' 'We don't want him to call here anymore.' And I said, 'I am paying to live here. And I care about both of you. I like living here, but it's not fair to me that I pay to live here and I can't receive phone calls.' She was like 'You can't use the phone anymore and he can't call you.' And I was like 'Did I do something wrong?' And she was like 'No, but you're getting too serious.' Which was totally outrageous for me to hear this from people who are not even my relations. At the time, that's what I felt....I had four weeks there and he would pick me up at like nine at night and I would come in at two in the morning. And I had my own key and I was quiet, and I did not feel like I was giving these people cause for them to say this to me. They had a major problem with the phone. They didn't want him to call their home. He wasn't calling, lest you think he called everyday, he would call twice a week maybe....When they told me I couldn't use the phone anymore unless I was calling the United States to call my parents, I was furious. And I said 'I can't live here if you make these kinds of rules on me. I'm used to more freedom in the United States anyway. In the United States I have a car and in the United States I can do this, that and the other thing. Now I understand this isn't the United States but to be denied phone privileges, for you to tell me who I can and cannot be friends with, I can't live like that for four weeks.'

In addition to conflict with her host family, Emily was being pressured by Thomas to move in with him. She did not feel comfortable doing this, but nor did she feel comfortable staying with her homestay family. She decided as an alternative to move into a hotel with another female SIT student for the remainder of her stay. This caused further conflict.

So I told them. They were furious. They were like 'What do you mean you are going to move into a hotel? You're chasing this boy.' And I'm like 'No, I'm not moving in with this boy. I am moving into a hotel. I cannot work here. I think that you're angry because I need to use your telephone. But I need to use your telephone. I need to call people. And not just this guy. I'm doing a project here where I need to call people all the time. And I need them to be able to call me.' And they would hang up on people who called me, regardless of whether it was a male or a female, or they would just be like 'She's not here.' Click....I'm not their family. I liked them, and I cared about them. And I'd love to go see them once a week or go out to dinner with them a couple times, but I didn't want them to be able to tell me what to do....I had a big fight with them. And I didn't see him ever again, the grandfather. Which was really painful for me, because I liked him. I really did. He was kind to me and I liked him, and he would not see me again after that....She would come to see me every so often and bring me treats or ask me to come for dinner. And so I went for lunch two or three times, but he was never there. Conspicuously so, because he was always there when I had lunch, every other time. So I knew he was angry, had a problem with it. I did talk to him, a month after I left. I talked to him New

Year's Day. And he acted like nothing had ever happened. And he said, 'Happy New Year Emily! How are you doing?!' And on and on and I was like, 'You wouldn't even say good-bye to me.' And it was sad. It was too bad. (p. 23-24)

These limitations on her personal freedom caused Emily to realize how much she valued her independence within her own culture. The relationships with her homestay grandparents and with Thomas forced her to confront her own cultural values as she experienced a loss of personal freedom, and led her to reassess the importance of her personal autonomy. The psychological intensity of the experience was increased as she felt a loss of power in these cross-cultural situations (Paige, 1993).

Danielle had an unusual homestay experience. Like Emily, she also remained in her homestay for the ISP part of the program, in addition to the actual homestay period. She described her homestay.

They're really, really wealthy. My host father was a colonel in the Moroccan army. Which is the biggest system of perks I've ever seen. They had like three cars, TV's and servants and a house. It was remarkable. So they were really wealthy. They were wealthier than my family. It was just a really nice house. And so that was kind of weird, to go to the Third World and live in this really wealthy home. I was a little disappointed, but I guess again it has to do with all the notions of authenticity. 'They're not REAL Moroccans,' you know. They weren't like the majority of the population, but they were really unique. They were great people. (Danielle, p. 10)

Danielle developed intense relationships with her homestay brother and sister, both which largely shaped her experience.

I had a relationship with my host brother. He's 25, I think he's 25 now. But that didn't start until like November. My host sister, I think is psychopathic. I really do. They only had two kids, which is unusual. But she is possibly the most, I swear, I don't usually call people mentally ill. I think it's because she's totally ugly and she's totally stupid. Those are the two kinds of neuroses that women get in a society like that. That women really don't have any power, especially among bourgeois women. I went to a rural village later in the trip. And the women, they had no power on paper. But they controlled everything. They would make the food, if they ever wanted to stop doing something to make a point, the whole village would fall apart. It's sort of like with capitalism I think, where the woman stayed at home like a housewife. So she really didn't have any power. She had servants to take care of the food. So she just exercised all day. This was my host mother. It was kind of a strange combination of a Moroccan and western life. So my Moroccan sister, if you're beautiful, then that improves just everything for you. Even good looking. She was not. And she was really stupid. And they didn't encourage anything in her, nothing at all. So I think she probably got more and more stubborn and self-hating. It was just

this big mass of self-hatred that made me so nervous. And she was just so screwed up....But she was really great to have around in the beginning, because we were really great friends. And then she was extremely possessive and she made my life hell towards the end. Absolute hell....And her family was like 'Oh, she's crazy. Everybody knows that.' They wouldn't do anything about it. At the end of the semester, a couple nights in a row, she would just sit there and yell at me for like three hours about how I'd ruined her life and I was totally messing everything up, and why didn't I tell her from the beginning that I didn't want to be her friend. And I was like 'No, actually, you just possessed me, basically, or tried to the whole time.' Whatever. That was really awful. (p. 10-11)

Danielle looked to her host brother for companionship after the relationship with her host sister deteriorated.

He was just a really good friend to me. We always talked at the end of the day about how things were going. He was always interested in hearing about my life. It was really good to have a friend like that. And I think we became sexually involved because I was curious and because it didn't really matter to me. But for him it was so different, because in his culture, I think it's really confused. He told me once that I would be a slut if I were Moroccan. But he didn't mean it like insultingly. He just meant that if I were Moroccan I wouldn't have had the same experiences. It doesn't really make sense. But I wasn't. I was American. And I think that was really attractive to him. I was really smart to him, smart like smart-ass kind of. And so he really likes strong women. Like his mother's really strong. He definitely had an Electra complex in a big way. So he was really, really important to me in terms of making my experience more whole, in the sense of being able to go places with him. We went out with his friends all the time. It was really fun....We knew it was going to end. Actually, he was in a relationship with somebody else when I first got there. And I started asking him questions about it because I didn't really understand it. It seemed like he was just using her and he wasn't really happy. So I started asking him about it, and saying 'Aren't you using her?' And he broke up with her. It was really weird. I feel sort of strange about that still. That I had that much influence on him. And I think he actually was more into me than I was into him. For example, he would say things like 'Oh, in the United States, I'll definitely come and we'll go out.' And I was like, 'The only place I would ever date you is in Morocco.' (p. 11-12)

Sexism and feminism were significant issues in Danielle's relationship with her host brother, as well as throughout her stay in Morocco.

He was so sexist in so many ways. He was borderline cool. If he had been brought here and given a good dose of American, I sound like a social-imperialist here. But he was just so weird. He was very, very smart, but at the same time wanted to be like an upper-class pig, basically. Go to prostitutes and do nothing, kind of. But at the same time there was a side of him that was like 'Oh, I want to get out of here.' I think it's a conflict for a lot of people in the Third World. They have different identities. (p. 12)

I'm a pretty big feminist. There were things that he said that were absolutely, like discussions about virginity that we had. He's like 'All men like virgins.' I

was like 'That is a load of crap. That is your fantasy. Virgin, virgin, virgin. Sexual control over women.' So there was also a whole issue in our sexual relationship that, while it was very exciting and sexually interesting, at the same time, he was very into kissing me and doing things TO me. Ideologically I was not an active participant, even though he wanted to pleasure me. Superficially it looked beneficial to me. But ideologically, he wanted to do this to me and if I didn't want him to, it didn't matter. It just happened to be that he wanted to pleasure me, but that was no longer a pleasure....And so I kind of let things slide. And behavior from my sister that I think is psycho. Part of it is just being in another culture and ignoring stuff that we think is wrong. (p. 23-24)

Danielle faced a difficult conflict between her cultural and personal ideals and wanting to adapt to a new culture. Having to make such major compromises eventually left her feeling violated. That she felt she had to "ignore stuff we think is wrong" within these two relationships is another example of how cross-cultural relationships can work to challenge cultural values and meaning perspectives. In her observations of her homestay sister, Danielle assessed male and female power relations in Morocco. She resented her sister's self-hatred and attempts to "possess" her. She then turned to her homestay brother, who appreciated her intelligence and strength. They engaged in cross-cultural dialogue concerning women's sexual roles in both American and Moroccan culture. Danielle seemed to be torn between asserting herself and her own beliefs and accepting the cultural values of Moroccans. The high degree of sexism she experienced in Moroccan culture created a sense of cultural marginality for Danielle, and this threat to her meaning perspectives led her to a re-commitment, or a stronger commitment to feminism.

Both Nicole and Brian had uneventful relationships with their initial homestay families, but instead bonded with the families they stayed with during the Independent Study Projects. Nicole was not engaged in her homestay in Harare, but she had an exceptional homestay experience in Chikwaka, a rural village where the work camp was held. Nicole stayed with this host family three times while she was in Zimbabwe: during the workcamp, during the ISP, and after the program, while she collected her data for her senior thesis. During the workcamp, Nicole worked as a teacher at a nearby secondary school. Her ISP and thesis research was a study of Zimbabwe's rural secondary school system and employment opportunities for students. Nicole described her host family:

They were really wonderful and they were very welcoming, very open. And this family had hosted seven SIT students. There were two of us staying there at the time. And I guess three or four before had come back and spent more time. And I spent another two and a half weeks there during my Independent Study Project. And when I was doing that, the school was out of session. So on a daily basis I got to spend the morning helping around the house, doing chores, making corn meal out of corn, sweeping floors, polishing floors. All that good stuff. And then in the afternoons, 'Melissa' and I would go and get interviews....And so we'd go interview people, and even though it wasn't as intense [as the first time I stayed with them], it was probably better than the first homestay because I got to learn more about the family and they didn't stage a big party every night. And occasionally we'd have one but it was much more natural. And I got to watch them do day to day work and participate in some of it and watch baba organize his own garden. He kind of organized this community garden that he's in charge of. Everybody has their own plots. And so that was a lot of fun. And I never did quite master making *sadza* over an open fire. It was just too intense. They were just wonderful people. And both the mother and the father spoke English which was nice because it meant that we could communicate on a deeper level....And they were great. No question about it. They were just wonderful. And the girls and I slept in the same hut and they took care of me. Taught me the ways. [laugh] And if anything they were overly accommodating at times. But that was okay. At the same time they were really anxious to show me by having me do. So they wanted me to learn by doing. Which was really neat. And we'd start to, because I was teaching at the school which was right nearby, they would start asking questions about the United States and other countries, and also to help with their math homework or their English homework or whatever. And that was neat too because I really got a sense of where they were. And at one point Melissa asked me, 'So what planet do you live on?' 'What do you mean?' 'Well, we live on earth. What planet do you live on?' Because they see the planes fly overhead. It never clicked that they're just going around the world. They're not going to another world. And it was really interesting. And they were much more open about asking those questions than a lot of the kids were. (p. 13-14)

During her stay in Ghana as well as Zimbabwe, it was important for Nicole to be a participant of a family. She also believed strongly in social service and community involvement. Her host family in Chikwaka gave Nicole this opportunity to immerse herself in the culture. Nicole had a strong sense of family, and being part of one through work and her relationships allowed Nicole to feel closer to Shona culture. Through her relationship with Melissa, one of the older children in the family, they educated one another about their different homes, cultures, and ways of life.

Brain had two initial homestays, one in Dharamsala, India and one in Kathmandu, Nepal. As a Chinese-American, Brian had many anxieties about entering a homestay.

I was terrified through the first homestay because of being Chinese, I wasn't sure how I was going to be perceived by these families. The parents, my homestay parents, they were part of the group that fled from Tibet when some of the Chinese took over. So I wasn't really sure how they were going to perceive me because I could tell them that I'm an American and my only basis for that is that I was born in America yet my parents are Chinese. And so that's the same as saying that their children are Indian and not Tibetan. So it was like if I'm insisting that I'm American because I was born in America, that's like me saying that their children are no longer Tibetan which was a problem because they are trying desperately to preserve their culture and not have it integrated with the Indian culture. And so there's so much, I mean understandably there's so much hatred and anger toward the Chinese by the Tibetan people. And so when I had this homestay I wasn't sure how I would be perceived because I would imagine that, I don't know whether they knew that their student was going to be a Chinese-American or whether or not they were looking forward to having a new son who was blond-haired, blue-eyed, 6'4" type of guy. Or whether or not they were gonna find somebody who not only was more familiar but was more familiar in a negative way....I kind of knew that it would be an issue, and I didn't know how I would address it because I knew I would have a really intensive experience, coming from a situation that would put me in a potentially conflicting situation. It was like this type of thing that I couldn't possibly prepare myself for in terms of what I would do. I would just have to play by ear and see what happens. For the homestay it actually worked out fine. I got along really well with my homestay father as well as the family. The kids were very young and they had no idea I was Chinese or whatever. It wasn't an issue in the homestay. It became an issue in very many other instances. But for the homestay which I was most terrified for, it wasn't an issue for that at all. That actually worked out really well. (Brian, p. 7)

The second homestay in Kathmandu was less successful than the first because it was too short for students to get to know the families well. In addition, the Tibetan families in Kathmandu had few ties left with the Tibetan culture, as they had lived in Nepal for many generations, long before the Chinese invasion of Tibet. Brian had a particularly unsuccessful second homestay because he was sick while he was there and he left early to travel to the site of his Independent Study Project. However, his racial identity proved not to be an issue in the second homestay either.

During the ISP, Brian stayed with the family of the Tibetan doctor with whom he was apprenticing. Brian developed a close relationship with this family, especially Tsampa, the doctor. He went to a small, isolated village called Dumba in western Nepal, which was a ten day hike from the nearest paved road. Since Brian was studying medicine and religion, Jean, the Academic Director of the Tibetan Studies program, directed him to a traditional Tibetan doctor in this area and suggested that he study with him for his ISP. During a four week stay

in Dumba, Brian observed patient relations as well as kept a record of traditional medicines that the doctor used in his treatments. Brian described his introduction to Tsampa, the doctor with whom he apprenticed:

And so I put on my backpack and went looking for this guy. He had no idea I even existed. I couldn't telephone ahead, I couldn't mail anything on him. I had no idea whether or not he was there, whether or not he had died, whether or not anything. And Jean had met him like years ago. And so I went there and went through the towns and with the Nepali I picked up, I figured out which town he was in, and where he lived. And I knocked on his door, and he wasn't there and he wasn't coming back until that evening. I just hung out and talked with his wife, and met the kids. Another student has studied with him I think two years ago and so I kind of made a connection between myself and this other student and that I was going to be in a similar situation. And so they understood....And so I banged on this guy's door and I spoke to his wife. And from the experience of this other student, Jean kind of knew that I was going to be put under a certain type of test by him, to see whether or not I was really serious or interested, just because this other student had. Basically he put this other student to help him with his chores and really put him through a lot of hard labor almost just to get him to show that he was really truly interested in this man, in this culture and in this way of life and not just a passer-by type of tourist who is just interested in checking things out, and really wants to become part of the community. And so that was one of the reasons I did all the chores with the rest of the family. I slept in the same pile as the other children and half the time I was working the fields, I cut down trees and did a lot of things that I would if I were actually a member of the family. That was actually my more significant unofficial homestay, where I was really integrated into the family....I had worked for an ambulance for four years before I went on the program. And when this doctor was away that day, I'd been there for maybe an hour or so and there was an emergency with a woman who came in and she had basically hacked away part of her hand. She didn't like lose any appendages but she had massive bleeding and what not. And so I'm trained in that kind of emergency type stuff in terms of bleeding control and infection control and I was carrying all my stuff, just basic first aid stuff. And so I took care of her hand and apparently that ended up being my test then that Tsampa was looking for. That didn't really show that I was interested in the Tibetans, that it showed that I was interested in medicine and interested in helping the people and interested in being part of the community in terms of helping the community....And so he was happy about that. He was impressed about that. And his wife told him about that and then they gave me a nickname which was Ingee Amchee U-tog. 'Ingee' is the word for foreigner, it's more translated as barbarian. 'Amchee' is the name of a doctor, and 'U-tog' is a famous Tibetan doctor. So this became my nickname that he introduced me to everybody. (p. 9-10)

Because of Brian's Chinese heritage, he was especially reliant on his actions and cross-cultural dialogue to demonstrate his interest in the Tibetan people and culture, and his ideological opposition to the Chinese government. Tsampa's mentorship and acceptance of Brian into his home demonstrates that Brian was able to communicate his intentions, in spite

of the language barrier. Tsampa became a significant role model for Brian, and his studies with him during the ISP allowed Brian to reflect on his aspirations as a doctor and as a human being. Tsampa also lived a life shaped by Buddhism, which impressed Brian.

This is a person who completely embraces all the ideas of Buddhism. Believes it 100 percent and you'd really see every bit of it reflected in everything he does. In terms of being compassionate toward his wife, toward his children, toward his patients and in terms of him wanting to really help people, not just medically but religiously and also personally and socially. Watching him interact with people and seeing him in difficult situations and still be so compassionate. I guess a lot of things that these Buddhist people have shown me is that they do so much meditation, so much learning to control their mind in terms of controlling their emotions, in terms of clearing their thoughts....I guess what I got to see was that these people really, really embrace life. And when they meditate, I mean I can't even tell people in the States that I meditate, just because they look at you weird as if you do something that's really, in certain circles it's inappropriate. But seeing them, they have a lot of control over their lives in terms of their emotions and they're so at peace with themselves and they're so at peace with nature and with other people. You never feel any friction from them, any anxiety. I mean they're just so relaxed and laid back. It's so hard for me to put a finger on it. By going to see these people, see how they can essentially be so happy, especially Tsampa. In the middle of nowhere, I mean forget about telephones and stereos and CD's and anything. In his very simple life he is so happy. It's just like I've never met anyone who is so happy as he is and who has embraced his family. It's just everything he does, he's just so content and relaxed....And realizing that people can be that way, especially in terms of growing up in the States and having so much emphasis on material goods, and seeing someone lived in this way and have a frame of mind with little, in fact, of any of these material goods that I've grown up with. It's really, really quite amazing. Especially, I've tried to show that Irvington [my home town] is very wealthy and very much based on material things and appearance and circles, all that crazy stuff. And seeing that people can really live in a different way. I mean, this little village in the middle of nowhere, there's about 70 people in the village. I was there long enough to realize that there are all the normal social problems that people, I'm not saying that there's no competition there. People talk about other people, the normal things are there. But also to see this doctor and to see how he is as a doctor also in terms of how he related to his patients. It was very eye opening to how one can live their life....And living with Tsampa, I said before that that was like my real homestay. And really becoming incorporated into this family. It's totally different from where I grew up. Like doing all the chores in terms of, like there's no bathroom, there's no toilet paper for like 50 miles in every direction. Going out with the family, going down to the river everyday to fill up these giant jugs of water to bring back. The wife could carry three times as much as I could. Tsampa's wife was the most unbelievable woman. She wasn't big at all, she had complete discipline on the kids like you would not believe. A really incredible woman. And then like living with this family and you're sitting around the fire and doing all the chores and helping cook. Just sleeping in the same big heap as everybody else. I didn't even take out my sleeping bag and sleep in my Gore-tex North Face. It was like getting under, literally lying up like sardines with the rest of the family. It really showed me that there are other ways to live that are as happy if not much more so than the way that I grew up.

I'm not saying anything bad about my parents, but just that there are other perspectives to take. And then also being with Tsampa, going around. Going out on a horseback and going to these certain villages and treating these things. I was his helper for this time. (p. 26-27)

Brian's observations of the lifestyle of Tsampa and his family caused him to critically reflect on his own lifestyle in the U.S. His meaning perspectives were challenged as he realized that his own culture's emphasis on material goods was problematic. He also was deeply impressed by Tsampa's practice of Buddhism, so much so that he began to practice Buddhism himself.

Although the other students did not develop particularly close relationships with their homestay families, a number of the students, such as Megan, Susan, Lisa, Angela, and Greg genuinely liked their homestay families and developed good relationships with them. The two remaining students expressed disappointment in their homestay families and did not form close relationships with them. James had a ten day homestay in Udaipur. He shared a homestay placement with the one other male in the program, Zach, with whom he became good friends. Their host family was very wealthy, and consisted of two parents and a 16 year old son. James was somewhat dissatisfied with his homestay placement.

I wanted a traditional Indian family. What I got was a very modernized, wealthy Indian family. The mother had gone to college in the United States. The father was a wealthy, his family was wealthy land owners. And so they had a huge house. They ran a private school. They only spoke English around the house. They spoke a couple of other languages, but they basically only spoke English around the house. Which was terrible for me because I wanted to learn Hindi and all the other students, in their homestay they would practice Hindi. Me, I felt like an idiot trying to ask them to speak in Hindi because they spoke English. Their son only spoke English with his friends because English is a cool, modern language to speak, and if you have a good education you speak English. So, they didn't, they spoke English all the time. I wanted to practice my Hindi. I felt like such an idiot stumbling around in Hindi with them. So as much as I wanted to learn it, I ended up not bothering with it. Very nice people. Very nice family. But very uncomfortable because they were a very wealthy family. And so we'd wake up every morning with a servant bringing us chay, tea. We'd wake up to bed chay, which is a servant comes and puts a tray down on your lap and gives you a pot of tea, chay. And that wasn't what I wanted. And we couldn't say, 'We don't want this.' And I told Ashwin [the Academic Director] that I would have preferred a different family, but by then it was too late because that was where I was. (James, p. 17)

The homestay appeared to be a disappointing part of the program experience for James. The brevity of the homestay may have contributed to this, as James did not get a chance to develop in-depth relationships with people in his host family. It is unclear why the homestay was so short. Furthermore, James expected his homestay family to be "traditional"; he did not expect them to have a westernized lifestyle. He had hoped to challenge himself by living a way of life radically different from his own; instead, he found one that was all too easy to adapt to.

Chris was also disappointed that his homestay family in Kathmandu was quite westernized, as well as by the fact that they were Hindu as opposed to Buddhist. He had hoped to study Buddhism while he was in Nepal. Like James, Chris found it frustrating to have to speak in English instead of the language he was attempting to learn.

Everybody had a different experience. My family was a Brahman Hindu family. I wanted to stay with a Buddhist family, but that didn't work out. A couple of kids stayed with Buddhist families. But my family was Hindu, the parents were youngish, like maybe mid thirties, late thirties. The kids were little kids, kindergarten age. He worked for the government so they were a very westernized family. Their oldest daughter had been born in Mississippi. He went to Mississippi for two years to study agricultural management or something like that. So he's been here so they're very westernized. I mean they live very Nepalese just because you have to be really rich to live what we would consider our western type lifestyle over there. They both spoke English well. It wasn't that kind of homestay I would have wanted. They really kept to themselves, did their own thing, I had a room. I was so busy with the full schedule that the school gave us as far as the lectures and language class. (Chris, p. 19)

The age was right, but I wished that somehow they were more traditionally Nepalese. I mean this guy was in the government, had studied in America. We could sit down and talk about American things and stuff like that. I kind of wanted a family that maybe spoke less English. As nice as that was from time to time that they spoke English, they didn't really help me learn my Nepalese because it was just easier to speak English with them. So that was a problem. I think I rather would have been with a Buddhist than a Hindu family because I find that the value structure and the moral structure that Buddhism sets up is similar to the moral and value structure of Christianity which was something that I was just amazed by. Whereas Hinduism is set up a different moral structure and value structure altogether that I was more uncomfortable with. I mean I could go and sit with a Buddhist family and it was like being with a Catholic family or a Christian family. Just the way they were and things that they found important about interaction with people and stuff like that, was very similar to what I was used to being around Christian people or Jewish people, western religions. I was able to find a lot of similarities with my background with the Buddhists. While they had a totally different religion, I think that the

social structure and the end morals and sort of day to day values were almost identical. Whereas the Hindus were sort of, like being personable and friendly wasn't as valued. (p. 20)

James and Chris's relationships with their homestay families demonstrate a dynamic characteristic of all cross-cultural relationships to a certain extent, how preconceptions and expectations can shape cross-cultural interaction. However, they also demonstrate how students use these relationships to develop new conceptions of people, cultures, and religions. These students were able to expand their understanding of the diversity that exists within one country and culture. "Traditional" or "authentic" culture is often romanticized by students, and when students witness the extent to which westernization has influenced these cultures through colonization, imperialism, and commercialization, they are disappointed. They study abroad in the hope of encountering new cultures and lifestyles, and are disturbed when they sometimes find mirror images of the culture they left at home. In many of these cases, students compared the elite, western-like lifestyles they encountered in the host countries with the lower class, poverty stricken lifestyles which can be romanticized as "traditional." Unfortunately, only some of these students had opportunities to be immersed in this way of life. One dynamic at work here may be the selection of the homestay families. It is possible that the families who volunteer to host U.S. students may be more westernized or have experience studying or living in industrialized countries, and therefore have an interest in cross-cultural relations.

Relationships with People of the Host Culture

In addition to the homestay families, students developed a multitude of other cross-cultural relationships. Three of the female students and one of the male students became romantically involved with people of their host culture. Danielle's relationship with her homestay brother has already been discussed. Emily had a relationship with a Bolivian man that eventually led to the detriment of her relationship with her homestay family. However, it should be noted that she did not move out of her homestay to be with Thomas. Rather, she

moved because she did not feel that she could live or work there after the conflict. Emily described the relationship:

I met him at the fair. I guess I was dating him for about four or five weeks. We met each other and we started dating, and everything moved really fast. And he asked me to live with him. And I really liked him a lot. He was fun, he was older than I was, he was wealthy, which, I got to admit is really fun if the guy will take you to really nice places and pay for it and pick you up in his BMW which is unheard of in Bolivia....He was very slick. So he asked me to live with him, and I said 'No. I can't live with you. If this was a Bolivian girl you wouldn't ask me to do it. You're asking me because I'm American. And I don't like it. And I won't do it. And he was like, 'No, that's not why I'm asking you.' (Emily, p. 22-23)

But the whole time, having a relationship with a Bolivian, I think, is a really unique experience. And I'm really glad I did. And I don't mind that that consumed so much of my time. It didn't bother me in the long run. So I would stay over at his house, we dated for maybe four weeks. I'd say I stayed over at his house, well it started out maybe twice a week for the first week. And then maybe three times. And for the last two weeks, it was rare that I slept at the hotel. No, for the third week I think I slept at his house almost every night. I was living over there. But then we got into a big fight the end of the third week. So my last week, like four days went by, and on my second to last day, he called. And he's like, 'Do I get to see you before you leave?'....We had a great time together. But I don't know. Some things need a lot more time than others. (p. 25)

Emily was disturbed by the expectations Thomas placed on her based on stereotypes about her race, gender, and culture. She was torn between her desire for personal autonomy and frustration with the stereotypes of American woman. This was another instance where a cross-cultural relationship caused Emily to challenge her meaning perspectives and recommit to her value of independence. The relationship also enabled her to reflect on gender relations within Bolivian society, which is further discussed in the following chapter.

An important relationship that Megan had while she was in Ecuador was with Jordan, whom she met when he worked as a rain forest guide for the SIT group. Like Danielle and Emily, Megan's relationship gave her insight into the host culture which she might not have otherwise discovered.

The rain forest guide, Jordan and I ended up being together for the next three months when I was in Ecuador. It was really funny because he ended up introducing me to a very different part of Ecuadorian culture that I wouldn't have been exposed to, because he was an elite Ecuadorian....In a way it was strange because the relationship, the part of the culture I was getting to see was most analogous to my own. Upper class, everyone had gone to college in the

States. We would get high together. It was just like, I could have been hanging out at college. It was really funny. It was great....So it became this whole social scene. Actually at one point I would feel bad about it. 'What am I doing? I'm in Ecuador!' We went to discos at night. I couldn't believe what the discos were like. It was like a New York city disco. All the women were wearing black. Tall and lanky, and had these gorgeous bodies, permed hair. I was like, 'Whoa!' It was such a weird experience for me. I hadn't seen it on the streets or anything. I went to this disco and there it was. (Megan, p. 30-31)

This is another example of a student who initially romanticized traditional life in Ecuador and expressed surprise at encountering a way of life that seemed just like home. Since Jordan had a great deal of cross-cultural experience himself, Megan's relationship with him allowed her to view the three perspectives of insider to the host culture, outsider to her own culture, and the third, cross-cultural perspective. He also taught her a great deal about Ecuador in general.

He came to visit me when I was doing my ISP. He was like the guru of my trip. Everyone on my trip loved him because he was this major source of knowledge. His job in Ecuador was, he was a tour guide, and in the country only four people ever reach the status of National Guide which means that they could guide the Galapagos, they could guide the rain forest, there were all these qualifications, and he was one of them. So he was a plethora of information. He knew everything. People would always say, 'When's Jordan coming? I have to ask him something.' Whether it was where they could go camping or what kind of bird this was. So he was friends with the whole group, and he would come out with us and stuff. (p. 36)

I think it definitely added to my experience. If I hadn't had that relationship, my experience would have been different and I can't imagine what it would have been like. I don't think it would have been a worse experience or a lesser experience, but it definitely enriched my experience. I was having this love affair. Everything seemed so much better. You were happy, and this partner that you were into. When I think back to Ecuador it's like, in general, a very, very positive experience. And I'm sure that's part of it. We just had a nice, healthy, good relationship. We were good friends, good buddies. In terms of the cultural sense, he was very knowledgeable. He helped me out a lot, even just with my ISP. He knew people I could call, and he was always giving information. (p. 37)

When students become romantically involved with people of another culture while studying abroad, it seems to increase their level of cultural immersion because they develop intense emotional connections to the host culture and country. Once their emotional involvement is grounded in the host culture rather than at home, they feel more free to immerse themselves.

Chris developed a relationship with a Nepalese woman through which he gained insight into the gender relations in Nepalese culture. He was disturbed by what he discovered.

I sort of got involved with this one girl, that was sort of strange....But it was really, really weird kind of up and down. She was living with her uncle who treated her badly....And she was like 20. It was a weird situation but it was an interesting experience. We still keep in touch. She wants to come to America sometime and she wanted me to marry her and I'm like, 'No, sorry. I've got things to do yet.' I hope she comes one day because she's really nice. She's like, 'My uncle is going to make me marry some guy I don't want to marry. He's going to get drunk and beat me.' Because that's a lot of times what happens....And she's like, 'Every Nepalese woman wants to meet a westerner and go back to Europe because they just treat them much nicer.' It's not so much they want to get out of the country. They just know that they'll have a better life and they'll have rights and they'll be respected and they'll be treated well. Like her aunt had run off with some mountain climber from Santa Barbara or some place out in California. She lives out here now. Lamu is probably looking to do the same thing. It was interesting. (Chris, p. 29-30)

Through this relationship, Chris was confronted by the predicaments faced by Nepalese women. In his involvement with Lamu, he could better understand her feeling of fear at the threat to her well-being and her desire to protect herself than he could have if he had only heard about the situation second-hand.

A number of students also developed significant cross-cultural friendships. Emily was fortunate in that she was able to develop many close relationships during her time in Bolivia, which was something she actively worked towards. She learned a great deal from these relationships, and she is still in contact with many of these people. One example is her friendship with Maria.

I had a good friend who lived a block away from me, Maria. She was a few years older than I am, she was about five years older than I am. And we would go, we would go out to discos. She was considered kind of racy. Not by American standards. By American standards she would be considered pretty tame. But by Bolivian standards, because she went out without a brother, father, male cousin, and because the people who she went out with didn't ask permission from her brother, father, or male cousin, she was considered racy. [laugh]...She was a language student. So she and I went out very often, because she was like a regular American to me. She was the best contact I could have found because she was a Bolivian. She knew where to go in Bolivia. She knew what to do, she knew where the good places were to go. But she wasn't confined by the boundaries of most Bolivian girls, or many. And so we went out often. (Emily, p. 15)

My friendship with Maria definitely exposed me to Bolivian culture in a way that I couldn't have been exposed by any other American. Because she's

accepted by her culture, and she would drag me along to everything that she did. And I mean, I was taken to house parties, I was taken to birthday parties, I was taken to barbecues and to dance parties. And all these houses and people's homes. And none of my other American friends got to see anybody else's home but their host family's home. Or maybe one other. And I went to scores of places. She was my most important relationship there, culturally I think. (p. 28)

Emily admired Maria's independence in the face of Bolivian cultural standards that required women to be chaperoned. Emily strongly resented this rule, so her friendship with Maria was a form of rebellion. Maria also gave Emily access to other parts of the culture that she would not have seen on her own, allowing her to immerse herself culturally without relinquishing her freedom.

