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Short-term Transformative Impacts of a Service-learning Study Abroad Program

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Universities are increasingly working to better prepare students for success in the workforce and increasingly advocating high-impact learning experiences. This case study explores the short-term impacts on students who participated in a short-term service-learning study abroad program in Ireland through a lens of Transformative Learning Theory. Data collection consisted of (a) a pre-participation interview, (b) a follow-up interview, and (c) participant observation. We found evidence of all four tenets of Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory: (a) refining meaning schema, (b) learning new schema, (c) transforming schemes, and (d) transforming perspectives. Emergent subthemes related to service-learning or personal growth were discovered within each of these tenets. We concluded that while this program was not intentionally designed with Transformative Learning Theory as a means to deliver an educational curriculum, there are transformational learning aspects inherent to study abroad as well as service-learning. Based on this study, we offer recommendations for best practices for facilitating service-learning study abroad programs and for future research.

Keywords: Transformative Learning, study abroad, service-learning, Ireland

Introduction

Universities are increasingly working to better prepare students for success in the workforce (National Research Council, 2009). College education is moving beyond classroom-based experiences to include internships, service-learning, study abroad, research, and other high-impact learning opportunities (Kuh, 2008). This study explored the short-term impacts on students who participated in one such high-impact learning experience, a short-term service-learning study abroad course. Studying abroad and service-learning are lauded for impacting students in positive ways (National Research Council, 2009).

According to the latest Institute for International Education's (IIE) Open Doors Report, the number of students going abroad for credit in the 2016-2017 academic year was 332,727, a 2.3% increase from the previous year (IIE, 2018). The report also showed that most students attended

short-term programs in Europe within a STEM field (IIE, 2018) and that the students studying abroad were predominately white and female (IIE, 2018). The University of Florida ranked 21st in the nation of leading institutions, sending 2,123 students abroad in the 2016-2017 academic school year. International components of curricula have grown in popularity and importance in colleges of agriculture (Graham, 2012).

Globalization affects current and future agricultural students in their personal and professional lives (Chang et al., 2013). It is becoming increasingly important for students to have an international experience as part of their undergraduate careers. According to Zhai and Scheer (2002), agricultural college students who had international education experiences perceived studying abroad as a useful experience in promoting personal development and global competencies. For students who study abroad, the impact can be far greater than what could be regulated to just their undergraduate studies. Arguably, an understanding of agriculture's history and current economic, social, and environmental significance, both domestically and internationally, is important for all Americans (Roberts et al., 2016). For students studying agriculture, a global perspective of the food system leads to a more well-rounded individual better prepared for a global workforce.

Other high-impact learning experiences, like service-learning, are also advocated by the National Research Council (2009). Service-learning can be viewed as another model of experiential education, with its foundation in community service (Howard, 2003). Service-learning has been a part of college education for some time. It has typically been integrated into college curricula as either a co-curricular or academic model (Howard, 2003). Co-curricular service-learning would be separate from a student's usual academics and complement their normal degree plans (Howard, 2003). Academic service-learning is integrated into an academic course and tied to the learning outcomes of that course (Howard, 2003). Research has also shown that participating in service-learning impacts students in the areas of personal development, increased sense of social responsibility, greater racial tolerance, and role in the community (Howard, 2003).

Service-learning programs have become increasingly popular within universities (Dreuth & Dreuth-Fewell, 2002; Lally, 2001), including within study abroad courses (IIE, 2018). As more students study abroad each year, they are now looking to spend their time out of the country doing more than studying at a foreign institution. Whether students are participating in service-learning programs for more altruistic reasons or because of the general desire to impact a community, many students are looking to expand beyond a traditional study abroad experience (Grusky, 2000). Even more specifically, within the studies of agriculture, civic engagement helps bring the knowledge of content to life and enables students to contribute to a community's needs (National Research Council, 2009).

