“THE OTHER SIDE”: A NARRATIVE STUDY OF SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNITY MEMBERS’ EXPERIENCES WITH AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of my narrative study was to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. At a time when universities and colleges in the United States emphasize internationalization efforts and the civic purpose of higher education, more institutions are designing and delivering international service-learning programs. More questions must be raised regarding how these programs affect communities. Despite the centrality of reciprocity in the service-learning paradigm, the extant literature primarily focuses on the effects of international service-learning programs on students.

I spent two weeks collecting data at a primary school in Ithemba, a predominantly Black African, Xhosa-speaking township in South Africa characterized by one of my participants as “the other side.” Three participants at Korhaan School—Bhejile (the principal), Dunyiswa (the deputy principal), and Peline (a teacher)—engaged in two semi-structured interviews and one focus group. To mask the identity of my participants, I selected pseudonyms for the two universities, the primary school, and the community where the primary school is situated, and I use the names selected by my participants throughout the manuscript.

Three key findings emerged from the data. First, my participants’ stories underscored the interconnectedness of the community and the community-based organization. Second, the students who participate in the international service-learning program bring a myriad of benefits to Korhaan School, and the students’ actions align with ubuntu, a cultural framework that shapes
an individual’s engagement with others. Third, areas for improvement exist for the international service-learning program.

A number of implications for higher education professionals are presented as a result of the findings. First, faculty members and practitioners must involve community members as co-educators in the long-term life cycle of an international service-learning program. Second, U.S. higher education professionals must learn from international models of service. Third, faculty members and practitioners who design international service-learning programs must restructure pre-departure programming to include domestic service opportunities, academic preparation beyond surface-level knowledge, and the postcolonial perspective. These strategies will help higher education professionals construct meaningful partnerships with community-based organizations that are characterized by thick reciprocity—partnerships that are more inclusive, just, and reciprocal.
This dissertation is dedicated to my mom and dad.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Life is an exhilarating and sometimes complicated journey. Each new adventure presents a traveler with unanticipated risks and rewards. I want to express my appreciation to the individuals who have tramped with me on my journey through life.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

In the first two decades of the 21st century, the international activities of universities and colleges in the United States (U.S.) have become more multidimensional and multifaceted (Kehm & Teicher, 2007) and have expanded in volume, scope, and complexity (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalization “is changing the world of higher education” (Knight, 2004, p. 5) and “has become a key theme and widespread phenomenon in higher education” (Kreber, 2009, p. 1).

One approach that institutions of higher education employ to produce globally-oriented graduates is to offer international service-learning programs. However, as more U.S. students participate in international service-learning programs, institutions must avoid the risk of focusing solely on student outcomes and ensure that a collaborative and equal partnership exists between the campus and the community. Despite the centrality of reciprocity in the service-learning paradigm (Baker-Boosamra, 2006; Camacho, 2004; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Dostilio et al., 2012; Jacoby, 2015; Le Grange, 2007), several researchers have noted that the current literature fails to examine the host community’s perspective of the experience (e.g., Blouin & Perry, 2009; Crabtree, 2013; d’Arlach, Sánchez, & Reuer, 2009; Miron & Moely, 2006; Mitchell & Humphries, 2007; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, & Koehn, 2009; Tryon et al., 2008; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Cruz and Giles (2000) noted that “the lack of research on the community dimension of service-learning is a glaring omission in the literature” (p. 28).

The purpose of my research study was to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. The participants in this study were purposefully sampled based on their engagement with the international service-learning program at South Point University (pseudonym), a public institution of higher education in South Africa.
I selected narrative inquiry for my research study hoping that the stories of South African community members inspire faculty members and practitioners to construct more reciprocal international service-learning programs. Riessman (2008) asserted that stories, which reveal truths about human experiences, “can mobilize others into action for progressive social change” (p. 9).

**Background on the Topic**

Globalization is reshaping higher education domestically and abroad (Stromquist, 2007), and the need for colleges and universities to internationalize is becoming more urgent (Qiang, 2003). Although globalization and internationalization are related, Kreber (2009) underscored the importance of distinguishing between the two phenomena. Globalization refers to the broader context of “economic and academic trends that are part of the reality of the 21st century” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290), including the interdependence and convergence of markets, cultures, and societies (Enders & Fulton, 2002). Internationalization concerns “the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment” (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290). Whereas globalization is a macro socioeconomic process, internationalization takes place at the institutional level and refers to higher education’s response to the challenges of globalization (van der Wende, 2001). Knight (1993), in an oft-cited definition, explained that the “internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions of the institution” (p. 21).

At the end of the 20th century, the pressures of globalization prompted institutions of higher education to devote more attention to their internationalization efforts (Edwards, Hoffa, & Kanach, 2005; Kreber, 2009). The missions of universities and colleges in the U.S. evolved as
more institutions acknowledged the importance of preparing graduates to live and work as responsible citizens and leaders in a globalized society (Childress, 2009; Edwards et al., 2005; Peterson & Helms, 2013; Qiang, 2003; Schroeder et al., 2009; Tarrant, Rubin, & Stoner, 2014). However, Knight (2004) articulated that the academic rationales for internationalization (e.g., enhancing students’ intercultural understanding, adding an international dimension to research and teaching) face pressure from and may be overshadowed by economic and political rationales. McClure, Szelenyi, Niehaus, Anderson, and Reed (2010) concurred that “international education has acquired ever-increasing economic and national security importance” (p. 368). In addition to preparing graduates for global citizenship, universities and colleges internationalize to generate income through the recruitment of fee-paying international students, develop an international reputation in an increasingly competitive global higher education environment, offer income-generating opportunities attached to the cross-border delivery of education, and address national security and foreign policy concerns (Knight, 2004).

Williams (2005) highlighted campus-based internationalization as one of the major developments in the recent history of U.S. higher education. Study abroad programs have “always been conceptualized on the strategic level as one element in the internationalization of campuses” (Edwards et al., 2005). As universities and colleges explore new ways to expand and diversify their international efforts in order to remain competitive in the contemporary higher education landscape, institutions have started to blend study abroad with service-learning. In the following sections, I introduce three core topics: (1) study abroad, (2) service-learning, and (3) international service-learning. I provide a deeper discussion of each topic in the second chapter.
Study Abroad

In 2004, the United States Congress created the bipartisan Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program, which symbolized the federal government’s interest in and support for study abroad. The Lincoln Commission was charged with expanding opportunities for U.S. postsecondary students to study abroad and meeting the growing need of the United States to become more sensitive to the cultures of other countries (Commission on the Abraham Lincoln Study Abroad Fellowship Program [Lincoln Commission], 2005).

In November 2005, the Lincoln Commission (2005) released its final report, Global Competence & National Needs: One Million Americans Studying Abroad, in which it declared that “promoting and democratizing undergraduate study abroad is the next step in the evolution of American higher education” (p. 3). Drawing inspiration from historic legislation, including the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1994 (the G.I. Bill), the Lincoln Commission proposed that by the 2016-2017 academic year, one million U.S. students should study abroad. Acknowledging their ambitious goal, the commission argued that “study abroad should be integral to undergraduate education” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. 3). The Lincoln Commission asserted that making study abroad the norm and not the exception is vital to the nation’s well-being and the national interests of the United States. Reilly and Senders (2009) articulated that the Lincoln Commission’s report “represents a powerful justification for study abroad” (p. 246).

Today, more students from the United States are studying abroad than ever before. Study abroad refers to “an educational program for undergraduate study, work, or research (or a credit-bearing internship) that is conducted outside the United States and that awards academic credit toward a college degree” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. 14). During the 2012-2013 academic
year, 289,408 U.S. postsecondary students studied abroad, which represents a 2.1% growth over the previous academic year and a growth of 65.7% over ten years (Institute of International Education, 2014e). Institutions of higher education are functioning in an era of unprecedented student mobility (Anderson, 2014).

Although the Lincoln Commission’s goal of sending one million students abroad by 2016-2017 likely will not be achieved, universities and colleges in the United States are embracing study abroad as a vital component of the educational experience (Reilly & Senders, 2009). Institutions of higher education acknowledge that study abroad programs have the potential to develop students’ intellectual skills, enhance students’ intercultural competence, and prepare students for post-graduate opportunities (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2015). To make the study abroad experience even more beneficial for students, universities and colleges have begun pairing study abroad with service-learning. International service-learning courses and programs “have blossomed as integral components of academic curricula within a number of higher education institutions” (Prins & Webster, 2010, p. 6) with an increased level of participation by U.S. postsecondary students (McMillan & Stanton, 2014).

**Service-Learning**

In addition to concentrating on internationalization efforts, institutions of higher education also have focused on the civic purpose of higher education over the past two decades (Weerts & Cabrera, 2015), which has the potential to enhance student learning, fulfill an institution’s mission, and improve local communities (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011). Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) argued that in the United States, “service-learning is now an accepted pedagogy, even if it remains at the margins of the curriculum in most colleges and universities” (p. 132). As civic and community engagement have become more salient in higher education
Service-learning has gained prominence at U.S. institutions of higher education (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Hollander and Hartley (2003) celebrated this accomplishment, noting that “the sweep of service-learning across the landscape of higher education must be recognized as a triumph” (p. 289).

Service-learning is defined as

a course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009, p. 38)

Service-learning differs from community service in three significant ways. First, service-learning is a curricular experience that links academic content, community engagement, and reflection. Community service is a co-curricular activity that is not tethered to an academic course. Prins and Webster (2010) explained that service-learning offers a community context for learning outside of the classroom and provides opportunities for connecting coursework to the real world. Second, service-learning demands that students understand the community-based organization (e.g., mission, culture, organization) and the individuals who benefit from the services provided by the organization (Brown, 2011). Third, service-learning is characterized by “a relationship of partnership” (Brown, 2011, p. 59), meaning that the community-based organization and the students engage in reciprocal learning. Worrall (2007) noted that characteristics of a strong service-learning partnership include trust, respect, mutual benefits, good communication, democratic decision-making, a shared vision, and resource sharing.
Crabtree (2013) described the marriage of study abroad and service-learning as the “coming of age of international service-learning as a subfield of international education” (p. 43). Since contemporary institutions of higher education in the United States strive to produce global citizens (De Leon, 2014), international service-learning presents fruitful opportunities for institutions and students. Bringle and Hatcher (2011) boldly stated that international service-learning “may be a pedagogy that is best suited to prepare college graduates to be active global citizens in the 21st century” (p. 3).

**International Service-Learning**

International service-learning represents the intersection of three educational domains: study abroad, service-learning, and international education (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Study abroad and service-learning have already been introduced. International education distinguishes itself as an interdisciplinary, multifaceted concept that focuses on the technical aspects of a major and the topical issues within a discipline related to the sociocultural, political, historical, and educational contexts in other countries. Bringle and Hatcher (2011) defined international service-learning as

a structured academic experience in another country in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; (b) learn from direct interaction and cross-cultural dialogue with others; and (c) reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of the host country and the discipline, and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally. (p. 19)
In a similar but more concise fashion, Crabtree (2008) described international service-learning as a pedagogical approach that “combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context” (p. 18).

Jones and Steinberg (2011) clarified the difference between international service-learning courses and programs. International service-learning courses are individual courses in which some or all of the academic content and service are conducted in another country. International service-learning programs integrate multiple courses that are all completed in another country, and a service component is integrated into at least one of the courses. International service-learning courses and programs “can now be found across higher education institutions of all sizes” (Crabtree, 2013, p. 44).

Plater (2011) described international-service learning as “a strong and positive way of responding to internationalization” (p. 42). Students immerse themselves in a community of action, apply their curricular knowledge in real time, and engage with individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds. Effective international service-learning programs offer “an exceptional degree of integration into a target culture and an intensive experience of community service” (Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004, p. 131).

However, international service-learning should not be designed with the sole focus of educating students. Tonkin and Quiroga (2004) cautioned that programs that only concentrate on the university and its students and ignore the host community “raise serious ethical questions” (p. 132). International service-learning programs have the potential to reproduce hierarchical power relations, reinforce stereotypes, and perpetuate social injustices (Prins & Webster, 2010). When international service-learning is not characterized by reciprocity and when the community voice is lost, courses and programs may be severely problematic (McMillan & Stanton, 2014).
Statement of the Problem

Sandy and Holland (2006) acknowledged that “in the absence of community-campus partnerships, it is difficult to imagine how service-learning might even exist” (p. 30). As previously noted, reciprocity is a central component of the service-learning paradigm. Plater (2011) explained that service-learning “is not performed for or done to a community;” rather, it is “enacted in and with the community” (p. 33). When relationships between institutions of higher education and community-based organizations are characterized by reciprocity, community members feel empowered to become co-educators (d’Arlach et al., 2009). Conversely, when universities and colleges use host communities as volunteer sites and disregard community members as equal partners, the institutions reinforce the notion of U.S. power and domination (Boyle-Baise et al., 2006; Mitchell & Humphries, 2007).

Many researchers (e.g., Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Boss, 1994; Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Myers-Lipton, 1998; Warchal & Ruiz, 2004; Warren, 2012) have explored the effect of service-learning on students. To genuinely understand whether international service-learning programs are reciprocal, more researchers must explore the host community’s perspective of the experience. Blouin and Perry (2009) noted that “research on the community impacts remains sparse and limited” and the voices of community members are “largely absent in the service-learning literature” (p. 122). Research on the effect of international service-learning programs on community members is “lagging” (Crabtree, 2013, p. 60) and “rare” (d’Arlach et al., 2009, p. 6). Miron and Moely (2006) explained that most service-learning research has focused on the college student who performs the service, not the community’s perspectives. Sandy and Holland (2006) added that
“to date, there are few published studies documenting the perspectives of community members in partnership with universities” (p. 30).

Given the increased mobility of U.S. postsecondary students across international borders and the popularity of international service-learning, Schroeder, Wood, Galiardi, and Koehn (2009) noted the urgency in understanding the effect that international courses and programs have on community members. Situating my research study in the context of South Africa is relevant for two key reasons. First, during the 2012-2013 academic year, 5,337 U.S. students studied abroad in South Africa, a 234.8% increase over ten years (Institute of International Education, 2014a, 2014b). The significant increase in the number of U.S. students who study in South Africa parallels a broader trend in the destinations of U.S. study abroad students. Fewer students are studying in Europe and Oceania, and more students are studying in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the Middle East and North Africa (Institute of International Education, 2014d).

Second, the context exemplifies the program model of students from the “Global North” (e.g., the United States) engaging in service in the “Global South” (e.g., South Africa) to enhance their own social and cultural capital (Tiessen & Huish, 2013). Cameron (2013) explained that these program reinforce “colonial understandings of the Global North as ‘developed’ and the Global South as needing assistance” (p. 25). Similarly, Zemach-Bersin (2007) argued that these programs reproduce “the logic of colonialism” and legitimize “American imperialist desires” (p. 10). Viewed through a South African lens, Kaars and Kaars (2014) cautioned that community members may perceive visiting faculty members and students as representing “the advantaged and privileged echelons of society” (p. 164). Higher education professionals from the Global North who implement international service-learning programs in South Africa and other countries in the Global South may find value in the findings of my research study.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of my research study was to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. I focused on the lived experiences of South African community members who engage with U.S. postsecondary students participating in a semester-long international service-learning program. As more institutions of higher education in the United States invest in international service-learning, “it is increasingly important to ensure that [the programs] are mutually beneficial to both universities and communities” (Blouin & Perry, 2004, p. 121). Erasmus (2011), writing from the South African perspective, articulated that researchers should investigate the effects that international service-learning students have on individuals and communities at the placement site. By learning more about the lived experiences of community members, I hope that my findings inspire faculty members and practitioners to design international service-learning programs that are rooted in the genuine needs of the host community and characterized by reciprocity. I also hope that my findings push students to be more cognizant of the sociocultural context of their program’s location and the effect of their service at their community-based organization.

Research Design Overview

One of the overarching principles of qualitative research is to understand and illuminate the lives of human beings (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2014). By employing a narrative approach, I concentrated on individuals’ lived experiences, the stories of these experiences and how meaning was made, and the social situations in which these experiences took place (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014; Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). My study included three participants—Bhejile (the principal), Dunyiswa (the deputy principal), and Peline (a teacher)—at Korhaan School (pseudonym), a primary school in the township of Ithemba (pseudonym) in
South Africa. The two methods that I employed to collect data—interviews and a focus group—were commensurate with the social constructivist paradigm, which emphasizes the participants’ view of the situation and the specific contexts in which people live and work (Creswell, 2013). After I analyzed my participants’ stories, I restored my participants’ experiences into a meaningful whole (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014).

**Significance of the Study**

Bringle et al. (2011) explained that “the growth in service learning and civic engagement, coupled with the Lincoln Commission’s recommendation for one million American students to study abroad as a matter of national policy, confirms that now is the time for closer attention to [international service-learning]” (p. xii). Narrative researchers have a responsibility to illuminate the connections between research, practice, and policy (Clandinin, 2006), and a qualitative researcher’s findings should allow for “the empowerment of people and improvement in the quality of life” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 51). My research study is significant for two key reasons.

First, my research begins to fill a void in the literature on international service-learning. A significant portion of the literature focuses on the benefits of service-learning programs for students and their home institutions. Tonkin (2011) stated that it is a “damaging notion that the larger world exists as a kind of classroom where the American student can learn values or skills that can be transferred to the United States and that student’s adult life. To see the world in this way is to lose all sense of reciprocity” (p. 193). The voices of community members must be amplified so that faculty members, practitioners, and students can better understand the effects of international service-learning programs.

Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000) explained that “without community partners, there would be no service learning. If service learning is to meet its goals of improving student learning,
preparing students for civic involvement, and addressing community needs, then it is critical for service learning practitioners and administrators to pay closer attention to the role of community in this endeavor” (p. 768). Individual voices and community needs must be integrated into the life cycle of international service-learning programs. Universities and colleges must remember that empowerment is a two-way street and that the educational process should be equitable and meaningful to everyone involved (Annette, 2002; Crabtree, 1998; Mitchell & Humphries, 2007; Stephenson, 1999).

Second, my research underscores the significant role that context plays in international service-learning. The sociocultural, political, historical, and educational contexts in which South African service-learning programs are situated are different from the contexts in which service-learning programs are situated in the United States. Fourie (2003) explained that community development initiatives should be done within the framework of the people concerned. In South Africa, community development initiatives are unique and complex due to the great inequalities that exist following apartheid (Mitchell & Rautenbach, 2005). Understanding the similarities and differences across cultural contexts is important for faculty members, practitioners, and students. Since issues of power and privilege can create an asymmetrical relationship (Camacho, 2004), students must be pushed to critically reflect upon the communities where they serve and the individuals with whom they collaborate.

**Overview of the Study**

The manuscript consists of five chapters. The first chapter was designed to contextualize the study, present the guiding purpose, and provide evidence of the study’s significance. In the second chapter, I offer an overview of the extant literature related to study abroad, service-learning, and the South African higher education system. In the third chapter, I address narrative
inquiry and outline the procedures that I employed to conduct my study. In the fourth chapter, I present an analysis of the study’s major findings. In the fifth chapter, I provide a discussion of the study’s implications for practice and future research.
CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of my study was to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. Specifically, I focused on the lived experiences of South African community members who engage with U.S. postsecondary students participating in a semester-long international service-learning program. To provide context for my study, I conducted a thorough review of the literature related to three topics: study abroad, service-learning, and South African public higher education. As noted in the first chapter, international service-learning is characterized by the intersection of study abroad and service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Furthermore, given the centrality of context in study abroad, service-learning, and narrative inquiry, an exploration of the South African system of public higher education is necessary.

**Study Abroad**

As the population of the United States becomes more diverse (Renn & Reason, 2013) and the world becomes more interdependent, universities and colleges are directing more resources to programs that facilitate the development of intercultural competence. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) explained that “producing interculturally competent citizens who can engage in informed, ethical decision-making when confronted with problems that involve a diversity of perspectives is becoming an urgent educational priority” (p. 54). More institutions of higher education aim to produce interculturally competent graduates (Paige & Good, 2009) who respect multiple cultural perspectives (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009).

Study abroad is “a powerful educational experience” (Lincoln Commission, 2005, p. 8) that “does and can have an important influence on the holistic and global development of students” (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009, p. 29). Since international service-learning is rooted
in study abroad (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011), I (1) discuss the historical background of U.S. study abroad, (2) provide an overview of student participation in U.S. study abroad programs, and (3) detail the effect of study abroad on students with special emphasis on intercultural competence. In order to keep my review of the literature focused, I do not concentrate on program development and administration, campus management, or the alignment of study abroad with broader internationalization efforts.

**Historical Background**

Student mobility across borders is not a recent phenomenon. International study has been a part of the liberal arts tradition for centuries (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Naidoo, 2006; Williams, 2005). In the 17th and 18th centuries, young men of privileged European families participated in a “Grand Tour” during which they visited important cultural and historical sites and fostered international social and political connections (Edwards et al., 2005). With the revival of the Grand Tour in the 19th century, men and women of the growing *nouveau riche* middle class began touring Europe and enhancing their social and cultural capital (Hoffa, 2007).

In the context of U.S. higher education, students first studied abroad in the 17th century when young men took a Grand Tour of their own by traveling to England, Germany, and Scotland to supplement the limited education that was provided at colonial colleges (Edwards et al., 2005). However, it was not until the 1920s that study abroad established itself as “a new initiative in American higher education” (Hoffa, 2007, p. 69). Two primary reasons explain this development. First, following World War I, U.S. institutions of higher education acknowledged the role that they needed to play on the world stage. Second, as the vision of universities shifted from educating the scholarly mind to developing the whole self (Thelin, 2011), study abroad provided opportunities to enrich students’ lives and diversify academic programs. It should be
noted, however, that study abroad programs at the beginning of the 20th century were predominantly available to affluent White students (Hoffa, 2007).

Several types of study abroad programs developed throughout the 1920s. Following the University of Delaware’s first Junior Year Abroad (JYA) program that took eight students to Paris, France, in 1923, more institutions began to offer JYA programs. Another model, the floating campus voyage, grew in popularity after University World Cruise took a group of roughly 500 students and 35 faculty members on a nearly eight-month journey in 1926 (Edwards et al., 2005). Whereas the country-specific JYA programs emphasized language study and cultural immersion, the multi-country ship voyages were comparative in nature. Additional program designs that emerged during the 1920s included the faculty-led study tour and short-term summer programs. Very few of these initial study abroad programs were credit-bearing experiences; most institutions did not recognize the credibility of study abroad programs and believed that domestic study was a superior way to achieve learning outcomes (Hoffa, 2007).

Broader social, political, and economic issues—most notably, the Great Depression and World War II—halted study abroad activity in the 1930s and the early 1940s. With the end of the war in 1945, “nearly everything suddenly began to change” (Hoffa, 2007, p. 105) as U.S. higher education experienced “a vigorous student travel movement” (Edwards et al., 2005, p. 7). In the aftermath of two world wars, the U.S. government supported international programs and initiatives that helped students develop a better understanding of other nations and cultures. First, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944 (the G.I. Bill) “changed the face of American higher education” (Hoffa, 2007, p. 111). Students engaged with peers who brought international experience into classroom. Second, the Fulbright Program was established in 1946 as a way to advance international cooperation between the United States and foreign countries. The program
supported study abroad activities for graduate students, scholars, and faculty members (Edwards et al., 2005). Third, shortly after the Soviet Union’s launch of Sputnik, the federal government illustrated its support for higher education by passing Title VI of the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) of 1958 (Hoffa, 2007). In the context of study abroad, the NDEA provided support and funding for critical languages, including Chinese and Russian, and area studies programs that focused on regions beyond Western Europe.

With the basic framework of study abroad established by the end of the 1950s, institutions of higher education expanded their efforts in the second half of the 20th century. In 1958, Stanford University established a branch campus in Stuttgart, Germany (Edwards et al., 2005). Whereas some institutions established their own programs that aligned with their missions, other universities and colleges joined academic consortia, such as the Associated Colleges of the Midwest and the Great Lakes College Association, to offer study abroad opportunities (Hoffa, 2007). As more U.S. students engaged in study abroad, four key non-profit organizations—the Institute of International Education (IIE), the United States National Student Association (USNSA), the Council on Student Travel (CST), and the National Association of Foreign Student Advisors (NAFSA)—provided information and guidance to institutions of higher education and their students (Hoffa, 2007).

Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, study abroad continued to intersect with broader federal policies focused on cultural diplomacy and national security (Keller & Frain, 2010). In 1980, Title VI of the NDEA was incorporated into the Higher Education Act. In addition to supporting U.S. government, military, and security needs, Title VI underscored the importance of a global perspective in business, technology, education, media, health, and other professional fields (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). In the late 1980s, Senator David L.
Boren proposed legislation to create a scholarship program for students pursuing studies deemed critical to U.S. national security. In 1991, Congress passed the National Security Education Act, which established the National Security Education Program (Keller & Frain, 2010).

The major developments at the end of the 20th century—the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, technological advancements, and an increasingly interconnected, competitive, and globalized economy—prompted universities and colleges to enhance their internationalization efforts, including their approaches to study abroad. Furthermore, the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, reinforced the need for institutions of higher education to produce graduates who could “understand and prevent threats to U.S. security” and “create connections and build the mutual understanding that might prevent and resolve the conflicts behind such threats” (Peterson & Helms, 2013, p. 28). Gammonley, Rotabi, and Gamble (2007) noted that U.S. citizens have a heightened awareness of their broader connection to the world after 9/11.

Students in the millennial generation are curious about the world (Lincoln Commission, 2005). As the next section indicates, at a time when study abroad is “a core element in U.S. post-secondary education” (Reilly & Senders, 2009, p. 241), the number of U.S. students who study abroad continues to increase. The international functions of U.S. universities and colleges will remain a central force in higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

**Student Participation**

Berdan (2015) remarked that “today’s students recognize that study abroad is one of the best ways they can acquire the valuable international experience necessary to work in the 21st century global marketplace” (para. 2). During the 2012-2013 academic year, 289,408 students
from the United States studied abroad, a 10.3% increase over five years and a 65.7% increase over ten years (Institute of International Education, 2014e).

Demographically, more females (65.3%) than males (34.7%) studied abroad during the 2012-2013 academic year. Table 1 illustrates that this gender gap has not changed over a ten-year period. The majority of U.S. students who studied abroad in 2012-2013 were White (76.3%), and the remaining students identified as Hispanic or Latino/a (7.6%); Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other Pacific Islander (7.3%); Black or African-American (5.3%); multiracial (3.0%); and American Indian or Alaska Native (0.5%; Institute of International Education, 2014e). During the Fall 2012 semester, 58.0% of all U.S. postsecondary students were White (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2013), indicating that the racial/ethnic background of study abroad students does not paint an accurate portrait of students who attend U.S. colleges and universities. Soria and Troisi (2014) articulated that disparities in study abroad participation “remain a concern for higher education institution” (p. 263).

The destinations of U.S. study abroad students have shifted over a ten-year period. Table 1 highlights that fewer students are studying in Europe and Oceania, and more students are studying in Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, and in multiple destinations (Institute of International Education, 2014d). Yet, seven of the top ten destinations in 2012-2013 were in Europe (United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Ireland) or Oceania (Australia); only China, Costa Rica, and Japan were located outside of these regions.

Short-term programs have dramatically risen in popularity among U.S. postsecondary students between 2002-2003 and 2012-2013. Short-term refers to summer programs and programs of eight weeks or less, mid-length programs last one or two quarters or one semester, and long-term programs last an academic or a calendar year (Institute of International Education,
### Table 1

*Ten-Year Comparison of U.S. Study Abroad Participation: 2002-2003 and 2012-2013*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>2002-2003</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Number of U.S. Study Abroad Students</td>
<td>174,629</td>
<td>289,408</td>
<td>114,770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>34.7%</td>
<td>-0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Native Hawaiian, or other</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Islander</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino/a</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>-6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination: Region</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>62.9%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
<td>-9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>15.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Destinations</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>-3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destination: Country</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>1,594</td>
<td>5,337</td>
<td>3,743</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>60.3%</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Length</td>
<td>44.5%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>-8.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>-4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes: Data were reported by the Institute of International Education (2014a, 2014 b, 2014c, 2014d, 2014e).*
The shift to short-term programs raises questions with respect to the development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions during an abbreviated experience abroad. Allen (2010) cautioned that short-term study abroad participants might engage in superficial intercultural experiences. Kehl and Morris (2007) found statistically significant differences in global-mindedness between students who studied abroad for eight weeks or less and those who studied abroad for a semester. Kehl and Morris used the Global-Mindedness Scale, an instrument with 30 statements and a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree) for each statement. Students who participated in a semester-long program had a significantly higher total global-mindedness score than the students who participated in a short-term program.

Conversely, Dwyer (2004) noted that participants still benefit considerably from a short-term study abroad experience. Lewis and Niesenbaum (2005) added that students who study abroad for less than eight weeks still enhance their foreign language skills, develop global competence, accumulate knowledge of the host culture, and learn more about themselves. Moreover, a short-term international experience may act as a catalyst for a longer study abroad program in the future or provide an opportunity for students in a rigorous academic program (Tarrant et al., 2014). Regardless of a program’s destination or length, Engle and Engle (2003) eloquently stated that “the presiding goal of study abroad, la raison d’être, should be to present participants with a challenge—the emotional and intellectual challenge of direct, authentic cultural encounters and guided reflection upon those encounters” (p. 7).

Although the total number of study abroad students is growing, it only represents 1.5% of all U.S. postsecondary students and 9.4% of all U.S. undergraduate students (Institute of International Education, 2014e). Desoff (2006) highlighted several barriers to study abroad that exist for U.S. students, including finances, familial and social constraints, and inflexible
curricular requirements. Stroud (2010) noted that a lack of campus and faculty support and a lack of foreign language skills served as additional barriers. Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, and Pascarella (2009), who explored predisposition to study abroad, found that the effects of accumulating low levels of social and cultural capital before college impact the choices that students make about their educational experiences long after they matriculate.

More research is needed on issues of access and opportunity to study abroad programs (Gaines, 2012). McClure et al. (2010) explained that “the understanding of what it means not to be among those undergraduate students who are willing and able to complete a segment of their college education in a foreign country is severely limited” (p. 368). A better understanding of access to study abroad will help higher education professionals alleviate and address factors that affect participation. Stroud (2010) underscored that “it is imperative that colleges and universities understand the characteristics and backgrounds of their students and how they influence intent to study abroad” (p. 492). As the population of U.S. postsecondary students grows more diverse, higher education professionals must understand that students’ pre-college capital will shape how they engage in educational opportunities, including study abroad programs (Salisbury, Umbach, Paulsen, & Pascarella, 2009).

**Effect of Study Abroad on Intercultural Competence**

Intercultural competence development is often cited as one of the core benefits of studying abroad. The focus on intercultural competence emerged in the 1960s from the need to train citizens from the United States to serve effectively in programs like the Peace Corps (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Salisbury, 2011). As the scope and purpose of intercultural competence research expanded, approaches to its description
and assessment evolved. Efforts to define intercultural competence quickly fell behind the popularity of the outcome (Salisbury, 2011).

Despite 40 years of research, there is no consensus on the terminology around intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Hunter, 2004; Hunter, Godbey, & White, 2006; Fantini, 2009). Over 300 conceptual frameworks exist for the construct (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009), including multiculturalism, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural sensitivity, cultural intelligence, international communication, transcultural communication, global competence, cross-cultural awareness, and global citizenship (Deardorff, 2011). Given the evolutionary nature of culture and the diverse contexts where learning occurs, it has been complex for scholars to land upon a definition for intercultural competence. Bennett (2009) noted that whether it is global mindset, global learning, culture learning, intercultural effectiveness, global leadership competence, or intercultural competence, “many of the disciplinary roads lead to the same place” (p. 122).

Although there may not be consensus on a definition, several researchers (e.g., Bennett, 2009; Deardorff, 2006, 2011; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009; Williams, 2005) have identified some commonalities. First, attitudes such as openness, respect, tolerance for ambiguity, and curiosity for discovery are a fundamental starting point. A second point of emphasis regards the knowledge that individuals bring to intercultural settings. Deardorff (2006) asserted that students must go beyond surface-level knowledge of food, greetings, and customs. In order to effectively function in an intercultural setting, a student must have a holistic, contextual understanding of a culture. Without an understanding of historical, sociocultural, political, and educational influences, a student does not have the ability to see from others’ perspectives. Third, intercultural competence development is an ongoing process, and students must be given
opportunities to reflect on their development and apply their new knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

The aforementioned commonalities surfaced in researchers’ attempts to define intercultural competence. Hunter, White, and Godbey (2006) defined intercultural competence as “having an open mind while actively seeking to understand cultural norms and expectations of others, leveraging this gained knowledge to interact, communicate and work effectively outside of one’s environment” (p. 277). Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) defined intercultural competence as “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavior orientations to the world” (p. 7). Kroeger and Olson (2001) described global competence as having “enough substantive knowledge, perceptual understanding, and intercultural communication skills to effectively interact in our globally interdependent world” (p. 117). Sinicrope, Norris, and Watanabe (2007) explained that the mixed terminology ultimately concerns the “ability to step beyond one’s culture and function with other individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds” (p. 1).

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), who provided a synthesis of the literature from 1989 to 2002 to capture how college affects students, explained that “most research on study abroad finds increases in students’ intercultural awareness and tolerance” (p. 316). Study abroad also promotes positive attitudes toward cultural pluralism and world-mindedness, greater tolerance and acceptance of others, increased appreciation of what it means to be different, increased interest in international issues, decreased use of stereotypes, and greater empathy for others (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).
Kitsantas (2004), Shaftel, Shaftel, and Ahluwalia (2007), and Williams (2005) employed Kelley and Meyers’ (1995) Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) to measure intercultural competence development. The instrument, which is typically administered as a pre-test and a post-test, consists of 50 items rated on a six-point scale and is comprised of four subscales: (1) flexibility and openness, (2) emotional resilience (the ability to maintain a positive attitude while dealing with ambiguity), (3) personal autonomy (the ability to maintain and respect one’s own personal values and beliefs), and (4) perceptual acuity (attentiveness to interpersonal communication).

When compared to on-campus students, Williams (2005) found that study abroad students exhibited a significantly greater change in intercultural communication skills. Shaftel et al. (2007) also found that study abroad students significantly increased their scores on the four subscales and on the total CCAI score; the control group did not exhibit any statistically significant changes in their scores. Kitsantas (2004), who analyzed differences in pre-test and post-test measures, reported that study abroad students had significantly higher levels of openness and flexibility, emotional resilience, and personal autonomy, as well as a significantly higher total CCAI score.