James developed a number of intimate relationships in India from which he learned a great deal about Indian culture as well as his own culture. An example is his relationship with Ravi.

I became very close to Ravi very quickly. I learned a lot about Indian men from him. He and his friends are very much motivated by honor, by honor and trust and friendship and loyalty. Very, very strong. If something happens to one of them, all their friends would go to bat for him. They'll do anything for their friends. They'll go to any lengths to stand by their friends. Friendship is extremely important. Very important. They have very close bonds of friendship. A lot more so than I've seen, not that there aren't close friendships here, but they're not openly talked about. Ravi is very open about that, and about emotions. And so it's much more described to your face how important friendship and loyalty are to him and his friends. Where as here it might be important, but you don't really talk about it that openly. You don't say, 'I really value our friendship, and I would go to any lengths to stand up for you.' I mean, it's not like that. There it is. I mean, it's great. It's wonderful. It's really refreshing. And we became very good friends. We traveled around together and we learned a lot about each other and each other's countries. So that was just a good, a very good friendship. We still keep in touch, and we'll always keep in touch. One thing that it did was it put into a more clear light my own friendships with other people, and how I value certain things in them. What is important in friendships, what is important about friendship, since these ideas of friendship and trust and loyalty were very out, very open, very much talked about. It brought into the forefront of my mind, or at least out of the subconscious. And so I thought about my own friendships more consciously than subconsciously. (James, p. 24-25)

This is another example of how cross-cultural relationships function to challenge meaning perspectives. Through his relationship with Ravi, James was able to reflect on friendship, both its value and how it is expressed.

Although the overall experience seemed to have a profound impact on Greg, he could not pinpoint any specific relationships that affected him. Rather, the people he did meet and the experience of interacting with people of Ecuador helped him to develop a new perspective on his place in the world. One encounter in particular helped Greg to consider his place as a privileged member of the global community.

[O]ne very influential person was this lady Solidaridad, who was the woman who went with us to the rain forest. And she lived in Quito, and I went out with her one night to some bars and stuff. And I got into this whole discussion with her about what to do now, sort of thing....And I said 'You know Solidaridad, it's really difficult to look at life, to look at your place in life, and you can see your life going two ways. You can either see your life, you can either say, 'Screw all the problems of the world, they're too big for me to handle. I'm going to just find my own corner of happiness in this world.' Or you can say, 'I can't live knowing that there are larger problems in the world. I can't live in my own little isolated world and just forget everything else.' And she said to me, and she's speaking as a very wealthy Ecuadorian woman. And she says to me, 'You know, if you can even comprehend that question in your mind, if you can even say to yourself, 'I have the choice to go either way,' there's so many people in this world that have no choice. If you can even think about making a choice, then you have to make the choice for the better. You have to make that choice to help. And you have to make that choice to devote your life to making the world a better place because you're a very small percentage. The people who can make that choice are a very small percentage. And it takes all those people to really make a difference.' And that was something that I've never forgotten, obviously. I haven't forgotten that. And that was very influential for me. Because here's someone who comes from a land where she's witnessing first hand development in the Third World, and she is a very enlightened person, and she's educated and she thinks the same way I do, and she is surrounded by poverty, and she is one of the lucky few. And so she says herself, 'I'm one of the lucky few. I'm going to make a difference.' And so that really made a difference to me. (Greg, p. 14-15)

Solidaridad caused Greg to question his capacity to disregard the world's social problems, and to realize his obligation as someone with a great deal of privilege to work for social change. It is within these cross-cultural relationships that cross-cultural dialogue is made possible, leading to confrontation and sometimes formation and transformation of meaning perspectives. Through these encounters, students commit and sometimes recommit to values and beliefs which are challenged, threatened, or placed in jeopardy by opposing cultural beliefs. They also commit to new meaning perspectives, and gain knowledge about their host cultures, the abstract concept of culture, and global politics such as colonization and

westernization. It is through these relationships that students become emotionally engaged in the host culture and the learning process. Although this is an element neglected by Mezirow (1991), it seems that emotional involvement and commitment provide significant opportunities for perspective transformation. Once a student is emotionally involved with a person, and that person challenges the student's meaning perspectives, the emotional commitment in the relationship makes it difficult for that challenge to be ignored.

Relationships With Other SIT Students

Some of the participants interviewed developed significant relationships with other SIT students. James became romantically involved with another student on the India program. This relationship had a deep effect on him.

I learned a lot from Kayla. I learned a lot. She's somebody that I probably admire almost more than anybody else I've ever met. The more I knew her, the more I kept going, 'Wow!' My slack-jawed, wide-eyed, she in her 23 years on this planet has done so much for so many in so many different ways, that it just makes me realize how I'm wasting my time and how I have wasted, squandered away, so much of my time on such trivialities....She was just nominated one of the Points of Light. Last year forty people in the country were nominated Points of Light, elected Points of Light by the government. She's one of them. She's 23. That just sums it up. If I had an hour I could talk about the things she's done and still not finish. She's just as humble as can be. Very modest, very humble. And she considers what she's done to not be enough. She's done so much more....I mean, and she's done so much work with so many different groups. And she still thinks that she hasn't done enough. We were just hanging out one day on the roof of Randevas where we were staying. And she started crying. And I was like, 'What, what's going on?' And she said something like 'In the past 30 seconds, five children died of starvation and I didn't do anything to stop them.' AND SHE WAS REALLY CRYING ABOUT THAT. And it was just, she's done so much but still works, believes that what she's done is just not enough. She's just driven. She's so motivated, so driven to help people. And it's just the utmost inspiration. It's amazing. She's such a role model. So I learned a lot about dedication, devotion, and I got a lot of inspiration from her. It also put me in my place, you know, under her heel ground down in the dirt. But she's very humble. She doesn't get high and mighty about it. She's a really beautiful person. She's constantly in awe of the beauty of life, which is one thing I totally picked up from her. Just being constantly in awe of life. And it's such a miracle. This is such a wonderful thing and even if you're not doing anything in particular, even if you're bummed out about your job, you're alive. The sun is shining. Even if it's not shining, what's the difference? You're alive and there's so much to be thankful for and appreciate that you should be in constant awe of what's around you. I could take hours and still not finish. So I learned a lot about devotion, dedication, inspiration, motivation, hard work and friendship. (James, p. 26-27)

Although this was not a cross-cultural relationship, James' relationship with Kayla had some of the same effects. It caused him to be emotionally grounded in India and to become connected to the place. It also challenged his self-concept in terms of his ability to help others, and his appreciation of life. By observing these characteristics in Kayla, he could reflect on his own characteristics.

The SIT student groups were important sources for emotional support during times of culture shock, crisis, and homesickness. The relationships that Angela developed with other members of the SIT group shaped her experience by offering emotional support as well as an escape from the cultural and physical conditions to which Angela had difficulty adjusting.

Well, with Americans, certainly, I made several good friends, which was a good and bad sort of situation. It was very important to me that I had friends there. I was very glad I did. But at the same time we would sort of feed on each other's anxieties. Like, oh my God. During the write up of the, that was another thing. We had a week to do our write up period of our projects. And I lived with one friend during that time. She and I were, together, so neurotic. It was really bad, looking back. We would feed on each other's anxieties. Just like, okay. 'We have seven days to do this project. We have nothing else to do. That's fine. God I really want to go home.' [laugh] Not anxieties, but sort of being fed up with the program and so forth, and just the difficulties of not being able to work after dark because there was no light, stuff like that. But at the same time, I'm really, really grateful for the friends I had while I was there....Some people were very independent. Or I've heard people who have done other programs who were very independent or whatever, and they jumped. I sort of waded into the culture, and some people jumped head first into it. Ideally I would have spent more time with Indonesians. If I hadn't had these American friends, then I would have done that I guess. When I think about it, I sort of regret it, but I also think that I was doing the best I could while I was there. I just sort of wish that I had balanced it a little more. I'm sort of a solitary person given the opportunity, and so I wish I'd spent more time with my family in the evenings. I would be just apt to stay by myself or go visit a friend rather than join them on THEIR porch. I had MY porch and they had THEIR porch. Things like that. Because some people did develop very strong relationships with their families. Well, not that many people, but some people did. So I do regret that....I'm still in touch by letter with, I'd say, three people. And they give me news from other people in the program that they're in touch with. I want to keep in touch with these people because we shared this really bizarre experience together. People want to hear about your trip. But a lot of people would go, 'So how was Bali? Was it great?' And there would be so much more than, 'Oh it was great,' to talk about. So having those people to say, 'Gee remember that time we were all throwing up at the beach?' is important to me. So I do want to stay in touch with them, as much as possible. (Angela, p. 14-15)

Angela had difficulty becoming cross-culturally engaged in Bali because she resisted forming cross-cultural relationships. Anxiety from culture shock and homesickness, which she

hadn't expected to encounter, limited her ability to immerse herself in the culture. Angela looked mostly to the SIT group for emotional support to help her through this frustration.

Group dynamics among the SIT students were also an important force that shaped students' experiences. Megan, Brian, Jodie, and Chris all had very positive experiences with group dynamics among the students in their programs. Throughout the program, Megan was engaged in close friendships with other students in the group, and was pleased with the group dynamics. Her relationships with other students expanded her horizons, as she bonded with people from very different backgrounds.

We'd sit around all the time and sing. We were brother and sister. You know, lying over each other, together. Really comfortable. I kept in touch with my close friends from the trip. My friend Amber who lives in Texas. My friend Sean lives in Boulder and I've seen him. Stephanie, she went out of the country, but she went to Brown. So when I was in Vermont we used to see each other....I made friends with different people and that definitely enriched my experience. I'm sure you experienced this too. Thank God, you're going through this experience and you need someone to share it with. And I really just did need to talk to some people. And Amber, who ended up being my closest friend, is this country bumpkin from a small town in Texas, never been anywhere. She's very different from most people that I was used to being friends with. And it was a lesson for me, when I physically judge someone, because I saw her and I just didn't think we'd be friends. It's not even in the way she dressed or anything, it was more her whole aura that she gave off. We were from such different places, and everything, that I never thought we'd be friends. And she ended up being my closest friend. So that was a good lesson for me, just that, because I always judge people like that. Getting to be friends with people that I wouldn't normally be friends with. (Megan, p. 38)

Chris had an excellent experience with the other students on the program. They formed a good support group for one another, but at the same time, all the students had a great deal of independence from the group.

Twenty-two I think, 11 girls and 11 guys. The interesting thing was though is there was like one love interest in the whole thing. I was just amazed because I thought well, 11 girls, 11 guys, this is going to be really interesting. We all got along fantastically, had a few problems, but man I've heard of all other semesters abroad where people cliqued off and had groups. It was just such a wild experience that we all just bonded together. It was just fantastic. But there was none of that. I think everybody was so busy with their own thing, they didn't have time for that. It was definitely an interesting group. And we all met for the first time at JFK. That's just cool. It was really scary. We were all just like being really lame and trying to be cool and stuff. It was so funny. We had a few good laughs about it later on. (Chris, p. 6-7)

At one point, Nick [the Academic Director] got all teary eyed late at night and said we were the best group he'd ever had. And we were like, 'Yeah, yeah, you say that to every group.' He's like, 'No, you guys are different. You stuck together.' I guess from what both of them said we were a better group as far as group dynamics went. We all got along. There were a couple of kids that were just sort of lame and nobody could deal with but they weren't alienated, they weren't ostracized. We just kind of took them in. We all just really pulled together and we all got along well with the directors. He had said that the semester before that everybody had like grouped off in their own little cliques and it got really ugly....With ours I think everybody was so independent that nobody really had a serious need to build small little support groups. Of even support in general. I think everybody could have pretty much done the program by themselves. So when people did need support, it was like the whole group, this one big group. I think that happens a lot....I think the group dynamics, I mean that's just going to happen, it's just human nature. (p. 31)

Other students encountered problems with group dynamics. Working through these problems and learning to adjust to group living was a part of co-operative learning. Susan liked the other members of the SIT group and developed some close friendships within the group. However, part way into the semester, she had a difficult time with the close living conditions that the group was in, and this caused some conflict.

There was inevitably tension. I don't know what most other groups are like. But there were 21 students and for the first two and a half months, we were just inseparable. You were always with the same people. And you just have tension that builds up. We were camping. We spent two weeks camping in the Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Crater, in two or three person tents, traveling in these huge overland vehicles that fit almost all the group in one vehicle. So if you weren't back at the campsite, you couldn't leave because you were at a national park and it was dangerous. If you weren't on the immediate campsite then you were on the vehicles together all the time. Day in and day out. And then we went to Mweka college and stayed in the dorms there for a week, which was the same thing. You went to dinner together and whatever. And then we went off and did another national park for a week, which was the same thing. So by the end of that, we were just like, 'Oh my gosh!' The ISP, I think a lot of people just needed some space to get away from the group and from, you know, everybody handles it differently. Some people just talked about really, what I felt were trivial things. Just missing what I felt were the most important aspects of the trip. Talking about, whatever, missing hamburgers, or whatever they talked about, always focusing on that versus focusing on the good. They always focused on the bad. But everybody handles it different. By ISP, I was definitely ready to be by myself. It didn't work out that way, but I would have liked for it to. (Susan, p. 4-5)

Although Susan encountered conflicts with other students in the group, these conflicts forced her to be independent and to look to other sources for emotional support. This was a

huge step for Susan, who had feared homesickness, culture shock, and isolation during the beginning of the program.

Danielle was initially disappointed with the other students in her group, but she developed some good friendships as she adjusted to the new environment.

The first few months were pretty difficult. I was really lonely. I didn't like the people in my group that much. I mean, I did eventually, really like them. But it took me a long time to begin to like them. (Danielle, p. 9)

It was pretty much split in two. People who were kind of like, 'Fuck this. This is so lame,' and who smoked a lot of hashish too. I think that was just their way of dealing with it. A lot of them had really bad home situations in their homestays. They just needed to be figure out their own trip I think....So I think that the three women that I wound up hanging out with were definitely the most healthy. Just really into traveling and a lot of stuff. They're all so different. I think Jessica, she's very charming, very impulsive, Latin American, very temperamental. I think she helped me relax a lot. And for some reason we saw each other as highly amusing, but at the same time it was a really good conversation. So it worked out really well. And Beth and I just really got along. We spent a lot of time together. I don't know what it is. She's black and so we talked a lot about race. And Michelle is like this psycho-feminist dyke, very funny woman from LA. It was hilarious. I don't know why she was there. But we really hit it off. Because I think I was a person who could really understand her sensibilities, but I was also not as extreme as she was. (p. 16-17)

Danielle received a lot of support from these three important friendships, which helped her to endure some of the crises she faced during the program.

Some students were disappointed with the lack of knowledge and sensitivity of other students in their groups. When Lisa first met her student group, she was surprised to discover that some students lacked some basic precepts of cultural sensitivity. She did not particularly bond with the other students in her group at first, although she did develop friendships later on in the program.

We had a group of about 24, and I didn't like a lot of them that much. I was a Sociology and Anthropology major, and I think there was one or two others who were majoring in that field but it was a lot of International Studies or Third World Development. A lot of very political people. They were really interested in the politics. They really were pretty clueless about being in another culture, or just any sort of cross-cultural understanding. I was really surprised. I mean, we certainly all got along, but I was very surprised at first. I expected to go there and be psyched to be with all these people and most of the time I just wanted to get away from them. (Lisa, p. 1)

Nicole was surprised at the low level of international awareness of the students in her group.

I expected people who were also interested in Africa, not just, there were some escapism for me, but that wasn't all of me. That was probably the smallest part of my motivation for wanting to go. And I found that for a lot of people it was probably 90 to 100 percent of why they wanted to go. At least in my group. And I found that really disturbing. People weren't really interested academically in learning about the country so much as just because it seemed cool. And I guess I was kind of turned off to the program, not only because I felt like the academic leadership there wasn't very strong, but I also found that for a lot of people, not everybody, but for a lot of people it was an escape. An escape from parents, sexuality, or boyfriends or girlfriends, all kinds of different reasons. College is too difficult....The other thing that I think amazed me when I got there was the fact that so many people had never seen poverty before. They were completely overwhelmed by the fact that there were people living in houses which were shacks basically. And I would try to say something like, 'There are people who are in the United States that live like that, and these same conditions exist in the United States. These same disparities. It's just that there's more of a middle class so we don't see it as much.' And people just wouldn't believe me. And the whole issue of guilt, and how do I deal with the fact that there is so much economic disparity, how do I deal with my own privileged position within that, was something that a lot of people had trouble with. And I think every time you face this, there is something within a person that, 'How do I deal with this?' And the questions do keep coming up. Hopefully. Hopefully we're all caring enough about other people to see this. So in a lot of ways it's very good. But I think it really surprised me that so many people had never dealt with these issues before. That college juniors or seniors never had to deal with these questions before really surprised me. And having worked in a homeless shelter, having worked in an after school program which was for low-income families, I felt like I had dealt with those questions before. And certainly you keep dealing with them over and over again. But at the time, it was just really surprising to me. (Nicole, p. 4-5)

Emily was initially disappointed by the eclectic interests and personalities of the other students in her group. Like Lisa, she found the approach of some of the students to cross-cultural relations disturbing. However, she eventually reconciled these differences of opinion and made some good friends with the other students.

What was disappointing to me a little bit though was that, I'm interested in world politics. I'm interested in the social situation of the world. I'm not, as they say, crunchy. [laugh] I mean that's kind of a bad, I'm not trying to dis on these people. They were good people. But I mean, a couple of them were going down there being like, 'Yeah, we're going to start our own political party and help the Natives.' And I'm like, 'Listen, go down there and observe them and learn about them. Don't go down there and try to change them and help them. They don't want your help. They're allowing you to come to their country and study. You don't need to go down there and like....' I don't know. I didn't hit it off too well with my group initially. (Emily, p. 3-4)

Emily gave an example of the type of attitude that disturbed her, displayed by two women in the group. She disagreed with their approach towards cross-cultural interaction.

They were very tight for awhile, and they were both really into like, 'Yeah dude, let's go save them (the Bolivians).' [laugh] Which really annoyed me. Their intentions were probably good, but they were just so superior about it. I don't know how to explain it. You know, they walked around with their greasy hair and their unshaven legs and were like, 'We're gonna be one with them.' And they had no idea, they weren't even friends with Bolivians when they left. They were friends with each other. (p. 4)

We did not all get along with each other. I would dress up for classes every morning. I would put on nylons and shoes, because that's how I was told women in Bolivia dress. And, as time wore on, I would just put on jeans or something. And the girls I was with would not dress for anything. Which was a point of contention, because they'd say, 'Why do you have to dress up everyday?' And I was like, 'Well, they told us to dress up. They told us to show respect for the culture. And respect for the culture was to dress nicely.' And it turned into a thing where the Bolivians were much more responsive to people who dressed in a certain way. Which became really controversial because I made friends very quickly with Bolivians. And Bob and Ryan did as well. But none of my other group mates did. None of them. Jill made a couple friends. But by the end of the program, there were five Americans going out with each other constantly, and four Americans going out with Bolivians constantly....Another big thing was that, I think a huge thing was drinking. The five of them really didn't like drinking, didn't like going out drinking. And the four of us, I'm not a lush, but I don't mind drinking. And it's not to go and get drunk. It's because it's a real means of being social in this country. Because there's movies, but like I was telling you before, there's no concerts. There's no, you can't really do anything at night except go out to bars or discotheques. That's your choice. Bars, movies, or discotheques. Or stay home and watch TV if you have one. Not everybody, you know, there's not a whole lot to do. Drinking games are played constantly at every restaurant. No matter how nice the restaurant is, they'll give you dice and a score pad....And that's what you do. And if you have an aversion to drinking, you're just not going to experience the culture because America's not a homogenous culture. It's a lot of people from a lot of different backgrounds and classes and cultures and races and everything. And Bolivia, it's one homogenous group of people. And they all do the same thing. (p. 6-7)

Lisa, Nicole, and Emily are three examples of ways in which relationships within the student group caused students to clarify their own values and standards of cross-cultural interaction. By critiquing reactions of other SIT students, participants were able to reflect on their own roles as cross-cultural sojourners. Again, this involved a commitment or re-commitment to personal belief systems and meaning perspectives.

Academic Directors

The role of the teacher is a vital one in experiential learning, as was illustrated in the literature review. This position is a complicated and demanding one. Participants expected the Academic Directors (A.D.'s) to fulfill five main functions: to handle program logistics and planning, to be a knowledge resource, to provide an overall context of the academic and experiential curriculum of the program, to offer emotional support for students, and to be a role model of cross-cultural relations. Three students, Susan, Brian, and Jodie developed significant relationships with their Academic Directors. In each of these relationships, the director functioned as a friend and meaningful role model for the student.

Jodie had two Academic Directors in charge of her program. One director, Tim, had worked with SIT in Switzerland and Japan. Jodie mentioned him very little in the interview, and described him as unfamiliar with West Africa. However, the other director, Karen, left a deep impression on Jodie. Karen had worked in the Peace Corps in Togo, had lived in other regions of Africa, and had been a director of the Cameroon program for the two previous semesters. She became a role model for Jodie. Jodie described her as having a dynamic and impressive way of interacting with people.

Karen was really together. She was just awesome, super, she's totally incredible and a good leader. She worked well with Tim, like they kind of complemented each other in this really bizarre way. She's totally amazing. I've never been more impressed by someone. Her attitude towards being there, her relationship and position within the community. She had a lot of ties to the place. She was very respectful of people and very open to getting to know them and kind of responsible about her presence there and very aware of what that meant and of following up. She was really into music. She liked music a lot too, so she kind of helped get some of my stuff started. I remember we were going to tape vendors on the streets when we got to the capital on a field trip. And they would be like, 'Oh, Madame Karen is back. KAREN, KAREN,' and stuff. I was like, 'How often do you come here?' 'Well I came here last time on a field trip.' They totally knew her. They had deals where she would buy four tapes and get three free. And they played her all their best music. I don't know, there was this lady she used to buy plantains from. And like she'd just give her like all this free stuff just because she liked her. She was just that kind of a person to elicit that response from people. And just really sensitive and kind of not afraid to take a position in terms of what it meant to be there. She had her shit together as far as the dynamics of being there and recognizing and dealing with that I guess....I kind of got to know her pretty well. We kind of hit it off and so I might have spent more time, because I think a lot of the issues that concerned her concerned me. And so I spent a lot of time quizzing her because

I was really interested. At the time I was kind of considering, I mean I was curious what she thought about a lot of the United States' relationships with countries in Africa and how it was to be living life based on, I don't know, just the questions that you ask like, 'Will I come back here? What did you think about the Peace Corps? What did you think about living in another country, and the ex-pat lifestyle?' and stuff like that. Which she didn't really lead. So we had a lot of really good talks about that so I kind of got more of her point of view than maybe she put out there in the group setting. (Jodie, p. 10-11)

The presence of such a competent role model from her own culture gave Jodie another arena in which to develop an intricate conceptualization of cross-cultural relations and cultural sensitivity. By observing Karen, Jodie could analyze her own cross-cultural interactions comparatively.

Brian's relationship with his Academic Director, Jean, provided him with another powerful role model in addition to Tsampa.

[T]hey are, next to my parents, they are my ideal role models right now in terms of basically how to embrace life and how to get the most out of life, how to see people, how to be compassionate, how to see that there's more to life than making a lot of money and all of that, and getting myself off of the rat race. I'm very convinced that I'm not going to spend my entire career as a doctor in the States. I'm planning on doing stuff in the Third World a lot, especially in Nepal and with the Tibetans. (Brian, p. 26)

He [Jean] has taught me so much because he is a western person who has gone to Nepal, embraced Buddhism, is incredibly Buddhist in every possible way, and he stayed there. And he's a person like myself who was brought up in a western sense. He gave that all up and stayed there. I don't plan on doing that. There are times that I didn't want to come back to the States but then realizing that I grew up in this incredibly lucky situation and that because of my education, because of my parents having money or whatever, I was able to go to Columbia and I was able to get in here [Yale Medical School] and that I'm incredibly lucky to be able to become a western doctor and having trained at this place. And for me to give that up just because I want to live a simple life in Kathmandu or wherever is really foolish when I think about it now. When I was there it was just like I was so content and happy with things and not worried about images, not worried about the social constraints that you have here, or at least the perceived western social constraints. I mean not that there aren't social constraints when you're there, of their own. For a while, I was just going to stay and hang out. But then wanting to come back to the States to finish my education, to become trained as a doctor here, knowing that I could go back to the States and finish my education and then have a much greater ability to come back to Nepal and back to Tibet and then use the knowledge that I've learned to really help in a different capacity that I otherwise wouldn't be able to. And realizing how lucky and how special my childhood and my upbringing and opportunities I was given. Or just traveling around and realizing what an American passport can do for you. I mean it's quite incredible. You don't realize that until you leave the States. (p. 28)

So Jean has a perspective that I can associate with and talking to him about not being caught up in the normal track, that danger of going to college, going to medical school, paying back your loans, being on what people consider normal here. When I tell people that I want to go the Third World to practice medicine, they scratch their heads and wonder why. And wanting to do things that I believe in and not being afraid to do them just because it's not normal by what my friends and what my parents would consider. Jean went to graduate school and he got his degree, had a great teaching job in a university. He was there for a year and decided it wasn't for him. Sold everything and hitchhiked to Kathmandu. That's the way he shocked his family. He knew from that year that sort of getting on a treadmill and realizing that he could be on that treadmill for the next 60 years was not the kind of thing that he wants to do and he was able to realize that early enough and able to admit to himself that he wanted something different out of these years. And having the energy and the motivation to tell his parents that he was quitting his job and that he was leaving. Not so much that he's irresponsible but because there are other things that he's passionate for. So his perspective is really valuable to me. (p. 28-29)

Susan's group had two Academic Directors. One of the directors was a positive role model for Susan with whom she became good friends. The other director, while knowledgeable in Wildlife Ecology, was not responsive to the students from Susan's perspective.

Two completely different personalities. Completely different. One of them, 'Jill,' she was the original, I think she might have been the original director....But she was there, and established a lot of contacts and what not. And had her way of living in East Africa and being right in East Africa, which I didn't really agree with. Her and the other director, 'Debbie,' got a house together, which was in the town we were based in for a lot of the time and was their place to stay when we were off on ISP. And they both lived together, which Debbie wouldn't have done again. I was a lot closer with Debbie. Jill is a vet, and she practices while the program is not going on, and she's very scientifically based. Everything is very structured for her. And so she kind of looks at things that way, and doesn't look at things from a cultural, anthropology, people perspective. It tends more to be numbers, scientific, very cold, is the way she kind of related to a lot of people. Or that's the way I interpreted it. And so she and I didn't really talk much....Also she felt very comfortable having a maid in the house and doing her laundry, and stuff like that. And we spent a lot of time in the house when we were in Arusha. So we spent a lot of time there. And she wanted guards at the house. To me things that weren't really necessary, but she felt that she could easily afford them due to the difference in economics, some stuff like that....And, to me, it's like, you can clean your own floor and you don't need to hire a maid. And it went further than that, obviously. If she was comfortable doing it in her household, then she was comfortable doing it other places. Like, when we were on trips and we had people that were driving and stuff like that, she had a dominant way of dealing with them, which I was very uncomfortable with. And Debbie wasn't like that at all. Debbie was very culturally sensitive. She was in the Peace Corps. I don't know if that makes a difference. But she definitely was very aware of racial issues and what not. Not to say that Jill was racist. But I don't know. Debbie was more down to earth for me to talk to. More interested in more

things, I wasn't interested in hanging around talking about feces of an elephant. Jill tended to be really interested in scientific, biology and that stuff....I think for a lot of people in the group, Debbie was the one who was more approachable. Easier to talk to....Debbie was the one we wrote the observation journal for. So she was the one who brought in the cultural aspect of the program, which is what I was just as interested in. Not just focusing on strict wildlife ecology and conservation. Bringing in more of the issues of people and what happens to the people when a national park is created or what not. (Susan, p. 7)

The most important element in these three relationships is the fact that the A.D.'s were powerful role models for the students. Through observation, students recognized admirable approaches to cross-cultural situations on the part of their A.D.'s, and endeavored to emulate them. These relationships helped students to form a third cultural perspective, and to learn skills in communication and cross-cultural interaction. However, aside from these success stories, only two other participants, Lisa and Chris, liked their directors and were pleased with their performance. The remaining seven were disappointed in the low levels of competence or the leadership styles of their Academic Directors. This is a disturbing ratio and it demonstrates that the position of Academic Director is a very demanding job. Angela was dissatisfied with the Academic Directors of the program because they failed to communicate with one another.

There was a woman who was in name the director and then a guy who was her assistant director, but she had, really her main credential was that she was married to a Balinese man. Whereas the guy was only a few years older than most of us. And he had done the SIT in Bali program, and had spent a lot of time in Indonesia. And spoke Indonesian fluently. And he was much more acclimated and assimilated and much more helpful. There were so many conflicts between the two of them. They didn't even like each other. They didn't talk to each other. They would stand up in front of the class and be like, 'Well, this is what we're going to do next week.' 'No, I don't think so.' They'd had no preparation outside of the classroom. It was really frustrating in that respect....She was in her mid to late thirties. Her name's Jackie. And the guy was David, and he just graduated from college. He was 23 or so. So it was not a good match at all. He was nominally the assistant director. So we sort of viewed them as co-directors, because Jackie was pretty helpless in terms of even getting to class. Although, she was good in that she was very, sort of, experiential-oriented. And she would be like, 'Now I'm not going to tell you guys what to do. If you want to do this, or you want to do that, then it's your responsibility to go do it.' But it helped too. So I don't look back on her fondly at all. David was helpful in that he was very knowledgeable about the culture and he helped everyone set up their ISP's, basically. So that was good. (Angela, p. 2-3)

Megan's Academic Director did not fulfill her needs for a mentor or a role model.

[S]he had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Ecuador eleven years earlier and she never left. And she was a single woman with an adopted Ecuadorian baby, like five months old....Very cold, not very warm. So she did the orientation, I just never like, you know I didn't feel that great. She was just, right off the bat, not very warm. Not that she was like a camp counselor or had to be hugging us and stuff. She totally lacked enthusiasm. She's very straightforward. Like the first day, you would think she would introduce herself and, she was very, she didn't smile a lot. I can picture her face right now, it was like, she seemed bitter almost. (Megan, p. 10)

Emily was also dissatisfied with the emotional support given by the Academic Director, in spite of her ample professional qualifications and knowledge.

It was kind of shocking. She was like, 'Hi, I'm Diana,' she was really brusque. I mean, one thing that I will say about Diana, is she was very competent. She knew people, she knew the language, she knew how to set up appointments for us, and how to get us from one place to another. But she was extremely distant, and not very warm, and almost never approachable. With a problem or anything. Like when she talked to us about sex one time, she said, 'There are condoms in the back room. If you want one, take one.' I mean that was it. So Diana wasn't what I needed. I needed somebody who was a lot warmer. I was not sure of where I wanted to be. I had to do this for a requirement, and I told her that the second day. I was like, 'I don't want to be here right now. I want to be at Kenyon. I was at Kenyon [college] a couple days ago, I was happy there. I don't want to be here.' She was like, 'Well, we'll have to change that attitude, won't we? Ha ha.' And I was like, 'Ha ha, yeah.' (Emily, p. 5-6)

And when I went to her with problems that were really bothering me, personal stuff. Like I went to her once and I said, 'Diana, I'm just really feeling lonely here. It's not because I don't have people around me. I do. I don't know what it is.' And she's like, 'Well, can't help you if you don't know what the problem is.' And I mean, that is not the right attitude. She's supposed to help me EXPLORE the problem. But then again, she knew everyone there was to know in Bolivia, it seems like. Anyone of political, social, economic, any category, significance, and she knew them. And she was on a first name basis and they liked her. She was a newspaper woman. She was tough and brassy. (p. 38-39)

Greg was disappointed in the academic leadership of his director.

I really didn't have too much respect for our program director. I didn't really respect her intellect because to me, she was more of a office manager type of person. She was there to make sure we had the right people come in to talk to us. She was there to make sure we got to where we needed to get to. She was there to make sure our homestay families were okay. She was there to make sure there were no problems with us. She was there to make sure we got to the Galapagos and she was there to pay people and stuff. But as far as I was concerned, I guess she had some credentials, but she never said anything that really impressed me. And she had been in Ecuador for awhile. She had been there for two or three years. And I expected her to have a little more insight into some problems. She really didn't. (Greg, p. 13)

Nicole was particularly critical of the Academic Directors, as well as the structure of the program in general. She did not feel that they fulfilled their roles as group leaders.