Theoretical Framework

We chose Transformative Learning Theory (TLT; Mezirow, 1978, 1991) as the lens to examine the short-term impacts of a short-term, service-learning study abroad course. Transformative learning involves critical reflection of assumptions that may occur either in group interaction or independently (Mezirow, 2003). For transformation to occur, a person's meaning structures are changed by "(a) refining meaning schemes, (b) learning new schemes, (c) transforming schemes, or (d) transforming perspectives" (Mezirow, 1991, p. 244). Although not all four must occur for transformation, the goal would be to challenge learners in all four areas. A new meaning perspective has dimensions of thought, feeling, and will (Mezirow, 1978). Moving to a new perspective and sustaining the required action depends upon interactions with others who share the new perspective (Mezirow, 1978). Individuals at the final stage of reflective judgment can offer a perspective about their own experiences, an essential condition for transformative learning to occur (Mezirow, 2003). For this research, we were interested in seeing how participation in a short-term study aboard service-learning course transformed students through (a) refining meaning schemes, (b) learning new schemes, (c) transforming schemes, and/or (d) transforming perspectives.

Previous Research

Our search for relevant literature revealed a plethora of research that examined (a) outcomes and impacts from study abroad programs and (b) outcomes and impacts from service-learning programs. However, very few used a lens of TLT to interpret these outcomes and impacts. Even fewer studies investigated the outcomes and impacts of study abroad programs focused on service-learning. Only a few looked at study abroad service-learning programs through the lens of TLT.

Recent research on study abroad included that of Hartley et al. (2019), who investigated a study abroad service-learning program for pre-service agriculture teachers. Their results showed changes in preconceived ideas and balancing cultural biases. They did not, however, link or interpret their findings to TLT. Similarly, Redwine et al. (2018) looked at changes in students' global perspectives. They reported changes in intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive domains related to global perspectives. They did not use TLT to interpret their findings.

A few previous studies examined the impacts of study abroad using Mezirow's (1978, 1991) TLT. Kiely (2005) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study of students who participated in an immersive study abroad program in Nicaragua. Kiely used Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning model to examine how study participants experienced transformational learning during and after the program. He found five themes that contributed to students' transformations: (a) contextual border crossing, (b) dissonance, (c) personalizing, (d) processing, and (e) connecting. In another study, O'Malley et al. (2019) used TLT as the lens to investigate the dissonance students experienced during study abroad. Their data revealed four types of dissonance: (a)

environmental, (b) sociocultural, (c) personal, and (d) intellectual. In another study, Foronda et al. (2012) researched several study-abroad programs in low-income countries. They made ten recommendations for a transformative experience: (a) promote instructor commitment and continuity; (b) examine course objectives; (c) develop evaluation criteria specific to study abroad; (d) have thorough and extensive pre-program efforts; (e) foster connection and coping; (f) use select and various teaching methods; (g) encourage small steps and include course content related to the environment; (h) conservation and creativity; (i) raise awareness of oppressive system; and (j) shift to a service-learning approach (Foronda et al., 2012). Although they tied their recommendations to Mezirow's (1978) work, Foronda et al. (2012) did not describe how their recommendations directly impacted students' transformational experiences.

Much of the research on service-learning focuses on the outcomes and impacts on participants. In the context of international education, Sutton et al. (2007) distinguished between learning outcomes assessment and other kinds of outcome assessments. Rubin and Matthews (2013) emphasized that student learning outcomes must be documented for service-learning to thrive. Even though Rubin and Matthews (2013) supported assessing service-learning, they did not present a theoretical framework for that purpose.

One study on international service-learning examined both short-term and long-term impacts. Bamber and Hankin (2011) framed their study using Mezirow's (1978) four meaning-making schemas needed for transformation to occur. In addition, Bamber and Hankin included the six areas that Kiely (2005) defined as areas in which a student's worldview was disrupted: (a) political, (b) moral, (c) intellectual, (d) cultural, (e) personal, and (f) spiritual.