Although Sutton and Rubin’s (2004) and Salisbury (2011) did not utilize the CCAI, the researchers still concluded that study abroad affects intercultural competence development. Sutton and Rubin (2004) conducted a comparison of outcomes between study abroad students and on-campus students. The study abroad students significantly differed from the on-campus students in four domains: functional knowledge, knowledge of world geography, knowledge of cultural relativism, and knowledge of global interdependence. Using the Wabash National Study
on Liberal Arts Education, Salisbury (2011) concluded that study abroad resulted in a statistically significant positive effect on intercultural competence.

As societies become more culturally diverse, the need for globally competent citizens is greater. Since “intercultural sensitivity does not come naturally” (Kroeger & Olson, 2001, p. 116), institutions of higher education must play a central role in equipping graduates with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to function in a globalized society. However, it is imperative that universities and colleges arrive at a definition of intercultural competence before proceeding with the development of learning outcomes and assessment endeavors. The definition must be shaped by an institution’s mission, values, and context, and then integrated into the culture, strategic planning efforts, structure, and vision. Without a clear definition, the ambiguity associated with intercultural competence will plague an institution’s study abroad and broader internationalization efforts (Li, 2012).

**Service-Learning**

Along with study abroad, service-learning is a foundational component of international service-learning. Although preparing graduates for their role as socially responsible citizens historically has been a responsibility of universities in the United States, the prevalence of service-learning “has increased dramatically in higher education” (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011, p. 5) in the 21st century. Service-learning courses and programs—including international service-learning—are “widespread throughout all types of higher education institutions in the United States” (Jacoby, 2015, p. 183). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2015b) currently highlights the development of a sense of personal and social responsibility as one of the four essential learning outcomes of a liberal education.
In the following review of the literature on service-learning, I (1) offer a brief historical background, (2) explain the centrality of reciprocity and reflection, (3) highlight the research on the effect of service-learning on students and communities, and (4) discuss international service-learning, including its critiques and the challenges faced by communities. To keep my review of the literature focused, I do not concentrate on curriculum integration, assessment, administration, or institutionalization.

**Historical Background**

Service-learning began to flourish on college campuses in the United States in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. However, since many of the initial efforts were not institutionalized, some programs and initiatives were short-lived (Jacoby, 2015). Organizations such as the National Society for Experiential Education (1978), the International Partnership for Service-Learning (1982), the Campus Outreach Opportunity League (1984), and Campus Compact (1986) were soon established to provide institutions of higher education with the structure and support necessary to ensure the sustainability of service-learning.

In the 1990s and early 2000s, service-learning exerted a strong influence on the higher education landscape in the United States. Bringle and Hatcher (2007) explained that next to technology, “no other source of influence has been as dramatic as civic engagement and service-learning during the past decade in American higher education” (p. 79). At the turn of the century, service-learning initiatives focused on the establishment of service-learning centers, institutionalization, and curricular integration (Jacoby, 2015). By providing students with active learning experiences that focused on local, regional, state, and national social issues (Fourie, 2003), service-learning efforts aligned with higher education’s increased emphasis on engaged pedagogies (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008).
The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) serves as an example of the federal government’s support for service-learning. Established in 1993, the CNCS is a federal agency that aims to “improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering” (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2014a). One of the CNCS’s initiatives that influences universities and colleges is the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll. The program was launched in 2006 to recognize the role of institutions of higher education in addressing community problems and stimulating interest in lifelong civic engagement (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2014b). Two of the primary goals of the program include increasing the number students who engage in service and encouraging universities and colleges to strengthen their commitment to service and civic engagement. In a similar fashion, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching released a new elective classification for community engagement in 2006 (Jacoby, 2015). The classification recognizes institutions for their collaboration with local, regional, state, national, and global communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources.

The Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which was signed into law in 2009, reauthorized and expanded national service programs administered by the CNCS through 2014 (Serve America Act, 2009). With respect to service-learning at institutions of higher education, the Serve America Act added authority to designate up to 25 universities and colleges with exemplary records of student civic engagement and service-learning as Campuses of Service, a recognition that is tethered to grant funds. In addition, the act prioritized innovative service-learning programs and research; authorized a ten-year longitudinal study on the benefits and effect of service-learning programs; provided service-learning funding for students in the
science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields; and authorized a new Semester of Service program aimed at engaging economically disadvantaged students (Serve America Act, 2009).

In the contemporary system of U.S. higher education, the diversity of institutional types and missions means that each university or college shapes service-learning differently. One commonality among institutions is that service-learning has stimulated a renewed commitment to civic engagement. By prioritizing civic engagement as a learning outcome, universities and colleges acknowledge the potential of service-learning to impact their communities (Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2008). Bringle and Hatcher (1996) articulated that “virtually all universities are interested in committing their resources to develop effective citizenship among their students, to address complex needs to their communities through the application of knowledge, and to form creative partnerships between the university and the community” (p. 236).

Moreover, at a time when the United States is becoming more diverse, “a healthy civic life will require citizens who can relate to people different from themselves” (Hollander & Hartley, 2003, p. 293). As students engage with individuals who come from diverse backgrounds, it is imperative that they develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are associated with intercultural competence. Aydlett, Randolph, and Wells (2010) argued that service-learning may be one of the most effective tools for preparing students to live in a globalized society.
Defining Service-Learning

The following definition of service-learning from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2015a) closely resembles Bringle and Hatcher’s (2009) definition that I introduced in the first chapter:

a course-based educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity and reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility. (Glossary section, para. 2)

The two definitions underscore the curricular nature of service-learning, the centrality of reflection in connecting service and learning outcomes, and the importance of expanding educational objectives to include civic action.


Furco’s (1996) well-known model in Figure 1 clarifies the fundamental differences between service-learning and other types of service programs. Furco placed five program types on a continuum defined by the intended beneficiary of the service activity and the degree of emphasis on service and/or learning. Volunteerism, a form of charity, emphasizes service and the primary beneficiary is the service recipient. Although students may benefit from the
experience, there is no intentional link to reflection or learning. Community service involves more structure than volunteerism. Students learn more about how their service makes a difference in the lives of the service recipients and begin to explore the root causes of social issues.

On the right side of the model, the main beneficiary is the student and the main focus is on learning. Furco (1996) explained that “internship programs engage students in service activities primarily for the purpose of providing students with hands-on experiences that enhance their learning or understanding of issues relevant to a particular area of study” (p. 4). Field education is generally connected to the curriculum, especially in teaching, social services, health, and law. Service is often performed in addition to a student’s courses, but service is not necessarily integrated into the course(s). The focus of field education is on enhancing a student’s learning in a particular field of study.

Service-learning “intentionally seeks to strike a balance between student learning and community outcomes” (Jacoby, 2015, p. 3). Furco (1996) added that service-learning programs “are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring” (p. 5). In service-learning, opportunities for learning are intentionally integrated into the structure of a course. Emphasis is placed on developing a deeper understanding of the historical, sociocultural, political, and educational contexts that are connected to community issues. Furthermore, as noted in the next two sections, service-learning is characterized by two essential elements: reciprocity and reflection.
Reciprocity. The literature on service-learning (e.g., Baker-Boosamra, 2006; Camacho, 2004; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Dostilio et al., 2012; Jacoby, 2015; Le Grange, 2007) highlighted the importance of reciprocity in campus-community partnerships. Jacoby (2015) explained that “reciprocity implies that the community is not a learning laboratory and that service-learning should be designed with the community to meet needs identified by the community” (p. 4). Dostilio et al. (2012) used the metaphor of a saw and its simple back and forth movement to capture the essence of reciprocity. Stakeholders from the campus and the community must be involved in determining the issues to be addressed, the strategies to be used, and the desired outcomes (Bringle, Hatcher, & Price, 2009; King, 2004). Several researchers (e.g., Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Gammonley, Rotabi, & Gamble, 2007; Jacoby, 2003; Jorge, 2003; Sandy & Holland, 2006) also underscored the importance of human relationships that are authentic, honest, and equitable.

When campus-community partnerships are reciprocal, “service-learning can yield substantial outcomes in terms of learning and empowerment for students and communities” (Jacoby, 2015, p. 79). King (2004) added that when relationships are “egalitarian rather than hierarchical . . . students are more likely to value and learn from the perspectives of those they are serving” (p. 135). Moreover, since social justice is a significant value of service-learning, a reciprocal relationship contributes to amplifying the voices of and empowering community members.

Boyle-Baise et al. (2006), Henry and Breyfogle (2006), and Mitchell and Humphries (2007) cautioned universities and colleges to be mindful of utilizing socially unjust binary distinctions, such as server/served, giver/receiver, developed/developing, and successful/unsuccessful. Since community issues are complicated, binary oversimplifications
fail to capture the complexities of the institution and the host community. Instead of concentrating on a community’s weaknesses and deficits, universities and colleges need to collaborate with community partners to discover their strengths and assets and work responsibly to develop a mutually beneficial purpose (Annette, 2002; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Thomson, Smith-Tolken, Naidoo, & Bringle, 2011). Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000) advised institutions of higher education to consider the cultural context and historical power differentials and build trust by connecting through commonalities. Jacoby (2015) added that universities should emphasize respect, genuine commitment, the sharing of resources, and clear communication.

Reflection. In addition to reciprocity, the literature on service-learning (e.g., Deeley, 2010; Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996; Jacoby, 2015; Le Grange, 2007; Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000) underscored the centrality of reflection. Whitney and Clayton (2011) argued that “reflection is a key ingredient in the design of effective service learning, whether domestic or international” (p. 148). Critical reflection provides the connection between students’ service experiences and the abstract course-related concepts (Deeley, 2010). In the context of international service-learning, Plater (2011) noted that engagement without reflection is incomplete.

Critical reflection was a key component of Dewey’s philosophy of education. Dewey (1938) emphasized the relevance of considering the wider historical, sociocultural, political, and educational contexts and the importance of reconsidering normative social structures that perpetuate unequal and exploitative power structures. Echoing Dewey, Jacoby (2015) defined critical reflection as “the process of analyzing, reconsidering, and questioning one’s experiences within a broad context of issues and content knowledge” (p. 26). Jacoby (2015) also noted that
reflection is so essential and irreplaceable that “there can be no service-learning without reflection” (p. 50).

Eyler et al. (1996) used the “4 Cs” to capture the essential characteristics of critical reflection. First, critical reflection must be *continuous* or an ongoing component of a service-learning course or program. It should occur before, during, and after the service experience. Second, critical reflection *connects* community engagement work with academic content and other personal experiences. Jacoby (2015) articulated that “reflection is indeed the hyphen that intentionally and purposefully connects the service and the learning” (p. 50). Third, critical reflection *challenges* students’ attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and stereotypes. Faculty members and practitioners must provide students with challenge and support as they seek to understand new perspectives and determine their capacity to affect social change. Fourth, critical reflection must be *contextualized*. Faculty members and practitioners must be attentive to the space where reflection is conducted, the activities and topics that are used for reflection, who participates in reflection, and external factors that influence the participants’ engagement in reflection.

Without critical reflection, students have the potential to do a great disservice to themselves and to communities (Baker-Boosamra, 2006) by developing simplistic solutions to complex problems. Since “all reflection is not equal” (Skilton-Sylvester & Erwin, 2000, p. 68), superficial reflection is not sufficient. When designed and facilitated effectively, deep and meaningful reflection can enhance students’ engagement with the community (Whitney & Clayton, 2011), heighten students’ awareness of their own values (Kahn, 2011), and enhance the quality of learning by adding depth and breadth to meaning (Jacoby, 2015).
Effect of Service-Learning on Students and Communities

Service-learning is one of the high-impact educational practices identified by the Association of American Colleges and Universities. In addition to active learning practices such as first-year seminars, learning communities, undergraduate research, and internships, service-learning benefits college students from diverse backgrounds and increases rates of student engagement (Kuh, 2008).

A great deal of research has explored the effect of service-learning on students. Student engagement in service-learning results in a heightened understanding of social justice issues and an increased desire to advocate for improved social programs (Barber & Battistoni, 1993; Boyle-Baise et al., 2006). Students increase their sense of social and civic responsibility (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al., 2000; Eyler, 2011; Jacoby, 2015; Prins & Webster, 2010), including their sense of connectedness to community and commitment to service during and after college. Astin and Sax (1998) added that participation in service enhances students’ academic development, including aspirations for an educational degree, discipline knowledge, grade point average, general knowledge, and academic self-concept. Service-learning fulfills a number of additional educational objectives, including increased respect for diversity, increased tolerance and decreased stereotyping, enhanced critical thinking skills, improved interpersonal skills, and enriched leadership skills (Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al., 2000; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Crabtree, 1998, 2008; Jacoby, 2015; Thomson et al., 2011).

Warren (2012) conducted a meta analysis of eleven studies that (1) examined the relationship between service-learning and student learning outcomes, (2) measured student learning as the dependent variable, and (3) included a control group. Warren found that service-learning has had statistically significant and positive effects on student learning outcomes.
Although student self-reported learning yielded greater effects on learning outcomes than more concrete measures (e.g., exam scores, scores on assignments), there was not a statistically significant difference between the self-report and concrete measures, meaning that students have a fairly accurate perception of their own learning.

More research is needed, however, to understand how service-learning affects students from diverse backgrounds. Butin (2006) underscored that “service-learning is premised on fostering ‘border-crossing’ across categories of race, ethnicity, class, (im)migrant status, language, and (dis)ability” (p. 482). Yet, how are students who serve with community members from identity groups similar to their own affected by service-learning experiences? Or, as Novick, Seider, and Huguley (2011) asked, “How [do] students from nondominant groups experience community service learning courses that seek to introduce them to issues facing groups of which they themselves are a part” (p. 1)?

A narrow body of literature provides some answers to these questions. Lee (2005) explored how students from different social classes describe their service-learning motivations and experiences. Lee found that although lower-, middle-, and upper-class students had different motivations for and interpretations of their engagement with the community, the extent of learning and students’ level of commitment were similar across social class groups. Novick et al. (2011), who examined the intersection of race and students’ experiences with a service-learning course, found that the sense of community in the classroom differed between White students and students of color. More specifically, students of color were less supportive of the notion that their service-learning classes offered a strong sense of community. Green (2001) also sought a better understanding of race with respect to students’ experiences with a service-learning course. Green highlighted distinctions between the experiences of White and Black
students who served at a predominantly Black middle school, including differences in establishing authority and building relationships with the middle school students. Despite the literature that exists, Swaminathan (2007) still advocated for “a better understanding of how service-learning intersects with social class, race, and location” (p. 142).

In addition to student development, service-learning has tremendous potential to address unmet local needs, bridge a town-gown divide, and benefit communities. The literature (e.g., Blouin & Perry, 2009; Jacoby, 2015; Leiderman, Furco, Zapf, & Goss, 2003; Tryon et al., 2008) revealed that community members value the outside perspectives, new ideas, and fresh energy that students bring. Service-learning students also provide communities with human and material resources that enhance organizational capacity (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Leiderman et al., 2003; Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009; Nduna, 2007; Worrall, 2007). Additionally, d’Arlach, Sánchez, and Feuer (2009) found that community members who participated in service-learning changed their views of university students, themselves, and social issues. Similarly, Jorge (2003) concluded that the possible benefits for community members include an increased sense of agency and an increased sense of self worth and self esteem. By including community members as co-educators, service-learning empowers community members by giving them an opportunity to share their knowledge of and experience with social issues (Baker-Boosamra, 2006; Jacoby, 2015; Worrall, 2007). Naidoo and Devnarain (2009) added that service-learning has the potential to dispel the belief that “academics are knowledgeable and the communities are uninformed” (p. 939).

**International Service-Learning**

International service-learning, one of the fastest growing movements in service-learning (Jacoby, 2015), diversifies an institution’s internationalization and civic engagement efforts.
Annette (2003) commented that “the way in which service-learning is developing internationally is striking” (p. 241). More institutions of higher education acknowledge that service-learning contributes to the development of socially responsible students and that study abroad affects the development of intercultural competence. Since most universities and colleges have established community engagement and study abroad programs (Crabtree, 2013), more institutions are taking their service-learning efforts abroad. Moreover, today’s students are seeking opportunities for international education (Chisholm, 2003).

Similar to domestic service-learning, Plater (2011) explained that international service-learning “occurs within the lived experience of a community and depends on a bond of mutual benefit and interaction between the students and the community itself” (p. 33). However, Crabtree (2013) underscored the relevance of several contextual variables, including the socioeconomic and cultural environment of the host country, political relations between the home and host countries, the participants’ degree of intercultural competence, and the capabilities of the institution and the community. Longo and Saltmarsh (2011) advised higher education professionals to “consider a diverse set of global outcomes that expand upon the design and goals of domestic service learning programs and courses” (p. 71).

International service-learning combines the benefits of study abroad and service-learning for students. Participation in international service-learning enhances students’ cultural competence and international understanding (Brown, 2011; Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2004; Prins & Webster, 2010), enhances students’ leadership skills (Brown, 2011; Crabtree, 2008), increases students’ understanding of complex global problems related to their academic discipline (Kiely, 2004), and heightens students’ sense of social responsibility and civic engagement (Brown, 2011; Crabtree, 2008; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) argued that
international service-learning results in “greater improvement in intercultural skills, more rapid language acquisition, better demonstration of democratic skills, deeper understanding of global issues, greater transformation of students’ lives and careers, more sensitivity to ethical issues, and more lifelong interest in global issues . . . than domestic service learning, international education without study abroad or service learning, and traditional study abroad” (p. 22).