I always wondered why it took two people to run the program. And I was also somewhat taken back by, I felt like if there were two people, one should be Zimbabwean. And I understand that, we had more discussions about this too, and 'Richard' informed me that one of the reasons why they had American directors was that a lot of people come over and they have culture shock and they have home sickness, and it's really important to have an American director. And I agree with that. But I also think that it would have been nice to also have a Zimbabwean director because the way the classes were organized and the way our activities were organized was very American. They were transplanting an American college into a Zimbabwean setting. And I think that just having that different cultural perspective on how to organize life and how to organize classes, and also in terms of what information you're giving the students and what texts are available and what resources are available. I think that would have been a very good thing. And they would always tell me, I had these questions of why they needed two directors, and they would say, 'Oh, it takes forever to do anything here, tracking down and doing phone calls.' And it seemed to me that it was a lot of clerical work that they could hire someone in Zimbabwe to do....But I don't know. I also understand that it's tough for a single person from the United States to move over there without a spouse. And their background is Peace Corps, which I guess kind of surprised me because I just can't imagine them working, doing training sessions for Peace Corps volunteers.....And nobody really had a lot of respect for them, which was sad. They may have had the international experience background, but I don't feel like they had, a, the academic background, and b, I don't think they were particularly culturally sensitive. Just some of the comments that would come out of their mouths really surprised me. I don't remember exactly, but some of Richard's ways he would go up and introduce himself to people. It was very kind of ME oriented, and he'd start a conversation in Shona to show them he knew a little bit, and then he'd kind of laugh about it, then of course start talking in English. And he never really tried to learn anything in Shona beyond a couple of phrases. And he had been there at that point for two years. And the Shona teachers were calling him on it. And acted very self-important at times towards some people, like when we were on the study tour or whatever. Very demanding, American demanding. And I don't think that went over well, watching the looks on people's faces. (Nicole, p. 9-10)

The dissatisfaction expressed concerning the performance of the Academic Directors demonstrates the importance of the position in terms of offering emotional and academic support for the students. It also illustrates how demanding the role of an experiential educator can be, and how difficult it is to fulfill all the expectations expressed by students, the most important of which is to function as a role model in cross-cultural relations.

Conclusion

This discussion of student relationships in cultural immersion is vital to the understanding of experiential, cross-cultural learning. Once students are emotionally engaged in cross-cultural relationships, they became engaged in cross-cultural encounters through which their meaning perspectives are confronted and challenged. The more engaged a student is in a relationship, the more the student has personally invested in an experience, and the more that student is open to change. Relationships with people from the home culture provide support and feedback for students, and also provide opportunities for the observation of different styles of cross-cultural interaction. Romantically involved relationships, whether with people of the home or host culture, help to shift a student's center of the universe away from home and into the setting of cultural immersion.

The development of important relationships during the program is a condition which led to perspective transformation in some cases. In general, the closer the bond, the more influential the relationship was in relation to the personal development of the participants. Like the chapter on participant backgrounds, this chapter frames the experiences of the participants in order to discuss transformative, experiential learning. Mezirow fails to emphasize the importance of relationships in transformative learning, and therefore it is difficult to apply his theory to this discussion. It can be seen from a case such as Brian, for instance, that through developing respect, admiration, and caring for another person, a student's values and understanding of the world can be touched and recreated. The following two chapters explore how students' meaning schemes and perspectives were challenged and transformed.

Chapter Six: Critical Incidents and Crisis

Introduction

This chapter is a discussion of the psychological intensity of crisis and other incidents of cross-cultural interaction, and the critical reflection inspired by them. It demonstrates the way in which the participants' cultural values were challenged and confronted by these experiences, leading them to question these values and meaning perspectives. A number of participants discussed incidents and crises which caused them to reflect critically on their own sociocultural reality. Examples of this can be seen in students' reflections on gender relations, race relations, and international relations. Other crises, such as culture shock, caused students to reflect on their psychological meaning perspectives. Finally, re-entry or the re-integration of students into their home culture forced some to reconcile their new cultural perspective with the old, or to establish a third cultural perspective. It is through cultural marginality that students enter into a state of crisis and then critical reflexivity. This can be seen in examples of student cross-cultural interactions. As Paige (1993) asserts, perceived racism, sexism, or other prejudice in the host culture, being physically different from members of the host culture and feeling highly visible, or feeling a loss of control over cross-cultural situations can all trigger a psychological intensity in students which can lead to transformation. The following chapter illustrates this process.

Gender Relations

From the data collected, it appears that the experience of being an American woman in another culture was disconcerting for many of the female participants. Every student I interviewed expressed concern about the sexual harassment faced by western women in non-industrialized countries. This seemed to be a widespread phenomenon attributed to the media representation of western women as sexually promiscuous, especially women of European-American descent.

One student in particular brought the issue of harassment to the forefront. Danielle conducted her own research in this area after experiencing severe sexual harassment and

assault during her stay in Morocco. She interviewed a number of other female American study abroad students, and found that many of them had trouble recovering from the sexual harassment they experienced in their host cultures. She discussed from an anthropological perspective how the way in which a person is perceived, for instance as a tourist, a slut, or an immoral person, shapes the interactions that person has with people of a host culture. One of the most important parts of the SIT experience is getting past these perceptions, on both sides, and developing concrete relationships to dispel stereotypes. However, this can be an intimidating goal when one is confronted with stereotypes that promote violence against women and threaten one's personal safety and sense of well-being. Danielle described her experiences of sexual harassment and assault:

The harassment, it was pretty constant for days on end. Whenever I was in a public place. I got molested a number of times. Like I went to this elevator in this building once, and this guy followed me in. I swear this elevator was only like two feet by three feet if even. It was an old building, it went up to the fifth floor. And he started putting his hands on my breasts and all this stuff. And I was like, I really can't do anything about this because we're in a really small place. He was taller than I was, and I think he was really drunk. So I just was like, he started jacking off, and I was like, 'I have to get off.'" Fortunately we reached the floor, and when I got off I shoved him as hard as I could and hit him with my elbows, and I just left. And that was pretty heinous. And a couple times when I was in a crowd, people would start feeling me up. Because the crowds are so tight. And I was followed and yelled at and talked to. It was pretty bad. (Danielle, p. 18)

Men followed me, jeering at me, yelling compliments interspersed with insults, people stepped in my way, attempting to get my attention. 'Hey baby! Got some nice American tits!' 'Comment-ca-va?' 'Tu veux te coucher avec moi?' 'Je te monterai le vrai Maroc!' 'Come to my house and have some cous-cous with me!' 'La gazelle!' 'Hey you are so strong! Are you so strong in bed?' 'Do you like to fuck?' 'Hey, fuck you Americans - you think you are so great' (clicking sounds) I was terrified. I gripped my companions' arms and kept walking. (paper on harassment and study abroad, p. 1)

I think this is really weird, but I started wearing a Walkman all the time. Because I would go home from class to my family. I slipped it on on the bus all the time. [laugh] I loved riding the bus because it gave me so much down time. So I started wearing a Walkman incessantly. And I was like, 'Forget it. I hate this.' It helped me ignore them. I sort of understand people who walk around campus here wearing Walkmans now a little better. But this wasn't my culture. I can't deal with this. (p. 18)

Although it is important for students to encounter crisis in the experiential, cross-cultural learning process for the sake of making meaning and perspective transformation,

physical and psychological violation such as this can result in psychological damage and scarring. Danielle reacted to the harassment by wearing a Walkman in public to help her ignore her aggressors, but her feelings of violation were harder to ignore. No student should be subjected to such an assault, and this is not an intention of experiential, cross-cultural learning. This might be categorized as an unstructured, unintended, and unacceptable experience. However, as Danielle herself mentioned, she managed to turn the harassment and assault into a positive personal growth experience by working through her feelings of violation after returning home.

Each of the men in this study described incidences where their female peers experienced harassment, and they functioned as male "protectors" or "harassment discouragers" by accompanying women in areas where they experienced harassment. In addition to Danielle, Susan, Lisa, Jodie and Megan all expressed frustration and feelings of intimidation and sometimes danger. Megan described the constant threat of harassment and ways in which she tried to avoid it.

I completely understand when you need cultural understanding, and when you live in another culture you have to understand. You have to adhere to what their culture is. But at the same time, you are from another culture and in a way they have to respect you too. I think there's a mutual respect that needs to happen....The fact that you're in Ecuador, I guess it's more your responsibility to. The women there [in Ecuador] suffer from machismo in different ways, but it wasn't street crap. You can't even imagine what it was like....I would like try to explain it to people and I get so emotional about it. You can't even understand. It was like, I would walk down the street, and I would zig zag....Because it's so warm out, all the men are standing out in front of their stores. Everyone's standing outside. You can kind of picture this stereotypical, sleazing around outside the front of their stores. I'd be walking down the street, and there'd be three men standing together, and there's no way I was gonna walk by them. So I'd cross the street. I'd walk a few feet, there'd be more men, I'd cross back. Zig zagging down the street....My director wore a wedding band and she was single. And she was white, also, even though she kind of seemed Ecuadorian because she'd been living there for so long. Walking with a man, it made all the difference, all the difference. I remember walking with my friend Jake, but still you'd walk by and people would go, 'Oooooo,' you know, like staring at you, 'Like, oooooo baby. Baby I love you. Hello baby how are you?' The only words they knew in English. (Megan, p. 15-17)

Like Danielle, Megan felt torn between adhering to the cultural values and beliefs of the host culture and remaining strong in her own ideals. She came to recognize, as did

Danielle, that what she was experiencing was not characteristic of Ecuadorian gender relations and culture, but rather an factor of cross-cultural gender relations between Ecuadorian men and American women. Megan reacted to the harassment, as did Danielle, by avoiding potentially problematic situations altogether.

In addition to these women who experienced sexual harassment, Nicole and Angela both sensed that certain situations were dangerous for women and should be avoided. Emily, while very frustrated at the loss of her personal freedom, enjoyed the male attention she received within the host culture. She did not describe this attention as harassment but rather said it made her feel like a princess. It is difficult to determine whether this was because she had a different attitude towards the behavior, or whether she experienced a different form of attention than the other students did.

Besides the problem of harassment, Danielle found that her values of feminism were contradicted by the attitudes of some Moroccan men towards American women. This was demonstrated in her description of her relationship with her host brother, where she felt she had to compromise her feminist ideals for the sake of cultural immersion. She also described resentment towards him wanting to do things "to" her, and feeling like an inactive participant in sexual relations. When Danielle returned to school after the program, she experienced severe reverse culture shock. She felt angry, insecure, and depressed. This was largely a result of the violation she endured in Morocco from sexual harassment and assault on the street, and sexism within her relationship with her homestay brother. As a part of her readjustment and healing process, Danielle changed her major from religion to anthropology, and wrote a paper on her own and other women's experiences of harassment abroad.

I came back from being abroad, and I was really screwed up last semester. I had a really hard time....So one thing that really helped me was, I started talking to some other friends who also went abroad. And we started to realize that we had a lot of very similar experiences dealing with harassment...This is the actual paper I wrote last semester, from which my thesis came. I wrote this paper about the harassment for a class, for a woman who's actually now my thesis advisor. Sort of trying to understand what was going on. And it was really amazing to talk to these women because they've been all over the world. They had similar feelings of isolation, depression when they came back. Depression, feeling violated. I'm a rape crisis counselor for the hotline, so I know a lot

about sexual violence. The symptoms were more or less those that you would attribute to somebody who was a survivor of sexual violence of some kind. So this paper I wrote, basically I just wrote about harassment experiences and analyzing them and discussing how it was at once being white and rich that made you the oppressor, but you were also kind of the oppressed, because they could still fuck you back. They were still able to get a handle over us because we're women. So that was about as far as I got on that paper. And then I proposed in the conclusion the idea of an anthropology of encounters, which is basically, how I've developed it and as it stands now, is the idea that the old anthropological model of understanding cultures, which is basically that you go and immerse yourself in a really foreign culture, and the idea of difference is different too. Like you go and preferably they're very far away geographically, they don't speak the same language, they have different colored skin. They're more primitive or whatever. Then you go immerse yourself in that culture, write some obscure book on some obscure topic, and come back. I think that there's a lot of relevance. I'm sort of being facetious. That model works, but there's also a new space. That's what I'm arguing in my thesis. There's a new space developing which is basically one [an anthropology] of encounters, cross-cultural encounters that are very significant for the majority of people. I don't think cross-cultural encounters have ever been the way anthropology would like to imagine them. I think that just now, it's becoming more and more obvious that difference is changing, and not, what is the other. The values are changing. So there are more and more spaces where people are having cross-cultural encounters that aren't being dubbed. But they are very significant in terms of shaping what we think of other cultures. For example, traveling, tourism. So my thesis deals with the idea that there is a place, and I'm arguing that it actually is a place. It's a mistake to assume that it's like a line, a margin. Because it's actually a place. It has its own little subculture. It has its own rules and regulations. And when you enter that place, you can't say I'm an American and this is a Moroccan...And if you simplify the harassment to say 'Oh, this is about tourist meets unemployed man.' Or 'Rich American woman meets viral, Arab man,' to use stereotypes. That doesn't cut it because there really is a dearth of vocabulary. It's like this no man's land of experience and vocabulary. I don't know how to say it. It was really significant that these women that I interviewed didn't understand what was happening. Or they understood it, but they couldn't say, 'This is sexual harassment here.' This would be sexual harassment in the United States. So what the hell is it here? So there's the idea that you don't have the vocabulary. You don't have a ready, available, cultural type of thing. And you shouldn't. In one way, I think it's very democratic because you're both there, stripped of your own vocabularies. So you can't say 'This is sexual harassment.' Just because it doesn't exist. (Danielle, p. 1-3)

The crisis Danielle faced within the "space" of these cross-cultural interactions led her to develop a third cultural perspective. As mentioned earlier, she was able to take a number of devastating encounters and turn them into a valuable learning experience through critical reflection as a form of healing. She felt powerless in many situations in Morocco involving her sexuality, and she regained some power over those situations through critical reflection. In attempting to make sense of these encounters, she connected her personal experiences to a

conceptualization of the larger field of anthropology, and this resulted in perspective transformation. The sexual harassment and assault Danielle endured highlights the female student's experience and conflicts students face between feminism, culture, and racism. Another way in which Danielle asserted power over these situations was to engage in feminist encounters, which were an important part of her Independent Study Project. She described one Moroccan woman she met while conducting her research.

I went back to the place where I was staying and I got there, and there was a next door neighbor of my friend, and her sister were there. And they were making this huge cous-cous dish for dinner, because it was Friday. So we all sat down and ate and it was really fun. And I started talking to the sister because the other two were talking. Turned out she was the first feminist that I met, the first independently feminist who hadn't been educated a lot and who thought deeply and intensely about these issues....She was just totally a smart woman. She made a point of smoking hashish all the time, and slept with as many men as she could. She just had so many great ideas. She was really in agony about the choices that she had to make. Between her identity as a woman and as an Arab, and if she wanted to leave. Her family was really important to her, but she knew that she couldn't be the woman that she wanted to be and the person she wanted to be in Morocco....Feminism to me means seeking out ways that you can define yourself in your own terms, whether that's economic or whatever. And she was definitely doing that. I think she was the first woman I met who really questioned things that actually by then I had become sort of blind to. One of her friends was a gay man, and she took me to his apartment. And she showed me all these things I never thought existed in Morocco. (Danielle, p. 14-15)

In her written ISP, Danielle described her exploration of feminism over the course of the month.

I am a feminist who believes strongly in social change. The further I have gotten, mentally and physically, from the protective and challenging walls of feminist academia, the more I have felt obliged to consider feminism and feminist world view and action as a reconciliation between academic dreams (such as gender-neutral language) and everyday realities (such as literacy.) When I left Williams, I was a strongly Academic Feminist, with an interest in woman-centered experience, a champion of the value (even absoluteness) of subjectivity, a belief that given a few determined women, everything was possible. Now, after 3 1/2 [sic] months in Morocco, I am more of an Adjusted Feminist, whose major concerns are dealing with the annoyance of harassment and understanding a culture as patriarchal as Morocco's. (ISP, p. 1)

Danielle describes how the crisis of cross-cultural gender relations in Morocco caused her to confront and alter her conceptualization of feminism. Although this discussion does not mean to imply that this form of crisis from violation is at all desirable in learning process, it is

noteworthy how the crisis led to perspective transformation. Other women also found it difficult to be an American woman in their host cultures. For instance, Lisa was unable to reconcile her feminist ideals with the Muslim religion. Also, as was discussed earlier, Emily was frustrated by the restrictions placed on her personal freedom by her homestay grandparents and other Bolivians. The homestay was not the only place Emily found her freedom restricted. This was a problem throughout her stay in Bolivia. Emily was constantly finding her freedom restricted because of her gender. In the middle of the program she wrote this essay in her observation journal, entitled, "Machismo". [Note: Once again, this paper is written in the Description, Interpretation, Evaluation format.]

Description: Yesterday I wanted to go to a movie by myself, so I went to Plaza Central to check out the billboards of what was playing and at what time they were playing. While I was reading the billboards, a male acquaintance of mine, Carlos, from UMSS approached me to say hello, and ask me what I was doing. I explained that I wanted some time by myself and was going to the movies in an hour and a half. He asked me to have a coke with him while I waited, and I resisted, but he insisted, so we walked to a cafe. On the way he ordered me to walk slower. When we got there, he ordered a bottle of soda without asking me what kind I wanted. After a glass, I wanted to excuse myself and leave, but as I did, he filled my glass again, disregarding what I was saying and told me to finish my drink. So I finished my drink and tried to give him 2 B's (my share) which he quickly declined accepting on the excuse that he was a man. He then invited himself to 'accompany' me to the movies, because he said, a girl shouldn't go to the movies by herself. I then told him that I had forgotten that I have to go to mass, which was a lie, and hailed a taxi and went home.

Interpretation: So I'm not allowed to pay my share of a refreshment shared with a male acquaintance, he has the right to tell me how to pace my walking, he can override any decision I try to make, and he can invite himself to spend time with me on the excuse that women shouldn't spend time on their own. What exactly are my rights? My rights are to a free glass of coke with a guy who I don't want to spend time with ordering me around and inviting himself to the movies with me.

Evaluation: Rage. Fury. I am most definitely not a Bolivian woman. No one has the right to tell me how fast I can walk, and if I want to spend time in their company, I'll say yes when they invite me to a drink, and I'll invite them to go to the movies with me. This machismo bullshit that gives him the right to treat me like a 5-yr. old [sic] is complete bullshit and the source of most of my frustration in this culture. It drives me NUTS!!

She reflected on the affect of these standards on her understanding of gender relations in her home country:

My relationship with my host family was interesting. It definitely made me sure that if I ever live in a South American country I want to have the means to support myself and give myself my own freedom. Several of the relationships I had with guys in South America were very indicative of the male / female relationship in the country. Which makes me very thankful that I'm an American. I think that there are traces of that in every culture, of the male domination of women and I mean, in this country women like to be, 'Oh we are so free. We are so liberated.' And yeah, to some extent we are. And I feel as though I am liberated as an American woman. But comparatively, if this is the most liberated country, it's not really that liberated. I mean, if we were really equal, then men wouldn't hold the door open. Then, you know, there's so much. I mean, it made me grateful that I live in a culture where it's not as blatant. But it did open my eyes to how much sexism there is in this country. Because a lot of what I saw there is just toned down here. It's the same thing. It's just not as blatant. (Emily, p. 28-29)

I said to Diana 'If I was a guy, would they have these restrictions on me?' She said 'Not a chance.' And it's true because Ryan, my good friend, I said 'Ryan, what time do you have to be in at night?' He's like 'Oh there's no restriction on it. I come in when I want to. I wake up when I want to, I do what I want to.' I said 'Yeah, but say you didn't come home one night?' He's like 'Emily, I'm a male in this culture.' I couldn't do that. And in the United States, if I called my parents and I was like, 'Oh, I'm staying over at whoever's house tonight.' If I was like 'Oh I'm staying over at this guy's house just by myself,' it would be like, 'Oh, you are?' But I mean, if I was like 'Me and this girlfriend and this guy and this other girl and this guy, we're all going to stay over at this guy's house,' they'd be like 'Oh, have fun. Come home tomorrow morning. Don't do anything dumb.' I just couldn't stand it here. I haven't had a curfew since I was seventeen. (p. 30)

By encountering blatant sexism in Bolivian society, Emily was able to reflect on how the same problem exists in her own society in a different form. Problems such as these can shape and limit women's cross-cultural experiences. They may discourage cultural immersion, and promote critical reflection at a very high cost, such as in the case of Danielle. These women have no outlet to counteract this type of aggression with which they are confronted. In order to make this type of educational experience a friendly one for women, these issues must be further investigated and arrangements should be made in programs to assist women in dealing with these problems.

One of the male participants also had some interesting observations of Nepalese gender relations. Chris made many comments in his journal and in the interview concerning his attraction to the beauty of Nepalese women and Asian women in general. This seems

characteristic of U.S. attitudes towards women of color, and Chris brought this cultural baggage to his experience. He was disturbed by the gender relations in Nepalese culture.

I must have fallen in love with every Nepalese woman I've ever met. I'm kind of partial to Asian-Indian women to begin with and then I was in a country full of them and there was like every shade in between....Nepalese women, they're just the sweetest. And the husbands treated them like crap. I don't know if it's just part of the culture and a lot of them are arranged marriages or something. But these poor, wonderful women, beautiful and they'd have this like loser husband who would treat them like crap. I was like 'Listen guy, wake up buddy.' ...My homestay mother was miserable. Being a woman in Nepal is just not fun. There is a growing women's movement and we spent like a whole week in the thing on it. There's these Nepalese women that are into women's rights and women's medicine and stuff like that, which was great. And a lot of the girls did their ISP on it. But they have a long way to go yet. It's just really too bad....It got weird sometimes. She [my homestay mother] would come to all upset and crying. 'It's miserable!' And she'd get whinny and stuff. I didn't know what to do. I mean, it wasn't my place to say anything. While her husband was a really nice guy, he just treats her traditionally how Nepali men treat women. It's just not nice. I felt bad. It was a tough situation. And the women put up with these guys who're just idiots....It seems to me like it's just sort of a mind set of a poor culture. You see the same thing in poorer cultures in America. When times are tough and when things aren't going well, the men that are traditionally superior, physically superior to women, tend to beat them or take advantage of them or control them or whatever just based on size. And they intimidate them and whatever because they can. I don't know, but you find it's like this a lot in the Third World. It's something I don't understand. (Chris, p. 29-30)

Race Relations

Issues of race in cross-cultural interactions formed another area of crisis and psychologically intense experience for students. In the neighborhood of her homestay in Nairobi, Kenya, Lisa was often overwhelmed by the attention she would get as a "mzungu" or white person. She was used to having a lot of personal space and time alone in the United States, and this was a shock to her system.

I was sort of the novelty item of the neighborhood. She [my homestay mother] would have this white girl that would come live at her house and I would get home, oh, one day I was just in the worst mood and this was horrible, and I got off the matatu to come home and all the kids are running around and they're saying, 'Mzungu,' which is white person and they're saying, 'Shayla's mzungu.' Shayla was the daughter's name. So it was, 'Shayla's mzungu, Shayla's mzungu.' [laugh] I was just in the worst mood, it was like I had been there two weeks and I was near tears and then I went in the house and ten kids came in. I was just trying to drink my tea and cookies. I was just sitting there and they were all standing around just gawking. [laugh] I was ready to cry. You can never escape it. It sounds like it would be fun for now, for a day or so, but then there's just no escaping. (Lisa, p. 10)

Lisa experienced culture shock largely as a result of all the attention she received as a Caucasian woman. This caused her to reflect on race, racism, and labels. She also reflected on her place as an American in Kenya.

It was constantly being looked and shouted at. Like the things that day with the kids all staring at me. And that was, that was the big thing. Always being looked at. Just always being an issue. Something that always bothered me was always trying to be hustled something on the street. You're a block away from where you live and every day it's like, 'Here buy this carved animal.' It's just so tiring and you're like, 'No, no, no,' and of course you say 'no' and the guy gets pissed at you and thinks you're rude and that got really tiring. I just wanted to feel like I belonged there. (p. 36)

I think I went through culture shock late. Like everyone kept saying it would happen like three days after you were there, and I think it was two or three weeks after I was there. 'Cuz I just loved it at first. I was absolutely in love with it, then I got sick of the kids staring at me. What I was reading about [in my journal] was getting on a matatu. Like it was one of the matatu stops where there are ten matatus and they're all trying to get you to get on theirs, even though you have no desire to go there. [laugh] And this one, they were like, 'Mzungu, mzungu!' [laugh] and they started fighting over which matatu was going to get the mzungu on it. And they were both going to the same place. They were both going to my homestay which is where I had to go. So I just got on one. And that was sort of permissible. I was like, 'Okay, I understand that.' But then the guy trying to get everyone on his matatu started advertising. I couldn't understand it, but he was saying that he had a mzungu on his matatu, and then there was like a matatu pulling aside. It all just happened at the wrong time. There was another matatu pulling, like we were sitting and it was sort of pulling out and the window was down and a guy reached out of the window and was like, 'Oh mzungu!' and blowing kisses at me. He really had nothing to do with the guy advertising that I was on his matatu but it was just so much, 'Mzungu, mzungu!' So what I was writing in my journal was like, 'Wow. Sometimes I can realize how black people feel in America, but it's really not the same. I guess I can be glad that I'm only here for four months whereas a black in America would have to deal with it their whole life.' But maybe it's better this way because what some Kenyan's would say and what our directors would point out, is that it's not always derogatory. It's just, they call each other the different tribal names. It's just how they recognize each other. They do it a lot by their looks....So in my journal I was talking about, 'Well maybe this is better than American culture. At least it's like recognizes that you're a mzungu and you're a Kenyan. I guess that's better than being privately, or silently discriminated against, in like getting jobs or not.'...I think that changed just with the situation and who was doing it. I was just trying to look at the positive side of it too. I was trying to relate it, I remember sitting there trying to relate it to American culture, thinking how it's so much better in America but then I was like 'But it's really not. It's so hidden and silent.'...It made me realize how when older people or southern people say that they don't mean anything discriminatory when they say the word 'nigger', when they call a black person 'nigger.' It's just what they call them and it's just what they've grown up calling them. It made me totally understand that. Like not that I agree with it, and I don't know if I agree with it or not, I still don't know. I guess I don't. I know I don't agree with it, but it just made me understand it, how you could just grow

up and it's just like a name. It's just what you call them. And like I said I wouldn't agree with it but it made me understand it....I guess it's sort of biased with me growing up in the north and you know, you're always told 'Never say 'nigger' and never be prejudiced against someone who's black.' It's hard for me to imagine someone being so obvious. I guess what we were saying about mzungu, being so obvious about someone being black and making it such an issue that they wouldn't be prejudice against them. I understand it. I guess I'm not absolutely sure if I agree with it or not. I'm not so sure if I agree with that, if it's a mean thing or not. I'm not sure if they're being racist in a mean way, like prejudice. I'm not sure whether or not, if someone says 'nigger' and be totally accepting of this black person as an equal human being. If they can do that while saying 'nigger' or if there's still inherently something discriminatory about them saying it. (p. 17-19)

When Lisa was confronted constantly by her color and the rarity of a "mzungu" living in a traditionally black suburb, it caused her to think about race and the social structure of her own society. She tried to distinguish between instances of racism versus those of simply racial identification. However, in the interview she did not discuss any reflections on racial segregation in Kenyan or American society, or how racism requires the identification of an individual's race. The experience of being highly visible in Kenyan society forced Lisa to confront her own racial identity, but it is unclear whether she had an understanding of the larger political and social picture from which to assess why her color was the center of attention within her neighborhood.

Brian also reflected critically on his relations with Tibetans and the impact of his Chinese heritage on those interactions. His SIT group had a study tour to Tibet. It is somewhat difficult for westerners to gain access to Tibet. Although the group eventually obtained travel visas, they had to be guided by a Chinese government escort. Brian was perceived by Tibetans as a Chinese person, so his interactions with Tibetan people were complex.

Jean is a Belgian fellow and very Caucasian as well as everybody else in the group, and then there is myself who's Chinese and the bus driver who's Chinese and the Chinese official and a tour guide. So the four of us were Chinese and so we all spoke Mandarin and so I could communicate with them very well. And then I could speak English whereas even the tour guide could not speak English. I ended up being the liaison between the Chinese government people and the group. This tour guide barely could speak English. Absolutely ridiculous. So every time we saw these Tibetan people, they would come up to me and they would ask me what I was doing with these Americans. I was never included as part of the Americans, I was always part of the Chinese contingent

in this group, and so never was I able to convince somebody that I was an American and part of this group. I was always part of the Chinese government officials that were coming around with these Americans....So that was one side of it. And if I were with two of my American friends and we were just walking in the streets, when they came to us they would see me as Chinese, they would instantly start talking to me in Chinese. But then as soon as I started speaking Chinese, then I was instantly, definitely Chinese and then all these walls came up because then we couldn't talk about the dialogue, we couldn't talk about anything because I am part of the Chinese government and I would tell people and they would be arrested and what have you. And so I quickly learned to pretend not to speak Mandarin and to speak only in the little bit of Tibetan that I knew and to speak in English, not that they can speak English, but to speak English with my friends just so that they saw me more as American. So when you speak Mandarin all these walls go up in terms of learning about the Buddhist culture and going into these monasteries. There were instances where the group, where Jean was speaking Tibetan, he's fluent in Tibetan, he's speaking to these Tibetans and trying to get us to see certain parts of the monasteries that we would never be allowed to be a part of. And a lot of times I became an issue because even though Jean could explain that I was an American, they would allow Jean and some of the other students to go in but they were very hesitant to let me go as well because they thought I might be a Chinese spy or I might be part of the government, they might be reported for having shown this part of the Tibetan culture to westerners. Because they're very aware of what the Chinese want and don't want. And they're ready to do anything against the Chinese government. But seeing me as Chinese, it put a lot of interesting dynamics between the group and between myself and the Tibetans and myself and other Chinese people....There were times when I would politely bow out when I knew that it was a difficult situation. But it wasn't ever a blatant situation where 'You guys can come but he can't,' just because the Tibetans by their nature and being very cautious about what they're getting themselves into. They would not blatantly say 'Well he's Chinese so he can't come in,' because if I were a Chinese official then I would know that they're, so I would suddenly have something to do and I would go off with some other people and do things. At times it was incredibly frustrating and at other times I just knew that I had to do things according to the way things work there. Speaking Mandarin allowed me to really break down a lot of walls, in the other sense, because my communication could really be efficient with some of these people. There were countless people, both monks and lay people, who after I spoke to them long enough, they'd realize that I was truly not Chinese and not interested in suppressing them or what have you. And then lots of doors open up just because communication was very good. We wouldn't have to go through a translator, we wouldn't have to wait for Jean to come around and speak to these people....I was probably more fluent in Mandarin than most of the Tibetans because the Tibetans can speak Mandarin because they've been dealing with the Chinese for so long. But in Eastern Tibet they prefer to speak Tibetan because that was their native tongue. It was a really interesting dynamic that opened up. Doors were closed in some areas and walls were put up, but in other areas it really helped me out. It kept me on guard all the time. It was hard being part of this group because we always had all these jokes about the Chinese. It's just like we would see these Chinese military guys coming in with their guns and whatever and feeling like they own the place and then the Tibetans by their nature are huge. Like these big guys with big knives looking down at these little Chinese people and so it was like, along with my fellow Americans, we could joke about it, we could really have a lot of hatred and a lot

anger for the Chinese. But on the other side I always knew that these people are Chinese and I have this tie with the Chinese because by blood I am a Chinese. It was interesting. (Brian, p. 16-17)

For Brian, dialogue was critical in establishing his identity with Tibetans; he looked and spoke like the oppressors of the Tibetan people, and yet he genuinely wanted to learn about their culture. He wanted to speak Mandarin in order to achieve a deeper level of communication since most Tibetans did not speak English and Tibetan was difficult for westerners to learn. Mandarin did afford Brian some opportunities for dialogue on a deep level. Ironically, his fluency in Mandarin also closed many doors for him. Thus, the intensity of these experiences was felt on a number of levels. On the one hand, Brian was physically different from the Tibetans and felt highly visible among them. On the other hand, he felt that his identity as a supporter of Tibetan liberation from the Chinese government was invisible to the Tibetans. It was critical in these situations for Brian to identify himself as a supporter of the Tibetan people. However, this was not always possible, and the cultural marginality that Brian experienced as a result was extremely frustrating. Conflicts such as these caused Brian to experience an identity crisis as a Chinese-American. This personal crisis led him to travel extensively through Nepal, Tibet, and China after the program ended, in order to search for his roots, identity, and family heritage. After the end of the program, Brian spent another month working in western Nepal with Tsampa, the doctor he studied with during his ISP. Then he spent two months traveling in Tibet and China. Brian became fully immersed in the Chinese culture, and he lost all contact with his home culture in the U.S. This deep immersion caused Brian to reflect on his own cultural values, beliefs, and practices, and leading to a transformation of meaning perspectives on a number of different levels. Brian described how the program led him to his decision to travel, and how through his travels he was able to resolve conflicts about his identity as a Chinese-American and discover his cultural heritage. Although this is a long story to quote within this chapter, I think it is important because it illustrates the potential power of experiential, cross-cultural learning.