Although previous research has used TLT (Mezirow, 1978, 1991) to examine the impacts of both study abroad and service-learning, few have examined a study abroad program that included service-learning by examining changes in participant's meaning structures through (a) refining meaning schemes, (b) learning new schemes, (c) transforming schemes, or (d) transforming perspectives. This study sought to address this deficit in the literature.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to understand the short-term impacts on students due to participating in a short-term service-learning study abroad program using a Transformative Learning Theory lens (Mezirow, 1978, 1991). Specifically, we sought to explore how students' meaning structures changed through (a) refining meaning schema, (b) learning new schema, (c) transforming schema, and (d) transforming perspectives.

Methodology

We chose a case study as the appropriate method to understand students' perspectives and viewpoints. Case study research involves the study of a case within a real-life, contemporary

context or setting (Yin, 2015). Case study research is defined as a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and reports a case description and case themes (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Based on our research purpose, we selected a study abroad program with the main purpose of service-learning. The UF (University of Florida) in Galway and Gweedore: Youth Development, Service-Learning, and Irish Culture fit the criteria. This six-week program was conducted in Galway and Bunbeg, Ireland. Students were enrolled in 6 credits, which included two academic courses: (1) Youth Development, Service-Learning & Irish Culture and (2) Ireland Field Study. While in Galway, Ireland, students completed individual service-learning placements for four weeks, and in Bunbeg, Ireland, students completed a group service-learning placement for two weeks. This study is part of a larger investigation that assessed the medium/long-term outcomes (Cully Garbers et al., 2022) and impacts on the organizations where students completed service (Cully Garbers et al., 2023).

Participant Selection

To be chosen for the program, participants had to complete an online application, pay a deposit, have approval from their academic advisor, and complete an interview with the faculty directors. Prerequisites for the program were that students had to have previous service-learning experience and have completed a course on the fundamentals of youth development. This course could be from various departments at the university. During the program selection interviews, the faculty directors set forth their expectations of students participating in the program and whether these expectations were in line with what the students expected of the program. Nineteen students were selected to participate in the program, and 18 students consented to be involved in this research study. All participants were female and ranged in age from 19 to 24 years old. Student's majors included ten in the Family, Youth, and Community Sciences, two in English, two in Psychology, two in Public Health, one in Linguistics, one in Biology, and one in Elementary Education.

Organization Service-learning Placements

For individual service-learning placements, program facilitators placed students in five organizations throughout Galway and the surrounding areas that focused on various aspects of youth development. The first organization worked with youth from a traveler neighborhood, which is a temporary encampment, at the community center's summer day camp. The second organization specifically worked with autistic youth and their families. The third organization focused on youth homelessness and prevention. The fourth organization was a refugee center in Galway, where the students worked specifically with youth at the refugee center by providing a day camp. Organization five was a community center in a Gaelic-speaking part of County Galway. At this organization, the students worked at a youth day camp. During the group

placement, the study-abroad students worked with the local community center in their day camp as well as provided resources for a youth drop-in center.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of (a) a pre-participation interview, (b) a follow-up interview, and (c) participant observation. The pre-program interview guide consisted of nine questions. We asked students what their major was and their school year. They were also asked if they had studied abroad before or if they had been out of the country for other reasons. We also asked students to explain why they chose this program. Students were also asked about their experiences in service-learning and if they had participated in any type of service-learning before this program. Students were then asked about why they were interested in service-learning, what excited them, and what worried them. Students were finally asked what they hoped to gain by participating in this program. Interviews were conducted face-to-face as well as over the telephone. Interviews were semi-structured and were recorded with a voice recorder.

The follow-up interview guide had six questions. This interview occurred after the completion of their individual placements. Questions focused on what the students felt they had gained from their experiences. Questions focused on student reflection on their experience in relation to their responses from pre-participation interviews. Students were asked about what they had learned, how service-learning impacted them, and what differences they saw in themselves from the beginning of the program to the end of the program. Interviews were conducted face-to-face as well as over the telephone. These interviews were also semi-structured and were recorded with a voice recorder.