Today’s students live in a society where local and global issues increasingly intersect. International service-learning has the potential to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are necessary to think globally and work cross-culturally (Chisholm, 2003). However, Deeley (2010) cautioned that there is no guarantee that the benefits that are claimed in the literature will occur. Higher education professionals cannot assume that students will develop intercultural competence simply because they are serving in an international context with community members from diverse backgrounds. The unpredictability of international service-learning may result in challenges for the host community. As in any service-learning partnership, “harm rather than good can result if all parties involved do not act in the spirit of equality, reciprocity, and mutuality” (Chisholm, 2003, p. 286).

**Critiques and community challenges.** International service-learning is complex and challenging (Bringle, Hatcher, & Williams, 2011), and courses and programs do not always achieve the reciprocal relationship that is desired. Crabtree (2013) and Sharpe and Dear (2013) warned that the outcomes of international service-learning may result in the opposite of what community members and students anticipate. Jones (2002a), for example, noted that there is some likelihood of service-learning experiences actually reinforcing negative stereotypes and assumptions. Thomas and Chandrasekera (2013) added that international service placements “often reinforce and reproduce the historical hegemonic power dynamics between the North and
the South” (p. 91), and MacDonald (2013) asserted that there are ways in which service work abroad is “an enactment of privilege that has parallels to colonialism” (p. 209). More researchers are examining international service-learning from a critical perspective. Jacoby (2015) explained that “we are finally having more serious conversations about the potential negative consequences of poorly planned and implemented service-learning” (p. 17).

The critique of international service-learning, however, is not new. Illich’s (1968) address to students at the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects in Cuernavaca, Mexico, serves as a prime example. In his controversial remarks on mission “vacations,” Illich questioned why students were concerned about poverty in Mexico, yet blind to poverty in the United States. Illich, who argued that the students’ ignorance led to disorder in Mexican villages, challenged the audience to acknowledge their incapacity to do the “good” that they intended to do.

Tiessen and Huish (2013) questioned whether international experiential learning programs produce “globetrotters or global citizens” (p. 3). Contemporary critics, such as Reilly and Senders (2009), Tiessen (2013), and Zemach-Bersin (2007), would argue that these programs produce globetrotters who view the world as an opportunity and a resource for individual enrichment. Reilly and Senders (2009) posited that some international service-learning participants exploit cultural acquisition to increase their own social and cultural capital. In a similar tone, Tiessen (2013) drew attention to the ethical implications associated with international service-learning programs that are characterized by students who travel from the Global North to the Global South to gain practical experience in their field of study. Zemach-Bersin (2007) also critiqued U.S. students for mimicking the dynamics of imperialism and colonialism and noted that U.S. students who identify as global citizens “[assume] the right to
travel unhindered, to penetrate cultures without the hassle of boundaries, to extend [their] rights of citizenship transnationally, and to unabashedly profit from this imperialist global arrangement” (p. 22)

When international service-learning is not firmly grounded in its fundamental principles, “the community becomes little more than a laboratory for the use of privileged students, rather than being a true partner in learning” (Baker-Boosamra, 2006, p. 8). Similarly, Grusky (2000) stated that “programs can easily become small theaters that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes” (p. 858). Although service-learning is heralded for its focus on social justice, critics argue that service-learning may actually reinforce power differentials. King (2004) explained that “to be in a position to ‘provide service’ to another party may itself be a mark of privilege” (p. 123). Kahn (2011) added that some students merely “participate from the protection of their privileged positions and assumptions” (p. 116).

International service-learning programs have the potential to create or exacerbate inequalities and produce unintended negative impacts in communities (Tiessen & Huish, 2013). Recent studies have examined the challenges that exist for community partners. Tryon et al. (2008) found that community-based organizations experienced difficulties training and supervising students and designing meaningful projects that align with a university’s academic calendar. Similarly, Birdsall (2005) noted that coordinating service-learning projects presented a challenge, and Worrall (2007) found that community-based organizations identified students’ limited time commitment as a barrier. South African researchers Naidoo and Devnarain (2009) explained that universities often played a dominant role in service-learning partnerships and that community partners felt “patronised and used by academics” (p. 948). Additionally, the literature (e.g., Birdsall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Leiderman et al., 2003; Naidoo &
Devnarain, 2009; Worrall, 2007) suggested that community-based organizations were challenged by students’ inadequate preparation, which places a burden upon the organization.

It is imperative that higher education professionals familiarize themselves with best practices in international service-learning so that “contemporary colonialist project[s]” (Sharpe & Dear, 2013, p. 54) that marginalize communities are not created. When designing and implementing international service-learning courses and programs, faculty members and practitioners must flatten traditional societal power differentials rather than replicating them (d’Arlach et al., 2009). Campus-community partnerships in an international context provide a space for students to examine power and privilege (Camacho, 2004; De Leon, 2014). Pratt (1992) described these spaces as contact zones—the social spaces where authority and hierarchy engage with the Other. Faculty members and practitioners must ensure that they are providing students with quality international experiences (Berdan, 2015) by creating reciprocal relationships (De Leon, 2014) and embracing the contact zone (Reilly & Senders, 2009). Moreover, students must be pushed to “participate in reflective inquiry on the origins and intent of the projects in which they participate, the relationship of the projects to the social and power structures of the host community and country, and the degree to which their projects and activities might either perpetuate or liberate political, social, and economic structures” (Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011, p. 77).

South African Public Higher Education System

As discussed, Deardorff (2006) encouraged higher education professionals to push students beyond surface-level knowledge to a more holistic, contextual understanding of a culture. McMillan and Stanton (2014) added that “where we do our work impacts what we do and the way we do it” (p. 73). Given the centrality of context in study abroad, service-learning,
and narrative inquiry, an exploration of the South African system of public higher education is necessary. International service-learning programs must be framed by a deep and rich understanding of the local context and respond to local modes of community engagement (Sutton, 2011). In the following section, I (1) discuss South Africa’s four main racial groups, (2) provide a summary of the National Party’s apartheid-era education system, (3) detail public higher education in post-apartheid democratic South Africa, and (4) explain the development of community engagement and service-learning at South Africa’s public institutions of higher education.

Since universities do not function as merely academic systems (Cizek, 1999), I highlight the interconnectedness of the history, politics, and sociology of education. Sadovnik, Cookson, and Semel (2013) explained that uniting education and history adds clarity to the complexity of the present. In the South African context, it is impossible to understand the current state of the higher education system without knowledge of the country’s apartheid past. Dewey (1938) explained that “the issues and problems of present social life are in such intimate and direct connection with the past that students cannot be prepared to understand either these problems or the best way of dealing with them without delving into their roots in the past” (p. 93). Furthermore, analyzing an education system from a sociopolitical perspective illuminates how institutions of higher education act as agents of cultural transmission. Although the current political landscape in South Africa includes several political parties (e.g., Democratic Alliance, Economic Freedom Fighters, Inkatha Freedom Party, National Freedom Party), my discussion concentrates on the major political parties during the apartheid era (i.e., National Party) and in the new South Africa (i.e., African National Congress). Positioning the National Party’s interpretation of culturally valued knowledge against the values of the African National Congress
draws attention to the system of power and privilege that existed during apartheid and highlights the democratic aspirations in the post-apartheid era.

**South Africa’s Racial Groups**

Before describing South Africa’s apartheid-era and democratic institutions of higher education, a brief overview of the country’s racial groups is necessary. Finchilescu and Tredoux (2010) explained that “these groups have a historical reality that has shaped the subjectivities and worldviews of the South African population” (p. 228). Although I primarily focus on South Africa during apartheid (1948 to 1994) and after apartheid (1994 to present), it is important to note that racial discrimination in South Africa existed in various forms before apartheid (Anderson, 2002).

The National Party’s government formalized racial separation with its apartheid policies. Under the Population Registration Act of 1950, the government identified and recorded the race of all South Africans. The country was comprised of four racial groups—Whites, Bantu, Indians, and Coloureds—with the latter three grouped under the term non-White or non-European (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010). The apartheid government aimed to systematically segregate the racial groups, construct a society characterized by inequity and discrimination, and concretize White supremacy.

Whites referred to people of European descent. Bantu, who were also called Natives, referred to people indigenous to the African continent. Individuals in this racial group are called Blacks, Africans, or Black Africans in contemporary South Africa. Throughout my manuscript, I refer to this racial group as Black Africans. Indians referred to people of Indian descent. Coloureds referred to racially mixed offspring and descendants of slaves from Africa and Asia who were brought to South Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries. The indigenous KhoiSan group,
also known as Bushmen or Hottentots, were also considered Coloured because they were physically and linguistically different from Black Africans (Finchilescu & Tredoux, 2010).

From 1968 to 1977, the Black Consciousness Movement sought to undermine the apartheid social order by redefining Blackness. As a statement of solidarity in the struggle for liberation, Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds identified as Black in a collective sense. Erasmus (2012) clarified that the collective use of Black did not define a racial category, but rather “a global political identification premised on resistance to oppression” (p. 1). Finchilescu and Tredoux (2010) noted that since the fall of apartheid, the collective use of Black “has largely ceased” (p. 228).

Although there is a national commitment to equality and human dignity in contemporary South Africa, the apartheid-era racial groups are still used (Bornman, 2010; Ruggunan & Maré, 2012). The 2011 national census, for example, classified individuals according to four racial groups: White, Black African, Indian/Asian, and Coloured (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Ruggunan and Maré (2012) articulated that “classification on the basis of race is understood as being necessary in order to achieve redress and transformation in South African society generally” (p. 50). However, despite the ubiquity of the four racial groups, salient identity groups (e.g., clan, ethnicity, language, religion, socioeconomic status) exist within and across the racial groups. Among Black Africans, for example, nine language groups are officially recognized: Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu. Within the White community, Afrikaans- and English-speaking Whites are regarded as two different identity groups (Bornman, 2010).
Apartheid South Africa

During the 1948 election in South Africa, the National Party introduced the concept of apartheid (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The function of apartheid, which literally means apartness, was to entrench White supremacy in South African society. The National Party’s slogan captured its mission: “Eie volk, eie taal, eie land—Our own people, our own language, our own land” (Mandela, 1995, p. 111). The apartheid ideology was applied to all aspects of society, including the education system.

Four ideas were at the heart of the National Party’s apartheid system: (1) South Africa was comprised of four racial groups—White, Black African, Indian, and Coloured—and each group had its own inherent culture; (2) Whites, the civilized race, were entitled to have absolute control over the state and had an obligation to lead other groups toward civilization; (3) the interests of Whites prevailed over the interests of Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds, and this privilege needed to be protected; and (4) Whites formed a single nation, while Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds needed to be divided into different nations (Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Thompson, 2014). The apartheid ideology illustrates that the National Party aimed to keep Whites in a position of superiority, or as Mandela (1995) commented, “White supremacy [implied] black inferiority” (p. 367).

Apartheid quickly developed from “a political slogan into a drastic, systematic program of social engineering” (Thompson, 2014, p. 189). Two laws formed the cornerstones of apartheid. The Population Registration Act of 1950 classified all South Africans according to race, and the Group Areas Act of 1950 divided urban areas into zones where members of one specified race could live and work. In addition to creating a legal framework for cultural separation and territorial partition (Louw, 2004), early legislation silenced opposition to the
apartheid government. The Suppression of Communism Act of 1950 employed a broad definition of communism to sanction and punish individuals and groups that unlawfully disturbed the state, and the Public Safety Act of 1953 empowered the government to declare martial law and detain people without trial. Mandela (1957) remarked that “the rule of force and violence, of terror and coercion, [became] the order of the day” (p. 10).

The National Party ensured that the education system reflected its discriminatory and inequitable racial values (Fehnel, 2004; Woodrooffe, 2011). Reddy (2004) explained that “the ideological foundations of educational policy under apartheid were designed to fit with the apartheid social arrangement of society” (p. 9). Under the Bantu Education Act of 1953, the government controlled Black African education. The Minister of the Department of Native Affairs was responsible for the curriculum, the governance structure, teachers, funding, and “any other matter related to the establishment, maintenance, management, and control of Government Bantu schools” (Union of South Africa, 1953, p. 274).

Two additional acts contributed to racially segregated schools. The Coloured Persons Education Act of 1963 outlined the legal framework for the establishment and maintenance of primary and secondary schools specifically for Coloureds and granted the Minister of Education the power to control the curriculum, inspect schools, make regulations, and finance schools (South African Law Reform Commission, 2011). Similarly, the Indian Education Act of 1965 gave the government control of primary and secondary education for Indians.

The government fashioned a system of primary and secondary education for Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds that was voluntary, lacked quality, and legitimized the prevailing social order (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). The system kept Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds out of the modern sector of the economy and in a position of perpetual subordination.
to Whites (Mandela, 1957; Woodrooffe, 2011). The apartheid government provided just enough education to maintain a steady supply of cheap labor in agriculture, mining, and domestic services (Fiske & Ladd, 2004). Resha (1966) explained that apartheid-era education policy socialized Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds into thinking that “they had no place in the so-called European areas above the level of certain forms of labour” (p. 11).

The Extension of University Education Act of 1959 extended racial segregation to institutions of higher education. The act provided for “the establishment, maintenance, management and control of university colleges for non-white persons; for the admission of students to and their instruction at university colleges; for the limitation of the admission of non-white students to certain university institutions; and for other incidental matters” (Union of South Africa, 1959, p. 484). The three goals of the act were to (1) further solidify the notion of separate racial groups, (2) provide personnel to support institutions in the newly created homelands, and (3) maintain and reproduce the subordinate social and economic position of Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds (Woodrooffe, 2011).

The National Party constructed a public higher education system that was regarded as “discriminatory, non-participative, unaccountable, divisive, inequitable, and undemocratic” (Cloete, Maassen, & Muller, 2005, p. 212). Institutions of higher education were “profoundly shaped by apartheid planning and by the respective functions assigned to them in relation to the reproduction of the apartheid social order” (Badat, 2007, p. 6). By 1985, nineteen public institutions of higher education were designated exclusively for the use of Whites, two for the exclusive use of Coloureds, two for the exclusive use of Indians, and six for the exclusive use of Black Africans (Bunting, 2004). Similar to the country’s primary and secondary schools, the institutions of higher education for Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds had inferior facilities,
less qualified instructors, and fewer course offerings. Discriminatory state policies, an unequal funding model, and racially based admissions criteria resulted in significant differences between White universities and institutions for Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds (Reddy, 2004).

**Democratic South Africa**

On April 27, 1994, South Africa’s first national, nonracial, one-person-one-vote election was held (Mandela, 1995). The African National Congress (ANC), which ran on a platform of creating jobs, redistributing land, providing low-cost housing, extending the supply of electricity and water, extending health care, and improving education, won the majority (62.6%) of votes, and Nelson Mandela was elected president (Thompson, 2014).

The ANC was presented with the challenge of combating the cumulative effects of colonialism and apartheid. There were no quick solutions to the complex issues of poverty, a dysfunctional healthcare system, crime, a weak economy, inconsistent access to water and electricity, and redressing the suffering of the victims of apartheid (Thompson, 2014). Furthermore, the South African higher education system was characterized by the following deficiencies: inequitable access and opportunity for faculty, staff, and students; its failure to build a foundation for a critical and tolerant civil society; the academic insularity of its academic programs; fragmented and inefficient governance; and the mismatch between the system’s outputs and the country’s economic needs (Strydom & Fourie, 1999). Wyngaard and Kapp (2004) asserted that “the scenario of higher education in the post-1994 South Africa, based on the historical development of the country, called for action” (p. 199).

Policy-driven restructuring of the higher education system was a top priority for the ANC (Cloete et al., 2005; Mfusi, 2004). The roots of the policy framework for the democratization of South Africa’s public higher education system can be traced to the National Commission on
Higher Education (NCHE), which was appointed in 1995 to “rid higher education of the aberrations of apartheid and to modernize it by infusing it with international experiences and best practices” (Maassen & Cloete, 2004, p. 8).

In 1996, the NCHE published *A Framework for Transformation*, the first comprehensive evaluation and analysis of South Africa’s entire higher education system (Strydom & Fourie, 1999). The following year, *A Framework for Transformation* was converted into the Department of Education’s (1997) *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, which outlined the government’s goals regarding the governance and organization of the post-apartheid public system of higher education (Cloete, 2004; Stanton & Erasmus, 2013; Woodrooffe, 2011). The government acknowledged that the country’s system of higher education needed to play a central role in meeting the challenges of reconstruction and development. The policy called upon institutions of higher education “to redress past inequalities, to serve a new social order, to meet pressing national needs, and to respond to new realities and opportunities” (Department of Education, 1997, p. 2). The white paper’s three pillars captured its vision: (1) broadening of democratic participation, (2) responsiveness to societal changes, and (3) inclusive partnership building and cooperation.

Shortly after the white paper was published, the government passed the Higher Education Act of 1997. The ANC aimed to (1) establish a single coordinated higher education system; (2) redress past discrimination and ensure equal access to higher education; (3) promote the values of a democratic society based on human dignity, equality, and freedom; (4) respect and encourage academic freedom and freedom of creativity, scholarship, and research; and (5) promote the tolerance of ideas and the appreciation of diversity (Republic of South Africa, 1997). The Higher Education Act also established the Council on Higher Education, which was
tasked with advising the Minister of Education on all aspects of higher education, including the role that public institutions of higher education would play in responding to the needs of communities (Republic of South Africa, 1997).