So the most important moments, in terms of cross cultural experiences, in terms of changes that I've had, was my first couple of weeks in Dharamsala and

northern India and then the transition between the program and my own study, or my own travels, because that was when I totally lost all connections with western this, western that. I was very much into doing whatever I wanted to do in an eastern type of perspective. (Brian, p. 6)

I had no idea what I really wanted to do at the end of the program in May, during the third week in May, and I had always thought that I would just go climbing with two of the other guys and stay in Nepal for a little while and then come back to the States and then work just because I always work during the summer for the next year. And then I was sitting around one day and I realized that I had so much anger for the Chinese and then I realized that I was Chinese. I just felt somehow that I had to find some way to coincide these two. And that I could always say that, 'Fine, this is the Chinese government and that's not the same as who I am.' I mean, I personally have absolutely no ties with the Chinese government. Even my family line was repressed by the Chinese government.

And so I needed to coincide this somehow. Granted in Irvington, I was the only Chinese person in the school. My graduating class was under a hundred people and so there was no racial diversity at all. There was maybe one or two African students, African-American students. Just everyone was very, very Caucasian and upper-middle class and very well to do and very homogenous. And so I was always accepted as such. Being Chinese was never an issue just because I was friends with all these people. Being in this type of environment I didn't have any racial problems and so I never considered myself Chinese. I never had any real interest to go to China. I understood Chinese because my parents spoke it at home and so I grew up speaking Chinese. I had no problem with that. But I had no interest to go to China whatsoever. When I first got to India I had no interest to go to China at all. And then somewhere along the line that changed and I decided that that was the thing that I had to do. And so I faxed home and I got whatever little information my parents knew about where they're from, or not what little information they knew, but what little information they knew of what was still there. Who was still alive, where their old house was, the names of the villages, the name of the villages in the local dialects because all things were renamed. Who I could hope to find, and my grandmother had been in contact with some of the people in larger cities but these weren't the same people who lived in the villages. And so I got whatever information I could from them and then I headed out to China. On the one hand to see the Chinese people in general and also to see if there's any part of my heritage or my roots that I could find.

[My parents] actually were very, very supportive. They never push anything on me and they have very little interest in going back themselves because so much has changed. After they saw my pictures of what their home town looked like, they were more content with their memories of their childhood and of what they knew China to be....And for my mom, there is one thing that she had to do or she had to make sure was done before she died. Her father never left China. He hung around to try to hold things together and he ended up dying before he had a chance to get out. Just like in terms of closing out all the family accounts and all the political stuff about things and he was the man in charge so he sent the family ahead and took care of everything. And so it was very meaningful for my mom because she wanted me to go to his grave and to pay respect for him because she had never done so herself. And none of her kids had gone. And me being one of her male sons going to do this for her was in her eyes sufficient.

And so that was very meaningful for my mom. On the one hand it was incredibly difficult, it was like a treasure hunt almost. But I only had to find one person in the village and then all the doors opened up. I would go trekking in and I'd go knock on this door and this person had moved 15 years ago or that person had died. In my mom's village it took me a week and a half before I finally found someone tangible. And it ended up being someone who's very unrelated to my family but who knew of my family and he knew of my mom's family lines. And as soon as I found this person, boom, all the doors opened up because he knew everybody in the town. So then he brought me to who my mom calls her aunt, she's not a blood aunt but she was an older woman who essentially was like a nanny or was like an older sister or was like a mom to her. And then so I found her and then I found whatever relatives, blood relatives of mine that were there and I found all these people who knew my family, or knew my mom and her mom. And so once I found all these people, then all these doors opened up and I really got the chance to get into the Chinese culture, to live in the family, to not get the tourist part of going to China, to actually be in these families, living with them, eating their foods. And really getting a glimpse of how they live, which I'm sure is no different from how my parents lived from when they were there. So finding these people and really finding a lot of beauty in their people and how they lived and their morals, I really felt that a lot of these people were really, really incredible.

My grandmother on my dad's side had been in contact with some people in her hometown. And so when I went back there it was much more easy for me to find people because I knew of an address of somebody who my dad was supposed to write to but he never did so he had no idea who I was. As soon as he saw me he recognized me because when I went into his house, this is like a little village on the other side of the world, very little resemblance to anything that I've ever been familiar with, and I walked into his house and there's this big shelf, it's like a shelf that their incense and stuff on top and little thing of Buddha and a lot of family relics type of thing. And then inside the shelf there was a picture of MY family, a picture of ME when I was three years old in front of my house in Irvington. And here I am halfway across the world, I walk into his house, I was like [laugh] my jaw like dislocated, hit the ground and it was really touching to see that. My dad's the oldest son on his line so he would have been in line with everything. And so he's supposed to be an important person. And so it was incredible to see that my family had still been incorporated into the Chinese heritage. Here was myself and my family here, a picture of us, and then there were statues of my grandfather and my great-grandfather and different people and portraits and stuff throughout this whole area. This guy was one of the only people who managed to keep a lot of the family artifacts type of thing. He was my dad's kind of half-brother. I don't think there was actually blood relation, but he was a guy who was incorporated into my dad's family. He's a little bit younger than my dad. He and my dad grew up together. All throughout my childhood my dad used to tell me about how he would have little cricket fights with his friends and stuff and he would tell me all these stories about how he would win. And now talking to this other guy, he's the guy who used to have these little contests with my dad and he would always win. [laugh] This was a guy who had grown up with my dad. And it was such an incredible experience to place some validity into this culture and seeing that it's so different from what I grew up with which is such an integral part of my parents' life.

And so what it did for me, as I look back now, is it's given me a lot of insight into understanding my parents and understanding why they are the way they are. Leaving, I was 19, 20 or so, I was still in the stage where I really

didn't understand my parents at all. I didn't understand their Chinese nature, I didn't understand a lot of why they're so peculiar about some things. Just in terms of holding the family together, in terms of family pride, just like a lot of things that are important but I didn't see the emphasis that they put in it. And like always having family dinners together, just a lot of quirks that my parents have that I just thought was kind of odd. I could kind of accept as part of them, but didn't really have any understanding into it. And then going, it really gave me a chance to understand my parents and to realize what kind of hardships they've been through in terms of growing up extremely comfortable, and having everything stripped away from them and having to flee the country in the middle of the war. (p. 18-20)

My parents left and they're very comfortable now in the States and to see the people who stayed there who have gone through the transition to the new type of government who have been repressed, who have all their belongings taken away from them, integrated into the communist ideal and seeing the hardships that they were dealing with, it really gave me a perspective on where my parents are coming from. I guess that might have happened with me growing up and getting over my terrible teenage years anyway, but just in the way it happened with me, going to China and me having this realization and me growing up and maturing in this way, it gave me a much different perspective when I came back. Now I can honestly say that I'm pretty good friends with my parents and I can understand them and appreciate them for what they are instead of, and thinking about how much they've integrated into American culture is really, like before I would be like, 'Why can't they just be a little more American?' that kind of thing. But now I'm realizing how much they've come from the way they grew up and the circumstances of their youth. It has really, really interesting. It has opened up a lot of conversations. My Mandarin is much, much better now. And so now with my grandmother, we have tons of stuff to say to each other. Now that I've been there and have seen some of it, my parents, and both my grandmothers, they're much more open to me. They tell me about a lot more stories that are very emotionally difficult for them, things that they've hidden in the past, stories about this person or that person. And I took pictures of everybody and I had pictures of my family and for some of these people to see my mom or my grandmother and to see that they have this healthy family and I'm all here. It was a really incredible exchange. (p. 20-21)

You hear of a lot of the Asian families that are growing up here in the States and they're trying to preserve whatever, whatever, whatever. And they want their children to marry into Chinese families or Korean families or what have you. My parents were just never part of that. They were very encouraging into whatever we wanted to do. I know a lot of parents who would have just put their foot down and said, 'Pearl, no you cannot go to Nicaragua during the war. [laugh] I don't care about how much soul searching you want to do, just don't do it there.' [laugh] So they've always been extremely encouraging into whatever we wanted to do no matter what crazy idea it is or what crazy sports we wanted to go into. And so they never pushed anything upon us and so they never suggested that we go to China to learn more about Chinese culture. And because it was a very difficult, emotional type for them they don't really even talk about it that much. Like my dad would always tell me stories about his youth in growing up in China, blah, blah, blah and this happened, this happened and these stories, but they were always childhood stories. They're not political stories about the transition time. That whole area from the time my parents left

their home towns to how they met, how they got married, how they got to the States, that whole period of 10, 15 years was a complete unknown to me until very recently. I started having more of an interest in that as I became older and I just wanted to know, how did my parents meet, things like that. And then after coming back, then I drilled my parents about things. Some things they haven't been wanting to tell me and there are some things that they were hesitant to tell me. But talking to people there I actually learned a lot about my parents that they never told me about.

And it's like, 'Well so and so told me about when this happened,' and then my mom would be like, a big sigh and then started to talk about it. So a lot of that stuff they never talked about. It's not like they didn't want to share it with us, it was just a difficult time for them so it was difficult for them to bring it up and especially if we don't understand, they have difficulty really expressing it to us and having us understand how important it is for them. It just never really happened that much. But since I made the step and it was my initiative to go find these people. I told them that I'm going to their home towns and that I need all the information they can give me, blah, blah, blah. Then they were encouraging and they wished me all the luck and my mom was into it. And coming back they're very into it now and they're very glad that I went and they're very glad that they can see pictures and they know more about people and they know who's still there and what kind of conditions they live in, that kind of thing. And so they're very, very happy about that. And it's drawn myself so much closer to my parents and my grandparents.

And then now that I know about these people I can draw maps like exactly to this person's house and that kind of thing. My sister went back last year. She did a rotation in China for her last rotations lab in medical school, and so she was outside of some major city doing some thing and then she took an extra four weeks to travel. And so she went down to my dad's home town, my mom's home town. I just gave her pictures of everybody and, you know, this person lives here, this person lives here and she just went and saw these people. She had a lot more time to spend with these people. I met these people and then she got to know these people and so she took it one step further. I was traveling so quickly through different areas and there's so many places that I wanted to see that, you know, I gave myself two weeks in my dad's hometown but it took me over a week to find the first person. So when I finally found all these people, one of the rules of traveling China is that as soon as you get to a place you have to figure out how you will leave because you can never get a bus ticket and change it for the next day or the next day, or whatever. So you always figure out when you buy your ticket when you're going to leave. And so when I finally found these people I knew I was leaving in two or three days and so I didn't really get a chance to really sit down and really get into things.

For me it was almost like a huge celebration of finding these people and like showing pictures and talking about things....and being the center of attention. It was unbelievable, the amount of people that would come out to see me, they're like all these families, all these cousins and stuff. And so my sister, she knew that she could find these people so she went there. She kind of looks like me, I don't know. As soon as she got to these places, they knew who she was. I'd been there the year before. The way she was dressed and the way she acts is clearly American and she looks like me and so they knew who she was. She actually got to spend a lot more time, one on one type of thing, and talk and deal with all these relatives. (p. 21-22)

It is striking that in Brian's effort to immerse himself in a cross-cultural experience, he wound up discovering his own cultural heritage and immersed himself in it for the first time. Brian seemed to go full circle during his time abroad, from never having left North America and wanting to challenge his own cultural beliefs, to immersion in a new culture very different from his own, to a crisis in his personal identity, to, in a sense, "finding himself" halfway across the world from his home, to returning home and bringing stories of China and his parents' childhoods back to them. The fact that Brian "found himself" and reconciled his identity as a Chinese person while in China is exemplified when he walked into his uncle's home and was confronted by a picture of himself. In this case, it seems too simple to say that Brian developed a third cultural perspective because the dynamics of his experience were so complicated. He was at once an outsider to Tibetan culture and an insider to Chinese culture, and yet at the same time he was also just the opposite in his political views. He gained an outsider's perspective on both his heritage as an American and as Chinese from the Tibetans, and he gained an insider's view of Chinese culture that he hadn't known before. This whole process culminated in a dramatic perspective transformation that spanned many levels. He was also able to confront a political regime which caused the expulsion of his parents and the Tibetan people, whom he had grown to care deeply about, from their homeland. Brian's entire understanding of himself, his family, and his roots were completely changed as he discovered his cultural heritage.

International Relations

Students were also confronted with cross-cultural situations that challenged their own cultural perspectives in dialogue with people of the host culture. Through living with her homestay family, Susan was able to reflect on and confront her preconceptions of her own and her nation's economic wealth. Susan wrote the following entry in her observation journal about a discussion she had with her homestay father concerning the economic inequities between themselves and their two countries.

How Rich Are We?

Last night my baba and I were sitting around after dinner and started talking about the fact that some of the students were having a problem with the fact that people had stopped them on the street and asked for gifts. Or for some students there [sic] homestay families were asking for gifts. I was explaining to my baba that this also bothered me even though it had never happened. I then tried to explain to him that wealth is all relative and even though I made more money last year than most Tanzanians and that for many families in the U.S., they to [sic] in their own way are struggling. For some reason he still couldn't understand what I was trying to say, so I tried to further explain it to him by giving him prices of things. Examples I gave were the fact that to visit my doctor for a basic check up was \$50 (half of my weekly paycheck) and that to pay for my school was \$20,000 a year with no financial aid so I had to take out student loans of roughly \$10,000 a year. Or that for me to buy food for myself for a week cost close to \$50. Once I started to give him hard figures he started to partially understand but not really believe that my family wasn't very wealthy.

I can understand why he feels the way he does towards Caucasians. For him the bottom line is the fact that I can go to school, can come to Africa and can own my own car ('82 VW Rabbit). Therefore I must be wealthy. And granted in that respect I am 'better off' than him and his family, but my parents income can't even compare to many of the students in this group. We are struggling to pay for me to be here. And I can't afford to give things away at the level he feels all Americans are able to. Part of me feels like it's all black and white to him - the blanket statement that if you're American, your [sic] wealthy. But - it also has to be taken into consideration that he works for a safari company. Therefore almost all the people he sees are fairly wealthy. They're taking a \$5,000 vacation once you figure everything in. To him, that's extreme wealth and it's the only time he comes into contact with Americans. Therefore, I don't blame him at all.

But how does this make me feel? Angry! I don't like to be looked at as a dollar sign. I don't want people to meet me and already have a preconceived notion of who I am and what I've got because in this case, it's not true. They are seeing me for something I am not, and actually don't want to be. The anger doesn't overrun me by any means, don't worry, but it does bother me once in awhile. I suppose in the long run it's good that I'm experiencing this because it's the first time in my life it's happened and I should be able to deal if it happens again - no matter what the preconceived notions are, good or bad - plus, it will make me conscious to never do it to anyone else. Completely abandon stereotypes! Wouldn't that be nice! (Susan, Observation Journal)

This confrontation with her homestay father gave Susan the opportunity to reflect on the meaning of American wealth in relation to people in Tanzania and other non-industrialized countries. The experience of the homestay forced Susan to face the reality of her wealth as a U.S. citizen. She was already conscious of the economic disparities within her own country.

Brian also reflected on the economic wealth he had at home:

And before I left I was very naive, much more so than most Americans just because I was so sheltered. For all I knew, there was New York and then there was La Guardia Airport on the other side of San Francisco. [laugh] I was very

naive how the other 99 percent of the world lives. One of the things I didn't mention was that you can see all the pictures you want about poverty and about wars and people suffering. But when I actually took a local bus outside of Delhi and we went to some of the poor areas and when the bus broke down we were walking through a lot of these areas and I was only with a few other people, a few other students, really seeing the poverty and really seeing the diseases and really seeing the amount of leprosy, the amount of disabilities that were in these unbelievably impoverished areas. It's one thing to see pictures of these areas, but to actually be in the spot and how these people breathe on you and touch them, and not only be in a place like in a picture on TV where you see these people, but have them see you also. I don't know if you have experienced anything like that. It's just so much more different, it just makes everything alive. I guess it forced me to grow up and realize that what I've been dealing with is not normal. The way I lived when I grew up and the luxuries I had and the conveniences I've had and basically how lucky I've been is totally completely unusual in every sense. And certainly my parents are by no means extremely wealthy. I mean, they're extremely comfortable and they do fine in the States and such. But the type of childhood that I lived is such a fantasy compared to how things really are. (Brian, p. 27)

Many middle and upper class westerners are desensitized to the media representation of poverty. However, when they come face to face with people in poverty stricken areas, and, as Brian says, "have them see you also," a human interaction has taken place and is much more difficult to ignore than a television which can be switched off. This is an example of the intensity of experiential, cross-cultural learning. When human interactions occur, people become emotionally involved in the learning process, and therefore they are more easily transformed and spurred into action than they would be otherwise. In the case of Susan, by engaging in dialogue with her homestay father, she was forced to confront her economic privilege in comparison with those who had a much lower standard of living.

Throughout her stay in Cameroon, Jodie consistently reflected critically on her role as an American in Cameroon. This is evident in a number of her writings from her time abroad. There are three examples of her journal writings that demonstrate her reflection on complex political and cultural issues. The first journal entry was written towards the beginning of the program.

Before I actually begin my first observation journal entry, I've decided to throw out a few thoughts, questions, and ponderings that I have about this whole process. Basically I think it's a great idea - writing is invaluable as a way to record and remember what the heck happened during an experience like this. Putting things into words also forces one to process and reflect on things -

thereby transforming me from Jodie, the Human Sponge, into Jodie the SIT student (one hopes).

But before I commence observing and recording, I want to remind myself of several things. As I said this morning in class (and I don't want to be a vocabulary police or nit-picker) the word observation gives me some trouble. To me it implies too much distance, objectivity, and an assumed power difference between me and those I am observing. I am completely in the middle of everything that I should be 'observing' and usually I'm the object of close scrutiny and observation by my family and anyone else around. After all, I'm the weird one who looks ridiculous eating cous-cous and who makes silly French mistakes all the time.

But nevertheless, I do want to 'observe' everything around me and record it here, in hopes of gaining the most possible from this incredible semester, and making some sort of sense of what I've seen and done.

So what I tell myself is this: Jodie, remember that you are not a detached observer but rather a lost flabbergasted foreigner trying to figure out a new culture. What I write is automatically filtered through my lens even if it is only description, because I have chosen what to describe and I am telling it through my eyes with my cultural baggage. Moreover when I move on to interpretation (hopefully I won't even attempt evaluation for awhile) I just get more and more subjective and the chances of being totally mistaken increase exponentially.

However this doesn't mean I shouldn't try, on the contrary, life is full of mistakes and confusion. But I have to remember that I should constantly question everything I've already 'figured out' and not to take myself so seriously that I'm afraid of being wrong (or admitting it). (Observation Journal, 9 / 23 / 92)

The excerpt confirms Jodie's awareness of her own cultural baggage and perceptions, and how they have the ability to shape her interpretations of her experiences and observations. She acknowledges her own process of selective perception, and her consciousness of this makes her apt to surmount it. This awareness can in part be attributable to her past experience in Turkey. Throughout her stay in Cameroon, Jodie consistently challenged her cultural perceptions and perspective. During a discussion with her fellow SIT students during the program, Jodie developed her understanding of her place in Cameroon. She wrote about this in a journal entry afterwards.

Response to the Post - LCS

Impromptu 'What Am I Doing Here?' Rap Session

We addressed a hell of a lot of big questions, running the gamut (what a weird expression) from 'should white people from America, like some of us, even ever be in Africa, and if so, in what capacity?' to 'are all types of foreign aid messed up and neo-colonialist' to racism to 'how do I best go about saving the world?'

...I hear many distinct arguments and sides come out in talks like this and I can see the validity of them all, but also the contradictions!! Ahhhh. I guess I'm having trouble reconciling my pre-Cameroon intellectual political

emotions with what I'm experiencing right here, right now. I thought a lot about colonialism and racism, both within the U.S. and outside, before I left. I took a class spring quarter called 'Culture and Colonialism' and we read stuff like Franz Fanon 'Wretched of the Earth' and Albert Memmi 'Colonizer and Colonized.' I came away from that very aware of the complexity and outrageousness of colonialism and its lasting effects. This class was also during the Rodney King incidents, which gave me cause to once again examine the racism that permeates U.S. society and our everyday lives. But the more I think about the two, the more I realize that they cannot really be treated like one and the same and just thrown in the big pot labeled 'Racism and Colonialism and Bad Things Done By White People to Black People.' Nor are they completely dissimilar or any less horrifying and problematic.

...Anyways, what I've noticed upon coming here is that my relations with Cameroonians are not really the post-colonial European-American meets West African dramas I might have expected in my more paranoid moments. They're mostly a lot like the intercultural stuff I experienced in Turkey, with of course culturally specific differences. In some ways I encountered a lot more anti-American sentiment in Turkey than I have here. And here I may have even less of a chance of ever blending in, but I stuck out a lot there too!! There is so much that cannot be attributed to race-relations, etc. alone, but rather is just what happens when someone leaves the place they live and goes somewhere new. Americans have fucked (pardon the expression but.... ça explique bien la pensée) over a lot of different countries and peoples so that weird feeling of having invaded and destroyed things is not just a black - white, African - non-African thing.

Yet I refuse to get so freaked out by the wrongs of my country that I become intra-culturally paralyzed and unable to go anywhere at all. Yet I want to acknowledge it all and do what I can to prevent further destruction and exploitation. Yet I also just want to learn about the world and meet neat people and hear good music.

Sometimes I feel that our 'help Africa - save the world' politically correct notions of what we can do to remedy the wrongs of colonialism, etc. are awfully simplistic and a little self-centered. Because once again the focus is us - what can we do to help, what can we change or preserve or whatever. Perhaps the people of said nation need to be left to self-determination and their own sort of development (to use an overused nebulous word). And then maybe they can tell us what might be helpful. But again what do these notions translate into, in real life situations? (Observation Journal, 10 / 8 / 92)

This is another example of Jodie's complex critical reflexivity as a student of cross-cultural relations. She intensely questions her position of privilege, and attacks difficult issues head on while realizing that solutions and answers are not readily accessible. At one point in the program, Jodie's group took a two week field trip through Cameroon. As a part of this field trip, the group visited the village of Rhumsiki. Jodie wrote about her reflections on the visit, and further stretched and investigated her ideas about the political and cultural implications of her place as a student in Cameroon:

"Cadeau, Cadeau?" Thoughts about Tourism and Rhumsiki"

...Rhumsiki was a weird experience. It was a place with incredible natural beauty and bizarre cultural contrast, primarily because it is a small remote village that is also one of Cameroon's hot tourist spots. The result is a town that looks and acts like the perfect vision of traditional Cameroon (except for the floods of guitar selling street-wise children) but that is probably primarily sustained by the tourist industry. I found my own reactions to being there very mixed and very complicated....A large factor in this mental turmoil was what I've now deemed the 'cadeau phenomenon.'

Within seconds after stepping off the Bon Chance bus we were accosted by many kids of all ages and sizes, who seemed to have but one mission - selling us any number of quaint 'vraiment traditional' wooden artifacts. 'Don't leave Rhumsiki without one,' was their unspoken commandment, and they were serious. But it wasn't even that simple because as soon as any rapport was established, the question of cadeau came into play.

I feel lucky because I chanced to meet an 11 year-old vendeur named Deli David, who was very straight and very nice. I explained right off that I was interested in music and liked his guitars, but that I was a student and couldn't buy much. Amazingly enough he seemed to understand, and after that we passed matters of souvenirs and became friends. He was a smart kid, and totally willing to talk about anything and answer all my questions. He tried to teach me to play the traditional guitar he was selling, long before I said anything about buying it and even let me take one home for the evening without paying for it. Of course much of this may have been very successful salesmanship but still, I felt like we had a good friendly rapport going.

And although softy that I am, I ended up buying the silly guitar, it was more to thank him for his time and for hanging out and being my own personal mini-guide than because I felt obligated to. He never once asked me to pay, and actually tried to give it to me, along with the hat, as cadeau.

However, other interactions with the vendeurs were not always so pleasant. I refused about a thousand pleas for 'Bic, Bic' 'cadeau, cadeau' and was at times called mean and selfish for not acquiescing. And I know other people felt the same pressure. Yet it is hard to know what to do. At times people seem to be helping you, but then they turn around and demand a ridiculous sum as payment. But if they do help you out, as Deli David did, I sometimes don't mind, after all fair is fair.

Connected to this is the overall unease at being a tourist in the strange constructed reality of Rhumsiki. There we were staring at the old man of the town, who posed for our clicking shutters as we rushed to capture traditional Africa. Then he got up from his craft to run after us, asking to be paid, which seemed to me completely just but rather ironic. All of the artisan centers, the sorcerer, etc. were a crazy blend of cultural authenticity and blatant capitalism. I found it hard to sit and watch the performance, knowing that it was entirely for my benefit, and yet I was still interested in seeing their crafts.

Tourism seems like yet another unfortunate result of neocolonialist contact in some ways, corrupting traditions and making eleven year olds wise and old beyond their years. But it is also a viable industry and a good way to make a living. And here I am, with the School for Intellectual Tourism, reaping the benefits of this questionable phenomenon and perpetuating the cycle. But I'm also putting some Cameroonian francs into the pockets of decent people which isn't necessarily a bad thing at all.

Needless to say, I haven't figured out where I stand on the issue. Sometimes I have faith that the bottom line is human interactions and that if those are truly good, if there is respect going both ways and mutual good-will,

then all is for the better. But it brought up many more questions as to the history of westerners in Cameroon, and I fear the answer is not quite that simple. All in all it was a thought provoking two days. (Observation Journal, 10 / 31 / 92)

This is another example of Jodie's critical and thoughtful approach to living in a culture different from her own. Throughout the program and continuing today, Jodie struggles to develop reciprocity in her thoughts and actions of cross-cultural interaction. She is unique in her critical reflexivity concerning this issue, and she demonstrates the critical reflection described by Mezirow. These three examples are significant because they illustrate the complexity of the presence and actions of westerners in non-industrialized countries. Because of Jodie's background, previous cross-cultural experience, and education in global politics, she is able to recognize the complexity of her place as a privileged student in Cameroon and the power dynamics inherent in her interactions. She is not only conscious of the power of her own observations and the implications of her actions, but she also realizes the effects of colonization, capitalism, and westernization on her interactions and the lives of the people she interacts with.

Greg's thoughtfulness on his place as a westerner concerned with issues of sustainable development permeated his trip in many ways, including his relationships with other SIT students. He recalled one major conflict during the program when he engaged in dialogue with the other students in the program:

[W]e'd have discussions about what can we do about the destruction of the rain forests, and some pretty heavy topics like that. Some of the girls would take some views, and we would play devil's advocate pretty much. Me and another guy would play devil's advocate and try to bring a little realism into the discussion. Because the fact of the matter is that the rain forest is being destroyed. The fact of the matter is that the only way to stop it is to do it in a regulatory way where you can get to the resources, because the main problem now is oil. There are oil deposits in the rain forest. And so companies go in and they want to extract those oil deposits. There's a pipe line going from the middle of the rain forest to the coast, Trans-Amazonian Pipeline, to get oil out. And the government wants the oil, and it's the government's land. And you can't come in being First World, western nations, saying, 'We've destroyed all of our resources, and now we realize the consequences. And so now we're going to tell you not to destroy yours and not to try and gain economic prosperity from doing things the same way we did.' And so we'd have these discussions about this, and some of the girls would take an emotional stance and say, 'We just have to say, 'Stop all development.' We just have to say, 'You

can't go into the rain forest.' We just have to protect it hands down.' And I would just say, 'Who are you kidding? You have to be realistic about things. You have to say, 'Okay. We'll go in there. We'll do it this way. We'll do it in a way with the least impact on the environment.' And so we'd do it and they'd get really upset sometimes, and they'd think we were heartless. But the fact of the matter is that everybody WANTS zero development of the rain forest. But the fact of the matter is you have to be realistic about things. And if you want to be part of productive change in the world, you have to also be a realist and you also have to realize the direction that things are going and you have to find a way in which to help and to be constant with the direction and the way things are going. Because you can't turn the world around and you can't tell the Ecuadorian government that they don't have the right to extract their own resources....And I'm not trying to get on my high horse or anything, but the fact of the matter is that me and this other guy, our points were more valid. And we wouldn't be just say, 'Save the rain forest.' That wasn't our point. I mean that's what we want, but we want to approach it from a realistic standpoint. And were trying to come up with a realistic approach to do things in a way that people can help productively instead of trying to do things that can never reach fruition. (Greg, p. 9-10)

Greg reflected deeply on how he, as a European-American male, could contribute to environmental and social change in Latin America. This was a major issue for him throughout his stay in Ecuador, and even before he participated in the SIT program. Greg continues to struggle with dilemmas of sustainable development. Through dialogue with other students, he clarified and expanded his own ideas concerning development and environmentalism.

Culture Shock

Culture shock was another form of anxiety or crisis that students faced. While some students were able to overcome it and learn from it, others were somewhat immobilized by it. Emily was emotionally unprepared for her semester in Bolivia, and this caused her to be quite homesick when she first arrived in Bolivia.

Before I went to Bolivia, I went to Kenyon for three days. And the day I came back from Kenyon, I came back at four in the afternoon. And I left for Bolivia the next morning at seven. Huge mistake. After a summer of not seeing any of my college friends and kind of having weaned myself from them, you know. Not thinking about them constantly, not missing them anymore, I went back, opened the whole thing up again, and then tried to go to Bolivia. So I entered it with a really, really bad attitude. I didn't want to be there. I wanted to postpone it to the next semester. I didn't want to go anymore. But I did. I remember when I got there, there was no jetway, nothing. You walk off the plane, and it was really hot, it was really hot and people were talking to me in quick Spanish. And my Spanish was good but it wasn't quick yet. My sentence construction was excellent, but I wasn't ready to hold whole conversations. I wasn't ready for people to dart the language at me and for me to answer them....we got into

taxis which were the most beat up, disgusting things I had ever seen. There are no stop lights in Bolivia, so you just go through the intersections. You beep your horn and hope that nobody else beeps their horn at the same time and crashes into you, but they do. (Emily, p. 3)

Emily faced a great deal of fear, distress, and homesickness pending her arrival in Bolivia.

We left Miami at like nine at night. We all sat together and I was miserable on the plane. I was so upset. I wanted to cry. And the worst thing was, I turned to several of the people in my group, and I was like, 'Aren't you scared? Aren't you nervous about what's going to happen? I mean, aren't you a little bit anxious about living somewhere for four months?' And they were like, 'No, dude. It's gonna be so cool!' And I was like, 'Oh, well, what if things don't work out? What if you're not happy?' 'You don't have a very good attitude.' Which made it really hard, because I did have a good attitude. It was just intimidating. (p. 5)

As the week progressed, Emily made some friends with other students, and began to adjust to life as a student in Bolivia. Although Emily struggled with homesickness throughout the semester, she was able to cope with it by immersing herself in Bolivian culture, especially the social scene in Cochabamba. Socializing was something that Emily valued, and her social skills enabled her to immerse herself in the culture and overcome culture shock. She looked to the relationships she developed in Bolivia, both with other SIT students and with Bolivians, for emotional support to cope with her homesickness.

Angela was somewhat disoriented from the beginning of the program as a result of the living conditions in Bali and general culture shock. Angela faced a great deal of culture shock and homesickness throughout the program. She found it difficult to reconcile her ideals of feminism and atheism with Balinese culture and Hinduism. Although Angela regards many of her experiences in Bali as valuable, the forces of culture shock, homesickness, and ill-prepared directors seemed to shape her program experience.