In addition, we conducted observations of the students at the places where they performed service for three of the five organizations. We observed how the students interacted with the youth as well as the other workers at the organizations. We also noted the type of work the students completed to describe whether the partnership was transactional or transformational. The focus was on the students' interactions at the organization and the roles that they played in the services provided.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally, representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion (Creswell & Poth, 2018). We transcribed student interviews using an online transcription service to provide PDF copies of each interview transcript. We typed all interview notes and observation notes into a Microsoft Word document for reference. Students were given participant numbers to keep their identities confidential.

We used both inductive and deductive coding to answer our research questions. First, we used open and axial coding (Saldaña, 2015) to identify and refine initial themes. Then, we used structural coding (Saldaña, 2015) to organize initial codes based on Mezirow's (1991) changes in meaning perspective: (a) refining meaning schemes, (b) learning new schemes, (c) transforming schemes, or (d) transforming perspectives.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness refers to the extent that the findings of the study accurately portray the participants and their context (Dooley, 2007). Triangulation was used as a means of establishing trustworthiness. Triangulation can be described in three ways: (a) using multiple researchers, (b) using multiple sources of data, or (c) using multiple research methods (Denzin, 2006). As a part of the larger research investigation, we used two of the triangulations mentioned above: data triangulation and methodological triangulation. We used multiple data sources, including (a) student interviews, (b) observations of students and organizations, and (c) interviews with the organizations. We also used member checks to establish trustworthiness, which allowed us to interpret participants' viewpoints, thoughts, feelings, and so forth accurately (Christensen et al., 2014). After the interviews had been transcribed and transcripts of interviews were made ready, we asked the faculty directors of the program and the organizations to verify. We also used peer debriefing to ensure trustworthiness in the methodology of the research.

We established confirmability and dependability through a detailed methodological journal to ensure accuracy in the researcher's ideas, changes, and thoughts as the research progressed (Erlandson et al., 1993). Notes consisted of the researcher's thoughts on potential follow-up questions in relation to the theoretical framework as well as any thoughts on how the research was progressing. Any changes to the methodology were also noted in the journal to ensure the accuracy of our reporting.

It is also important to address reflexivity in a study (Malterud, 2001). As the lead researcher, I was a professional in the international education field who worked directly with students studying abroad at the University of Florida. In the case of this study abroad program, I was the study abroad advisor but was not the instructor or leader of the program. I also have a professional relationship with the company that helped plan the program, Learn International, which existed before this research investigation. The other researchers were members of my graduate committee, including my advisor, who is a professor of agricultural education, and a committee member, who is one of the facilitators of this program. Both researchers are strong advocates for study abroad programs.

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Results

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Results were organized using the four tenets of Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory: (a) refining meaning schema, (b) learning new schema, (c) transforming schema, and (d)

transforming perspectives. Within each of these tenets, emergent subthemes related to service-learning or personal growth were discovered.

Refining Meaning Schema

Service-Learning

To understand students' perceptions of service-learning, participants were asked what aspects of service-learning excited them. For students 1, 3, 6, 7, 12, and 17, volunteering seemed to be a waste of time when their talents were not used. These students shared that there is no value in volunteering for the student since all they gave was their time. They felt that volunteering did not allow them the same opportunities as service-learning, because there was no learning. However, in service-learning, they were able to apply their coursework during their individual placements.

Furthermore, their service-learning experiences allowed students to think about potential job fields and explore if this was a field they might want to work in. Students shared how service-learning goes beyond what they were taught in a classroom. Student 5 described it as almost akin to an internship for her. Student 1 stated, "With service-learning, it's a continuous aspect of volunteering, and you go with a goal in mind." Student 16 reflected that "service-learning can teach you skills that you can't necessarily learn in the classroom."