**Community engagement and service-learning.** The Council on Higher Education (2006) asserted that the central aim of post-apartheid higher education reform, the development of an inclusive and equitable system, “had to be translated into new missions, strategies, and directions in discharging the core functions of higher education institutions” (p. 1). Among the legislation and policy initiatives that concentrated on the theme of transformation, the government made specific reference to the role of community engagement.

Since the turbulent first decade of South Africa’s new democracy, community engagement has been a central component of the government’s higher education policy (O’Brien, 2012; Preece, 2013). In an attempt to overhaul the education system, the ANC urged public universities to establish broad collaborations with South African communities (Alexander & Khabanyane, 2013) and graduate actively engaged citizens (Alperstein, 2007). Community engagement and service-learning created opportunities for administrators, faculty, staff, and students to become socially responsible citizens in the new South Africa (van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011).

Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna, and Slamat (2008) noted that “community engagement was a relatively unknown concept in South African higher education until the late 1990s” (p. 59). The white paper first directed institutions of higher education to “promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students” through community service programs, “encourage interaction through co-operation and partnerships,” and make available “expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes” (Department of Education,
The ANC essentially pushed universities to abandon their perceived isolation from society and be more responsive to national development needs (Osman & Castle, 2006).

Following the publication of the white paper, the Ford Foundation provided a grant to the Joint Education Trust (JET), a non-governmental organization, to conduct an assessment of community service at South African public universities (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013). JET concluded that although most institutions included community service in their mission statement and hosted a wide range of projects, few institutions had an explicit policy or strategy to operationalize community engagement. The Ford Foundation provided additional funding to establish the Community-Higher Education-Service Partnerships (CHESP) initiative to support the development of pilot programs that focused on capacity building, development support, leadership training, and advocacy for community engagement (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013). The pilot programs were monitored and evaluated, and the data were used to inform community engagement policy and practice (Lazarus, Erasmus, Hendricks, Nduna, & Slamat, 2008).

Compared to the U.S. model of service-learning that employs a dyad (campus and community-based organization) approach, the CHESP model advocated for three-way interaction between historically disadvantaged communities, higher education institutions, and service providers (e.g., non-profit organizations and government agencies; Gelmon, 2003). The triad approach amplifies the voices of the community and pushes the university to work collaboratively with the community throughout the program development and implementation process (Gelmon, 2003; Stanton & Erasmus, 2013).

Erasmus (2011) credited JET and the CHESP initiative for increasing the support of service-learning as a valuable form of community engagement. Hall (2009) added that CHESP brought attention to experiential learning and “challenged the boundedness of the traditional,
formal, university curriculum” (p. 8). Lazarus et al. (2008) applauded CHESP for creating an awareness of community engagement and service-learning as integral components of the higher education system. However, the achievements of the CHESP initiative “only scratched the surface of embedding community engagement in South African higher education” (Lazarus et al., 2008, p. 83).

In 2007, when the funding for CHESP concluded, the responsibility for driving community engagement shifted to the Council on Higher Education (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013). Along with teaching and research, community engagement has been one of the three principles guiding the post-apartheid transformation of the public higher education system. Although the Council on Higher Education (2006) described community engagement as “an integral part of teaching and research” (p. 11), Preece (2013) concluded that community engagement is still regarded as a peripheral concern of universities. Yet, interest in service-learning is growing at South African universities. Service-learning can “undeniably be an effective means to contribute to the hard realities and needs of South African communities” (Hay, 2003, p. 190), while at the same time “contributing to the transformation of higher education” (Le Grange, 2007, p. 3).

Skepticism with the U.S. approach to service-learning. When service-learning was introduced in South Africa, the country found itself in a fragile state during which it was undergoing a comprehensive agenda for transformation. South Africans initially relied on higher education professionals in the United States for an approach to service-learning. Hatcher and Erasmus (2005) reported that teams of South Africans visited universities and colleges in the U.S. to learn more about the pedagogy. Practitioners from the U.S. then traveled to South Africa to facilitate faculty development workshops, conduct consultations, and offer advice on program evaluation.
The literature (e.g., O’Brien, 2005; Preece, 2013; Thomson et al., 2008; van Schalkwyk & Erasmus, 2011) supported the notion that the U.S. approach to service-learning was adopted and applied to the South African context. On the one hand, South Africans welcomed the contributions of the pedagogy, including the commitments to reciprocal relationships, critical reflection, and responsible citizenship (Erasmus, 2011). On the other hand, policy makers, administrators, faculty members, and practitioners “had some misgivings about the wisdom behind importing an educational approach from the United States” (Stanton & Erasmus, 2013, p. 82). Bender (2011) explained that the service-learning resources that were originally distributed by the government in 2006 were placed in the context of higher education in the U.S. with minimal consideration for the South African context. Similarly, Tonkin (2011) noted that service-learning was rooted in U.S. higher education structures and U.S. ideologies of service and experiential education.

It is reasonable to conclude that service-learning cannot be applied in the same way in all contexts. Smith-Tolken and Williams (2011) explained that as practitioners continue to shape the local approach to service-learning, scholars “have begun to interrogate the applicability of these frameworks and models [from the U.S.] for the South African context” (p. 5). Although Erasmus (2011) and Maistry and Ramdhani (2010) called for indigenous conceptualizations that reflect the South African context more effectively, more research is needed to uncover these indigenous models of engagement. Furthermore, the skepticism with the U.S. approach to service-learning signals a warning for higher education professionals in the United States. The two foundational elements of international service-learning—study abroad and service-learning—involves the spread of Western concepts in contexts where the terminology and practice may be foreign. U.S. faculty members, practitioners, and students must be mindful of
the issues of “fit, ethnocentrism, and imperialism” (Sutton, 2011, p. 126) and “neocolonialist models of development that involve powerful and wealthy foreigners from one world providing for those in another” (Kahn, 2011, p. 117).

**Conceptual Framework**

Experiential learning methods—including study abroad and service-learning programs—are increasingly prominent at institutions of higher education throughout the United States (Warren, 2012). As more colleges and universities embrace the concept of an engaged campus, more students are learning alongside community members both locally and globally. Although central to the service-learning paradigm, community partners “are often treated like shadow players to the event” (Boyle-Baise et al., 2001, p. 344). Kiely and Hartman (2011) called upon researchers to look beyond student learning outcomes and focus more attention on the community. Longo and Saltmarsh (2011) added that “deeper inquiry needs to be made into the dimensions of reciprocity in an international service context” (p. 76).

To maintain a focus on the community throughout my study, my conceptual framework underscores democratic engagement. First, I draw attention to Dewey’s (1938) philosophy of education. Second, I compare Saltmarsh, Hartley, and Clayton’s (2009) technocratic engagement and democratic engagement, or as Jameson, Clayton, and Jaeger (2011) posited, thin reciprocity and thick reciprocity. Third, I discuss how Porter and Monard’s (2001) application of the indigenous principle of ayni in the international service-learning context exemplifies democratic engagement.

**Dewey’s Philosophy of Education**

Dewey (1938) was a strong proponent of experiential education at the beginning of the 20th century. His philosophy of education, which emphasized the organic connection between
personal experiences and purposeful learning, was driven by two key principles: continuity of experience and social interaction. First, with regard to continuity, Dewey posited that every experience lives on in further experiences. Yet, he cautioned that not all experiences are equally educative, noting that “everything depends on the quality of the experience which is had” (Dewey, 1938, p. 13). Dewey added that cognitive development does not occur with experience alone. Reflection—the reconstruction or remaking of experience—“is the heart of intellectual organization of the disciplined mind” (Dewey, 1938, p. 110).

Second, highlighting the principle of social interaction, Dewey (1938) explained that “experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment” (p. 41). He claimed that education is a social process and that everyone involved in the learning process has something to contribute. Dewey (1938) argued that relationships between schools and communities must be “a co-operative enterprise, not a dictation” (p. 85). When Dewey’s philosophy is applied to international service-learning programs, it serves as a reminder for higher education professionals to be cognizant of the capacities, needs, and experiences of everyone involved in the program.

In addition to the centrality of continuity and social interaction, Dewey (1938) emphasized the democratic purpose of education. The goals of education included providing students with the knowledge of how to improve the social order and preparing students for life in a democratic society (Sadovnik, Cookson, & Semel, 2013). Since schools reflected life in a democratic society, Dewey advocated for community-based educational experiences that allowed students to experiment with and practice democracy (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009). The work of Saltmarsh et al. (2009), Jameson et al. (2011), and Porter and Monard (2001) further
captures the intersection of Dewey’s (1938) philosophy of education and international service-learning programs.

**Technocratic Engagement (Thin Reciprocity) and Democratic Engagement (Thick Reciprocity)**

In my historical overview of study abroad, I explained that throughout the 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th} centuries, affluent European men participated in a Grand Tour to build their social and cultural capital. Ogden (2007) warned that some U.S. students who engage in contemporary international programs are taking a “modern Grand Tour” (p. 49) of their own. Ogden (2007) stated that “by imposing an American-ethnocentric, colonial system on the backs of our host communities and then to concern ourselves with issues of intercultural integration does little more than perpetuate notions of our own elitism, power and domination” (p. 43). A divide exists between international service-learning programs that are characterized by technocratic engagement or thin reciprocity and those that are characterized by democratic engagement or thick reciprocity.

Technocratic engagement refers to the approach to community involvement in which “those without academic credentials and degrees are treated as clients with problems to be solved” (Jameson, Clayton, & Jaeger, 2011, p. 260). This approach, which favors academic over community-based knowledge, is characterized by the unidirectional flow of knowledge (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). Since this approach privileges the expertise of a university, deficit-based projects are often designed by universities and “engagement is enacted for the public” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009, p. 8). Jameson et al. (2011) referred to this type of engagement as thin reciprocity. Although the university and the community both benefit from the partnership, the relationship is not always equal and questions of power are often ignored.
Democratic engagement, on the other hand, refers to the equitable contribution of faculty members, practitioners, students, and community members throughout service-learning life cycle (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). This asset-based, non-hierarchical approach is characterized by the multidirectional flow of knowledge. Stakeholders from the university and the community contribute their expertise and share their experiences. Jameson et al. (2011) explained that “this stronger, ‘thick’ understanding of reciprocity—one that emphasizes shared voice and power and insists upon collaborative knowledge construction and joint ownership of work processes and products—aligns well with more democratic approaches to civic engagement” (p. 264). By employing an inclusive, relational, and contextual approach, universities engage “with the public and not merely for the public” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009, p. 9).

Jameson et al. (2011) outlined four conditions of a democratically engaged partnership. First, the university and the community-based organization must construct a vision of mutual development. Outcomes for the institution, faculty members, students, community-based organization, and community members must be identified in a collaborative fashion. Second, a commitment to shared authority and power must be developed. All of the stakeholders in the relationship must be considered “co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge” (Jameson et al., 2011, p. 260). Third, long-term, sustainable relationships must be established. Complex problems in local and global communities are rarely solved in one semester or one academic year. Moreover, it takes time for an authentic and truly reciprocal relationship to flourish. Fourth, the university and community must avoid technocratic discourse and intentionally use egalitarian, participatory, and democratic language. Porter and Monard’s (2001) application of the indigenous concept of *ayni* in the context of international service-
learning programs supports partnerships that are characterized by democratic engagement or thick reciprocity.

**Ayni and International Service-Learning Programs**

*Ayni* is defined as “a symmetrical exchange of delayed reciprocity” (Allen, 1981 p. 165) usually manifested in labor exchanges or “the exchange of comparable work or goods as part of an ongoing cycle of reciprocity” (Porter & Monard, 2001, p. 6). To the Quechua people of South America, *ayni* is a thread that is woven throughout the fabric of their social life and a pervasive theme in everyday sociocultural practices (Mannheim, 1986).

Porter and Monard (2001) pushed higher education professionals to think beyond a Western framework by exploring how *ayni* informs the design and delivery of international service-learning programs. Faculty members, practitioners, and students from the United States must be mindful that Western models may not always align with the contexts of the host country and community. Similar to the democratic engagement approach, partners in an *ayni* relationship commit to shared responsibility and respect, work together for the common good, and serve a greater purpose than individual self-interest (Porter & Monard, 2001).

Porter and Monard (2001) highlighted eight aspects of *ayni* that translate to international service-learning programs. Higher education professionals must be mindful, however, that the following principles associated with a Quechua concept from South America may not apply to all cultural contexts. First, the relationship between a university and a community must be rooted in the genuine needs of the host community. Additionally, given the complexity of community needs, the university and the community must concentrate on establishing a long-term relationship. Short-term contracts will not suffice for issues that require long-term solutions. Second, as the relationship begins to flourish, the network of stakeholders should also
grow. In the spirit of thick reciprocity, everyone must share ownership of and take responsibility for the program’s success.

The next four recommendations are closely intertwined. Third, reciprocity based in *ayni* keeps the cycle of interdependence to a human scale. Porter and Monard (2001) poignantly stated that “when service-learning programs offer participants the opportunity to gain something rather than just charitably giving, they see the work as part of their own lives, rather than a task to be endured solely for someone else’s benefit” (p. 11). Fourth, since individualized service has currency, strenuous physical engagement is a defining feature of an *ayni* relationship. Fifth, giving with the body “is complemented by giving from the heart” (Porter & Monard, 2001, p. 12). An open mind and a positive spirit facilitate cross-cultural engagement and a deeper understanding of the community. Sixth, Western conceptualizations of time might not apply in the host community. In the context of a U.S. institution of higher education, time is dictated by the academic calendar, and this typically is not the case in communities.

The seventh aspect of *ayni* that should be applied to international service-learning programs is the attention to equity, trust, and mutual ownership. Porter and Monard (2001) stated that “both the institution and the community need to sincerely believe they have something to contribute and gain through the relationship” (p. 14). Furthermore, it is traditional in an *ayni* relationship to give back more than one receives. Finally, applying *ayni* to international service-learning programs “requires a shift in both language and practice” (Porter & Monard, 2001, p. 15). *Ayni* is a complex concept that requires new ways of thinking and new approaches on behalf of faculty members, practitioners, students, and community members.
Summary

International service-learning has become part of the higher education landscape in the United States. The extant literature suggests that international service-learning programs have the potential to benefit universities and communities. To reap these potential benefits, programs must be characterized by the principles of democratic engagement. Since international service-learning programs involve a high degree of socially interconnected action, these programs must be defined by inclusivity, authenticity, and thick reciprocity. Lategan (2009) explained that “engagement is never about doing something for a community, but always about doing something with the community” (p. 60). If universities build relationships using the technocratic approach, Ogden (2007) warned that “we may be doing little more than establishing a colonial-like presence in what appears to be our ‘country’s dominions abroad’” (p. 40).

Higher education professionals must also understand that community engagement varies considerably from one context to the next. South African communities, for example, continue to be challenged by the apartheid legacy. Faculty members and practitioners must acknowledge that concepts and practices from the U.S. may not always serve well in international settings. The case of South Africa underscores the relevance of indigenous models of engagement and local knowledge.
CHAPTER III. METHODOLOGY

The following research question guided my narrative study: What are the stories of community members who are affected by an international service-learning program? I focused on the lived experiences of South African community members at Korhaan School, a service-learning site for South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s semester-long international service-learning program. To mask the identity of my participants, I selected pseudonyms for the two universities (i.e., South Point University, St. Dominic University), the primary school (i.e., Korhaan School), and the community where the primary school is situated (i.e., Ithemba). I also use the names selected by my participants throughout the manuscript. In this chapter, I focus on my study’s research design and address the guiding paradigmatic framework, my role as a researcher, the rationales for a qualitative study and narrative inquiry, the methods that I employed, issues related to trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

Paradigmatic Framework

Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative research, “it is imperative that researchers are cognizant of their own assumptions and interpretive lenses” (Jones, 2002b, p. 472). A researcher’s paradigm refers to one’s epistemological and ontological beliefs that guide action. Since “paradigms shape research at its most basic level” (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 435), I first provide an overview of social constructivism and detail my role as the researcher.

Social Constructivism

A close relationship exists between a researcher’s paradigm and the research design. Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2014) noted that “one’s worldview of the nature and existence of knowledge has implications for how one will embark upon a study” (p. 12). My study was situated in the social constructivist research paradigm. I reject the positivist notion that
knowledge and reality are universal and measurable. Instead, I believe that knowledge, meaning, and existence are constructed through human interaction.

The constructivist paradigm was commensurate with my research study. Jones et al. (2014) explained that constructivist perspectives “bring to the forefront of analysis the voices, experiences, and meaning-making of participants, including those whose stories have been underrepresented in the research” (p. 56). Since constructivist perspectives rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation and focus on specific contexts in which people live and work (Creswell, 2013), the constructivist paradigm served as an ideal framework for my research on the lived experiences of South African community members.

Jones et al. (2014) also explained that “by definition, narrative inquiry seems consonant with constructivist and interpretive perspectives” (p. 86). Narrative inquiry highlights the stories of individuals set within their personal, social, and historical context (Creswell, 2013). It is essential to understand and elucidate the sociocultural, political, historical, and educational dynamics at play in communities. Additionally, in narrative research, as with the constructivist paradigm, knowledge is mutually constructed between the researcher and the participants.