When we arrived, it was total, total culture shock immediately. It was very hot. Just things that are hard to remember now but then seemed so clear. Like it smelled a lot, but you got used to that. The trash was burning in the streets, and there was a lot more, I don't know, uncleanness or something. The vegetation was very lush. That was a good thing. And I remember things like, we were all very thirsty and hot, and we get to the homestay place or whatever where we were staying for the first few days. And Jackie, our director, first said, 'Oh guess what? I'm getting married in two days. And I know you guys are really thirsty, but we're going to serve you hot tea because that's the custom here.'

We're all like, 'Yuck.'...I think we and Jackie got off to a bad start from the beginning because she gets married two days after we get there because the priest had said, 'Oh now's a good time for you to get married,' according to the calendars and things like that. So from the beginning she was kind of detached from the group. But at the same time it was a good look or insight into the Balinese way. You know, the way things are dictated by calendars and things beyond our control, type of thing. And we all went to the wedding, and things like that. So that was good because we saw parts of Balinese life right away. She and we and a few of her friends were the only white people there. And we all had to go out and buy the traditional religious clothing to wear....And, there were a lot of things to get used to. Like I remember, we all had roommates. My room was so dark and damp, and I thought, 'Oh my God. I will NEVER get used to this.' So luckily we didn't stay there longer than two weeks. The mosquitoes, once it got dark, there's these really disgusting, gross, rabid dogs that run through the street. And when it's dark, they start barking. And it was also difficult because, not only were we in a new culture but, it's like, let's figure out who our friends are among our classmates and stuff. And so that was really, somewhat stressful, in addition to the other acclimation. (Angela, p. 6-7)

The discomfort of culture shock and homesickness throughout the semester caused much stress and anxiety for Angela. She recalled that everyday of the semester, she knew the number of days she had left before returning home. In some ways, this anxiety caused Angela to separate herself from the Balinese culture and people. In other ways, this crisis led to Angela's personal growth. At the end of the program, Angela wrote a paper called, "Putting it All Together: Thoughts on This Semester". This is an insightful summary of the course of learning and experience that Angela went through during the program.

Bali bear little reality or relevance to my actual experience here. I didn't realize that the heat would be so intense, the people so beautiful, the dogs so appalling, the language so deceptively simple to master. I could never have predicted how 'out of my element' I've often felt here, nor how, just as often, I've felt cared for, fortunate, and privileged. My most treasured memories and challenging moments have occurred when I was interfacing with the Balinese, and I was able to experience that magical, intangible shift from 'faceless rich tourist' to 'culturally-aware, accepted student.'

The first significant instance of this shift took place during my time with my homestay family in Peliatan. While many of the days I lived in that small and peaceful compound were difficult and anxiety-filled as I tried to acquaint myself with, and adapt myself to, the ways of my family, just as a many times I felt like a member of the family. For instance, when I went to *purn* with them; when I sat on the porch and compared Balinese to American life; when I played hide and seek with my sister; when I realized as I was preparing to move out of my compound how much I would miss the routine I had established there over the last 8 [sic] weeks. I had begun to think of it as 'home', and did not relish leaving its refuge for the unknown and uncharted territory of the greater Ubud-Bali area.

But ISP period inevitably began and it was during these weeks that I engaged most with Balinese culture, taking risks and challenging myself in

ways I had not previously considered...and loving the strengths and resources I found within myself. About mid-November I reached a feeling of integration that made me realize the progress -- in terms of personal, social, and cultural growth -- I had made this semester; however, the timing of this discovery, with perhaps 2 weeks left on the program, made me wish I had arrived at this point far earlier. If I had come to this point 6 or 8 weeks previously, I reasoned, then this whole semester would have necessarily been a perfectly fulfilling experience. However, what warped my logic then (and has only recently been revised) was my convenient disregard for the fact that I had first to endure all the setbacks and discomfort of the past months in order to end up at this feeling of satisfaction and completion.

This semester has taught me, if anything, the danger of complacency -- just when you think you've found your footing, you'll be uprooted the next day. Moving around so often has made me appreciate my abilities to adapt; the ties with either American students or Balinese people I've been able to establish the cultural obstacles I've encountered and often overcome. I've re-defined my conception of success; for me, in the Balinese context, it means less winning the race than crossing the finish line. (MTFS Final Paper, December 13, 1992)

Culture shock is a vital component of experiential, cross-cultural learning. It is the student's first encounter with the feeling of cultural marginality. The process of overcoming culture shock involves adjustment and adaption to the host culture, the first step in cultural immersion. Experiential, cross-cultural learning involves the continual resolution of conflicts and crisis in adjusting to a new culture. Culture shock is the first conflict that students face, and is sometimes continual or else reappears in various different forms throughout the course of the immersion period. Coming to terms with culture shock is one of the first steps in the development of a third cultural perspective. The shock results from the host culture's confrontation of the student's cultural values and meaning perspectives. It is the process of resolving this shock that leads to transformation.

Re-entry

Another form of crisis faced by some students is re-entry into the home culture after the semester abroad or subsequent travels have ended. This completes the process of the development of a third cultural perspective different from home and host cultures. Students once again experience cultural marginality when they enter their home cultures as changed people. Emily experienced reverse culture shock when she returned to the U.S., and had a very difficult time adjusting to life back at home.

Oh it was so hard. At first you feel numb. It doesn't sink in. It's like you're going on another weekend trip or something and you will be back. And I got home four days before Christmas. But when I got home, my parents are social people and they were having Christmas parties and cocktail parties and it was so frustrating because I just wanted somebody to listen. And my mom was good. She would. She'd be like, 'Okay. Tell me all about it.' But then we would have guests over that night, which was horrible. They would be like, 'Now where were you?' I'd be like, 'Bolivia.' 'You went to Africa.' 'No that's in South America.' 'Mmhm.' They did not care. They did not want to hear about it. They'd mix it up with Botswana. It was so annoying to me. I just was not up for it, you know what I mean? And I told my mom that. And she was like, 'I know you came home at such a difficult time honey. I'm so sorry.' I was like, 'Oh, okay.' I wanted just to cry for like five days straight. First of all, you live it up to the hilt that last week. You go out every night with everyone you see there. You're crying off and on about leaving them. Every emotion you can feel goes through your head during that last week. And then after that exhausting week, you get home. And my parents expected me to be their little social daughter and be like, 'Hello. How are you Mrs. Smith? How are you Mrs. Joyce? So good to see you both. Mmm.' And I was just not up to that. I was up to going to my room and crying for five days, and trying to get some of it out of my system. The quicker you can get it out of your system, the better you are. I think you should have total emotional release. Plus, what's really difficult also was that there is a real culture shock coming back. Physically, I'm just not treated the same way as I'm treated down there. I'm treated like an attractive person. I'm not ugly or anything. It's very shocking suddenly, not to have people giving you the attention that I was given there. And you feel very down already. And it's just a real knock to your esteem, self-esteem. Because you feel sad anyway that you're away from people that you cared about. But suddenly your self-esteem is lowering too, because you don't feel like you're the most beautiful, or you don't feel as attractive anymore. And on top of that, there's a real code of chivalry down there that doesn't exist here as much anymore. So you don't feel special. So your self-esteem is going down. You don't feel special. The language that you thought you would never miss, you miss terribly, I found when I got back. And I spoke into the mirror every chance I got. It was hard. It was a really rough transition. And then to go to Kenyon was just, I got mononucleosis three weeks after I got back to Kenyon. So I couldn't go out with my friends. And I couldn't really re-bond with them right away. It was a really tough re-entry. Really bad. (Emily, p. 41)

After the initial period of readjustment, Emily noticed that her experiences in Bolivia led her to exert more control over her life. The network of friends that Emily made in Bolivia eventually led her to reevaluate her friendships at home, which she described as abusive, and to develop healthier relationships. She was able to reconcile her shock at returning home by asserting control over her life and relationships.

My whole group of friends turned over. I think what Bolivia did, actually, was it did foster a lot of self-confidence in me. And it gave me the courage to let some friends go who were not very good friends. I was sort of hanging out with this group my freshman year. You get sucked into things, you know. And it gets hard to change it. And they were my friends and I did everything with

them. They were really nasty to each other. They still are. They're being nasty somewhere right now to each other. I know they are. And they were really mean. Any chance they could be nasty and mean and biting and kind of cruel to each other, they were. And they weren't usually to me. They'd usually be softer to me just because I would start crying or something. And I could never break away from them. And I finally did break away from them. I got back from Bolivia and I was like, 'Oh, I don't need this.' If I can live by myself and make all new friends in a period of four months, then I can certainly make new friends in a place where I know the language and I know the culture. After the mono went away and I kept two or three friends from that group. And I broke up with Scott who was abusive to me. And I went on. I made a lot more better friends. Nicer people. Good people. Kinder people. And it is because of Bolivia....I was always afraid to break away from them because I was like, 'Oh, if you break away from them, who are you going to go out with?' And I've always been really, and I'm glad I can admit this. I've always been conscious of what I'm doing on the weekends and it's important to me to have a good social life because I enjoy it so much. And, I mean, I'm not going to be hypocritical about that. I do. I enjoy going out. So I like to be with people who also do. And they always did. They still do. But they were really nasty. There was no reason to be with them anymore. And I don't think that I would have done that if I hadn't gone to Bolivia. Because, seriously what I said before. If you feel like you can make it for four months on your own, then it just doesn't seem worth it if you're unhappy with people. And I still feel like that....If you can survive four months in a Third World country, you can certainly survive anything in this country. It gives you a whole new system of evaluating yourself. It gives you a whole new system of evaluation. Your goals don't remain in one sphere anymore. It goes to a whole new sphere and the boundaries of the limits are a lot wider. My limits are no longer, I can go to Ohio which is two states away. I can go anywhere in the world. And not only any where in the world, any where of the world regardless of the conditions that part of the world is in. It's that whole thing, I've done it before, I'll do it again. (p. 41-42)

Emily's self-esteem was initially lowered when she returned home because she was no longer the center of attention. However, once she recovered from the shock of returning home and readjusted to her home life, she realized that the changes she had gone through in Bolivia empowered her to make certain changes in her life at home. At this point, her self-confidence sky-rocketed.

Megan also had some difficulty re-adjusting when she returned home. She felt isolated and unable to communicate her experience to her family and friends. It took her some time to incorporate her experiences in Ecuador into her life at home.

It was really strange. I definitely had culture shock. Very much culture shock. I couldn't deal with the excess here. I couldn't deal with my parents at all. They were just annoying me. They wanted to know about my experience, but I couldn't sit there and just talk to them for hours about every little thing. So I would tell them little things, and then I felt like I couldn't really talk about it.

Just because they weren't there and they didn't experience it. And now I'm home and that's it. It's over. It was hard for me. I wanted to talk about it. I was home and I was going back to school. I was just in Ecuador. Nobody understands. You know that feeling? Nobody knows I was just trekking across the Andes. NOBODY UNDERSTANDS! (Megan, p. 43)

Megan's difficulty in readjusting to life at home seems strongly related to her decision to return to Ecuador. Danielle also faced frustration in trying to communicate her experience. Fortunately, she had a good support group to help her work through her feelings of anger and depression.

It was just a pain in the ass to talk about it all the time. And nobody was really that interested. And I felt like I was kind of disturbing their life. I was like, 'Blah, blah, blah.' I think one of my biggest fears is that people won't listen to me. So I won't say anything if they're not going to really listen. Also, I really just cut myself off last semester from a lot of my friends. So that was just a major confusion last semester...But I think that in general I was facing a lot of really major life choices that I've never really thought about. Ideological choices, lots of stuff. Like how I view the world, how I deal with other people, and what I wanted to believe in. All the major ones....I didn't think of it this way, but my advisor said to me, 'You turned what was a very difficult experience into an incredible amount of emotional and intellectual strength.' I think I would have dropped out of school if it hadn't been for two things. One is my boyfriend, who is just like amazingly supportive. Because we didn't really get back together. We were just really good friends. We realized that we had a strange relationship. And then my roommate was another person, was really the only other person who I kept in touch with. And then my academics. I had two professors in particular who were really, really supportive to me. So that made such a huge difference. I think if they had been like, 'Whatever. Life sucks,' I probably would have dropped out. I needed something to pour myself into, and so I really did get into my work....I had all these experiences at the same time. And it partly was just that going away to another culture not only gives you perspective on that culture, but a perspective on yourself. So I went away this totally disaffected liberal, 'Blah, blah, the government sucks.' And I came back and I started recognizing the potentials inherent in our country. (Danielle, p. 19)

People who were your friends because you feel like you should be friends with them, and people who are your friends because you're afraid not to be friends with them. And people who you keep on because they're family friends, because they used to be your friends. Stuff that just seems unnecessary to me. So I don't encumber myself with that anymore. I was like, 'Whatever. This is BS.' I actually have made better friends in the last year. It's kind of strange. (p. 25-26)

The trauma of re-entry and re-adjustment was devastating for Danielle. However, it also caused her to grow in many ways. In addition to incorporating her experiences in

Morocco into her life at home, Danielle was forced to deal with the sexual harassment, assault, and feelings of violation she had experienced in Morocco.

Jodie experienced a gradual progression of returning to a western lifestyle and eventually, home. She traveled after the program from Cameroon, through eastern Africa, to Turkey and western Europe, and then back to the United States. Each new country embodied a further level of westernization. Since the change was gradual, she experienced less re-entry shock than many other students. In addition, she had experienced the process of re-entry earlier in life when she returned from Turkey, so she could anticipate her responses. However, Jodie did encounter some difficulties.

Coming back here, I spent a summer in that kind of rage thing....I worked all summer in my hometown and tried to pay off my travel debts, and was full of a lot of anger about how things were here and kind of hard to live with sometimes because I was hit head on with the inequalities of my own society once more. And then the kind of bullshit that people, I had a woman come in who was French. She's the mother of someone I went to high school with. She came in to where I worked, and she's like, she knew I took French in high school and was just like, 'How have you been doing lately?' and I said, 'Oh, I just got back from a field study.' 'Oh, where?' 'Oh, in Cameroon.' And then we started speaking French, and she's like, 'You've learned the French of the le petit negre,' which is the little niggers basically. And I was like, you know, I wanted to throw her latte in her face but I couldn't, I was at work. I was like, 'Okay, that will be \$1.79.' So in that way I guess, yeah. But then you work through that and then you get to a new level of wanting to make things change but hopefully not like burning up that rage inside like a time bomb. That's something I've been working on. (Jodie, p. 35)

When she returned from Kenya, Lisa also found it difficult to explain her experiences and new found knowledge to her friends and family. She wanted to discuss about her experiences, but there was no outlet for her to do so.

Something that was strange was I was home for, I guess it was about a week or two weeks and then I drove to Atlanta to live with my boyfriend. Obviously he was very interested in my stories about Kenya and stuff, but a lot of times he wasn't or a lot of times I just felt like there were so many things that I wanted to talk about or that I wanted to say, and I just felt like he wasn't that interested in it. And that really bothered me sometimes. Like I can definitely understand it now, and I could understand it then too. But it still bothered me. Like here I am living with this person who I really liked and that it's sort of boring for him. (Lisa, p. 28) I do remember just feeling sort of lost and sort of, kind of like I was enlightened and no one else was. [laugh] (p. 28-29)

However, Lisa found that her experience in Kenya functioned to equalize the relationship to a certain degree.

Something that has sort of bothered me about our relationship is that because he's two years older it's always been like he experienced, I'm the older sister for my brother so it's sort of like what I perceive as having an older brother or sister. He did everything first. So he was a junior when I was a freshman and it's like, 'Oh well that class is easy, and oh well it's not that hard to write that paper.' You know, everything, and a lot of times my senior year I felt like it was so overshadowed by, 'Oh well I'm out working and wouldn't it be easy to be back at school.' Meanwhile here I am, like I was not that happy at school. I hated writing papers and doing all the tests. So it was just like he was always two steps ahead and doing this and, just when you asked that question it made me realize that it's something that I did that he hadn't done. He went to Jamaica and did that but it's different. It's sort of like something that I completely experienced on my own that he didn't. So I guess that's different. But I don't know what that changed. (p. 30)

Lisa's experiences in Kenya did not affect her relationships with her family, but they did influence her relationships with her friends.

They [my friends] were sort of impressed with it. A lot of my close friends have very conservative parents, and I remember once going out to dinner with my roommate, my best friend in college's parents and some other of our close friends. And they were asking me about things. Like the whole dinner wound up being circled around like, 'Well this was so dangerous, I can't believe you did that.' And it was just question after question after question. Which I didn't mind, but then they were kind of getting degrading. Like, 'How could you have done that?' or, 'This is dangerous and I wouldn't have let my daughter go on that program.' So it sort of changed it [my relationships with friends] in that they realized how much I did. And things that I just didn't even think to talk about, like how I was saying you go to this place and you realize you don't have a place to stay and that I just didn't think that much about. Then they're like, 'Wow!' I mean here I had lived with them all last year and they didn't even know some of the things I had done that they were so impressed with. (p. 29)

Chris planned to travel for a month after the program ended. However, when the time arrived he decided instead to return home because he felt overwhelmed by the experiences he had already incurred.

I was like 'How can I travel anymore? I got to assimilate all of these, you know, one semester.' And plus I was like, 'I want to be home for Christmas.' I was being like a wus. At that point I was like, 'All right, I'm going to go home but I'm not going to tell anybody.' They're expecting to pick me up at JFK on the fourteenth. So I'm in London, I get all the way across, I had to change all these tickets and everything and get all the way to London. I called my best friend who lives in Poughkeepsie. And I'm like, 'Hey, Mike, what are you doing tomorrow?' He's like, 'Where the hell are you?' I'm like, 'What are you doing tomorrow?' He was at Suny actually at that time, Suny, Albany. 'Well,

I'm coming home from school.' 'Don't bother going home, just go straight to JFK I'm coming in.' So he came and got me and then we came to the house. Before my parents realized what was going on, I went up to the door and knocked. My mom comes to the door, 'Ahhh, he's home for Christmas!' She was freaking out. And that was December. (Chris, p. 6)

We've [the SIT students] had two reunions already. We've only been back for a year. We got together, but everybody has been like meeting each other on their own because we're all pretty much throughout the northeast. And Justin came to one of the reunions so that was pretty cool. Like this one kid in the program was loaded. He lives in Old Greenwich, Connecticut, which is really rich community. So he rented an island for a weekend off the coast of Connecticut. He got a sailboat, right, so we all go out there, we all sailed out there and Justin came and so it was like the whole group together again. It was just really weird because we had spent a semester together in poverty and here's 'Kyle' throwing his money around. (p. 7)

Chris had problems readjusting to his old lifestyle when he returned to New York, and he also found it frustrating to try to communicate his experience to his family and friends.

At first, my best friend came to pick me up off the plane. I was just like dirty clothes, my beard was like this because I hadn't been trimming it. I looked like a freak and felt like a freak. I must have smelled like a freak. I was just different. I was still in my mode of doing what I was accustomed to doing in Nepal, and yet here I was in his car driving away from JFK like it had never happened. It was just really weird. I tried to explain it to him and I couldn't really. And he didn't seem as interested as I thought he would be. It was weird. And it was kind of disheartening to, you just want to tell everybody everything. And you want everybody to be as excited and interested as you are. It's tough because it's so beyond other people's experience that it's hard to explain what you saw and did and felt all at once....Everybody wants to hear about it. But one of the things I found back at school was everybody was like, 'Wow, you went to Nepal. Tell me about it.' And I'm like, 'Wow, it was really cool,' and you start into it and then, 'Yeah, so when are we going out?' It was like a five minute interest, if that. People want to see your pictures but you start showing a couple and then they just sort of lose interest. So now I've learned just go and point one out on each page and just talk about that or something. So that was kind of depressing in a way. You just want to share everything and it was tough. But there were faithful friends that even though they probably lost interest, they sat there, 'Wow. Cool. Neat. Great.' I mean I'm sure they generally were interested, but unlike other people, they didn't allow themselves to get distracted. That was nice. But it was a difficult part about coming back....That's the worst thing, I think. And then there's the sanitary behavior. My sanitary behavior is like down the tubes. I wasn't used to showering every day. I probably didn't smell too good just because you get used to that stuff. Geez, there's no inhibitions at all about bodily functions in Nepal. The guys just stand there in the street cleaning out their noses like this. At first it was like, 'Ugh.' And the women do that stuff too. But then by the end all the girls in our trip were doing the same thing. And we wouldn't even think twice about it. And then you come home and people are just like, 'Ew, what's wrong with you?' (p. 45)

Not all students had difficult re-entries. For some students, this process was a relatively smooth one, usually in cases where the students had already reconciled their experiences in the host culture with their home cultural values and ideals, and had firmly established their third cultural perspective. Greg described his attitude towards re-entry which was somewhat different from the other participants in this study.

[I]n terms of who I was and if that caused a conflict with coming back to who they were, they kept on doing their same thing while I went off and had this great experience, that didn't really effect me too bad. Because I'm not one who's going to come back and be like, 'I've seen the light. Who are you?' type of thing. That's not me. And I was always the same person. Even before I left I knew my goals. I said, 'That's is what I'm going to do in life. This is one step towards it.' And when I came back I just wanted to continue with the other steps. And my whole life, that's the way it's been. Ever since I knew what I wanted to do, going to Mexico was my first step. (Greg, p. 21)

Re-entry into the home culture is another instance where the host and home cultures confront one another, and students must reconcile differences between the two. Often, they return home to find no emotional support system to help them accomplish this. Many times, friends and family will not understand or be sympathetic to the adjustment process, and cannot relate to stories of cross-cultural experiences. Once again, students may feel culturally marginal; as a result of the third cultural perspective they have developed, they begin to feel like outsiders in their own culture. In addition, there may be experiences that students have not yet reflected upon, and they must sort through feelings of loss and disconnectedness. Indeed, the re-entry and re-integration process can go on for years, and students may continue to process their experiences for a long time to come.

These narratives have illustrated the components of experience and reflection in experiential, cross-cultural learning. The feelings of cultural marginality expressed by these students exemplifies Mezirow's transformative learning process, where meaning perspectives and schemes are challenged. As it is dialogue that often sparks these feelings of marginality, it is often dialogue that in turn helps students to reconcile it. As students critically reflect on their experiences, they develop a third cultural perspective distinctive from their home and host cultures, that of an outsider to both cultures. Re-entry involves incorporating experiences,

lessons, and transformed perspectives into lifestyles and relationships at home. The following chapter is a discussion of the changes that took places in the participants. In this chapter I have applied parts of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to the changes expressed by the students. This is the third main element of experiential, cross-cultural learning.

Chapter Seven: Transformation

Introduction

The first initial research question in this study inquires about changes in students' ideas concerning the Third World, their personal values, and their personal life plans. Mezirow categorizes changes in meaning perspectives in terms of epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological changes. I have developed eight constructs to determine the type of learning that has taken place in each of the categories. These constructs are: changes in approach to learning, changes in attitude towards the Third World and understanding of global politics, development of a sense of reciprocity, changes in sense of social commitment and approach to social change, changes in personal values, changes in level of self-confidence, changes in personality or lifestyle, and changes in professional and career goals. Each of these constructs falls into one of Mezirow's perspective categories.

Table 2: Constructs Grouped by Meaning Perspective

<u>Epistemic Perspectives</u>	<u>Sociolinguistic Perspectives</u>	<u>Psychological Perspectives</u>
1) Changes in approach to learning	2) Changes in attitudes towards the Third World and understanding of global politics	5) Changes in personal values
	3) Development of a sense of reciprocity	6) Changes in level of self-confidence
	4) Changes in sense of social commitment and approach to social change	7) Changes in personality or lifestyle
		8) Changes in professional or career goals

It is important to restate at the outset of this discussion that although this study is intended to explore the effects of this type of learning on students, it did not intend to measure students' sense of cultural sensitivity, sensitivity as human beings, or maturity levels in any judgmental or critical way. Each student responded to this educational experience differently, and that does not reflect on their character or personal stature in any way.

To review from the literature discussion, Mezirow distinguishes four different levels of learning in transformation theory. The first level, *learning through established meaning schemes*, consists of the expansion of existing meaning schemes which are already accepted through which learning is easily accommodated. The second level involves *incorporating new*

meaning schemes which are in agreement with accepted meaning perspectives. The third level is *learning through the transformation of meaning schemes*, through which assumptions and expectations previously taken for granted are challenged. The fourth level of learning, considered the most significant level by Mezirow, is *learning through perspective transformation*. At this level, a meaning perspective is distorted and a student becomes aware and must recreate this meaning perspective in order to reconcile new found contradictions (Mezirow, 1991).

These levels were found to be useful in identifying the various components of transformative learning. However, when they were applied to the actual learning experiences of young adults in this study, this hierarchical model seemed to imply that unless a student "achieved" level four, or perspective transformation, the learning experience was not valuable. Students became known as "level one learners" or "level two learners." This model fails to emphasize what might be significantly formative experiences for students in spite of the fact that no transformation has taken place. It is also extremely difficult to distinguish between meaning schemes and meaning perspectives when discussing these experiences, and therefore it is difficult to determine which kind of learning has taken place. Finally, it can be difficult to know what the values of the participants were before going abroad, and whether any of these values conflicted with newly adopted or clarified ones. Initially, I attempted to assign Mezirow's levels to the types of transformation that students experienced abroad. However, as this was found to be inadequate, I abandoned this method of analysis. This chapter will discuss changes in participants that can be categorized as either psychological or sociolinguistic meaning perspectives. Epistemic meaning perspectives are discussed in Chapter Eight.

Psychological Perspectives

Self-Awareness and Value Clarification

Many of the participants expressed an increase of self-awareness as a result of their experiences abroad. Self-awareness is a change that fits into the category of psychological

perspectives. In addition, through cross-cultural interaction and dialogue, students found that they were able to clarify their personal values, also characteristic of psychological perspectives. When they were confronted by values possibly contradictory to their own or by ones that they particularly admired, they were able to make educated choices about their beliefs and ideals. In addition, when students missed parts of their home life or home culture, they realized their dedication to these parts or people in their lives and began to more consciously value them.

In terms of self-awareness, Megan learned a great deal about herself as a result of her interactions within the group of SIT students.

I definitely have self-realizations in myself, in getting along with people, twelve people traveling around the country together. I've learned a lot about myself through that. How I interact with groups, what kind of role I take. I guess this is neither good nor bad. It's just kind of, I guess sometimes I think it's bad, but it's me and I can be happy with it. I talk a lot. I guess I'm kind of a leader. I just felt like a leader in the group. The women I was friends with, one other woman was pretty, my friend Stephanie. She's a strong-willed, out-spoken woman. The other women were very soft-spoken. That might be particularly why. My friends Amber and Lauren and Linda were very soft-spoken women. I learned a lot of this stuff along the way. I think the acceptance thing, definitely realizing prejudices and biases that I had, and trying to be more aware of them. (Megan, p. 43)

Danielle's experiences in Morocco helped her to better realize her own strengths and weaknesses and personal capacity for adjustment.

This is going to sound strange, but I definitely learned how to take things coming on. First when I was there, I realized how amazingly chameleon-like people are. How I could really adjust to living in another country, when I hated a lot of things about it. I really objected to how they treated women. But like for two months I was like, 'I can imagine living here.' And some of those values that I hold most dear I sort of let slide by. It's strange. You change in different places. That was one thing. A second thing was that I wasn't as sane as I thought I was. I recognized last spring how close we all are to being crazy. Sometimes when you're really stressed out or emotionally upset, you start to realize, 'My God, I could just go over the edge.' I never thought about killing myself or anything, but it was definitely sort of this realization that you could go mad one day. And life is full of that. (Danielle, p. 23)

Angela views her experiences in Bali as extremely worthwhile, in spite of her self-criticism of the level of immersion that she achieved. Upon reflecting on her experience, I think she was surprised by her personal reactions and changes during the program.

I feel like I'm a less judgmental person. And more concrete things like I'm more interested in Anthropology, things like that, than I was previously. (p. 18) Basically that, just because I feel much more tolerant and understanding of other cultures, to the point that one of my friends calls me the culture police now. [laugh] Just because I'm very, very, very aware now of other cultures. Primarily Third World, just when I'm watching TV or reading about something or talking about something, I'm very aware of what sort of perspective is being seen. So I consider that extremely valuable. (Angela, p. 23-24)

I see myself as a very independent person, but on that program I was very reluctant to go off on my own, which I would recognize as it was happening, and it frustrated me. But at the same time I felt powerless to do anything about it. Eventually I was just like, 'Whatever. Just let me get through this and let me go home,' type of thing. I think because it was such a big mass of things that I had to get used to, like this new culture and this group of people, and the problems of getting around as a white woman by yourself, and dealing with potential harassment. And I just never ended up feeling comfortable enough with the language. I would contrast it a lot in my mind with my semester in Chicago, where I was extremely independent. I think it had a lot to do with being in a new culture and not being comfortable with the language, which I could have met half way, but I never did. I came home with a broader perspective and world view, so I learned that that was possible. (p. 19)

Angela realized her capacity to deal with situations in which she felt insecure and unsure of herself. Nicole was another student who's semester abroad resulted in a greater self-awareness. Nicole's experiences in Zimbabwe led to a clarification of both her personal and professional values.

I began to learn that it's okay to let down some barriers, to not be tough all the time. And that's okay to do in front of people who you don't necessarily know. And I began to learn that for me the whole idea of family is really important. And that that was true not just in watching their family, but also in recognizing that I missed mine. I wasn't really homesick, but there was definitely things that I wanted to share with my family or my friends while I was there. And that really was an important thing. It does sound like a cliché, but recognizing your values is really what life is about. And it's not something I've never thought about before, but it was just another step in my progress. It led me to a lot of wonderings that aren't necessarily about myself, but do relate to how I identify what my views are. What is important? What is education? What is progress? What is modernization? What is culture? All of that kind of stuff. (Nicole, p. 21)

I'm learning about education theory and there's so many different methods of learning. I think that there's a lot to value about an experience and I think that you obviously learn a lot from the experience. However, I think that that experience needs to be analyzed, and I think that's something where I really kind of differed with, like I said that I felt negatively about the how you feel talks. A lot of the reason why I felt negatively about them was because we never analyzed. We just talked about how we felt. We never used that feeling to analyze what our perceptions were and what we were learning through those feelings. And some kind of larger comparison, larger scope. Because one

person can learn a lot from their own feelings, but I think that it's by reconciling those feelings with larger studies, larger groups of information that true learning comes about. Experiencing learning a language is one thing, but I think that you learn a lot more about learning a language if you experience it, a, and then you learn about other people and how they learn, and compare those two modes of learning...I think that that was what my problem with it was. Not the fact that we were talking about our feelings. I think that that's important. My problem with it was that we never took that to the next step. Of, 'Okay, these are our feelings. What are we going to do about it? What impact does this have? Why are we talking about this?' Now I've recognized that that's why we were talking about it. But we were never taken to that next level. And as a result I feel like it was only through our own thinking about it later on that we were taken to that level. So yeah, especially now teaching, I feel like I can teach my kids about statistics about government and economics until their teeth fall out. But they're not going to learn anything about culture until they experience it. And obviously it's preposterous to read textbooks to recreate that, which is why I tried to start this pen pal thing, because I feel like, even though it's only one person that they're talking to, and even if they're not really talking and they only get two letters out of the whole deal, at least it's a start. There's somebody else who's a real, live person. I agree and I think part of it is being informed of education theory. (p. 27-28)

It definitely made me doubt education a lot more in terms of what it is supposed to do. It made me question the purpose of education, and, 'What is good education?' was a big question to me. Watching kids, talking to kids and talking to parents who have gone through the education system and not been able to find a job outside of life in Chikwaka. And know that they want more than that but not being able to get more than that because the economy just doesn't provide more than that. But at the same time because they've been taken to the level where their expectations were that they could get a job. Where their teachers or tutors that they had in the classroom, rather explicitly or implicitly, that unless you live a modern life in Harare, you are no good. And so they had this perception that they've taken on. And they believe it. And now they can't get those jobs and they're totally unhappy with what they have. What is the point of that? Is that really valuable? If they were able to get a job in the city, what would they be leaving behind? What are the things that are of value that we need to look at right now? (p. 29)

Nicole's critical reflection on education was a result of her ISP and thesis research in the village of Chikwaka in Zimbabwe. Greg's experiences in Ecuador helped him to realize his capacity as an agent for social change.