During the follow-up interviews after their individual placements, students were able to see the connections more clearly between service-learning, individual placements, and how they applied to what they had previously learned in the classroom. Student 12 said she "got to learn how to do a specific task." She stated that in working with autistic youth, "I've seen it done, and I know what to do, but I've never been one-on-one with a kid where it's my responsibility." Student 8 shared that she was "definitely more confident in what I am going to do." Regarding future career aspirations, student 14 reiterated that by reflecting, "it made me realize I am in the right field and exactly where I am supposed to be."

Skills in Service-Learning

An emergent subtheme was that students desired to use various skills that they learned in the classroom by directly applying them in the field. Students thought their skill sets gave them the means to give back to a particular community. Student 5 stated that she "wanted to use the abilities specific to youth development." Student 6 reflected on the academic aspects of her major by saying that she wanted to "apply everything that I've learned in class to my service-learning." Student 13 reflected that service-learning was important because "you get to experience it first-hand." Student 15 summed it up by saying, "It's really rewarding to help people."

Personal Growth

Students also focused on how service-learning would allow them to give back as a means of personal growth. A common sentiment among the students was that they had some sort of responsibility to the community and that they should be expected to give back. Giving back implied that the students had been granted something that they should, in turn, gift to someone else. When asked about what excited them about service-learning, student 2 stated that "it's being able to give back to other people but also being able to learn throughout the process. But the biggest thing is to be able to give back to people." Student 3 had a similar response to the same question, stating "I always think it is important to give back to other people, and to be able to do it in an academic sense is cool." In fact, half of the respondents stated that what excited them about service-learning was the opportunity to give back to a community or organization. Student 10 mentioned that with service-learning, "you will learn and grow as a person." The underlying thought was that giving back meant using your time and talents to give back to organizations and that the organizations would also benefit from the students giving back.

In the same regard, getting out of their comfort zone was a common response when asked what they hoped to gain from this program. Students 2, 4, 11, 12, and 14 discussed how they wanted to learn how to step out of their comfort zone to try new things, whether they related directly back to service-learning. While students could not describe their comfort zones, they were aware they had one. In pre-program interviews, students described their expectations that participating in this program would force them out of their self-defined comfort zones, leading to changes in their comfort zones. Students anticipated that it was not if this would happen but rather when this would happen.

Cross-cultural Experience and Personal Growth

A subtheme important to note was the cross-cultural experience. Many students shared they looked forward to experiencing a culture different from their own. Almost every student specifically mentioned Irish culture and looking forward to experiencing this new culture. Student 17 said she thought the program would "help [her] come out of [her] comfort zone and maybe be able to talk to people."

Learning New Schema

Service-Learning

Students reflected that completing service-learning in a different country would allow them to see differences in youth development in the United States versus that of Ireland. They shared that visiting a new place and seeing how youth development organizations operated would give them new views on Non-Government Organizations that they would not experience by completing service-learning in the United States. Student 4 shared, "I want to see the difference between

how it is here and how it is somewhere else." Student 13 reflected that she was "able to compare the two practices of autism and the way they handle the situations." They were able to see how programs were managed, funded, or suffered from lack of funding. They could also see how this could be related to the culture of Ireland and how certain programs might be deemed worthier than others.

In terms of learning new schemes, only one student specifically mentioned gaining a new skill because of the service-learning. In her follow-up interview, student 14 indicated that she learned skills that she did not previously have due to her service-learning placement and the requirement that she helped facilitate the summer camp. She shared, "I gained … leadership skills. I was also able to learn communication skills."

Personal Growth

In terms of new schemes, students' responses in this area focused on culture and understanding cultures different from their own. Student 3 shared that they "hoped to gain a broader understanding of people from different walks of life." Of particular interest were the students placed at the refugee center. Students 4, 6, 8, and 15 gave multiple answers focused on how they were able to learn about more than the Irish culture due to being exposed to a plethora of cultures of refugees from around the world by interacting with youth and their parents. This came into play later when some students assisted with a summer camp that had no Irish youth who attended. These students shared how they were able to learn more about Irish culture and how Irish culture interacts with the refugee population. Beyond this, very few students reflected on any new schemes that they might have learned that related to personal growth.