**Role as the Researcher**

In the constructivist paradigm, “researchers recognize that their own background shapes their interpretation, and they ‘position themselves’ in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Relational competence refers to what the researcher brings to the research process, the relationship between the researcher and the participant, and the evolving role of the researcher (Jones et al., 2014). It is important for me to offer an authentic sense of what I brought to the research endeavor since my worldview, experiences, and identity shaped my
narrative study. Understanding researcher positionality guards against “hearing, seeing, reading, and presenting results that conform to the researcher’s experiences and assumptions about self and other, rather than honoring the participants’ voices in the study” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 41).

Unlike other qualitative methodologies, narrative researchers cannot bracket themselves out of the inquiry (Clandinin, 2006). Glesne and Peshkin (1992) added that “continual alertness to your own biases, your own subjectivity, also assists in producing more trustworthy interpretations” (p. 147).

**Personal interest.** My interest in the study stemmed from the intersection of my academic and professional experiences. Academically, I have been intentional about infusing international experiences into my education. As a high school student, I studied abroad for one semester in Loxstedt, Germany, and as an undergraduate student, I spent one semester at Westfälische-Wilhems Universität in Münster, Germany. As part of my international education cognate for my doctoral program, I worked for two months in an office that concentrated on student leadership development at South Point University in South Africa. I understand from firsthand experiences the benefits and challenges associated with international programs. Furthermore, my experiences abroad have influenced my research agenda and inspired me to design and implement opportunities abroad for students.

Professionally, I have focused on international education and service-learning. Upon the completion of my undergraduate degree, I served as a Peace Corps volunteer in rural Ukraine where I taught English at the secondary level and completed a myriad of community engagement projects. In the context of higher education, I worked as a study abroad advisor for four years and as the assistant director of co-curricular programs in a service-learning office for two years. My professional experiences have pushed me to develop effective international programs that are
characterized by reciprocity and mutual empowerment. Exploring the marriage of international
education and service-learning through international service-learning programs was a natural fit
for me.

I selected South Africa as the context for my study because I was profoundly affected by
my two-month experience at South Point University. One of my primary responsibilities was
designing community engagement opportunities for South Point University students. I vividly
recall when a group of students from St. Dominic University visited a community-based
organization and participated in a youth literacy program that I coordinated. In this moment, I
grew curious about how community members experienced the abbreviated visit by U.S.
undergraduate students. Additionally, for the past two years, my research has focused on South
Africa’s public higher education system. In May 2015, I co-led a sixteen-day study abroad
program for master’s and doctoral students to South Africa. The study abroad program, which
included visits to seven universities, focused on comparing student affairs in South Africa and
the United States. Given my background with the South African higher education system, it
seemed appropriate to situate my study in the context of South Africa.

Impact of my identity. South Africa’s long history of colonialism and four decades of
apartheid kept Whites in a position of superiority over Black Africans, Indians, and Coloureds.
The complexities of an inequitable, discriminatory, and undemocratic past can still be seen in
South African communities today. Jones et al. (2014) remarked that understanding one’s own
position also includes “taking into account the experiences and social identities of those being
studied . . . while considering how societal structures have constrained marginal, oppressed, or
dominated groups” (p. 41). Acknowledging the impact of my own identity and understanding
the identities of my participants was crucial for my study.
Given South Africa’s convoluted apartheid past, one part of my identity that had the most significant impact on my research was my race. As a White researcher in the predominantly Black African township of Ithemba, I was mindful that my participants could have been hesitant to genuinely disclose their stories given the power and privilege associated with my race. My knowledge of South Africa and my previous work experiences in South Africa helped me build rapport with my participants. By employing multiple methods—interviews and a focus group—the two weeks that I spent at Korhaan School helped me strengthen my relationships with my participants. I also entered a space where White St. Dominic University students historically have built strong bonds with administrators, teachers, and learners at Korhaan School. My participants’ previous experiences with White students from the United States served as a foundation for the connection that I sought to establish. Yet, despite these factors, I could not escape and grew uncomfortable with the colonial undertones of my own research.

Morrow (2005) cautioned that “cross-cultural research or research with a population or an issue to which the investigator is an ‘outsider’ demands preparation to enter the field in a credible manner” (p. 253). In addition to my race, several facets of my identity positioned me as an outsider, including my nationality (a U.S. citizen in South Africa), economic capital (a middle-class researcher in a socioeconomically disadvantaged township), cultural capital (high from a Western perspective, but low from an South African perspective), language (an English speaker in a Xhosa-speaking community), and education level (a doctoral student at a primary school). I was mindful that my status as an outsider could have caused my participants to feel that I was invading their space. Also, given Korhaan School’s fruitful relationship with South Point University and St. Dominic University, I was also cognizant that my participants could have withheld their true reflections so that they did not present the international service-learning
program in a negative light. Kahn (2011) cautioned that community members might simply provide answers that they feel the interviewer wants to hear. During the first week of my data collection process, my participants shared stories that emphasized the positive effects of the international service-learning program. I felt that my participants initially sought to leverage the power and privilege associated with my role as a researcher from the United States to obtain more resources for the primary school. During the second week of my data collection process, as my participants and I grew closer, my participants narrated stories that hinted at areas for improvement for the international service-learning program.

In addition to concentrating on building relationships with my participants, I spent more time than anticipated ensuring that my participants had a strong understanding of my research. Magolda and Weems (2002) explained that “many respondents do not understand qualitative researchers’ intentions” and that a researcher must clearly communicate “the unique aspects of qualitative research to respondents” (p. 497). During my first interview with each participant, I reviewed the participant consent form (Appendix B) and provided an overview of the context of my study. Initially, I had the impression that my participants were unfamiliar and uncomfortable with the rigid and bureaucratic nature of my consent form. However, after speaking with my South African peer debriefer, I learned that the first meeting between South Africans is often dedicated to understanding relationship dynamics. Looking back, it would more culturally appropriate to have an informal meeting with my participants, and then introduce the consent form during the second meeting with my participants.

Assumptions. To further demonstrate reflexivity, it is essential that I address the assumptions that I brought to my study. My first assumption was that my participants would articulate that benefits and challenges exist with the international service-learning program. This
assumption was grounded in my experiences as a service-learning practitioner and the literature (e.g., Blouin & Perry, 2009; Leiderman et al., 2003; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Tryon et al., 2008; Worrall, 2007). My second assumption was that my participants would highlight the unique sociocultural, historical, political, and educational issues that affect the international service-learning program. This assumption was based upon my experiences in South Africa and the literature (e.g., Deardorff, 2006; Sadovnik et al., 2013; Sutton, 2011). My third assumption was that my participants would share stories that indicate that the relationship between South Point University, St. Dominic University, and Korhaan School is not characterized by democratic engagement or thick reciprocity. Primarily rooted in the culmination of academic and professional experiences and my conceptual framework, I anticipated that my participants would explain that they are omitted from certain aspects of the international service-learning program.

**Rationale for Qualitative Research Design**

The goal of qualitative research is “to see the world through someone else’s eyes, using ourselves as a research instrument” (Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, & Liamputtong, 2009, p. 62). Qualitative researchers aim to understand and illuminate the lives of human beings (Jones et al., 2014) and richly describe a phenomenon that has not been fully appreciated (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). In the context of international service-learning programs, qualitative research has the potential to “foreground the perspectives of the understudied and underserved, illuminating issues central to the community” (d’Arlach et al., 2009, p. 6).

In addition to creating pathways to enhance learning, qualitative research should serve as an impetus for social action by fostering community empowerment and redressing power imbalances (Creswell, 2013). Researchers have a responsibility to “contribute to a deeper understanding of the larger social contexts in which individual lives are embedded” (p. 470) and
to attend to issues of power, identity, and social justice (Jones, 2002b). By working to transform inequitable situations, researchers can leverage social change through scholarship (Luttrell, 2010). At a time when more institutions of higher education are offering international service-learning programs, my research amplifies the voices of community members who are currently excluded from the literature and prompts institutions of higher education to reflect on the power and privilege associated with their programs. Kiely and Hartman (2011) suggested that qualitative research “can provide important knowledge on the value, impact, and/or effectiveness of [international service-learning] programs for campus and community participants” (p. 295).

**Rationale for Narrative Inquiry**

Narrative inquiry, with deep roots in the social sciences and humanities (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002), begins with individuals’ lived experiences, the stories of these experiences and how meaning is made, and the social situations in which these experiences take place (Creswell, 2013; Jones et al., 2014; Josselson & Lieblich, 2003). The aim of narrative inquiry is to “create interpreted description of the rich and multilayered meanings of historical and personal events” (Josselson & Lieblich, 2003, p. 259).

One of the defining features of narrative inquiry is the strong degree of collaboration between the researcher and the participant. The essence of narrative research is “to obtain ‘data’ from a deeply human, genuine, empathic, and respectful relationship to the participant about significant and meaningful aspects of the participant’s life” (Josselson, 2007, p. 539). A story should emerge through the interaction of the researcher and the participant. In addition, a researcher’s stories and lived experiences are significant and necessary (Jones et al., 2014). Creswell (2013) noted that “within the participant’s story may also be an interwoven story of the researcher gaining insight into her or his [sic] own life” (p. 75). As a researcher in South Africa,
I did not simply collect narratives. Instead, I participated in their co-creation as my life experiences, especially my two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Ukraine and my work at South Point University, intersected with the lives of my participants.

Another distinguishing feature of narrative inquiry is the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space approach, which concentrates on sociality, continuity, and situation (Clandinin, 2006; Jones et al., 2014; Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002). First, sociality refers to the integral relationship between an individual and the social context. Riesmann (2008) underscored that narratives have “a robust life beyond the individual” (p. 7). In addition to being mindful of my engagement with my participants, I was attentive to my participants’ interactions with each other during the focus group; with colleagues, the U.S. students, and the learners at Korhaan School; and with community members in Ithemba. Second, continuity regards the interconnectedness of experiences that are situated in the past, present, and future. In the context of my study, I concentrated on the evolution of the international service-learning program at Korhaan School. Third, situation captures the environments where the inquiry and the experiences take place. Narrative research requires rich detail about the context of the participants’ experiences. The methodology involves the exploration of the sociocultural, political, historical, and educational narratives within which individuals’ experiences are shaped. Morrow (2005) noted that “contextual grounding is essential for understanding the meanings that participants make of their experience” (p. 253). Throughout the fourth chapter, I include a rich descriptions of Ithemba and Korhaan School.

Bignold and Su (2013) commented that narrative inquiry “can be a very useful approach in educational research” (p. 401). I selected narrative inquiry for my research study hoping that the stories of South African community members inspire higher education professionals to revisit
the design and delivery of their international service-learning programs. Riessman (2008) asserted that stories, which reveal truths about human experiences, “can mobilize others into action for progressive social change” (p. 9). As noted in the second chapter, researchers have focused on student learning outcomes and have disregarded how international service-learning programs affect community members. I hope that the stories of South African community members prompt faculty members and practitioners to establish relationships characterized by thick reciprocity. In addition, by devoting more attention to context, faculty members and practitioners must understand that a singular approach to designing and facilitating international service-learning programs does not work.

**Methods**

My study concentrated on the stories of South African community members at Korhaan School who are affected by South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program. I employed two methods to collect my data—interviews and a focus group. The methods were commensurate with the social constructivist paradigm and narrative inquiry. Throughout the data collection and data analysis processes, I also journaled as a way to document my reflections and preserve my experiences.

**Site Selection**

South Point University is a public institution of higher education in South Africa. Since the South African higher education system only consists of 23 public universities, few details about South Point University are provided in an effort to heighten and respect the anonymity of my participants. I was first introduced to South Point University during a two-month internship that began in June 2014. In my role in the student leadership development office, I learned about South Point University’s semester-long international service-learning program with St. Dominic
University, a private Jesuit university with roughly 12,000 undergraduate and graduate students in the Midwestern region of the United States.

Established in 2005, the international service-learning program recently celebrated its ten-year anniversary. Each semester, the U.S. undergraduate students who participate in the program take classes at South Point University two days per week, serve at a community-based organization two days per week, and participate in two St. Dominic University courses one day per week.

Korhaan School, a primary school in the predominantly Black African, Xhosa-speaking township of Ithemba, is one of the community-based organizations where the students have historically completed their service-learning placements. Four U.S. undergraduate students served at the school during the Fall 2015 semester. Since narrative inquiry underscores situation or place, my data collection only took place at Korhaan School. The focus on one community-based organization allowed me to produce a rich description of the surrounding community and the school.

Prior to my data collection, I met with Arnold (pseudonym), the program director of South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program. Jones et al. (2014) explained that one of the primary strategies for gaining access is through negotiations with gatekeepers. After explaining my research design, Arnold agreed to support my study and help me gain access to Korhaan School. Prior to traveling to South Africa for my data collection, I received letters of support from Arnold and Bhejile, the principal at Korhaan School.
Participant Selection

Clandinin (2006) articulated that a researcher walks into the midst of stories in the field. Stories are data with a soul (Brown, 2010), and the quality of this data is largely dependent upon the participants in the study. In qualitative research, a sample is purposefully drawn with an emphasis on information-rich cases that inform an understanding of the research problem (Jones et al., 2014). Creswell (2013) defined purposeful sampling as “intentionally [sampling] a group of people that can best inform the researcher about the research problem under examination” (p. 147). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) added that “research that is field oriented in nature and not concerned with statistical generalizability often uses nonprobabilistic samples” (p. 61).

Since the intent in narrative inquiry is to elucidate the particular, my study included three participants at Korhaan School: Bhejile (the principal), Dunyiswa (the deputy principal), and Peline (a teacher who has collaborated with U.S. undergraduate students). These three individuals had the highest degree of involvement with the international service-learning program at Korhaan School. Jones (2002b) acknowledged that more attention should be devoted to the depth of understanding of the research problem, not the number of participants. Morrow (2005) concurred that “insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with information-rich cases than with sample size” (p. 255). Since a researcher’s sample size depends on what the researcher wants to know and the methodological approach (Jones et al., 2014), I am confident that stories of my three participants adequately addressed my research question.

In addition to assisting me with access to Korhaan School, Arnold also helped me identify two of my participants—Bhejile and Dunyiswa. Bhejile identified Peline, the teacher who became the third participant in my study. Two weeks before my arrival in South Africa, I sent my participants a recruitment letter via electronic communication (email) and invited them
to participate in my research study (Appendix C). My participants confirmed their participation in my research study during my initial visit to Korhaan School.

**Data Collection**

A researcher conducting narrative inquiry needs to select participants who have stories to tell, and then spend considerable time with the participants gathering their stories through multiple methods (Creswell, 2013). The methods that I used—interviews and a focus group—provided me with the data that I needed to answer my research question. Morrow (2005) suggested that qualitative methods are appropriate for examining individuals within their cultural framework. The immersive, collaborative, and reflective nature of qualitative methods “are especially appropriate when moving into new social worlds, where there are . . . new modes of civic engagement to be discovered” (Sutton, 2011, p. 137). Furthermore, qualitative methods have the potential to yield rich results that lead to a better understanding of a community (d’Arlach et al., 2009).

Before detailing my methods, it is important to highlight the unique cross-linguistic nature of my research. Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline spoke Xhosa as their first language. Since I do not know Xhosa, we communicated in English, one of the eleven official languages of South Africa. Although my participants exhibited strong English language skills, I was mindful of avoiding complex vocabulary and convoluted sentences structures. Recalling my own experiences learning foreign languages in Germany and Ukraine, I empathized with my participants. In addition, drawing upon my skills as a former instructor of English as a second language, I exercised sensitivity and communicated in an easy-to-understand manner with my participants. Although my interview and focus group protocols include complicated questions, I presented these questions to Bhejlie, Dunyiswa, and Peline in a simplified manner.
Interviews. I conducted two interviews with each of my three participants. The interviews took place at Korhaan School in a space where the participants felt comfortable. I interviewed Bhejile and Dunyiswa in their offices, and I met with Peline in the Head of Departments office. My first interviews with Bhejile (70 minutes) and Dunyiswa (55 minutes) were longer than my initial interview with Peline (35 minutes) due to Peline’s limited availability. Using the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space approach to guide my first interview, my questions concentrated on interactions between former and current U.S. undergraduate students assigned to Korhaan School and my participants (sociality); the past, present, and future of the international service-learning program (continuity); and Korhaan School and Ithemba (situation).

During my second interview, I focused on member checking—confirming the accuracy of facts and my interpretation of my participants’ stories from the first interview. I also asked questions that deepened my understanding of my participants’ experiences with the international service-learning program. Again, my interviews with Bhejile (80 minutes) and Dunyiswa (65 minutes) were longer than my interview with Peline (25 minutes) because Peline only had a 30-minute window of opportunity between her classes.

When I first met with each participant, I reviewed the purpose of my study and the participant consent form, and then had my participants sign a hard copy of the consent form. At the beginning of each interview, I also asked the participants for their permission to record the interview. My interviews were digitally recorded and followed a semi-structured protocol (Appendices D and E). The flexible nature of a semi-structured interview protocol allowed for a certain amount of uniformity while also providing opportunities for the emergence of data. Seidman (2006) cautioned that researchers must avoid manipulating the participants to respond
to a rigid interview protocol. With semi-structured interviews, the researcher must follow the participant’s lead, which makes the conversation unpredictable (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). My participants, the narrators, were “the only experts on the question of their own lives” (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 48).