It didn't change me at all, but it fulfilled a part of me. It fulfilled something that I needed to do. And now I can move on and do something else. It maybe helped my relationships with people. It changed me in a way. It opened my eyes and made me a more compassionate person....I learned more about my passion and my drive. And I learned, I just realized what I want to accomplish in life. And I realized what I'm going to spend my life trying to do. And I've done it, or I'm on my way. Hopefully I can make a difference somehow, somewhere. That's pretty much what I learned about myself. Just in all my experiences. I wouldn't say my experience in Ecuador specifically. But just in all my experiences going abroad and being exposed to new places and new

ideas and new perspectives. Going to Ecuador, Ecuador is the most beautiful place I've ever been. Everywhere you go is just beautiful. I don't want to see places like that destroyed. I want to see places like that live. And let my children see places like that and let Ecuadorians see things like that. And so that's what I learned about myself. (Greg, p. 20-21)

Chris noticed some changes in himself and his relationships at home as a result of his program experience. Although he feels very independent and open, he does not see these qualities in his friends, and that frustrates him.

It's sort of like an experience that was a big part of my life that I don't think I could ever fully share with any of them. It's just because it's one of those things that unless you have some sort of common experience, you can't explain to someone else outside of that. But that happens, growing up, doing anything. But not to any serious degree, no, with little things you know. Like I'm more independent than I ever was before. I was always relatively independent and that causes problems because my parents want to know what I'm doing, where I'm going and I don't even know when I walk out the door half of the time. That makes problems. Just having been in Nepal and traveling around and stuff, I really want to be independent. Unfortunately, right now with my financial situation, the economy is not very conducive to being independent. That's difficult because I want to move out and get on and do something. But everything is really risky about that. Part of that has been influenced by my trip because I was so independent going over there and going out to western Nepal by myself. That's a lot more independent than a lot of people were doing. I look at some of my friends, like I've one friend who'll probably never leave New York State. That's a wedge between us right there because he's not one bit half as independent as I am. And I'm not as independent as a lot of people. But I just look at him. If any relationship has been affected the most, that's the one that has, with my friend Mike. We've been best friends since we were in ninth grade. He just wants to get a job and marry his girlfriend and live here. And I want to do everything. And Nepal has just wet my appetite to go and explore and do things. (Chris, p. 46-47)

Self-Confidence

In addition to increased self-awareness and value clarification, many students reported an increase in their self-confidence as a result of study abroad. When students are immersed in a completely new culture and way of life, they must learn to adjust by learning a new language, learning new cultural practices, getting to know a new environment, making new friends, and learning to take care of their everyday needs. Becoming self-sufficient in a new culture and accomplishing all of these tasks inevitably causes students' self-confidence to rise. Students reason that if they can go to an entirely new environment and learn to survive, then they can accomplish other intimidating feats as well. In addition, learning to survive so far

from home promotes feelings of independence. For example, as a direct result of her experiences in the CSA program, Susan discovered strength and confidence that she didn't know she possessed:

I was a lot stronger than I thought. I was really insecure when I left. I felt like I couldn't do it. I remember it was SO hard leaving. I was so hysterically crying on the way to the airport. [laugh] I had to say good-bye to Ben and say good-bye to my family. And me being alone in Africa. It was just like, 'Oh my God!' I was so scared. I think, it's like what I was saying about being here. Being so grounded. In a way it gives me strength, but initially making that break is so hard. And so I was just trying to make that first initial break to just turn my back and walk as me and not as me with the house and my family and the roots and everything. I no longer had those roots I felt. And so trying to take that first step was really hard. And Ben was going to London. And we've been together for five years so he's, if you can't tell, he's like a very huge part of my life. And we were going through awful times, and I didn't know if we'd make it. I didn't know if, by the time the year was over, with him being in London, when he came back if we'd still be together. So that was a huge concern of mine. And just feeling like I'd freak out when I got there. And then getting there the first week, they started talking about ISP and I was so scared. 'I can't do this. I can't be by myself for a month. I won't know the language. Something will happen. I won't know what to do.' Just questioning my ability to take care of myself and just to trust my intuition just to know what was right. And it definitely gave me the confidence to do that. (Susan, p. 37-38)

It's an important part of my life that happened. It was an amazing part of my life, so I see it as leading to more, I would definitely like to see myself continue traveling. Because of that, in order to understand where I'm at now, I guess you have to understand the past to know where I'm going in the future. And that seems to be kind of a grounding part. I'd definitely like it to be part of my identity. To continue it. (p. 43-44)

Nicole also noticed an improvement in her self-confidence:

In some ways, the SIT program kind of boosted my self-confidence, the SIT part. Because I didn't have any academic problems and a lot of people really did. That boosted my self-confidence in terms of my own academic abilities. In terms of my personal views, I think that being on my own that far away from home and especially after being sort of on my own at college, made me more comfortable with who I am and myself. But that's also just growing up. I think I have become more comfortable with who I am in the last three years. (Nicole, p. 19)

Lisa noticed a significant change in her level of confidence as a result of learning to adapt and live in a new culture. She also learned self-reliance, while at the same time realizing how dependent she is on her family and friends for emotional support.

Right away in my journal after two weeks I was saying how definitely become more confident. Just the confidence, and I've always been pretty confident, but the confidence to know that you can handle any situation that's going to be

thrown at you. Like, I mean just some of the things, you would travel somewhere and by the end of the program we really didn't think about it. But when you go off on your ISP I knew I didn't have anywhere to stay the first night or so. And when I tell people that now they're like, 'Oh my God, how could you have done that?' and, 'You traveled for three weeks alone in Africa?' At the time it, you really didn't think about it and it gives me a lot of confidence now. I was driving down to Atlanta and I was thinking, 'Oh gosh, what happens if my car breaks down?' or whatever. I could certainly handle breaking down in Virginia if I can handle being out in wherever in Kenya. Things like that and just talking to people. I think having faith that people will help you. I mean there's sort of a big thing inside me now that people are good, people are bad. [laugh] So I guess it helps the people are good side, but people will help you. They're nice and just ask and that you can work things out....I do know one thing I learned about myself. Before I always thought that I would really like to get my own apartment and live by myself. And that I would really like to go into the Peace Corps and travel around by myself, and do all these things by myself. And I found out when I was there how important my family was to me and especially my friends. Just because I missed a lot of, I missed my boyfriend. I wrote to my boyfriend and my parents constantly. I learned definitely how important those sort of relationships are. I'm trying to think of other things. I guess you really learn that you are responsible for your own moods because if you would be in a bad mood or whatever, it wasn't like you could rely on anyone else or anything else to get you out of that slump. It wasn't like someone is going to throw you a surprise party, someone is going to come take you out to dinner. You were responsible for, 'Okay, what's going to make me happy right now? Do I want to go shopping, do I want to go take a walk?' That was kind of neat. I just felt like I became much more in touch with what I wanted to do and what made me happy. (Lisa, p. 22-23)

Emily noticed an increased level of self-confidence and attributed it to the attention she received as an American woman, and as a result of self-sufficiency.

The attention from the guys did get a little monotonous and tedious after awhile. But I don't know anyone in the world who could get attention from the opposite sex. I mean, it wasn't lewd, it was just admiring. Who's going to be like, 'Oh, I hated it.' And if they did, I think that they wouldn't be telling the whole truth because I don't think that anyone minds that. So from that aspect, yeah. You're like, 'Yeah, I know there's somewhere in the world I can go if I want to be the princess.' But other than that, though, your confidence level is amazing when you come back from something like that. I mean, I lived independently of my family and my country. And anything I recognized as familiar in my life suddenly wasn't, you just have to make your own way. You have to fall back on what you do know. You fall back on your language skills. You fall back on your people skills. You do what you can and if you survive and if you enjoy it, you have so much respect for your own strength and your own confidence. (Emily, p. 36-37)

Jodie experienced some changes in her relationships with her family when she returned from her travels. The experience caused her to value parts of her life that she hadn't in the

past. She began to appreciate the uniqueness of her parents and their upbringing. She also gained new confidence in her abilities and self-image as a direct result of living in Cameroon.

It was a real turning point for me, just kind of personal sanity, personal faith in myself and confidence and stuff for a number of different reasons. Like my sophomore year [in college] was kind of a turbulent year for me, lots of different things going on, my parents split up. Weird relationship shit here, like a lot of stuff. Feeling a little clueless as to what my academics, where it was taking me, the role of music in my life, and then should I have been a music major, what it meant. I had a big crisis in confidence in my ability to play music. What being musician means, what being like a girl-sax player means and the acceptance levels and confidence levels and stuff. So for a lot of different reasons, my experience in Cameroon was really excellent. The personal friendships and relationships I had there, my family, being in a really close, loving family, even for six weeks, being accepted as a musician unquestioned. People were like, 'Oh, yeah, you seem like you really like music, of course you play music.' Not being like, 'Why? What are you going to do with that? Is that practical?' You know, 'Legitimate yourself,' because music is a marginal activity in the United States. That really changed. (Jodie, p. 34)

It's hard to say what would be the result of where the program fit in my life and what happened to me there. There's things that are very specific to having been in Cameroon and being with the people and then there are things that just happened at this point in my life that resulted in some different things. A deeper sense of valuing myself in kind of, not like 'Oh, now I appreciate myself,' but more like valuing what a human being has to offer and deeply considering everything that I will do in the future as part of that. But also having confidence in lots of different ways. Like I was talking about it a little bit before, you know, things like music and stuff, and my ability to relate to people. And also a sense of the necessity of honesty with myself. I don't know how that happened but it did. And a sense of appreciating my roots and where I'm from....And a lot of those values made sense in Cameroon in ways they haven't always, in my suburban junior high and high school and even college experience. I was really at home there. People took me for what I was. It had a very nice effect. Parts of the way I grew up, I always felt different in junior high and high school, it made me realize why maybe. (p. 38-39)

Experiential, cross-cultural learning resulted in increased self-awareness, clarification of personal and professional values, and improved self-confidence for all of the participants in this study. It appears that this form of learning is important in the personal development of these students.

Transformation

Students also experienced incidents of transformative learning concerning both meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. James noticed a number of changes in himself resulting from his experiences in India and the relationships he developed there.

It's funny. There are two changes that are very noticeable. And they seem contradictory but they're not. One of them is, a stronger self-criticism, which I picked up in large part from Kayla. And that is, how little I'm doing with what potential I have. And I know I have great potential if I would only use it. Everyone does. And that I'm really wasting a lot of it. And so I feel a lot of guilt. Not like over riding guilt, like I'm racked by guilt. But I feel guilty that I'm not doing even a fraction of what I could or should be doing. So that's, self-criticism of what I should be doing. But I'm also a lot more thankful for what I have. And so I'm a lot, I'm more happy, I'm more relaxed. Partially that greater appreciation and the understanding, like greater awareness. But it's also partially the Buddhism that I've studied and I've been reading about that's really made me happier, more peaceful with where I am. More accepting I guess. Happy with what is there and understanding the interconnectedness of all, which is a very important concept....They seem contradictory. But they're not because the criticism isn't criticism. The criticism isn't of myself, it's of what I'm doing. So I'm not saying I'm a bad person. I'm saying that what I'm doing isn't really as good as what I could be doing. And it's not saying I, internally, my person, my being is bad. It's what my being is doing is bad, is not bad but is not what it should be. There's a difference. It's like telling the first graders, 'I'm not angry at you for hitting. I'm angry at what you did. I love you. You are a human being and you are a good person and I don't hate you. I'm not angry at you. You're not bad. What you did was bad.' Same thing with myself. I'm not critical of myself, of my being like in the innermost sense. I'm more critical of what I'm doing than who I really am. Sort of now, with that, it's not really contradictory. At least the way I see it, it's not contradictory. (James, p. 37-38)

I learned a lot about myself, in that, from learning from Kayla, learning about taking things for granted, learning about, in those terms the big sense is, yeah it has effected my identity, in what I want to do now. It really brought it home. These were ideas that I had had, but it really brought it home. And it's definitely stuck with me....I'm very interested in other cultures, other peoples. I always have been. And so that trip to India was very important, it was actualization of that interest. Yeah. It was just such an amazing body of experiences that I can define myself very strongly with it because I learned so much and it was a very intense four months. Yeah, it's definitely a part of me. (p. 45-46)

James simultaneously became both more critical and more accepting of himself and society. Through his relationship with Kayla and his direct exposure to poverty, James realized his obligation to humanity to work for social change. At the same time, he learned to appreciate life on a more conscious level. Because these changes revolutionized his approach

to life, he views his experience in India as a distinct part of his identity. Many other students expressed the same sentiment.

Brian experienced a number of changes in himself and his lifestyle resulting from the SIT program and his subsequent travels in India, Nepal, Tibet, and China. These changes illustrate perspective transformation.

In terms of impact, I can't begin to tell you how much I was transformed by the entire experience. (Brian, preliminary questionnaire)

There are a lot of very pronounced changes. One of the things, I did begin to practice Buddhism as a part of my life and it became a very important part of my life. I went through a few rituals in Nepal and I learned certain meditation techniques and I did a couple of retreats when Tsampa was with me. And these kinds of things. So Buddhism became an active part of my life in terms of the philosophy of Buddhism, in terms of living day to day life as a Buddhist. I can't tell you whether or not I believe in re-birth or any of the deities. But in terms of controlling your mind, in terms of meditating and using your emotions and not becoming angry and being able to sublimate your anger and that energy into different more healthy means. People have said that I appear much more comfortable with myself. I feel so much more at ease. I'm much more content than I've ever been. That doesn't mean I'm not passionate about things and there are things that I want to accomplish and things I want to do. And I'm very driven to go out and do those things. But I just don't have the anxiety attacks, that kind of thing. Even with medical school interviews and such, more than one of my interviewers had commented afterwards how incredibly relaxed I was, that I appeared more relaxed than they were, and that they don't have many students that have come in that are so nonchalant, and kidding around. Just seeing that that one interview, that one test or that kind of thing is not the end of the world. You're keeping these things in perspective. Again, very few people know that I've embraced Buddhism or I've become Buddhist in any sense. Buddhism, the way I see it, is a very personal thing. It helps you perceive life and it helps mold the way you deal with things. The only reason I'm telling you is because you're interested in how this kind of things have affected me. But my parents don't really know anything about me going to caves and meditating. My friends don't know I meditate or those kinds of things. It's not a thing like I went to this country and I had this great experience and I've learned to do this kind of thing. That helped changed a part of my life. And I kind of think Buddhism is not, you don't practice Buddhism as a show to other people which is one of my gripes about a lot of the western Buddhists here. Especially in Seattle for these past two or three years have become a real big trend. The in thing to do is become Buddhist, to meditate. [laugh] You tell some people you meditate and they look at you strange. Other people it's like hanging with the in crowd sort of thing. I mean, it's not like I practice Buddhism in terms of visualizing the deities and what they do. But in terms of not killing anything. It's like a cockroach comes, you chuck it out the window instead of squashing it or something. Things like that. Even when that happens to me I realize that this is a life. Even though I don't hold this cockroach's life as much as I hold a human life, I can now acknowledge it as much more significant than I ever have, and chuck it out the window instead of squashing it. (p. 33-34)

Even in terms of the profession, like becoming an orthopedic surgeon is such, you know, if you're a good doctor and you're in a great school, this is the kind of thing, you become an ENT surgeon, you do these hot shot things. And the second you mention you want to do family practice or something like that, then you immediately become a second class citizen. 'You're going to go to Yale and be family doc?' But being in family practice and primary care, that's where you really get to know people. That's where you get to form relationships with people. For me the satisfaction of becoming a physician is not to make money, not the status or whatever, it's having the opportunity to learn this trade and being able to use that to help people is much more important. And I see that in part of my care. Being a hot shot surgeon is not, I mean it can be, but in the stereotypical orthopedic surgeon type, guy who lives in the States all the time and makes an incredible amount of money, blah, blah, has no compassion for their patients, never touches their patients, all the things that you hear about bad doctors. That is NOT what I consider being a compassionate doctor. (p. 34)

I ended up becoming very attached to is the Buddhism in terms of its day to day, how to live your life, how to perceive things, how to be compassionate, you shouldn't kill anything, all the major ideas of Buddhism. I mean that type of how to live your daily life, I've incorporated it as much as I could into my life and tried to bring it back to the States. But then there's the whole other half of Buddhism in terms of the ritual behind visualizing this deity, this deity is present here and when you do these types of mantras with these types of rituals, this is supposed to happen. A lot of those type of religious rituals. No, I don't necessarily buy into that. But the basic tenets of Buddhism, I've embraced a lot. I can say that in terms of day to day actions, I'm extremely Buddhist in terms of how I perceive life and how I want to live my life. And that sort of basic day-to-day type of how to be a good person type thing, you can integrate that as being very Christian as well. And having studied Buddhism more seriously in Nepal, I'm more aware of those, more of those basic day-to-day things. (p. 10)

Through his experiences as a student and traveler, Brian was able to come to terms with a number of cultural conflicts which led to his personal transformation. The fact that the culture which he immersed himself in was diametrically opposed to his own cultural heritage caused him to actively seek out his cultural background and come to terms with the conflicts between the Tibet and China. Brian also confronted his guilt from being Chinese and American, in terms of the Chinese colonization of Tibet and his wealthy American lifestyle. As he discovered Buddhism, Brian was able to determine in part the answers to some of the conflicts he was facing. These experiences finally led to Brian's decision to devote his medical career to helping people and making a contribution to the world through family practice and medical work in the Third World as opposed to becoming a high-priced surgeon.

Sociolinguistic Perspectives

Psychological perspective transformation refers to changes in students' personal values, lifestyles, and personalities; in other words, self-change. Sociolinguistic perspective transformation, on the other hand, describes ways people relate to and understand the surrounding society. According to Mezirow, these are two categories of meaning perspectives which are transformed in transformative learning.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity can be defined as a sense of mutual exchange between oneself and one's own culture and country, and the people of the host culture and country. This concept arose in several different forms in the interviews. Many of the participants discussed the importance of not acting like a tourist, being culturally sensitive and making an effort to participate respectfully in the culture. It appears that the initial exposure to cross-cultural learning results in a student's development of cultural sensitivity and skills of immersion. The students who had previously studied abroad in non-industrialized countries (with the exception of one) were able to use these skills which had been previously acquired from the beginning of their consequent experience, and therefore were able to develop more complex understandings of culture and global politics, leading to reciprocity. There are a few examples of this sense of reciprocity, such as in Jodie's interview:

I realized that I compartmentalized Cameroon into this kind of immense personal growth and incredible experience. And when I was talking to Robin last Sunday in the morning, all the sudden I realized that this place that had been such a big part of me, I wasn't a part of it anymore. And it was going on and having its own troubles, and despite the kind of sacred section of my memory it holds, it's Cameroon and I'm not a Cameroonian and I don't live there anymore, and Robin is even totally more involved that I will ever be because she works there. It was like a slap in the face that this thing that I'd idealized was just going on, limping along, plunging into a deeper political and economic crisis and I was just kind of fluttering along, talking about it a lot here in my life or whatever, but not doing, not living it. (Jodie, p. 35)

This demonstrates a painful awareness of the separation between herself and her host culture, and the lack of reciprocity she experienced after being separated from Cameroon. This can be contrasted with the feeling of connectedness to Cameroon which she had during her cultural immersion experience. Jodie also discussed her thoughts on the lack of national

reciprocity and the power dynamics between the United States and other non-industrialized nations. She reflected on the inequities between her opportunity to study abroad, and the opportunities allotted to Cameroonian students like herself, and thus she was working on inviting a member of her Cameroonian homestay to travel to the U.S. to live with her own family. Jodie's sensitivity to reciprocity and / or the lack thereof in cross-cultural relationships might be attributed to her previous cross-cultural experience in Turkey, and her in-depth knowledge of issues of culture as an anthropology major.

Greg was another student who expressed a sense of reciprocity.

I feel like I'm almost betraying myself because I'm not doing something right now to get in there, to help, and to do things. But I guess it's so confusing to realize where you can really help. That's why I'm applying to graduate school in like Watershed Management and stuff like that. Because I figure if I get a real technical skill like that, then I can take my work back down to Latin America and get involved in land management and conservation biology and stuff like that. So I feel like I was on a threshold point, and if I don't get it now then in five years, IT MAY BE TOO LATE. But what can I do now, is the thing. I can go and I can try and do some work and I can try and get involved in buying up land and trying to save it. But I really need to get a direction. But everyday that I don't do something, I feel a real pain and I feel like I'm betraying what I've learned. And what I've been exposed to, I feel, was a gift to me and was an opportunity that most people don't have. And I was exposed to so much that now I'm betraying what I was exposed to by not being involved right now, by being down there right now. And I mean, it's a real struggle for me, but I think I'll be better off and be able to do more good if I get involved in a program like what I'm trying to do now. And then hopefully in the summers maybe I can go down and do work and do graduate work down there. I think that would be the only way to do it. Through a university is the only way to do it anyways, because I can't go down there just by myself, and just say, 'Okay, here I am.' (Greg, p. 18)

Greg went on to reflect critically on his place in international development as a European-American male. He also considered ways to balance the force of capitalism with sustainable development. The realization of self as a contributing member of the global community is an important element of the development of global citizenship, referred to in the literature review (Knip, 1987). This can involve a transformation of one's sense of self. Like Jodie, Greg had previous experience studying abroad, and he had also reflected on many of these issues as a Latin American Studies major.

Although previous study abroad experience appears to be conducive to the development of a sense of reciprocity, it does not appear to be a required condition. Nicole

had a sense of reciprocity and social commitment before embarking on this program, as was evident by her community involvement. James and Brian both developed a sense of reciprocity in spite of not having studied abroad previously, illustrated in Brian's reflections on his economic wealth (p. 139 of this thesis). The development of a sense of reciprocity in spite of a lack of previous cross-cultural experience might be attributed to Nicole's sense of reciprocity before the program, James' exposure to Kayla who had an exceptional sense of reciprocity, and Brian's level of cultural immersion, as well as his adoption of Buddhism.

It is difficult to determine whether or not students experienced any instances of ideological transformation as a result of exposure to Third World politics and global affairs. Since the individual Academic Directors determined the reading lists and curriculum for the various programs, some students might not have been exposed to concepts such as colonization or imperialism, and may not have recognized their consequences during their experiences abroad. Another possibility is that students were already familiar with these concepts, so ideological transformation may not have been a result of exposure to political and economic conditions in the Third World. When I questioned participants about changes in their ideas about Third World politics and global affairs, many students articulated realization and recognition of the lack of autonomy and independence of these countries in the international community. Susan's response illustrates this:

One thing I can definitely appreciate more is going there and talking specifically about the environmental movement and conservation, is just appreciating the fact, I didn't feel this way before I left, but appreciating the fact that right now within the movement or whatever you want to call industrialization and what not, I don't feel like as a country now, we can tell other countries what to do in regards to that. I definitely appreciate the fact that people in Tanzania should have the right to do what they want with Serengeti National Park or Ngorongoro Crater. And just because Americans want to keep the park open because it's such a luxury to go there on safari doesn't mean it should stay open. Or even greater issues regarding anything, any kind of conservation or protection or preservation or anything like that, I definitely feel like countries should be allowed to have, especially Third World countries, should be allowed to have a voice, if not the strongest voice in that decision. Because it's hard having the background that I do, not to say, 'Okay, protect your parks. Don't allow grazing or whatever in Serengeti National Park by cattle because that will effect this and that and what not.' The bottom line is we were allowed to do what we wanted when we wanted to do it. And they should be allowed the same. And hopefully, hopefully, they will know to learn from

our mistakes. We can't make them learn from our mistakes. Obviously we're all within one system of the earth, and we have to acknowledge the fact that what we do here effects what happens in Germany or China or whatever. Obviously it's all one large organism. But at the same time I feel like countries, the whole colonialism thing is still going on. Only now it's on a different level. And I'm not dead set in one way, but I definitely got the appreciation of that from going and talking to people at Mweka [Conservation School] and what not about conservation and where they see it going. Just appreciating their ideas, and where they want to see their country go. (Susan, p. 33-34)

Understanding the power dynamics of global politics is an important dimension of global citizenship, as was discussed in the literature review (Kniep, 1987). Exposure to poverty, oppression, blatant economic inequity, and the effects of mental and physical colonization, sometimes for the first time, theoretically should lead to ideological transformation in these students. However, it is unclear the extent to which each student had access to ideological frameworks from which to make sense of these conditions, or the extent to which students had adopted these ideologies beforehand, such as in the cases of Jodie and Greg. While many students discussed these issues in the interviews, none described experiencing any ideological transformations, only realizations of conditions and dynamics in global politics.

Academic Interests, Career, and Social Change

Without exception, the career interests of all participants in the study were in some way influenced by their experiences abroad. Among a number of students, there was a strong connection between the students' ISP, academic major, career interests, and interest in social change. The ISP's seemed to result in students' enhanced commitments or re-commitments to their academic majors, which related to their career interests. In some cases, the ISP's led to commitments in new fields entirely. Participants viewed their careers as a way to work towards social change. Like reciprocity, this can be considered a part of sociolinguistic perspective learning. Susan's experience exemplifies these connections. For her ISP, Susan worked on a sea turtle conservation project on the island of Zanzibar, which was an opportunity for her to work in the field of environmental education.

I actually worked in the Department of Education everyday....It was kind of like starting out from scratch. There was still export and killing of sea turtles within

Zanzibar and Pemba. So in the beginning, I had to prove that they had signed a worldwide agreement to protect them as an endangered species. So I found proof of that and they showed it to the Department of Ministry. And then there was funding from a Finnish organization called Finnedda to do this project. And so there were two British women working on the project already when I got there. And I worked directly with them. They pretty much had the whole thing laid out and I helped them do things for education. We did a pamphlet on sea turtles and there was a board game that was created and some posters that we hung up in area schools, stuff like that. Pemba, which is a small island, is the main area where the turtle hunting was going on. And it was mainly for subsistence, which is arguable. You can't really go in and tell someone that they can't kill a sea turtle because it's endangered when their kid is suffering from malnutrition....We had a one day workshop where, during the two weeks preparation, key contacts were made in each village, where they said they would go back into their village and do education with the people about turtles and what not. At this point it was mainly education before any type of conservation measure was introduced. And so they came in to the workshop, and we did the sea turtle game that was developed, just to give them an idea of when they go to get the eggs, the chances of the little turtle surviving. And just basic biological education research on sea turtles and their reproduction capabilities and where they live and migrate, and the fact that none of the sea turtles nest on Pemba, therefore when they kill the turtles, they aren't really THEIR turtles to kill. They're migrating from India. And just try to have them have a wider grasp of the concept....This is the very, very, very first step. So then from there they were going to go back to their villages and educate the people. Each village got a game. They requested that, so those had to be made after the workshop. They brought back the game, and then more follow up was going to be done after I left about such things as that. And then about creating laws that would work under the circumstances. (Susan, p. 21-22)

When I spoke with Susan, she had just finished her undergraduate course work at UVM and was beginning to write her senior thesis. Susan's work during her ISP seemed to have had an impact on her career interests. Her experience in Tanzania also gave her the confidence to pursue additional international work.

We [Ben and I] both have been getting progressively more and more interested in indigenous peoples and the rights of indigenous peoples. I'm sure that has a huge impact from me traveling and experiencing other cultures besides my own. It has to. And I'm sure part of the reason why I went was because I had the interest to begin with. And so I had the interest, I went, I gained more interest, so now I continue moving forward. Even though I'm in environmental studies, I'm focusing on education, and now I'm being open within environmental education, and going into aspects of education on indigenous peoples, is another thing, which is extremely international....In the sense of international education, I have been gaining that through my environmental studies courses. They've always been internationally based. But not actually going out and doing it....I don't know if I would have been open to doing something like international education before. Where I would definitely consider going abroad again. I would consider going to East Africa and doing some sort of environmental education overseas, something along those lines. And I would feel very confident doing that. And not even East Africa

necessarily, but I would feel confident working internationally. On an educational level, anyway, for awhile, and feeling it out and seeing where it goes....Before I went I never would have considered doing any international work. I wouldn't have felt confident doing that. Going overseas definitely gave me confidence to know that I could, whether alone or with someone else, that I could do that, be okay overseas. (p. 35-36)

Susan's experiences in Tanzania, especially during the ISP, strengthened her interest in education, and helped her to commit to the field of environmental education.

I transferred to UVM after two years at a U Mass. So I got to UVM. When I got to UVM, it was always environmental. But at first it was environmental law when I got to UVM. I just started thinking environmental ed. in the spring semester. And then I decided my ISP being on education when I was in Africa. So in that sense it strengthened my passion for education under the environmental umbrella, because I was just starting to question if I wanted to lean in that direction. And then I got to Africa and I really enjoyed doing the education aspect. So it strengthened my idea which I already had. It didn't change it. Now definitely education is it. That's what I'm definitely focusing on. I think it was a pretty solid strengthening. Because I don't have an education background at all. It's completely environmental. So getting the experience that I got in Africa was really, I thought, unique. Being able to work directly through the Department of the Environment. It was really weird because I walked in there with no experience in education. And yet they still looked at me like I was an expert. I went to college, and they just felt like somehow I knew more than them. So I was afforded a lot of opportunities that I don't know if I would have gotten here. (p. 36-37)

Brian is another example of how his ISP connected to his academic interests and career goals, and led him to a commitment to work for social change. As discussed earlier, Brian apprenticed with a traditional Tibetan doctor for his ISP. He observed patient relations as well as kept records of traditional medicines that the doctor used in his treatments.

My ISP was kind of half anthropological approach and half a medical approach of how this guy functioned in his community. You know, what sort of social interactions he had with his community, how the people looked up to him, what role he played, whether or not he was a leader. He was, he is a Tibetan doctor who learned the medicine from father to son, father to son, for more generations than he can count. And so he's in the process of teaching his son. It's all very traditional medicine. Tibetan medicine is famous for their diagnosis through pulse and through urinalysis. So my ISP was on side looking at anthropological approach of things. And the other side, it was really fortunate for me that I got there in the time of year that was his annual medicine making time. And so we traveled, kind of on a horse back to all the different areas and picked up a lot of different ingredients and came back and with a huge mortar and pestle pounded away at these ingredients for hours and hours and days and days on end, and I was able to take a lot of pictures of the ingredients and I copied down all the Tibetan names for these certain things. That's what I'm kind of working at now, to try to translate some of these things, to figure out what the ingredients are. Because these are Tibetan names and sometimes it's not even a Tibetan name of

something. It's like, one of them is translated like, 'bone from a flying dragon of this mountain,' and I'm trying to figure out what that is is just like totally impossible. (Brian, p. 9-10)

Through Brian's work with Tsampa, he developed his professional goals regarding his aspirations to be a doctor. This resulted in his re-commitment to medicine, and he realized his desire to be a doctor committed to helping people as opposed to one driven by earning potential.

Jodie studied Bikutsi music for her ISP, a form of Cameroonian music characterizing the transition from a traditional to modern music style. Jodie's interest lay in how music mirrors the cultural and economic transition faced by the people of Cameroon. She decided to study Bikutsi music, which originated in Yaounde, the capital city, because it had its roots in traditional music and yet was often played with modern, electrical instruments.

From the day I stepped off the airplane I was listening to music and I talked it over a lot with my family. And that was another thing we bonded on because they were so into the fact that I was really interested in music. On Friday afternoons my host father would lock the television. We had a television, no car, not very much running water, but we had television. But he would lock it because he didn't want the kids to watch it too much. Yeah, he was really aware. And so on Friday he wouldn't come home till late and the TV would be off so we'd put on music and that was Jodie's dancing lessons. They were just always, like anytime there was any kind of music, they would tell me what kind of music it was. 'Jodie, Jodie, Bikutsi's on the television. Jodie, Jodie, on the radio is this kind of music, Makosa.' So they helped me differentiate a lot of the major musical things going on. (Jodie, p. 16)

We just worked really hard trying to find musicians who are the most nebulous and unreliable people you'll ever meet anywhere. And I knew that because it's the same here. They sleep in, they never have telephones or addresses or regular hours or offices. God, I just walked around that stupid city for hours. 'Turn left after the pineapple stand, and maybe you'll talk to somebody who can maybe take you to this person's house. But she's back in the village and her four wheel drive is stuck in the mud. So you'll have to wait until dry season comes and she can get it out.' I'd go, 'Ah! It's due in three weeks!' (p. 17)

Jodie described her ISP as one of the most intensely musical periods of her life, in spite of the fact that she was not playing music herself. She described the music as being everywhere and permeating every part of life. Through this project, she was able to successfully connect her interests of music and culture. Although the program had an effect on Jodie's attitude towards her major and her plans for the future, in many ways she was on a

certain path of personal development when she started the program, and her experience in Cameroon functioned to direct her even more on this same path of learning.