Transforming Schema

Service-Learning

Most of the experiences that transformed schema came when students worked at individual placement sites. The difficulties faced by students supported the transformation of their existing schema. Their preconceived notions about various topics or how they thought something should be handled seemed to precipitate the transformations for most students. Student 11 reported that the culture was a challenge at her site because "they wouldn't respond to things in the same way that we would in the United States." The realization that you must adapt became essential to student success at their placements in both administering the summer camp and in how they approached and dealt with various issues that arose.

A student at another site reflected on how it was hard for her to understand why she was not allowed to participate in one of the weekly camp events due to the close-knit nature of the community. Families who attended the weekly summer camp event would see her as an outsider. She felt that she should be allowed to attend the family events because she wanted to be

immersed in the subculture of the community that she was serving. She reflected, "It was not until the end of the placement that I realized and really understood why I couldn't go. That I would be disruptive towards the event and the family time that the event created."

Personal Growth

With the expectation that this program would impact them and transform their worldviews, students overwhelmingly responded, in both the pre-participation and follow-up interviews, that this experience would help them to become more independent. During pre-participation interviews, students could not identify how the program would facilitate this independence but recognized that it would be a point where they would grow. Student 3 stated, "I think it will definitely make me more independent. It would really challenge me to grow as an individual."

In follow-up interviews, more than half of the students responded that the program made them more independent. Student 12 stated that the program made her more independent because "if you want to do things, you have to kind of go on your own, and you have to be alone." Student 9 reflected, "I'm a shy person by nature and don't like to talk to people. I had to become more independent so that I could accomplish things like grocery shopping." Students reported an increase in their growth of independence due to various reasons, including figuring out transportation, resolving issues with host families, and being more assertive at placements.

Culture and Personal Growth

Another subtheme related to learning new schemas within personal growth related to how students viewed a culture different from their own. In the follow-up interviews, student 11 stated that the program helped her "definitely view people differently." Similarly, student 10 shared how she "got to see the way that different cultures interact in general." Ten students mentioned learning about a new culture in some context during their interviews. They discussed how their assumptions about Irish culture were incorrect and how they ultimately adjusted their assumptions once they realized this.

Transforming Perspectives

Service-Learning

In pre-participation interviews, students shared how they thought service-learning in this study abroad program would give them new perspectives. Student 1 stated that by participating in this program, she hoped to gain "a new perspective … none of these things is anything I have experience in" and that she was "looking forward to learning and seeing new things from a new site that I would have not been exposed to at home."

During the follow-up interviews, not a single student directly related their service-learning experiences to the transformation of their perspectives. Additionally, none of them mentioned

gaining new perspectives because of their service-learning experiences. While some implied they had undergone transformations within the program, they would not fit with Mezirow's (1991) definition of transforming perspectives.

Personal Growth

Transforming perspectives related to personal growth is where we saw the most changes for students. From the pre-participation interviews, students noted that they wanted to change and that they were open to change. Student 8 stated that she wanted the program to "change my perspective in the way that I see the world." She said she hoped the program would help her "to be more culturally diverse" and "changing the way other people think and the way I see other people."

In follow-up interviews, students implied having transformations in their perspectives because of the program. However, no student described specific transformations in their perspectives. Students alluded that they might have new perspectives, that their assumptions about perspectives were wrong, or that they were able to change because of the program.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Before making conclusions, it is important to note that based on the research methodology, results are limited to this group of students enrolled in this program during this academic term. Transferability is at the discretion of the reader.