I asked open-ended questions that allowed my participants to respond in a manner that they found meaningful (Riessman, 2008). Whereas Bhejile’s and Dunyiswa’s responses to my questions generated detailed stories, Peline’s responses were often brief. I frequently deviated from my plan to follow the stories of my participants. Since the research interview is an interpersonal situation (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009), I worked “mutually in a partnership with the interviewee to elicit the best possible descriptions of how interviewees understand their experiences” (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007, p. 503). Riessman (2008) explained that an open-ended interview consists of two active participants who jointly construct the narrative. My participants played a significant role in constructing the process and structure of the interviews.

Focus group. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2011) described focus groups as “collective conversations or group interviews” (p. 545). The socially oriented nature of a focus group has the potential to stimulate reflections that may not be captured in individual interviews (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009) and provide a researcher with richer, thicker, and more complex levels of understanding (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011). Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, and Zoran (2009) added that focus groups may be less threatening to participants. Following my second interview with Bhejile and my first interview with Dunyiswa, I conducted a 65-minute focus group with the principal and the deputy principal. Peline was scheduled to attend, but Bhejile informed me before the start of the focus group that she was no longer able to participate. The
focus group presented two of my participants with another opportunity to share their stories about the international service-learning program.

Acocella (2012) explained that the researcher must establish a comfortable environment where participants feel free to express their opinions. To help create a safe space, I discussed several norms for the focus group, including the following: there are no right or wrong stories or responses; engage with and react to each other; positive and negative stories and responses are helpful; and respect the confidentiality of information. To assist with authentic participation, I reminded Bhejile and Dunyiswa that they are the experts in the context of my research study. Facilitating interaction among participants is one of the primary aims of a focus group (Acocella, 2012). As outlined in my focus group protocol (Appendix F), I asked open-ended questions, and then encouraged Bhejile and Dunyiswa to exchange ideas, experiences, stories, and perspectives. Onwuegbuzie et al. (2009) noted that the researcher is responsible for “facilitating the discussion, prompting members to speak, requesting overly talkative members to let others talk, and encouraging all the members to participate” (p. 4). Initially, Bhejile shared several stories, and I needed to engage Dunyiswa and encourage interaction between the two participants.

Data Analysis

The aim of narrative analysis is to gain an overall sense of the meaning that my participants make of their lived experiences. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) articulated that data analysis “involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned” (p. 127). Similarly, Creswell (2013) explained that data analysis in qualitative research “consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, and 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” (p. 180).
I began organizing my data during the data collection process in South Africa, and I continued organizing my data upon my return to the United States. I transcribed my interviews and my recording from the focus group and saved the transcripts in an electronic format. Since I wanted to get acquainted with my data in an intimate and personal manner, I did not use a qualitative software program or an outside transcriber. After my data were organized, I sought a broader sense of the whole database. I immersed myself in the transcripts and re-read my journal entries. I added notes and memos throughout the documents to capture my reflections.

Coding the data was the third step in my data analysis process. Coding involves categorizing segments of data with a name that summarizes each piece of data (Jones et al., 2014). I began by open coding, or coding line by line. Saldaña (2013) explained that a code is “most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). I then progressed to axial coding and collapsed the open codes into themes that related to one another. Patterns in my participants’ stories and a cohesive narrative began to emerge.

Fourth, I articulated the lessons that I learned and detailed the larger meaning behind the participants’ lived experiences. Interpreting the data moves beyond rephrasing the text. Jones et al. (2014) explained that interpretation “embraces the text but broadens and deepens understanding of what was said, what it means, and its implications” (p. 51). Jones (2002b) added that data analysis should produce “findings that convey a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation” (p. 468).

I determined what was storyworthy, and then relied upon the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space approach and my conceptual framework for restorying. Creswell (2013) defined restorying as a “process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework” (p. 74).
In addition to devoting attention to sociality, continuity, and situation, I also considered the characteristics of technocratic engagement (thin reciprocity) and democratic engagement (thick reciprocity) in my analysis. In the presentation of my findings, I was cognizant of balancing my interpretations with supporting quotations from my participants. Morrow (2005) explained that “the actual words of participants are essential to persuade the reader that the interpretations of the researcher are in fact grounded in the lived experiences of the participants” (p. 256).

**Trustworthiness**

In qualitative research, trustworthiness refers to confidence in the research findings (Jones et al., 2014). Whereas quantitative research relies on validity, reliability, and objectivity, qualitative studies rely on other forms for measuring integrity. Guba (1981) outlined four criteria that contribute to a trustworthy study: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this section, I discuss the integrity of my study as it relates to each criterion.

Credibility refers to whether a study’s findings are congruent with reality (Guba, 1981). In my study, credibility was primarily achieved through member checking and peer debriefing. Member checking helps ensure that the story emerges directly from participants’ words and the context influencing the study (Jones, 2002b). Riessman (2008) asserted that “the credibility of an investigator’s representation is strengthened if it is recognizable to the participants” (p. 197). I planned to engage in two rounds of member checking with my participants, but only the first round was successful. During my second interview with each participant, I revisited the stories that were told in the first interview to check for accuracy of fact and interpretation. I was pleased with this process because it served as a catalyst for additional stories. Approximately one month after my data collection in South Africa, after I conducted my initial analysis of the data, I emailed my participants a synopsis of the stories that I wanted to include in my findings.
The participants had two months to send me feedback. Despite two reminders, I did not receive any feedback from my participants. My difficulty with the second round of member checking highlights the complexity of qualitative research that is conducted in international contexts.

In addition to member checking, working with two peer debriefers enhanced the credibility of my study. Peer debriefing involves the external check of the research process (Creswell, 2013). Guba (1981) advised researchers to “detach themselves from the site and to seek out and interact with other professionals who are able and willing to perform the debriefing function” (p. 85). Shenton (2004) asserted that the unbiased review and scrutiny of a study by colleagues is encouraged.

Apart from the four Bowling Green State University faculty members on my dissertation committee, a former colleague at South Point University served as one of my peer debriefers. Until recently, this colleague worked as a director in the division of student affairs at South Point University. She serves on the editorial board of an African student affairs journal, and her doctoral dissertation concentrated on student development and support in South African higher education. My conversations with my South African peer debriefer affected my study in two key ways. First, she introduced me to the sociocultural norms of the first meeting between South Africans. As noted in my third and fifth chapters, researchers must be mindful of the complexity of introducing a participant consent form in cross-cultural settings. Second, my South African peer debriefer supported the critical perspective of international service-learning programs that I highlight throughout my manuscript. She underscored the relevance of critically analyzing international programs that import volunteers from the Global North to the Global South.

A recent graduate of Bowling Green State University’s Higher Education Administration doctoral program served as my second peer debriefer. His qualitative dissertation explored the
experiences of high-achieving students who departed their institution in the first year. My U.S. peer debriefer inspired me to revisit the structure of my fourth chapter. He indicated that readers may struggle with the headings that were originally constructed from my participants’ quotes. After considering his feedback, I crafted more straightforward headings throughout the manuscript to provide enhanced clarity for my audience.

Transferability requires that “findings are meaningful to the reader” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 37). The goal of naturalistic inquiry is not to generalize. Shenton (2004) explained that “since the findings of a qualitative project are specific to a small number of particular environments and individuals, it is impossible to demonstrate that the findings and conclusions are applicable to other situations and populations” (p. 69). Ultimately, readers must determine whether the findings are relevant to their context. Transferability was accomplished through thick descriptions that illuminated the “multiplicity of complex conceptual structures” that were “knotted into one another” (Geertz, 1973, p. 10). Detailed descriptions of the landscape of the South African higher education system, Ithemba and Korhaan School, and the experiences of my participants will help my readers make judgments about the “fittingness” (Guba, 1981, p. 1981) or degree of similarity between two contexts.

The third criterion related to the trustworthiness of a study is dependability, or the consistency and stability of data (Guba, 1981). To address this criterion, Shenton (2004) recommended that researchers report the research design in detail, “thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work” (p. 71). Throughout my study, I kept a journal in which I detailed the chronology of my research process. Given the emerging nature of naturalistic inquiry, Guba (1981) suggested that an audit trail be established so that other researchers can follow the process
of inquiry. In my manuscript, I accurately reported my decisions and procedures throughout the data collection and data analysis processes.

Lastly, confirmability concerns the connection between the research findings and the data (Jones et al., 2014). A researcher must illustrate that a study’s findings are based upon the experiences and stories of participants, not the assumptions and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). I employed two strategies to ensure the confirmability of my study. First, triangulation involves the collection of data from a variety of perspectives and the use of a variety of methods (Creswell, 2013; Guba, 1981). I demonstrated multiple perspectives through the use of interviews, a focus group, and my own journaling, and to a lesser degree through the processes of member checking and peer debriefing. Second, I demonstrated reflexivity by making my assumptions, biases, and predispositions overt. Morrow (2005) recommended that researchers keep a self-reflective journal from the inception to the completion of the inquiry process. During data collection and analysis, I recorded my experiences and reflections, and then incorporated these data into my restorying of my participants’ experiences.

**Ethical Considerations**

A researcher must be mindful of ethical issues throughout the entire research process. Creswell (2013) noted that ethical practices of the researcher acknowledge subjectivity, the co-construction of narratives, and power imbalances, along with sensitivity to vulnerable populations. Clandinin (2006) added that researchers conducting narrative inquiry must “imagine ethics as being about negotiation, respect, mutuality, and openness to multiple voices” (p. 52), principles that are not foreign to the service-learning paradigm. Awareness of the ethical dimensions of the research process can help minimize harm to individuals (Magolda & Weems, 2002).
After I received approval for my research study from the Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board (Appendix G), I began my data collection process. Throughout this process, I was cognizant of respecting my participants and my research site. Creswell (2013) underscored that “we always need to be sensitive to the potential of our research to disturb the site and potentially (and often unintentionally) exploit the vulnerable populations we study” (p. 55). Reviewing the informed consent form afforded me the opportunity to articulate the purpose of my study and discuss the rights of each participant. However, the concept of an informed consent form highlights the ethical dilemmas that are involved in cross-cultural research. Josselson (2007) cautioned that the introduction of an informed consent form may interfere with the development of trust, highlight the power differential that exists, and remind the participants of the impersonality of bureaucracy. Andrews (2007) added that cross-cultural research is “a deeply risky venture” (p. 507). Culture impacts not only the research setting, but also the way that a researcher approaches the entire research process. Andrews (2007) advised that “if we wish to access the frameworks of meaning for others, we must be willing and able to imagine a world other than the one we know” (p. 489). I focused on exercising intercultural competence, building trust with my participants, respecting the norms of Korhaan School and its relationship with South Point University and St. Dominic University, and disrupting my research site as little as possible. Jones et al. (2014) noted that “establishing rapport and developing trust take time, care, and persistent attention throughout the entire research process” (p. 120).

Interviewing has the potential to present complex ethical issues. Issues of power complicate the interviewing relationship. Although a researcher can strive to reduce the power differential, the researcher and the participant “are never equal” (Seidman, 2006, p. 109). Creswell (2013) concurred that “the nature of an interview sets up an unequal power dynamic
between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p. 173). Seidman (2006) also noted that each participant has different limits with respect to what information is shared. Using the concept of *ayni* (Porter & Monard, 2001) to guide me, I repaid my participants by forging personal connections, engaging in cross-cultural dialogue, and amplifying their voices in my final manuscript.

Lastly, although I could not guarantee confidentiality and anonymity, I was mindful of respecting the confidentiality and anonymity of my participants. Confidentiality concerns “the treatment of information that an individual has knowingly disclosed in a research relationship or context with an expectation that this information will not be disclosed to unauthorized parties without consent” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 176). I kept the audio files from the interviews and focus group and the electronic transcripts of the audio files on my password-protected computer that was only available to me. Also, since the nature of the focus group was interactive, I asked Bhejile and Dunyiswa to treat the information that was presented as confidential. Anonymity suggests that when information is shared, “no identifiable data will be disclosed” (Jones et al., 2014, p. 176). As evidenced throughout this manuscript, I selected pseudonyms and provided ambiguous details for the two universities (i.e., South Point University, St. Dominic University), the primary school (i.e., Korhaan School), and the community where the primary school is situated (i.e., Ithemba). Also, I used the names selected by my participants throughout my transcripts and the manuscript. Since the director of the international service-learning program served as my gatekeeper and assisted me with recruitment, he knew the identities of my participants.
Summary

My qualitative research study addressed the following research question: What are the stories of community members who are affected by an international service-learning program? Operating within a constructivist paradigm and adhering to a narrative study, this research study illuminates the stories of South African community members at Korhaan School. As more institutions of higher education in the United States design and implement international service-learning courses and programs, faculty members and practitioners will find utility in the authentic and intimate nature of the results. The research study encourages higher education professionals to construct courses and programs that are characterized by thick reciprocity.
CHAPTER IV. FINDINGS

The following research question guided my narrative study: What are the stories of community members who are affected by an international service-learning program? In this chapter, I (1) present profiles of my three participants at Korhaan School—Bhejile (the principal), Dunyiswa (the deputy principal), and Peline (a teacher who has collaborated with the U.S. students); (2) briefly describe the evolution of South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s program at Korhaan School; and (3) detail my findings by restorying the narratives of my participants.

Chase (2011) explained that “narrative inquiry revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them” (p. 421). Narrative researchers “work closely with individuals and their stories” (Chase, 2011, p. 423). For two weeks, I collected and shared stories with three individuals at a primary school in South Africa. I relied on the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space approach—which concentrates on sociality, continuity, and situation—to capture the rich, multilayered, and complex meaning of my participants’ everyday experiences. The approach also illuminated the sociocultural, political, historical, and educational narratives within which my participants’ experiences have been shaped. In this chapter, my participants’ narratives are restoried, a “process of reorganizing the stories into some general type of framework” (Creswell, 2013, p. 74).

Participant Profiles

Korhaan School, a primary school in the predominantly Black African, Xhosa-speaking township of Ithemba, served as the site of my narrative study. Korhaan School is one of the community-based organizations where U.S. students serve as part of South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s semester-long international service-learning program. To mask the
identity of my participants, I selected pseudonyms for the two universities (i.e., South Point University, St. Dominic University), the primary school (i.e., Korhaan School), and the community where the primary school is situated (i.e., Ithemba). I also use the names selected by my participants throughout the manuscript.

Before I briefly introduce Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline in the following profiles, I must comment on two dynamics associated with my cross-linguistic and cross-cultural research. First, Xhosa was the first language of each of my participants. Since I am not a Xhosa speaker, my participants and I communicated in English, a second (or third or fourth) language for my participants. As noted in my fifth chapter, the deeper meaning behind stories may be lost when research is conducted across languages. Second, although Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline exhibited strong English language skills, they occasionally utilized irregular vocabulary and sentence structures when narrating their stories. Since one of the aims of qualitative research is to take readers to the location of the inquiry (Creswell, 2013), I intentionally did not alter my participants’ quotes throughout the manuscript. This raw approach also aligns with narrative inquiry and the centrality of situation with the methodology.

**Bhejile: The Principal**

Bhejile has been the principal at Korhaan School since 2004. Like most of his colleagues and the learners at the primary school, Bhejile is a Xhosa-speaking Black African. Often dressed in embroidered garments the color of earth tones, Bhejile spoke with tranquility and wisdom. During a tour of the school, the young learners in their navy, light blue, and grey uniforms displayed their affection for Bhejile by waving, flashing a thumbs-up, holding his hand for a short stroll, or embracing him with a quick hug.
Originally from the Eastern Cape province, Bhejile now considers the community of Ithemba his “home away from home.” Prior to his arrival at Korhaan School, Bhejile taught at the secondary level. Bhejile’s transition from his role as a high school teacher to a principal captures his compassion for the community and its learners:

Because of many challenges that this school was facing, I was approached to come and lead. I only started to teach at primary school when I became a principal here. All my years have been teaching at high school. You hear lots of challenges that we have been confronted with. But managing to pass those challenges because our aim is to better the life of these kids.

Bhejile’s main responsibilities are to “manage the whole system” and to “make sure that the vision of the school is implemented or is followed.” Dunyiswa, the deputy principal, added that Bhejile “must make sure that there’s a relationship between the school and the community.” Bhejile specified what it means to oversee the primary school:

My job is to make sure that teaching is taking place at the school. Learners know when to be in class and to go out of class. Make sure that educators regularly come to school prepared. . . . And the reporting to the [Department of Basic Education] about what is happening in the school. Accessing resources from the [department]. Making sure that educators get necessary resources. Reporting to parents about the progress and the challenges that now are facing at in the school. Trying to involve them so as to work as a team because in education if we want to get into the learners, we must involve all parties. Additionally, the Department of Basic Education requires Bhejile teach at least one class. He noted that “it means that I’m a manager, a leader,” and a teacher.
Dunyiswa: The Deputy Principal

Bhejile is assisted by Dunyiswa, the deputy principal at Korhaan School. Similar to Bhejile, Dunyiswa is a Xhosa-speaking Black African from the Eastern Cape province. Dunyiswa, who radiates positivity with her wide smile and engaging personality, is deeply committed to the learners at the primary school. She explained that “our learners are our first priority.” Dunyiswa illustrated her commitment to the learners by detailing the risks that she is willing to take:

For example, if a learner is sick, and I take my car, I bring that learner home, something happens to me there, the Department [of Basic Education] will not even pay me. They will tell me, ‘You were at the wrong place.’ And, they will not even bother themselves that my reason why I was there. . . . They will not say, ‘You sort of caring, you were looking after this learner, you wanted to protect this learner, you were looking of the safety of this learner.’ . . . So, they only saying, ‘You were at the wrong place. Your place is at the school, not outside the school.’