Both the Anthro. board [at UC Santa Cruz] and other boards take a very critical view towards the traditional place of disciplines like anthropology in a post-colonial, Eurocentric, white, typically academic, power dynamic, and anthropology's relationship with colonialism and relationship with places like Africa is very problematic. It's not an easy past to reconcile, and I have a lot of skepticism about that and my place in it. And yet it's this vehicle for me to blend music with culture and I think culture is an important part of politics and history and all that kind of stuff. So I'm interested in studying the dynamics of culture in a modern sense and what it means to be a part of a multicultural society (ha, ha, ha) that doesn't acknowledge its multiculturalism very much. And if it does it's in its shallow sense with that word but not any real, that kind of stuff. I was headed on that bent before I went to Cameroon and came back. (p. 37)

Jodie mentioned that some of the classes she took when she returned from Cameroon, and the professors who taught those courses, helped her to analyze critically her conceptualizations of education and anthropology, in connection with her experiences in Cameroon. Jodie is interested in learning Spanish and working and volunteering within her own community in the future. She also hopes that music will remain an influential part of her life.

I don't know where, how. And when I play music it will probably be in a political way. I'm playing with some people right now (in a quartet) and we're trying to make it quite, everything that we've lived. My bass player spent a year in Ghana, and he has a ballaphone under his bed. We're also not into the world beat trap, you know. I recognize the politics in music and how music gets here and what it means and there's an easy ethnicity that people slip into instead of creating. Appreciating anything ethnic, all things ethnic, without realizing the power, things that go on. When you wear that Guatemalan shirt, where did it come from? Who made it? That kind of thing. And they kind of pick and choose and mess it all up together and say, 'Gee it's ethnic, it's cool, let's go to a drumming class,' you know? I'm pretty disillusioned about a lot of that. But we've managed to reach out and find people who are, I don't know, the music that we play, it's weird. We don't play African music or anything. We play jazz and folk kind of stuff. But everything I experienced is in there anyway and my relationship to music is so much changed. (p. 36)

At the time of the interview, the quartet was considering calling themselves "Not for Prophets" meaning they do not intend to commodify their music, nor do they consider themselves prophets. Jodie continues to find meaning in her music and to express herself within that realm. Her experience in Cameroon appeared to have a profound effect on her; it

advanced her on a path of learning that she had been on before going to Cameroon, one that may have been shaped earlier by her upbringing and experiences in Turkey.

Other examples of these commitments can be seen in the experiences of Danielle, Greg, and Nicole. For her ISP, Danielle researched Moroccan women's cooperatives. She called her paper "Cooperative doesn't just mean Hippie. 'Rockin' women's economic enterprises as a source of community.'" When Danielle returned to school, she changed her major from religion to anthropology in order to explore the cultural dynamics that she experienced in Morocco. She plans to do a joint graduate degree program in law and anthropology in the near future. She is dedicated to working in the non-profit sector in order to promote social change, and has a strong commitment to social service.

Greg studied a dry tropical forest reserve on the coast of Ecuador for his ISP, where he worked as a park ranger on a reforestation project for one month. According to Greg, this is the most endangered forest in the world, as less than one percent of the original forest remains along this area of coastline. This work is related to his commitment to environmental conservation. After considering ways in which he could contribute to positive social change in Latin America, Greg decided to apply for graduate programs starting in the fall of 1994 in watershed management, forest hydrology, and water contamination.

Nicole's work as a teacher during the workcamp compelled her to return to the village of Chikwaka in Zimbabwe during her ISP, and also to conduct her senior thesis research there after the program. She continued to develop and explore her interest in education through this research. The title of Nicole's ISP was "Education for What? A Case Study Assessing the Rural Secondary School System in Zimbabwe" through which she examined the student and parent perspectives of rural secondary education, particularly in relation to employment. Her senior thesis research was an extension of this project. Nicole's research experience helped to shape her professional values and goals as an educator. Nicole hopes to continue her interest in African studies in the future. However, she has decided that her career as an educator should focus on the educational system within her own society in the United States.

Through their experiences abroad, and particularly the ISP projects, these students found direction in regard to their career plans, leading to an increase in their commitment to social change and their academic fields of study. This commitment was significant in students' development since, at the time of these experiences, they were just beginning to prepare for their careers after college. According to Mezirow's learning levels, this career development is deemed insignificant as a result of being non-transformative because students had been on these same career tracks before the beginning of their cross-cultural experiences. These experiences are devalued by Mezirow's standards. This obstacle demonstrates a need for a more appropriate theory of the learning of young adults which incorporates formative learning experiences as well as transformative learning experiences.

Adventure Learning

One aspect of learning articulated by students seemed to have a significant impact on their experiences, but is neglected by Mezirow's transformation theory: adventure learning. A number of students described exciting adventures and anecdotes of experiences from their time abroad. These experiences were vital to the students' engagement in cultural immersion. Experiences such as these stimulate students and draw them into the culture and learning environment. There are a number of examples of adventure learning. Susan traveled through Tanzania for her Wildlife Ecology seminar fieldwork. She went to the Serengeti, Ngorongoro Crater, and climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro.

God, absolutely amazing to be 20 feet from a giraffe. And they took us to the Grumeti river, which is in the Serengeti, and it's where the largest crocodiles in the world live. And some of the crocodiles in the river fast for the entire year until the wildebeest migration. And then they just gorge themselves on wildebeest. It's been proven that some of them do. So we saw a 20 foot long crocodile on the other side of the river. And we were like, 'Whoa! Whatever you do, don't go near the water!' That in itself was amazing. And just seeing the wildlife, and just seeing the area. (Susan, p. 15)

We did this counting of doves on the side of this road. We went and tried to find, we had to track dik-dik feces. Dik-dik is like the smallest antelope. They're tiny, tiny. They're only about this big. They're really cute. And you can find their territory by tracking, they tend to keep their territory in a figure eight. So we had to find their feces and markings and what not and determine where dik-dik territory was. And then another time they just drove down this

tangent straight for like ten miles. And every half a mile dropped off a group of people and said, 'Okay follow 160.' They gave you a compass and then you had to count your paces, count how many animals you saw of each species, and then keep your eye, and make sure you stayed on the tangent you were supposed to be on. And we did that which was completely scary. Here's me and two other women walking in the middle of nowhere. The next person is who knows where. And these herds of elephant and wildebeest and giraffe are walking by. And I'm just like, 'Oh my God.' And you know, just tramping through these dark, deep bushes at some points, it was just, because you couldn't go off your tangent. We were just like, 'What?' That was really insane. We went one day and stalked animals in the park. You could choose your animal and then, because we were with Mweka, we were able to walk around in Tarangire National Park, which your not supposed to be able to do. So, like I got within 20 feet of a whole matriarchy of elephants, with the truck like a mile away, which is, oh God. CRAZY things that I don't know if I should have done, you know. Just putting yourself in these situations. Because at one point they did a fake charge at us. They took the formation of encircling all their young. The mothers raised their trunks and flapped their ears. I was like, 'Oh my God, I'm dead. I'm gonna be trampled by elephants.' (p. 19-20)

Megan's Comparative Ecology fieldwork in Ecuador also proved to be an exciting adventure.

Then we went to the cloud forest, which was amazing. It's different from the rain forest in the elevation. It's higher elevation. So the rain falls a little different and species diversity is different, and numbers of species. I don't remember it, but between the cloud forest and the rain forest, one has a greater number of individual species, but less actual real numbers of animals. And one has an abundance of animals but less species. But we went to the cloud forest and we stayed in this amazing place in the middle of the Cloud forest. Oh my God, it was just incredible. A frame but no sides to it. And we just slept on these grass mats....Oh it was so amazing. We'd wake up at five o'clock in the morning and go bird watching. And was incredible. It looks like the rain forest. It was lush, green, parrots and toucans, these were the birds that were flying around. And incredible flowers and plants and stuff. (Megan, p. 24-25)

I would say that was probably the highlight, that one section of the trip. I'd say it would be the rain forest. I mean, what a place! I really feel like we were on the cutting edge of eco-tourism in Ecuador. I mean we stayed with families, we were like the second, third Americans who were staying with them. They had built a little guest house. They lived in literally a thatched roof hut, and they built a second one just like it so people could stay. We traveled in canoe, and we had in our canoe our group, our director, and the rain forest guide, this guy named 'Jordan.' A cook, another guy who had planned the whole trip, and three boat operators who also had to help. So it was like this huge entourage. And we'd travel like six hours in the boat, upriver, passing nothing. Picture at Disneyworld, a trip you'd take that's a simulated jungle trip. On both sides of us, trees, green, big huge ferns hanging over. Huge birds, there would be tons of birds. We'd stop and be like, 'Oh my God there's a toucan.' And you'd see like Toucan Sam sitting in a tree. This huge beast. (p. 27)

And then about ten days later we took off for the Galapagos....We didn't do anything in the Galapagos. We just laid around. We'd wake up in the morning

and jump off the boat to cool off. It was the best. Go snorkeling everyday. We'd see sea lions. We were so close to sea lions that, they said to us, 'Be careful not to touch them because you can get your scent on them and the mother won't recognize the babies, if you rub your scent on them.' But it was so hard because they were so curious, they would swim right up to you. And it was hard being so close together. And I'd be paddling back with my hands so I wouldn't touch them. We were so close. What an amazing, oh my God. And I was telling my parents, 'I WAS SWIMMING WITH SEA LIONS!' We were right there together. (p. 32-33)

It seems that much of the impact of the field study for Megan came from the adventure part of the experience, the excitement of visiting places that people in the United States usually only read about. Chris described his group's trek through the Himalayas to reach a village homestay.

You can only go like maybe one third of the way north in the country before the roads just quit and you got to start walking. So that's what we did. And we got to this place called Basantapur where the road literally ends in the foothills of Himalayas. And then we trekked into our first village day, which is about a four-day trip by foot into the mountains....There's parts of it in the central part of Nepal called the Anapurnas and that's where all the foreigners that come go because it's really easy level type walking, but you have beautiful mountain views. Where we were was in the eastern Nepal near the border and it was like you start out your day at like five in the morning. Four hours like this [motions upward], and half an hour like that [motions flat], then four hours like this, and then like two hours like this and two hours like that. And then we would be happy when we'd skirt the side of a lech, these sort of things coming down from the mountains and ridges. Like skirt the side or go on the top because it was more level than just going up and over. (Chris, p. 11)

It was like four or five days. Since the mountains were so up and down, there's a million different trails that you could take. So we split up into five small groups of four and then with one language teacher we all just headed in our different ways. It was fantastic. Unfortunately, I got stuck with a group that took the most rigorous one of all. They were explaining the trips to us and they said, 'Okay, now, this group is going to take the ridge trail,' which was this one trail that followed ridges all the way to Taplejung. And they're like, 'Okay, this group is going to take the adventurous route.' Because they would ask the locals, 'What is this trail like? What is that trail like?' So I said, 'Well, I want to go with the one that's the adventurous group.' Stupid me, you know. So we spent the whole time going up and down because we were crossing over the ridges instead of following them. But it made for some nice views....So then we finally got up, we hit the trail to Taplejung. And what we would do along the way is we'd just stop at a farm house and say, 'Could we spend the night here and could you feed us and whatever?' (p. 11-12)

When the group arrived in the village of Taplejung, they had a brief homestay for a week and a half. This was their first main introduction to rural Nepalese life.

It was tough because we had only been there for two weeks. So me and this kid Dave were there. It was interesting. They crammed food down your throat. The mother would just sit us down for dinner, right, and me and Dave would have this competition to see who we could get to be served more. We were using our feeble Nepali to say, 'Oh, he's still very hungry, give him more.' If you weren't looking, she'd give you second helping. Like one night we had this battle going and by the end of the meal we both just like, 'Ugh!' We just went upstairs to bed and just listened to our stomachs gargle for like an hour....So we were with the homestay family and we had so many entertaining meals just because we were trying to use our Nepali. We learned the word for 'enough' very soon. Like the word 'pugio' means enough. And you have to say that four or five times just to get them to stop. And we determined this other word 'ookus mukus' which means, 'I am so full to the point at which I feel as though I'm going to vomit,' is basically what the translation was. So we thought, 'Hey that would be a cool word to use at the dinner table then they'd definitely know when to stop. But I guess it's just as rude to say in Nepal as it's translation would be in America when you're at a guest's house. So we were like, 'Ookus Mukas,' and they were like opening the door. So we determined that that word wasn't really a nice word to use at the dinner table. After the Dasain festival, the sister-in-law had gone out to the pilgrimage we took a couple of days earlier and sacrificed the goats. So our last night there, it was big thing, they had meat. They're like, 'Great! We never have meat, and now we have meat.' I'm like, 'Meat!!' because I'd been there three weeks and I hadn't eaten any meat. I tend to eat meat and I really miss it when I don't have it. So the kid I'm with is a vegan right, so he's eating his rice. And they're like, 'Meat!' plop. So what they do is they take it and they just hack it up, like bones, bristle, fur, everything and just cook it. And so you get this disgusting pile of bones. And he's like, 'Ugh.' And so we had to explain that he's a vegan. And they were like, 'Have some now! It's great!' And so I'm sitting there, 'Meat! Crunch crunch!' And he's getting sick listening to me chomp on bones and bristle. I'm like, 'Rom, rom,' like fur and stuff. And I was just so happy to have meat. (p. 16-17)

After the homestay, the students had the rare opportunity to roam through the Himalayas on their return to Kathmandu.

They were just like, 'Well, the language teachers have left for the Dasain festival. They were supposed to leave tomorrow but they left a day early.' They're like, 'Day after tomorrow you guys are going to go. We're leaving.' The directors, they were flying back to Kathmandu because they were going to take their vacation. 'So all three of us are leaving.' At this point, we've been in the country for like three weeks. And they're like, 'You guys have learned the language skills and part of the program is, now we'll expect you back in Kathmandu in seven days or nine days. We're going to go.' They're like, 'Here's some maps, you could do this, you could do that, you could do the next thing.' They took a lot of risks with us which is why our folks signed all those waivers. So we were up at the airport like waving. And it's like, 'Well, they told us to split up.' So we just kind of grouped up with whoever we were friends with. 'See you back in Kathmandu, maybe.'...So me and the group I was with decided that we were going to take this, and there were like three different road heads about maybe four or five days from the village. The one that we came in on and there were a couple of other road heads that you could go out on. Since it was the Dasain festival, people were taking these goats up to the top of this peak, like 13,000 feet, and they were chopping their heads off. So

we decided we were going to go up there and check it out, four of us. So we go up and we're marching up and we pass these people with goats and stuff going up on a sort of pilgrimage to this peak. So we get up to the peak and there's a little temple and a little place to sleep. Blood everywhere, all over the ground, everywhere. And people just one after another with their goats. Whack, whack, people bring their goats up and carry them back down. And they hang the goats to let the blood drain out, and you sleep there. It was really gross. It was really pretty gross. (p. 15)

Greg also described his visits to the rain forest and the Galapagos Islands.

And it was just amazing. Everything we saw was new and exciting. And we studied the rain forest, the eco-systems there. And the animals. And we studied how it works and why it's so precious, and how the rain forest is a self-sustaining environment and why when people come in and cut it down, why it destroys the rain forest. The hazards of it, and everything involved. You know, everything these days is rain forest this, rain forest that. Everybody talks about saving the rain forest. And most people don't even know about the rain forest. And they're not even aware of the realities of the rain forest. And they've never been there. So to me it was a real eye-opener. And it was a really great experience, and one of the best in my life, definitely. (Greg, p. 4-5)

[W]e had an eight-day tour of the Galapagos. And the Galapagos were amazing as well. It just kept getting better. Everything we saw was really amazing. The Galapagos was great. It was a really nice, kind of a vacation, because we had just spent a whole month doing classes. We were really looking forward to going out on a boat and getting some sun and snorkeling. But the whole time we were there we were learning because, even if you go there as a normal tourist, you learn the whole time you're there because there's a naturalist on your boat. And the whole time you're there you are learning....So the Galapagos were excellent. We would wake up. We would have a little charla, as it's called, a little talk about what we were going to do for the day, what we were going to see. And then we'd go hiking on an island. Then we'd come back to the boat. Go snorkeling, see all the underwater life. We'd be snorkeling with sharks, sting rays, sea lions, seals, penguins, schools of fish. Really amazing. And then we'd come back and we'd just hang out on the boat. And then we'd go out again and do another little tour. And we'd see the animal life and all the animals and plants. So the Galapagos was really intense. (p. 5-6)

These were just a few of the numerous adventures described by students in the interviews. A great deal of attention was paid to adventure stories as students described their semesters abroad in the oral narratives, signaling that these were significant to the learning process. One way that students immerse themselves in their host cultures is by becoming involved in cross-cultural relationships. When students are emotionally engaged, they have more of an investment in the learning process. These adventure experiences serve the same purpose. Adventures function to engage a student in the host culture and country, enabling them to connect with the place, people and culture in which they are immersed. Sometimes

this is as simple as feeling connected to the natural beauty of a place, such as in the case of the rain forest and the Galapagos for Megan and Greg, as they came into contact with places and animals they've only read about or seen on television. In addition, adventures typically challenge students in some way. Students are required to meet these challenges, leading to an increase in self-confidence.

Mezirow fails to acknowledge the ways in which students are emotionally engaged in the learning process through relationships, and, in the case of experiential, cross-cultural learning, through adventures. These elements eventually become mediums for transformational experiences and dialogue, and are vital components in the learning process. Students must have an emotional commitment to a learning situation in order to experience transformation.

In the final chapter I directly answer the research questions posed at the beginning of this thesis based on the research discussed thus far. I also reflect on the social context of this study, in particular the lack of reciprocity in the field of study abroad and the student selection process. Finally, I discuss the benefits and dilemmas involved in the use of Mezirow's transformation theory as the theoretical framework of this study.

Chapter Eight: Conclusions

Introduction

The purpose of this study has been to examine the process of experiential, cross-cultural learning from the perspective of students from the United States who have studied in non-industrialized countries. The research was designed to examine students' experiences from the standpoint of Mezirow's transformation theory, in order to determine whether or not experiential, cross-cultural learning leads to perspective transformation among participants. It also endeavored to determine, when such a transformation does occur, what conditions of learning lead to a process of transformative learning.

The following conclusions discuss the various elements of change, adaption, and transformation resulting from the experiences of the students interviewed in this study. I have analyzed student responses to examine the types of changes that the participants have undergone, and explored the conditions of experiential, cross-cultural learning that led to perspective transformation. In addition, this chapter includes a reflection of the social and global context of this educational program model, providing insight into a number of larger issues surrounding experiential study abroad. Reflection on these issues contributes to the improvement and development of experiential, cross-cultural educational ventures, as well as to the field in general.

Discussion of Research Questions

Perspective Transformation

From the data presented thus far, there are some conclusions to be drawn in relation to the initial research questions of this study. The first question is: As a result of an experiential, cross-cultural immersion experience in a non-industrialized country, what changes do U.S. undergraduate students undergo in relation to their ideas about: a) the Third World and international issues, b) their own values, and c) their own life plans? If students are transformed by this learning process, what is the nature of this transformation?

This study has shown evidence of each of the three forms of perspective transformation indicated by Mezirow (1991). In terms of epistemic perspectives, many students indicated changes in their approach to learning, as well as their approach to new situations. Sociolinguistic perspectives were changed as students learned new languages and learned to adjust to and live in new societies often contradictory to their own. They developed more complex understandings of the global society. Finally, many participants noted personal changes that took place as a result of their experience, constituting psychological perspective transformation. However, in light of these findings, it is important to note that Mezirow's transformation theory does not specify the starting and finishing points of transformative learning. Therefore, if a student begins the learning process from a high level of cross-cultural understanding and personal development and changes only a small amount, he or she might be at the same level of development as a student who started with little cross-cultural understanding gained a great deal. Indeed this study has shown that students who had no previous cross-cultural experiences before their study abroad experience were the most transformed by their College Semester Abroad because they had more to learn than their relatively experienced counterparts. This is one reason these four levels of learning have proven to be inadequate as a tool of analysis. They analyze only the extent to which a student has been transformed by learning, as opposed to the overall significance of learning for the student. This is especially problematic in a study such as this where transformation theory is applied to young adults who are still engaged in the formative learning process. Formative learning does not appear on a transformative learning scale in spite of its significance for the learner.

In interviews with participants, I asked questions regarding students' changes in their attitudes towards their home cultures, the Third World, and their host countries. I inquired about changes in their ideas about their careers, changes in self, changes in approach towards learning, and changes in students' attitudes towards their majors. I also asked students what they learned about themselves, and whether they saw their study abroad experiences as part of

their identity. Their answers informed analysis of the eight constructs listed in Chapter Seven. They are again listed here in relation to Mezirow's perspective categories:

Table 2: Constructs Grouped by Meaning Perspective

<u>Epistemic Perspectives</u>	<u>Sociolinguistic Perspectives</u>	<u>Psychological Perspectives</u>
1) Changes in approach to learning	2) Changes in attitudes towards the Third World and understanding of global politics	5) Changes in personal values
	3) Development of a sense of reciprocity	6) Changes in level of self-confidence
	4) Changes in sense of social commitment and approach to social change	7) Changes in personality or lifestyle
		8) Changes in professional or career goals

Epistemic Perspective Transformation

An epistemic perspective refers to how a student gains knowledge about the world. The research design and data collected in this study preclude a thorough investigation of whether experiential, cross-cultural learning leads to epistemic perspective transformation. This is a limitation of the study. The interview questions were developed without this perspective in mind. However, one category of change which was investigated sheds some light on this area, changes in approach to learning. The learning approaches of many of the students changed as a result of their cultural immersion experiences. None of the students responded negatively to the process of experiential learning. Some students were proponents of experiential learning before the program, and their experiences reinforced their belief in it. Some students had been critical of experiential learning upon entering the program and were pleasantly surprised to observe positive results from it. Four of the students' approaches to learning changed dramatically as a result of their experiences abroad, and these changes can be attributed to other forms of transformation which occurred at the same time. For example, Brian's concept of himself as a doctor was radically changed as a result of his experience. This correlates with his adoption of Buddhism, part of which is an attitude towards learning for its own inherent value. When Brian applied for medical school after college, he was impressed by the way in which Yale medical school emphasized the importance of learning for its intrinsic value by not giving grades to students. Like Brian, as Greg realized his career goals

in environmentalism, he developed a more practical approach to learning as a means to acquire concrete skills with which to contribute to social change. Jodie and Nicole, the other two students who experienced significant changes in their approaches towards learning, developed new approaches to learning as they realized that this aided them in accomplishing their goals as agents for social change. Besides this one construct, the study did not focus on epistemic perspective transformation as a result of experiential, cross-cultural learning, and this is an area where further research would be beneficial.

Sociolinguistic Perspective Transformation

Participants in this study demonstrated significant transformative learning in relation to sociolinguistic perspectives, an area upon which this research was focused. All students reported that they learned a great deal about their host culture and country, and they described changes in their understanding of issues revolving around Third World politics and societies, and issues of development and industrialization. People varied in their responses. In her discussion of self-discoveries, Susan explained how she was able to develop a philosophy and understanding of environmentalism in the non-industrialized nations. Lisa indicated a deeper comprehension of global politics as a result of her experience in Kenya. James was meaningfully affected by witnessing severe poverty for the first time. It caused him to realize how many luxuries he took for granted, and he developed a permanent sense of awareness that he did not have before the program. He went from a minimal concept of life in non-industrialized countries to a detailed knowledge of life, culture, politics, and economics in India. For Megan, her experience in Ecuador led her to reflect on the role of the United States in the Third World, and on the ignorance of many Americans concerning political and environmental issues in non-industrialized nations.

Emily was also disturbed when she realized the disparity between the media portrayal of life in non-industrialized nations and the realities of these countries. She acquired a sense of "life" in Bolivia, the many lifestyles and plural realities that exist there, and she was able to find similarities between the lifestyle she was accustomed to and the lifestyle she led in

Bolivia. She also gained insight into the role the United States plays in Bolivia, especially the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), and the resentment felt by the Bolivians towards Americans. Like James, Brian was made aware of the incredible opportunities afforded to him as a upper middle class citizen of the United States. His trip to Tibet was the first time he had left North America in his lifetime, and he recalled having no preconceptions or impressions of the Third World. Therefore, the change in his perspective was the acquisition of knowledge and experience of life in non-industrialized countries. He was faced with poverty that he did not know existed. In addition to her exposure to Morocco, Danielle was struck by how blatantly connected politics were to everyday life in Morocco. Angela was surprised to find that some of her own values seemed out of place in Bali, such as her western concept of feminism. Instead, she came to understand how religion shapes the everyday life of Balinese people. Chris was struck with the intensity of politics in non-industrialized countries and with the extent of corruption. For the students who did not have experience living in non-industrialized countries, the experience was eye-opening. It caused them to challenge their own meaning perspectives and assumptions of the world. Although no students experienced an ideological transformation as discussed in the previous chapter, all the students seemed to learn about global politics, and were able to recognize it in the everyday lives of people in their host cultures.

On the other hand, the students who had previous experience in non-industrialized countries had already gone through many of these changes. When Jodie went to Cameroon she already had a great deal of knowledge and deep understanding of the politics between industrialized and non-industrialized nations from her university courses, and her experience in Cameroon brought a sense of realism to her intellectual comprehension. She also realized the importance of crossing boundaries in society. Greg, like Jodie, was very knowledgeable from his university education of global politics. His experiences in Ecuador helped him to further develop his own philosophy of sustainable development and action for social change. Nicole's previous study abroad experience in Ghana and her African studies focus at university

prepared her in much the same way as Jodie and Greg for her experiences in Africa. She realized the extent to which culture influences politics and everyday life.

I expected to find students actively engaged in international activities after returning home. However, few of the students interviewed had been very involved in international activities or organizations, with the exception of Emily who worked as an international students' advisor at her university the semester after she returned from Bolivia. Social change through grassroots organizing and community involvement did appear to be a value for many of these students, and yet when questioned they responded that they did not have time to participate in these sorts of activities. I found that these students looked towards their careers, research, or further schooling as ways in which to have an impact on society and to express their sense of social commitment.

Susan saw her work in environmental education as a way to act on her values of environmentalism. She also mentioned that she would be interested in doing international development work overseas. Lisa worked in volunteer development in a human services department, and anticipated a career in social work. James and Nicole saw their teaching careers as ways in which to have an impact on society. However, Nicole had a history of community work and involvement before the Zimbabwe program, and was unable to continue her work after she graduated from college because of the rigor of her teaching credential program. Greg, Megan, Brian, Emily, and Danielle all had plans to return to their host countries in order to travel, conduct research, and continue their cultural and linguistic studies. Danielle's conception and ideology of feminism had been challenged and transformed through her experiences, and therefore her approach to feminism and social change was transformed. Megan mentioned that she would be interested in doing some volunteer work while she was in Ecuador, and was interested in studying women's health. All of the participants said that they would like to return to their host countries or the general area to travel at some point again in their lives. Emily was interested in working in an international context, and had been looking for a teaching position when I spoke with her. Jodie was interested in finding a job or a

volunteer position in the area of community development. Angela hoped to enter the field of career counseling, and considered culture shock counseling as a way she might incorporate her experience in Bali into her career.

It is striking that the career goals of these participants all stem from strong values of social commitment. Many of these students seemed as though they would welcome the opportunity to volunteer for programs in international development. However, few of them actively recognized grassroots community work as an important past time to incorporate in their lives. Rather, they looked to their careers, research, or further schooling as ways in which to make a difference in society.

Psychological Perspective Transformation

In terms of the changes in personal values of the participants, this consisted of a greater self-awareness and clarification of their personal values. For example, Susan realized how important her values of environmentalism and conservation were to her. Lisa, James, Brian, Jodie, Danielle, and Nicole recognized the importance of their families and friends to their lives. Danielle, through her disturbing experiences of sexual harassment, assault, and compromise of her feminist ideals, was able to clarify the significance of feminism in her life. After some difficulty, she reconciled her experiences in Morocco with a newly developed sense of self. Both Chris and Emily recognized their value of personal independence. Only two students, James and Brian, noticed significant changes in their personal values. James acquired a great deal of admiration for the dedication of his girlfriend Kayla to social change, which caused him to develop personal values of commitment and contribution to his community. Brian began to practice Buddhism, adopted many of its teachings and values.

Almost all the participants, with the exception of one, noticed growth in their self-confidence as a result of learning to adapt and function in cultures and languages dramatically different from their own. Angela, however, felt discouraged by her loss of independence during her time in Bali, and disappointed in the extent to which she immersed herself in the culture. Aside from this incident, all participants felt that their levels of self-confidence

improved significantly as a result of this learning process. It seems that one contributing factor to this improvement, which appeared to be of importance to a number of the students, was the adventure element of experiential, cross-cultural learning. Susan, Megan, Chris, Brian, James, Jodie and Greg all expressed feelings of excitement at the thrill of their "adventures", and at being thrust into challenging situations where they were forced to cope with difficulties. By enduring these experiences, students developed feelings of competence and said that they felt they could handle new challenging situations and cope effectively with them.

In addition to the acquisition of confidence, many of the participants noticed actual changes in their personalities. Each participant saw this experience as an integral part of their personal identities. Susan found that she had a greater level of independence than she had when she left home. James discovered a greater self-criticism, and yet at the same time was more thankful for his lifestyle and opportunities. Brian began to practice Buddhism, which led to some major lifestyle changes. He also began to take more risks. He developed professional goals for himself and recreated his identity as a medical student. Jodie's identity as a musician was intensified, which led her to develop a better self-image. Greg recognized his potential as an agent for social change. Angela noticed that she became more aware and tolerant of other cultures.

Participants had difficulty distinguishing between their personal changes as a result of maturation, and personal changes resulting from their experiences abroad. However, travel in time and place go hand in hand, and these two types of personal changes occur simultaneously. Because these students are young adults and still in the midst of the maturation process, we can not know for sure to what their maturation and personal changes can be attributed.

Most of these students were on a path of career development before starting this program, and this program helped students to clarify their professional goals. Students were able to use the ISP part of the program to develop their academic and professional (or personal) interests and to act on them. Susan was an Environmental Studies major before the SIT program began. However, through her ISP she worked in the field of Environmental

Education, and she committed herself to that field when she returned to Vermont to finish her degree. James went from planning on a career as a religious studies professor to a career as an elementary school teacher in an attempt to have a stronger impact on education, although his ISP did not have much to do with this decision. Through Brian's studies with a traditional Tibetan doctor, he realized his desire to be a family practitioner as opposed to a specialist, in order to have a closer relationship with people and their problems. He also realized his desire to work in non-industrialized countries in order to alleviate health problems in areas where medical attention is not readily available. Jodie, Danielle, and Nicole realized the importance of working for social change within their own communities, Jodie through community development, Danielle through law, and Nicole through education. Greg decided that he would be best equipped to make a difference environmentally if he went back to school and acquired practical training in forestry skills. Chris realized his commitment to environmentalism and international development but was unsure of the direction to take in his career.

Conditions Leading to Perspective Transformation

The second research question is: What elements of the experiential, cross-cultural immersion experience are crucial in the student's change process? In particular, under what circumstances do the emotional and interpersonal involvement of students in the host culture have a transformative effect on their intellectual and personal development? How do individual differences among students in background, knowledge, and values affect their experience of the change process? What effect does the process of re-entry and re-integration into the home culture have on the transformation process? In the interviews with students, I asked participants to discuss important relationships they developed during their SIT programs, and the effect these relationships had on them. I also asked participants what they considered to be the essential parts of the SIT program. Finally, I asked questions regarding their previous study abroad experiences, their academic and personal interests, their personal characteristics, and the influence of their families and upbringings.

Five main factors influence the conditions leading to transformative learning. These are: positive or challenging experiences of CSA program components, the degree of cultural immersion, the development of significant and deeply involved relationships, the use of experiential education techniques, and the opportunities for reflection and the incorporation of changes in lifestyle upon re-entry.

The components of the SIT program that participants listed as important in the interviews can not necessarily be correlated with the student change process, although they are definitely influential components. What stood out in the minds of the students does not necessarily indicate the elements of the program that led to their personal changes. However, the opinions and insights of students are informative in terms of the program components that left a deep impact on them. The students' construction of meaning is also vital to this study. Many students listed the homestay and the Independent Study Project as essential parts of the CSA program. Chris stated that experiential education balanced with academic learning was a critical dimension of the educational value of the program. Susan appreciated the language and cultural training she received in addition to her Wildlife Ecology classes.