Our results allowed us to make several conclusions. First, we concluded that while this program was not intentionally designed or facilitated using Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978, 1991), there were transformative learning aspects inherent within the study abroad and service-learning aspects of this program. This was consistent with what Foronda et al. (2012) found in their research. As such, students reported they perceived having changed in some ways, whether it be their views on working within different cultures or that they had learned important life lessons for their future work lives. These outcomes are congruent with what Kiely (2005) found. Specifically, our results showed that short-term outcomes addressed all four tenets of Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory: (a) refining meaning schema, (b) learning new schema, (c) transforming schemes, and (d) transforming perspectives. However, results related to transforming perspectives were more prominent in aspirations before the program than they were in actual examples after the program. Within each of these four tenets, outcomes focused on service-learning and personal growth.

Our second conclusion was that reflection occurred on some level. We can see the connection between TLT and students' actual transformations (Mezirow, 1991). In student interviews, evidence emerged of refining schemes or of students being challenged to reimagine preconceived notions they had before the program. Data also showed that students made new schemas as they

realized new thoughts and beliefs about themselves and their surroundings due to studying abroad. Students also transformed their current schemas into perspectives reflecting on what they learned during the program. Evidence of transforming their perspectives or rather shifting the way they looked at situations was also found. These outcomes are consistent with the work of Bamber and Hankin (2011).

Our third conclusion was that student reflections lacked depth. However, it was apparent that while students thought about and reflected on the program, they had not gone beyond surface-level reflection. As previously stated, while we can connect the transformation back to Mezirow's (1991) theory, most of the responses given by students were obvious aspects of transformation that students would have likely noticed without prompting from the interview questions or intentional reflection facilitated by the faculty directors.

We were unable to make conclusions about how transformations occurred. We know that they did, but was it a prompt from faculty directors of the program that facilitated the transformation? Was it during their group reflection periods that they realized their schemas or perspectives were changing? Was it a fellow classmate who helped them realize they needed to change their schema and perspectives? Or perhaps it was their host family that challenged their beliefs.

Finally, we concluded that using TLT (Mezirow, 1991) when designing a study abroad service-learning course would make it easier to assess if transformations were occurring. We were unaware of underlying educational assumptions made by the faculty directors when they designed the program, including the extent that elements of TLT were intentionally or unintentionally considered during the design process. If TLT was intentionally considered, it would be easier to determine if course assignments reflected the tenets of TLT. Without the knowledge of the intent of how the program was designed, it is difficult to make the connection directly back to TLT. While we can say that we saw the four tenets that Mezirow (1991) established happening throughout the process, if TLT was the intent from the beginning, perhaps more intentional connections could be made. More so, the linkage between the four tenets and specific course assignments would better detail the outcomes and impacts on the students.

Our results imply several things for study abroad service-learning facilitators to consider. First, TLT can be a viable theory to guide these programs, but it should be considered during the planning stages. Second, reflection is key. Opportunities for critical reflection should be provided throughout the program. Third, transforming perspectives was more challenging than refining, learning, or transforming schema. Changing perspectives likely takes considerable forethought and intentionality.

Although our conclusions showed that some transformations occurred, we did not get the complete picture. We offer the following recommendations. First, follow-up research with students could help understand longer-term impacts and transformations. One of the key takeaways found within the data was that students did not provide rich answers to the questions

asked in their interviews. This could be because students had not had sufficient time to reflect deeply on their experiences. This follow-up should be done no sooner than six months after the end of the program to allow time for deeper reflection from students.

Our second recommendation would be for a deeper investigation of the impacts on students by following a handful of the students from the start of the program to the end, perhaps as a participant observer. While the current study focused on all students, a few students could be selected, and they could be more thoroughly observed during the entire experience to gain a more robust understanding of their experiences within the program.

Lastly, given that our study focused on a study abroad service-learning program, we were unable to discern which transformations were occurring from studying abroad or from participating in service-learning. We recommend a comparison of domestic service-learning programs and international service-learning programs. This would allow researchers to understand better if transformation is a result of service-learning or the study abroad experience. This may offer better insights into the overall goals of service-learning as well as help faculty directors plan accordingly.

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