Most of the students found the academic components of the program, such as the seminars and language classes, useful in enabling them to immerse themselves in the culture. Many students had positive experiences of the homestay and the ISP. However, in cases where these program components promoted transformative learning, they were closely correlated with the degree of cultural immersion experienced by the student.

Of the students who experienced profound degrees of cultural immersion, some factors in their experiences led to the development of intimate interaction with the host culture. First of all, students who had had previous study abroad experiences, such as Greg, Jodie, Nicole, Emily, and Danielle, were able to engage in cross-cultural interaction beyond the acquisition of cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural understanding. In other words, they had already experienced some degree of perspective transformation through cross-cultural learning and were open to new perspectives and the challenge to their own cultural assumptions,

expectations, and norms. This was true to a large extent for Greg, Jodie and Nicole. Emily's experience in Mexico had been five years earlier and lasted only a couple of weeks. Danielle's experience was in Switzerland during high school, and she did not mention this as having had much of an effect on her.

Secondly, language skills affected the level of cross-cultural interaction experienced by students. Greg, Emily, and Megan were all proficient in Spanish before participating in the SIT program. Both Jodie and Danielle were proficient in French before they studied abroad. Brian spoke Mandarin fluently, which was the language spoken in his home throughout his childhood. All of these students found that their advanced language skills helped them to communicate with people of their host culture on a deeper level than they would have with beginning language skills. However, this is a complicated issue because for programs in Spanish and French speaking countries, some language proficiency is required for participation because those languages are accessible to students in the United States. However, languages such as Kiswahili spoken in Kenya and Tanzania, Indonesian, Tibetan, and Nepalese are for many U.S. students only accessible once they reach their country of study. Therefore, logistically, this is a difficult factor for study abroad programs to compensate.

The length of the homestay varies in different CSA programs. However, it seems that the homestays which lasted approximately six weeks allowed students to develop personal relationships with their homestay families that led to transformative learning, such as in the cases of Jodie, Nicole, and Brian. For Nicole and Brian these homestays actually happened during the ISP. The case of Emily demonstrates the problem of having a homestay longer than six weeks, where destructive conflicts arose.

Finally, long term post-program travel allowed students to further their degree of cultural immersion, and allowed students to reflect on their status as U.S. students traveling in non-industrialized countries. James, Brian, Jodie, and Nicole each spent at least a month traveling in the host country or general region of study. Brian and Nicole each plunged deeper into cultural immersion as a result of their post-program travel and research, while James and

Jodie both noticed that their status changed from student to tourist, and they were disappointed that they could not achieve the same level of interaction with people of host cultures after the program ended.

The fourth condition of learning which leads to perspective transformation is the use of experiential learning. This condition has five contributing factors: the degree of personal involvement or investment; the degree to which perspectives, values, and cultural norms are challenged; the degree to which students learn about global politics; the degree to which students play a direct role in their own learning; and the level of critical reflection experienced by students.

Student experiences are somewhat unpredictable; although the program and students can promote the occurrence of these conditions of learning in student experiences to a certain degree, they also depend on outside influences, such as students encountering influential people and experiences on their own. Students and directors have little control over these circumstances. For example, Angela did not know she would experience such a degree of culture shock in Bali. Her previous experience with experiential learning in Chicago had been positive and she looked forward to a similar experience, which she did not find. Brian had no idea that he would experience an identity crisis when confronted by the colonization of the Tibetan people.

The final condition of learning for perspective transformation is emotional support upon re-entry and the opportunity for reflection and change upon return. This is a critical component of the experiential, cross-cultural learning process. Much of the learning can take place long after the initial experience as students process their experiences. Contributing factors to this condition for learning are emotional support, support for new meaning schema or perspective, and outlets for the expression of ideology and new meaning schemes or perspectives. Hansel (1993) presents a description of four stages in the re-entry process. The first stage is the excitement of the initial return to the home culture, in which students feel relief through enjoying the comforts of home and reunion with family and friends. After

students settle into old routines, they experience the second stage of re-entry shock, where they are challenged by the desire to make adjustments in their education and career and encounter conflicts in relationships with families and friends. This can result in feelings of isolation or even identity crises, which is stage three. Stage four is the reconciliation of conflicts between the host and home cultures, and the establishment of a new identity (p. 109-114). Wilson (1988) suggests ways in which students can attempt to resolve the frustrations of re-entry. Students should talk about their experiences and try to communicate the experience effectively to family and friends, respond to questions that people ask with patience and a positive attitude, become a bridge builder between other cultures in the home community, and use the experience in the future by developing cross-cultural relationships, acquiring more cross-cultural experience, becoming involved internationally, or developing a career based on the experience. The level of intensity of the re-entry experience is dependent on a number of factors: age and academic level, previous cross-cultural experiences, length of stay in the host culture and the degree of interaction with the host culture, readiness to return home, degree of similarity between the home and host culture, changes or lack of change in the home environment, the type of job placement or application of new knowledge upon return, individual awareness of the re-entry process, and the availability or lack of a support group (Thomas, 1992, p. 8-12).

Participants in this study had a variety of re-entry experiences. Susan was able to move directly into an environmental co-operative through which she received support and an outlet for her clarified values of environmentalism. James received a great deal of emotional support from his family, and also moved directly to Seattle where he found an ideological outlet in his work as an elementary school teacher. Megan had a difficult re-entry because she encountered little emotional or ideological support. She waited until she graduated from college to find an outlet to continue her exploration of cross-cultural learning, when she returned to Ecuador and traveled through Latin America. Emily also had a difficult re-entry. She found no emotional support or support for her new meaning perspectives. However, she did find an outlet for her

cross-cultural skills through her position as an international students coordinator. Danielle faced severe depression during her re-integration into her home culture, as she had to deal with the confrontations and harassment she encountered in Morocco. Eventually, Danielle found an emotional and intellectual outlet in the writing of her thesis, and she received some emotional support from friends, peers, and a few of her professors.

Brian found an outlet for processing his experiences when he returned to his family and recounted his physical and emotional journey through China. This journey had a great deal of significance for his family, and they provided him with emotional support. Brian changed his lifestyle when he began to practice Buddhism, and he continued to receive support from his mentors, Jean and Tsampa. Angela had a relatively easy re-entry process. She was relieved to return home and to find the emotional and cultural support that she missed in Bali. Greg, Jodie, and Chris all experienced processes of re-adjustment, but they worked through their own conflicts through time and reflection. Each of these students now hopes to use their careers as outlets for their ideologies of social commitment.

In some ways, students are on the margins of society when they return to their home culture. They must learn to incorporate the new cultural values they have learned with their old home culture. Students perceive themselves and their world views differently when they return home. They have experienced access to a perspective that has been hidden from most people in their home society. This may result in feelings of isolation and frustration. Other people in the home culture may perceive these students differently when they return home, perhaps as a result of confusion or misunderstanding. The way in which society responds to the students upon re-entry may change how the students perceive themselves. Many participants in these programs may feel unique for having gained a perspective of life in a non-industrialized country. In fact, their original decision to study abroad may have been shaped for a desire to express themselves uniquely or to gain uncommon knowledge.

When students return home and have not reconciled their new knowledge, experiences, and meaning perspectives with their old ones, they might experience reverse culture shock.

The process of readjustment and personal reconciliation composes the re-entry process. Students may need to re-establish their identities and meaning perspectives based on their new experiences. Therefore, much of the transformative learning process actually occurs at home as students experience marginality, reconciliation, and the creation of new meaning schemes and perspectives. This can continue for years after the program, as often a great deal of processing must take place.

Students expressed a need for follow up discussions after the return to the home culture. An important part of the learning process is the way in which students incorporate their transformed meaning perspectives into their lives at home, ideally having an outlet for the expression of these new meaning perspectives and schemes. A lack of cultural and social collectivity of experience after the study abroad program ends could lessen the potential of transformation for the students and might function to immobilize them part way through the transformation process, lessening the potency of the learning experience. This could result in de-emphasizing and restricting reciprocity and social action.

There are a number of ways to facilitate re-entry support and collectivity for returning students. One way is to set up regional networks for alumni. These networks could organize regional meetings and conferences for students who wish to continue to expand, reflect, and act on their experiences. Also, they could advise students about opportunities to express commitment to social change. Re-entry adjustment counseling, such as Angela hoped to participate in, would also benefit students in their re-entry process. And, in the same way that pre-departure home preparation curriculum packets can help to ease the initial culture shock for students when they arrive in the host culture, re-entry home adjustment curriculum packets can ease the re-integration process.

Finally, certain elements in student backgrounds can influence perspective transformation. This study did not determine adequately how students' backgrounds affect their experiences abroad. However, a few conclusions can be drawn. Participants in this study came from a variety of backgrounds. Students who studied abroad previous to this program

tended to demonstrate a more complex sense of cultural sensitivity and understanding and develop a more complex understanding of cultural and political issues through the CSA program. Two-thirds of the participants in this program were European-American women, reflecting a tendency for people with such a background to participate in this type of educational program. Of the four men interviewed, three of them studied abroad in part to further their knowledge and understanding of eastern religions. Three students were majoring in regional studies and studied abroad according to their area of interest. Three students were environmental studies majors or minors, and the remaining four students majored in or had strong interests in the field of anthropology. Each of these majors is concerned in one way or another with cross-cultural perspectives and international development and relations.

Conclusions: Reflections on the Social Context of This Study

Multi-Levelled Reciprocity

From the data collected in this study, it appears that students have a difficult time developing a varied, multi-leveled sense of reciprocity within a one-way, or one-sided study abroad program as opposed to an exchange program. This one-sidedness shapes the ideals and values which are passed on to the students. This is especially problematic when a privileged student from an industrialized country studies abroad in a non-industrialized country, as the power dynamics in subsequent cross-cultural relationships are historically shaped by colonialism and imperialism. An experience such as CSA could be just as beneficial to people from non-industrialized countries, and these people should be afforded this opportunity. This could be referred to as another level of reciprocity. Cross-cultural exchanges, where students from two cultures switch places or take turns studying in one another's country are based on a reciprocal model of cross-cultural relations, and this model emphasizes the importance of cultural reciprocity. Although there is a cultural exchange between the students and the people of the host culture in a one-sided program model, there is not a student exchange between industrialized and non-industrialized countries. Students in one-sided programs only experience the perspective of cultural sojourner, they do not experience the perspective of

cultural host. Many study abroad programs today are based in First World countries and cater to First World students, where students from the First World have the option to go to another First World country or a Third World country. These programs do not offer Third World students the opportunity to study abroad at all.

This contributes to a capitalist model of experiential learning, or the commodification of experience. Students "buy" an experience with tuition money, expecting what they paid for, an educational experience. From an outsider's perspective, it becomes a situation where people from non-industrialized countries are required to entertain and educate students from industrialized nations. This is a dangerous and unhealthy model of cross-cultural relations. It leads to the myth of an "authentic" cultural experience, one shaped by preconceptions and stereotypes.

As a general rule, it is claimed, a one-way flow is exploitative. Study abroad then becomes the 'mining' of one culture by another, a cruel manifestation of cultural imperialism. Students abroad are then only a sophisticated type of tourist, gawking not just at the natives and their funny ways but in greater depth at their language, society, and culture as well. At a more practical level, those who have administered study abroad find that reciprocity can improve the entire tone and effectiveness of the experience. Under a two-way relationship American students become partners and collaborators rather than charges (Goodwin and Nacht, 1988, p. 83-84)

Some students enter their homestay expecting quintessential culture and Third World living conditions, wanting to challenge themselves and test their personal limits, to experience something different from what they know. If they are placed with a wealthy family, they are disappointed. When people in the Third World treat the interaction as a capitalist enterprise, First World people get offended, because the unspoken role for the people of the Third World is to develop meaningful relationships with westerners to facilitate the personal growth of westerners. For example, Jodie discussed her disillusionment with the capitalist venture of a village in her essay "Cadeau, Cadeau". The Cameroonian village had realized a way in which to profit from the tourist industry. However, once the culture became commodified, it no longer seemed authentic. Both James and Danielle expressed dismay at being placed with wealthy homestay families, as this did not fit with their expectations of living in a non-

industrialized country. Susan expressed frustration that her homestay father could not comprehend the limits or relativity of her personal wealth and the wealth or cost of living of her country. These students initially did not want to acknowledge their own wealth and privilege in relation to their cross-cultural relations. It was something with which they were not accustomed to being confronted. Through critical reflection, some students were able to see the injustice of these situations as well as their expectations of authenticity. Nicole recognized this inequality from the beginning of the program and questioned the lack of student exchange and bi-cultural program leadership.

Within the field of experiential cross-cultural learning, there is a need to move away from the model of "one-way" learning about and learning from a host culture. Instead, more reciprocal and democratic models of study abroad should be promoted so that students can better build bridges between cultures rather than focusing on the acquisition of cross-cultural learning and experience. With this approach, knowledge becomes power which is only accessible to a select few.

Within the School for International Training, there appears to be a philosophy of and desire for cultural reciprocity in the CSA program. However, logistical problems in many non-industrial countries, such as difficulty in obtaining visas, immigration laws, and financial limitations, have thus far prevented the creation of an exchange CSA program. Instead, CSA uses methods such as employing people of the host culture as lecturers and ISP advisers, and work camps to promote reciprocity in the CSA programs. In addition, the organization World Learning contains the mechanism for cultural reciprocity within other programs, just not in the CSA program.

Another way to promote reciprocity within experiential, cross-cultural learning is to develop service learning as a program component. In addition to workcamps, students should be required to perform regular community service throughout the program and encouraged to continue this practice after they return home. It should be emphasized that all communities require involvement and service from their members, both in industrialized and non-

industrialized countries. Transformative learning can refer to the transformation of the world as well as personal transformation; not only does the world transform these students, but they can transform the world around them. Pyle (1981) found that cross-cultural service learning resulted in an increase in student realization of interdependence in relationships. Conrad and Hedin (1982), Hamilton and Fenzel (1988), and Newmann and Rutter (1983) each found that community service learning resulted in gains in social and personal responsibility (all cited in Conrad and Hedin, 1990).

[Q]uantitative research on the impact of community service suggests that it can and often does have a positive effect on the social / psychological development of participants. Researchers consistently report a heightened sense of personal and social responsibility, more positive attitudes toward adults and others, more active exploration of careers, enhanced self-esteem, growth in moral and ego development, more complex patterns of thought, and greater mastery of skills and content that are directly related to the experiences of the participants. (Conrad and Hedin, 1990, p. 747)

Through service learning, students can learn to have a positive impact on the world around them, and to develop reciprocal cross-cultural and cross-political relationships. The field of study abroad lacks a sense of global democracy. One-way study abroad, from industrialized countries to non-industrialized countries, remains a neo-colonialist model of cross-cultural relations. An alternative can be found in continental and cross-continental cultural exchange programs, which encourage reciprocity between industrialized and non-industrialized nations. Unfortunately, there are significant logistical problems with exchange programs, such as with program funding and travel visas. It appears that these problems can only be solved with governmental financial and logistical support. One model of a continental service-learning program that created a domestic exchange program with the help of governmental funding is the former Canadian Katimavik program. This program died out in the 1980's when its funding was cut.

Katimavik was a national youth volunteer service program sponsored by the Canadian government from 1977 until 1986. It was a nine-month residential program divided into three trimesters, each spent in a different community in Canada, two English-speaking and one French-speaking. Participants were placed in 12 member groups and were expected to practice

cooperative living. Katimavik had four main goals: personal development of participants, service to Canadian communities, promotion of participant awareness of environmental issues, and participant understanding of various cultures in Canada (McMullan and Snyder, 1986). This is an example of a service learning, experiential, cross-cultural educational program that promoted reciprocity, cross-cultural awareness, and personal development. It can be referred to as a model for other cross-cultural exchange, service learning programs. Unfortunately, this program and others like it suffer from a severe lack of funding. This is an issue that must be addressed by experts in the field in order to create democracy and reciprocity in experiential, cross-cultural learning.

The Student Selection Process

A final issue in the discussion of the social context of this program is the program's selection of students. The students who are selected for this program are academically successful, educated, often wealthy university students. It has been discussed previously that the CSA program is dominated by people of European-American descent, particularly women. Only a few students of color participate in CSA programs every semester, and there is a lack of data collection on the race and ethnicities of study abroad participants (Markiewicz, 1994).

Two thirds of all CSA students are women, calling into question the cultural norms and expectations of women in our society. Why is it that women of European-American descent are more encouraged and motivated to study abroad than any other group of students? There are many explanations for the domination of the CSA program by women, most of which involve gender stereotypes. One rationale is that women consider the purpose of their education to be for personal development, while men are more concerned with career training. Therefore, women are more likely to seek out opportunities for study abroad for their own personal development, while men might see the "break" from their career training as a distraction. Other theories are that women are more brave than men, more motivated than men, or that women are more likely than men to engage in communicative learning, all of which leads them to study abroad. Some educators speculate that since science majors are

dominated by men and liberal arts majors are dominated by women, more women study abroad because it is more encouraged by liberal arts programs than by science programs. Finally, there is a theory that women are socialized to be more caring and compassionate concerning social issues, and to value justice and diversity. It appears that female socialization in the U.S. does contribute to this trend, but it is difficult to determine how. Although I asked students about their personal theories concerning this trend, it is impossible to conclude from the data collected in this study the reason behind the dominance of the field by women. This warrants further research.

Certain barriers lead to the lack of diversity among study abroad participants. For example, many faculty and staff members have not traditionally recommended minority students for study abroad programs, and there is a need to educate faculty and staff on the importance of international education for students from all backgrounds. Finances are another intimidating barrier to study abroad for students on financial aid, many of whom are minority students. Resistance by the families and communities of minority students proves to be a barrier to study abroad. Many of these students and their families may fear racism, social isolation, and a lack of community support in host countries (Markiewicz, 1994).

Access to this program is limited by high tuition fees. College students in general tend to be people from privileged groups in society, and only the privileged of the privileged have access to study abroad programs. The opportunity to study abroad then increases an already privileged student's marketability in the job force. In addition to discouraging many students from participating in study abroad programs, financing can be a problem for students during the program. Burn, Cerych, and Smith (1990) found that 13 percent of study abroad students had financial difficulties during their stay abroad.

One way to democratize the field of study abroad is to investigate alternative funding options for students. For example, SIT could require that a certain percentage of student tuition is raised through fund raising. This would equalize the economic selection requirement for students. Another option is to subsidize programs through universities and government

funding so that the study abroad program's tuition fees equal the tuition fees of the home university, minus travel and living costs. Finally, the expansion of scholarship funding would significantly diversify and democratize study abroad. Until the opportunity of study abroad is accessible to students of all backgrounds, it will remain an opportunity accorded to the economically privileged, which contradicts the main objectives of the organization World Learning, as well as other study abroad institutions.

Implications of this Study

This study has informed the field of study abroad in terms of the process and consequences of experiential, cross-cultural learning. It has given students the opportunity to voice their opinions concerning issues in the field of study abroad, tell stories of cultural immersion, and reflect further on the meanings behind their cross-cultural experiences. This study is unique in that it uses the method of narrative to research a learning process. This is rare in the field of experiential education, and noticeably so, as experiential learning is process-centered and dependent on the interchange between experience and reflection. A student narrative such as this can only inform the field in regard to the dynamics of this learning process.

Although this study conducted research with an organization in the United States and with only American students, it is informative for Canadian study abroad programs, as well as programs around the world. The problems of reciprocity, gender issues and the student selection process are applicable to the entire field of study abroad, not just the CSA program. Visibly, as indicated in this study, these problems significantly impact the experiences of study abroad students. Further research is necessary in order to alleviate the problems of gender and racial inequity, lack of funding, and a lack of cultural reciprocity in the field of study abroad.

This thesis has demonstrated some of the difficulties in applying Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformative learning to the cross-cultural learning experiences of young adults. The initial value of Mezirow's transformation theory as part of the theoretical framework of this study stems from its relevance to the process of making meaning from experience.

Transformation theory adds dimension to the discussion of experiential learning theory, the process of learning through experience, reflection, and change. Mezirow clarifies the process through which experience reinforces or challenges the meaning schemes and perspectives of a learner. In addition, the three types of meaning perspectives, epistemic, sociolinguistic, and psychological, provide a useful framework for understanding the ways in which transformation results from the interplay of experience and reflection in the learning process. He explains how critical reflection and dialogue can result in the transformation or recreation of meaning perspectives, a vital component in the experiential, cross-cultural learning process where students' cultural values and beliefs are constantly being confronted and re-evaluated. However, at this point, Mezirow's theory becomes problematic. Mezirow's four learning levels were found to be an insufficient analysis tool in the discussion of change resulting from experiential, cross-cultural learning for young adults. This model was created for the study of the learning of older adults, as Mezirow himself specifies. By applying this model to the learning of young adults, it is evident that there is a missing element in the differentiation of formative and transformative experiences, thereby de-emphasizing the importance of formative experiences for young adults, as in the case of the clarification of students' career interests and professional goals. While the general theory of transformative learning seems to be in agreement with the principles of experiential, cross-cultural learning, the model for evaluation of different degrees of learning are unsatisfactory. Mezirow's model is a measurement of the depth of transformation that results from experiential learning. However, it does not acknowledge the value of formative experiences or recognize the subtleties of the change process. In this study, it made sense to use a wider interpretation of the word transformation to refer to, in some cases, both formative or transformative learning. In addition, Mezirow's four levels of learning is a hierarchical model which implies that unless the highest level of transformation is realized, the learning is invalid.

Finally, Mezirow neglects the importance of becoming emotionally engaged in the learning process. Emotional involvement increases the psychological intensity of a learning

situation, and can lead to powerful experiences, dialogue, and change. In this study, it was evident that the relationships that students developed abroad were crucial to their learning experiences. Through these relationships, students became emotionally engaged, experienced challenging encounters, and engaged in cross-cultural dialogue and critical reflection. It is also through these relationships that students tested new meaning perspectives and personal values. It was evident in this study that the connections students developed to the host country and culture through experiences of adventure were also significant in grounding them in the learning process. These elements which engage students in learning and frame experience and reflection cannot be underestimated.

In spite of these issues with Mezirow's theory, the student narratives have richly demonstrated the phenomenon of experiential, cross-cultural learning. The four main areas of examination have been student backgrounds, student relationships, critical incidents and crisis, and transformation, and the bearing of the elements on the process of experiential, cross-cultural learning. Throughout this thesis, I have deliberately avoided opportunities to evaluate or measure student learning experiences and outcomes. The imposition of a hierarchical model on learning can only prove to be detrimental to these students, especially considering the emotional intensity of these experiences. Experiential learning is theoretically process centered as opposed to product centered. This study has endeavored to focus on both process and product without the evaluation of either, and with the understanding that there is no "final" product and that the reflection process is a continual one.

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Appendix I: Organizational Structure and List of Programs for World Learning

Each organizational division contains the following programs:

Citizen Exchange and Language Programs:

Short term, cross-cultural exchange and language programs.

- 1) **Summer Abroad**: the original exchange program, now primarily for high school students; includes homestays, travel, language training, and community service
- 2) **Homestay USA program**: programs for international visitors to the U.S., provides homestays with families for approximately four weeks, includes a language training option
- 3) **International High School Program**: individuals from other countries come to the U.S. and attend high school, year long
* example: **Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange**: a German / U.S. high school scholarship exchange funded by the U.S. government and the German Parliament
- 4) **International Students of English**: an intensive English training program for college students, located at various university sites in the U.S., with programs designed in four weeks modules
- 5) **Individual Homestays**: ranging from three to four weeks
- 6) **Executive English Program**: intensive language and cultural training for programs for business people in the international marketplace
- 7) **Youth Adventure Camp**: A summer program near Orlando, Florida for international 11 to 15 year olds, includes language training, Disneyworld, and other activities
- 8) **Elderhostel**: International homestay and study programs for participants 60 and older
- 9) **AuPair / Homestay USA & Abroad**: a year-long cross-cultural program where European au pairs provide child care for U.S. families, and U.S. au pairs provide child care for European families
- 10) **Specialized Programs**: Set up on an individual basis

School for International Training:

Undergraduate study abroad and graduate programs which train students for intercultural careers.

- 1) **College Semester Abroad**: (the focus of this study) 47 semester-long programs in 35 countries around the world
- 2) **Master's of Arts in Teaching**: a training program for English, French, and Spanish as Second Language teachers

- 3) **Master's Program in Intercultural Management**: a graduate program for training in intercultural careers, with concentrations in sustainable development, international education, and training and human resource development
- 4) **Bachelor's Program in World Issues**: an upper-division bachelor's program in international studies for junior and senior undergraduates; students concentrate in studies of peace, social and economic development, or the environment; includes a six to eight month internship

Projects in International Development and Training:

The management of international development projects, with a focus on human resource development and language training.

- 1) **Development Management**: international projects that work with local institutions for the promotion of social and economic change through job training and workshops
 - * example 1: English language training and cross-cultural training for refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia
 - * example 2: the strengthening of social services and local organizations in the former Soviet Union, and the creation of groups such as the United Way
 - * example 3: AIDS education in Uganda
- 2) **Human Resources Development**: international projects in community development and employment opportunities
 - * example: helping Cambodian refugees to return to Cambodia and set up income-generating projects and reestablish villages

(Leitch, 1993 and World Learning, 1993)

Appendix II: Letter of Introduction and Preliminary Questionnaire
Research Study:
**"A Narrative of Student Experience, Reflection, and Transformation
in an Experiential Study Abroad Program"**

To: Alumni of the School for International Training College Semester Abroad Program

What was your S.I.T. College Semester Abroad experience like? Has it had an impact on your life? If you are interested in talking about and reflecting on your S.I.T. experience, then I urge you to consider participation in this upcoming study.

I am a master's student in Social and Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. I am also an alumni of S.I.T.'s College Semester Abroad program in Zimbabwe (fall semester, 1990). For my master's thesis, I plan to conduct a study exploring the student perspective of experience within an S.I.T. program. I am interested in talking with students about their reflections and experiences in a cross-cultural, third world context. I received your name and address from the School for International Training. This letter inquires if you are interested in taking part in this study.

I believe participation in this study will be strongly beneficial to students, in that it will give you the opportunity to reflect on your experiences abroad and the integration of these experiences into your life at home. Reflection can help you to clarify your own understanding and conceptualization of these experiences, so that you might further apply what you have learned through the study abroad experience to your present and future life. In addition, participants will have the opportunity to voice their opinions concerning the S.I.T. experience and experiential cross-cultural learning in general.

Through information from this questionnaire, I will select 12 students to participate in this study based on the availability and location of students. Participants of this study will be asked to write a narrative of the program experience, and participate in one 1-2 hour, tape recorded interview in December, 1993. I will travel to your town of residence for the interview. Students will also be asked to submit all regular program assignments and journal entries which they feel comfortable submitting. All of this information will remain strictly confidential. I will assign pseudonyms to the tapes and transcription of interviews, as well as to the papers which are submitted to the study. In addition, students will be asked to read and comment on their own narratives as presented by the researcher, as well as researcher analysis.

Please take the time out from your busy schedule to fill out the enclosed questionnaire, regardless of your choice to participate in this study. There is room on the questionnaire to indicate if you would like to participate. Your immediate response is appreciated. Please return the questionnaire to me by
November 22, 1993, at:

Kelly Tuffo
20076 Ljepava Dr.
Saratoga, CA. 95070, USA

If you have any questions concerning the study, please call me at ----- . I will accept collect calls. You can also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Peter Seixas, at ----- . Thank you for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,
Kelly M. Tuffo

Preliminary Questionnaire
**"A Narrative of Student Experience, Reflection, and Transformation in an
Experiential Study Abroad Program"**

Kelly M. Tuffo, M.A. student in Social and Educational Studies,
University of British Columbia
(408) 867-1041

The information given on this questionnaire will be used to update the records of the School for International Training, as well as to inform the researcher in the selection of a group of 12 students to participate in a study of the student's perspective of an experiential study abroad program. Participants in this study will be asked to write a narrative of their experience, participate in one 1-2 hour interview, and voluntarily submit relevant journal entries and S.I.T. program assignments, all of which will remain strictly confidential. Participants will also be asked to read and comment on their own narratives as presented by the researcher, as well as researcher analysis. All information given on this questionnaire is strictly confidential. Please fill out and return this questionnaire regardless of your decision to participate in this study. Please indicate on question # 17 if you would like to participate in this study. This questionnaire should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Thank you!

(Note: If the questionnaire is filled out, it will be assumed that consent has been given to complete the questionnaire. It will not be assumed that consent has been given to participate in the study.)

Please print your answers. You may choose not to answer any or all of the following questions.

1) Name

2) Permanent address and phone number:

School address and phone number:

Dates available at this address:

Dates available at this address:

3) Semester, year, and country of SIT program:

4) Gender (please circle): F M

5) Ethnic background:

6) What is your major?

7) What are your other academic interests?

8) What are your personal interests and hobbies?

9) What are your career plans and goals?

10) Did the SIT program have an effect on your career plans and goals? If so, how?

11) What sparked your interest in study abroad?

12) Did you write in a journal during your SIT program? If so, how frequently?

13) Did your journal entries consist of:

- ☐ a record of the day's events
- ☐ thoughts and reflections
- ☐ both

14) Do you continue to write in a journal? If so, how frequently?

15) Do your journal entries consist of:

- ☐ a record of the day's events
- ☐ thoughts and reflections
- ☐ both

16) Briefly describe anything you see as unique about yourself and your background.

17) Would you like to participate in this study?

If yes, please indicate dates in the month of December, 1993, when you are available for an interview.

Appendix III: Interview Questions

- 1) Please describe your experiences abroad from beginning to end, starting with why you decided to study abroad.
- 2) Describe the relationships you developed during this program, both with Americans and the people of the country you visited. What influence and effect has each relationship had on you?
- 3) Have you maintained contact with any of these people? If yes, how?
- 4) Can you think of any cross-cultural experiences from the program which had a pronounced effect on you: (Note: this set of questions will be asked for each experience.)
 - a) Please describe the experience in as much detail as possible. (i.e. What was your role? Describe your actions. What were the actions of the other people involved?)
 - b) Why do you think this experience had a pronounced effect on you? Why do you distinctly remember it?
 - c) Discuss the motivations and the intentions behind your actions. Were any of these cultural beliefs?
 - d) What is your interpretation of the motivations and the intentions behind the actions of the other people involved? Were these cultural beliefs?
 - e) How, if at all, has this experience caused you to change:
 - 1) your approach to cross-cultural situations
 - 2) your beliefs and actions
- 5) Has your experience in the SIT program changed your ideas and attitudes about:
 - a) third world political and global affairs
 - b) third world people and societies--And if so, how?
- 6) Did your experience in the program change your ideas and attitudes towards the people of the specific country? If so, how?
- 7) Did your experience in the program change your ideas and attitudes towards Americans? If so, how?
- 8) Have you noticed a change in your interest in international events and issues? If yes, in what way?
- 9) Have you become involved in any international activities or organizations since you returned? Has any of your other behavior been internationally oriented?
- 10) Do you have any future travel plans? Did this experience affect your desire to travel?
- 11) Have you changed at all as a result of this experience?
- 12) What are your career goals and other aspects of your life plans? Has the program changed these? If so, how?
- 13) Did the program affect your attitude towards your major when you returned to school? If so, how?
- 14) Discuss the overall experience of this program.
What was positive? Why?

What was negative? Why?

15) What did you learn about yourself as a result of this program?

16) Did you experience any culture shock or homesickness?

17) Describe what it was like returning home.

18) Did the program change your relationships with:

a) family

b) close friends

c) partner in a romantic relationship

--And if so, in what ways?

19) What do you think are the essential elements of this program?

20) Do you think you participated in this experience at an appropriate time in your life? Why or why not?

21) Is there anything special in your background that affected your experience of this program?

22) Were there any experiences that made you especially conscious of your gender? If so, how? What effect did these experiences have on your ideas and actions?

23) Was the program experience different for people of the opposite sex in the group? If so, how?

24) The ratio of women to men in study abroad is generally 2 to 1. Do you have any speculation about why this might be?

25) Were there any experiences that made you especially conscious of your racial or ethnic background? If so, how? What effect did these experiences have on your ideas, attitudes, or actions?

26) Was the program experience different for people of other racial or ethnic backgrounds in the group? If so, how?

27) Has this program changed your approach to learning? If so, in what way?

28) Do you view this experience as relevant to your identity? In other words, if someone asked you, "Who are you?" would this experience come to your mind as part of your answer?