Dunyiswa offers the same dedication to the U.S. students who serve at the school as part of the international service-learning program. Bhejile stated that his role with the U.S. students is to “welcome them” and to “make sure that they feel at home,” and Dunyiswa “makes sure that whatever they need,” they have. Since Dunyiswa primarily concentrates on the curriculum, she works closely with the U.S. students who serve in the classroom. She detailed her engagement with Arnold, the director of the international service-learning program:

Every time he’s going to bring the students, he meets with me. Then, we arrange when they’re going to come, the classes that they’re going to. Then, when the students are here, he will come and introduce them to me. Then again, there will be a meeting
between the teacher and the student before they meet with the learners. Then, the teacher will introduce the student. Then, the process, they start coming in.

**Peline: The Teacher**

Dunyiswa is responsible for placing the U.S. students with teachers like Peline, a mathematics (maths) teacher who has worked at Korhaan School since 2012. Since Bhejile and Dunyiswa identified maths as a curricular area that needs attention, and given the subject’s importance in the Department of Basic Education’s national testing scheme, Peline has collaborated with U.S. students to teach maths to learners in grades six through nine.

Peline, a Xhosa-speaking Black African, initially presented as shy, but slowly began to open up during my two weeks at Korhaan School. Reminiscing about her past experiences with the U.S. students, Peline described the characteristics that she appreciates:

Someone who’s friendly. Someone who can be, who can act as a parent to kids because they need that parent material. A person who is really willing to teach, who’s willing to share knowledge with kids.

With respect to her daily workload, Peline noted that “there not enough time” in the day. Peline typically arrives at school at 7:50 a.m., and classes begin at 8:00 a.m. The school day concludes at 2:30 p.m., but she often stays later to prepare for the next day’s lessons and to complete her administrative work. As for the classroom experience, Peline spoke about the challenges of teaching maths to roughly 50 learners in each class:

I have about 50, an average of 50 students. And remember, of those 50 students, learners, they don’t understand maths, and they not even interested because they know that their brothers and their parents, they failed maths. They don’t get motivation even at home. From that 50, I must give them individual attention, and it’s hard.
Evolution of the International Service-Learning Program

South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program at Korhaan School has roots in the Hope Foundation (pseudonym), a non-profit organization that provides services to children in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities like Ithemba. Initially, the Hope Foundation facilitated an after-school program at the primary school, and the U.S. students who participated in the international service-learning program worked with the foundation, not directly with Korhaan School. Bhejile recalled that the Hope Foundation “stayed at our school for a certain period of time,” and then shifted its efforts to other schools to “make things better for the kids and the community.” Bhejile originally thought that this was “the end of the story” in terms of support from the U.S. students.

However, when the Hope Foundation left Korhaan School, Arnold, the program director for the international service-learning program, committed to maintaining a relationship between South Point University, St. Dominic University, and the primary school. Bhejile recalled:

[Arnold] is one that insisted when [Hope] Foundation moved from our school to other school, he’s one who said, ‘No, no, no. These [U.S. students] are still going to come to [Korhaan]. They are not going to move from that school. We are going to stick to our relationship with the school.’

The new era of the international service-learning program at Korhaan School—dependent from the Hope Foundation—began in 2011. During this transition period, the U.S. students remained focused on the after-school program, and they continue to offer these co-curricular activities today. Dunyiswa explained that “there’s chess, there’s soccer, there’s netball.” Bhejile added:
This after-school program is taking the kids, is making the kids being involved after school. That different programs which are there in terms of they playing marimba, playing soccer, and then they doing different dances.

In addition to serving as coaches, the U.S. students assist the learners with their homework as part of the after-school program. Bhejile explained that “there’ll be some classes which we regard as purpose of helping them in the homeworks and all that.” Dunyiswa also spoke about the after-school tutoring:

And, after school, they will take some of those that they see that they are lacking. So, the average ones and up, they would leave them. Then, the below ones, they will deal with them after school in groups, in separated groups.

The U.S. students, however, have not been the only individuals providing an after-school program at Korhaan School. Bhejile detailed a unified venture between the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Sport and Recreation that aims “to make sure that learners are provided with activities at the end of the curriculum period.” Korhaan School received a grant to purchase sports equipment and offer co-curricular activities in several sports, including table tennis, soccer, volleyball, and rugby. Bhejile discussed the conflict that initially existed between the U.S. students and the South African group:

Now, at the beginning, there was a clash between that group and this group. Because all of them are taking from one source in terms of the learners. This group needs learners from our school, this one needs learners from our school. And then, they are providing same thing. . . . Because I’ve indicated even to them that you cannot say this group will play netball, and then that group is also playing netball. You work together netball, soccer is soccer, chess is chess, dance is dance.
Determined to find a solution that would benefit the learners, Bhejile encouraged the U.S. students and the South African group to collaborate. Driven by his investment in the learners, Bhejile expressed a desire for “the learners to benefit from all the activities that are taking place at school.” Bhejile reported that the U.S. students and the South Africans “are working as one group.” Celebrating this marriage, Bhejile noted that the groups “are still having an impact when it comes to extra-mural activities.”

As the relationship between South Point University, St. Dominic University, and Korhaan School improved, Bhejile sought to enhance the experience. Bhejile recalled the moment when he realized that the U.S. students “are resources that we can tap into to help us to come with a different approach.” He acknowledged that the U.S. students “are professionals who are able to give me or give the school the curriculum expertise.” Determined to find a more effective way to partner with the U.S. students, Bhejile began to integrate the U.S. students into the curriculum:

Now, it was agreed that they come during teaching time. When they come during teaching time, it’s then that we have to check the learning areas they need, they can help us with. And then, trying to get a meeting with the educators so as to be in a position to plan so that one knows that, tomorrow when I come, or Tuesday when I come to the school, coming prepared, working. Hence then, we are getting fruits out of that.

Bhejile told a brief story about a particular U.S. student who responded positively to the new role:

This lady . . . suggested that she be given the work so that she can be in a position to prepare. Not come in and observe that. Coming as an active participant, you know, in the teaching. Now, that process as it unfolds, now we end up reaping fruits, reaping fruits, and then looking at that connection between her and learners and the teacher.
What began as an after-school program tethered to a non-governmental organization has flourished into a collaborative partnership between South Point University, St. Dominic University, and Korhaan School. As detailed in the next section, the U.S. students bring tremendous benefits to the administrators, teachers, and learners at the primary school. Bhejile remarked that the U.S. students have “opened our eyes” and “had a certain impact” on the Korhaan School community. Yet, at the same time, there is considerable room for improvement for the international service-learning program.

“The Other Side”

Narratives are “a means of human sense-making, representation, construction and reconstruction of lived experiences” (Bignold & Su, 2013, p. 403). In the following (re)story, I (1) detail my daily commute from South Point University to Ithemba during my data collection process; (2) provide a rich description of Ithemba through the narratives of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline; (3) discuss the culture of Korhaan School; (4) highlight the benefits that the U.S. students bring to the primary school; (5) introduce ubuntu and explain how the U.S. students exemplify ubuntu behavior; (6) describe areas for improvement for the international service-learning program; and (7) share my participants’ vision for the future of the program. Throughout the (re)story, I emphasize the voices of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline, a hallmark of narrative inquiry (Creswell, 2013), in order to illuminate the human experience (Jones et al., 2014).

The Drive to “the Other Side”

Each morning, I traveled from my residence at South Point University through the community of Ithemba to Korhaan School. I left behind the revolutionary chants, burning tires, vandalism, and relentless spirit of the #FeesMustFall movement. Students at South Point
University—and at institutions of higher education throughout South Africa—protested against the proposed fee increases for the upcoming academic year. Like a brush fire during a dry South African summer, the unrest quickly spread from one institution to the next.

Once the #FeesMustFall movement asserted its presence at South Point University, the administration initially closed the university for two days. When the young revolutionaries threatened faculty, staff, and students with sharpened wooden sticks and crowbars, university activities were halted until further notice. New art that was spray-painted in red, black, and green letters decorated campus: “#FEESMUSTFALL” and “FREE EDUCATION NOW!!!” The Born Frees—the post-apartheid generation—occupied one of the science buildings and renamed it Steve Biko House after a Black African anti-apartheid activist. Meant to be studying for their end-of-year exams, students instead channeled the rebellious spirit of their fathers, mothers, uncles, and aunts. Although the increased security personnel attempted silence or at least contain the movement, students persevered, congregated in available spaces on campus, and crafted their growing list of demands. The #FeesMustFall movement evolved into a national conversation about the decolonization of syllabi, access to higher education, food security, and student safety.

My route took me from the site of student protests to a community that some of the Born Frees at South Point University call home. Ithemba is a product of apartheid legislation that segregated Black Africans and forcibly removed them from urban areas that were designated for Whites. As with many townships in South Africa, Ithemba rests on the periphery of an urban area. Many of the homes in Ithemba are shacks constructed from corrugated metal and reclaimed wood, and several of the shops operate from obsolete shipping containers.

Most days, my eyes were repeatedly drawn to some of the same landmarks in Ithemba. The façade of one particular shop was completely adorned with small nets that were each filled
with five to six medium-sized onions. Sprinkled throughout the township, I witnessed signs of progress and development with the construction of concrete homes that were painted in vibrant colors—teal, electric blue, and pastel tones of pink and purple. Terminus, the combined outdoor market and transportation hub, reminded me of the biweekly bazaar in the Ukrainian village where I served as a Peace Corps volunteer. The smoke from braai (barbeque) stands created a slight haze over the stands that sold clothing, home goods, and food products.

Not too far from terminus, I entered a quiet residential neighborhood that was home to Korhaan School. On the other side of the chain-link and barbed wire fence that surrounded the perimeter of the school, I was often welcomed by the screams, laughs, and chaos of learners who were enjoying a break between classes. Despite the warm October sun overhead, the boys wore uniforms of grey trousers, light blue button-down shirts, navy vests, and black shoes. The girls exchanged the grey trousers for grey skirts. The more time that I spent at the primary school, I observed that variations included checkered dresses and tracksuits. Often the fit was off, presumably from several years of wearing the same uniform or due to its secondhand nature.

In the stories that Dunyiswa shared, she often referred to Ithemba as “the other side.” When I asked Dunyiswa to clarify this description, she explained that “we are in one country, one town, but different areas.” In a similar voice, Bhejile articulated that “we are living in different worlds in the same country.” In the next section, the restoried narratives of my participants illuminate some of the fundamental challenges facing “the other side.”

**Ithemba: The Community on “the Other Side”**

I frequently thought about the colorful mosaic that decorated a concrete wall across the street from the primary school. The vibrant shards of clay spelled out, “WELCOME THE NEW, LET GO THE OLD.” I appreciated the art installation’s message of hope, inspiration, and
progress. However, the more I contemplated the mosaic, the more I grew frustrated by the
generic solution that did not capture the complexity of South Africa’s convoluted apartheid past.
After all, the racist, discriminatory, and inequitable policies of the National Party created the
community of Ithemba that Bhejile described as “the poor of the poorest.”

When I prompted Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline to speak about the community, each individual began with stories about the learners’ parents or guardians. The majority of learners—90% according to Bhejile—are raised by their grandmothers or foster parents. Dunyiswa explained that “most of them, they are orphans” who “don’t have parents.” Peline commented:

You know, learners from our community, they are being raised by their grandmoms.
Some are raised by, I don’t know which word I can use, by other parents, not really their moms and dads.

In some cases, a learner’s mother lives in Ithemba or a nearby community, but is absent from her child’s life. The mothers receive federal aid that should be directed towards the children, but the money is often spent elsewhere. Dunyiswa remarked that the younger mothers still “want to explore” and “want to enjoy life.” Bhejile added that some learners’ mothers “are seeing other new boyfriends” and “staying with them in new areas.” Dunyiswa underscored that in the post-apartheid era, education is no longer a top priority for all parents:

They don’t see that in the near future, it’s not about them. It’s about their kids. They are building a future for their kids. They were raised in a culture where education comes first. Because during the apartheid system, education was the first thing. But now, there’s technology, there’s everything. It’s democracy now. Everybody’s free to live the
life the way they want to. So, they think that ‘I have my freedom.’ So, they forget that it goes along with their responsibilities.

Dunyiswa suggested that it can be difficult to establish trust with the parents. She noted that “when I’m in the community, I have the stigma that I’m an educator.” Since Dunyiswa works as an administrator at a public school, parents view her as a government employee with a certain degree of power and privilege:

You talk to these parents when you are in the community, but when you talk to them, they’re like, ‘No, it’s a teacher.’ They won’t give you some information fully. Because they know you are working for the government. Then, you can tell the Department what they are doing. For example, for the grant money. Some, most of these kids are staying with their grannies. But, their mothers are earning grant, but living elsewhere. So, the kids are suffering. But, once they find out you are there, then they will tell you four stories.

The lack of positive role models in Ithemba was a salient issue for Dunyiswa. Instead of growing up in homes where parents nurture their children and facilitate growth and development, Dunyiswa shared that some of the learners “are exposed to crime, people who are doing wrong things, people who cannot motivate them.” She noted:

There are no role models. So, it’s up to a parent to guide, teach, support, advise these learners. Prepare these learners for a future. But, if a parent does not do that, does not give that to a learner, so it depends to a learner.

Dunyiswa clarified that there are successful individuals who come from Ithemba, but they often move elsewhere to escape poverty and unemployment. Dunyiswa, who is originally from the Eastern Cape province, has a personal connection to this issue:
Most Eastern Cape people are in Cape Town, Bloemfontein, Joburg because they moved from the places that they live in for better. . . . Because what took us out of Eastern Cape? Because there were no jobs. Then, we went out, looking for jobs, and we got the jobs. But for the person who’s still there, that person is still struggling to get a job. So, it’s up to you to decide. You leave your family, you move, find some greener pastures.

Social problems—unemployment, alcoholism, and violence—exacerbate the situation.

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline drew attention to social issues in the community that affect the learners who attend Korhaan School. Bhejile remarked that Ithemba is “full of parents that are not working,” and Dunyiswa clarified that “90% of the community is unemployed.” In addition to unemployment, Ithemba is characterized by a culture of violence. Bhejile explained that the community has one of the highest crime rates in South Africa. As described in the next section, I quickly learned that these issues permeate the culture of Korhaan School.

**Korhaan School: A School on “the Other Side”**

When I first arrived at Korhaan School, I did not anticipate the interconnectedness of the cultures of the broader community and Korhaan School. After inviting Dunyiswa to distinguish between the cultures, she enlightened me:

What happens in this society determines the school culture. Because what is there, you’ll get it here. So, if something wrong happens there, you must know it’s coming.

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline told stories that illustrated this point. Dunyiswa, who expressed concern about the extent to which parents in the new South Africa value education, expanded upon this perspective by speaking about textbooks. Although the Department of Basic Education requires learners to take their textbooks home, the learners’ parents requested that the textbooks be kept at school. Knowing that this request disregarded the law, Dunyiswa supported
the parents by sending class timetables to the learners’ homes. Dunyiswa hoped that the parents would reference the timetable, and then help their children pack their school bags with the appropriate textbooks. Dunyiswa described the situation that unfolded:

I then had a problem because the parents did not assist us in terms of, ‘Okay, now it’s Thursday. Let us take out all Thursday’s book and put in Friday’s books.’ Then, you find out that when you want to continue with the lesson, some books are left at home. So, half of the class still have books, yesterday’s books. So, again, as a teacher you are delayed because you don’t get the support from parents.

The learners, perhaps imitating their parents’ attitudes toward textbooks, displayed a similar disregard. Dunyiswa continued:

And these kids, they are getting bored with the textbooks. They destroy. They don’t value the textbook. They don’t know what to do with the textbook. In our culture, because when we, our education before, we valued the textbook because we had nothing else other than the textbook. But with these kids, giving the textbook, telling them to study from the textbook, they won’t. And, they don’t even understand why this textbook.

Complicated issues such as the lack of role models and the post-apartheid shift in the extent to which people value education penetrate the culture of Korhaan School. Instances of crime also impair a school that already lacks the resources that it desires. Dunyiswa described the theft of the school’s computers:

The computer lab, there was a computer lab. Because they were on top of the computer lab. They took up the roof, they jumped in, they took computers from there. I think there was seven, fourteen. They took all of them.

An identical scenario took place at a nearby school in Ithemba:
They put, I think, 12 computers. And same day, 12 computers were gone. Seriously, at night. When they come the next morning, everything was gone.

In the same way that the learners mimic their parents’ attitudes towards textbooks, the learners also emulate the aggressive behaviors of family and community members. Peline declared that “this community is full of gangsters.” The learners interpret crime and violence as avenues to acceptance and safety, and they crave the social capital that comes with these cruel acts. Dunyiswa stated that the learners “want to belong, they want to be seen as no-touchable.”

At school, the playground transforms into a space where the learners replicate the violent behavior of family and community members. Dunyiswa explained that some children “always beat other learners, they bully other learners.”

The U.S. students who serve at Korhaan School are not immune to the community issues that bleed into the school. Each participant shared their version of the story about the learner who stole one of the U.S. students’ mobile phones. The theft took place on a day when the U.S. students were facilitating after-school activities. A learner jumped over the chain-link fence that wraps around the perimeter of the school, located the U.S. student’s bag, stole the mobile phone, and then hopped back over the fence. Fortunately, some of the other learners witnessed the theft and reported the young boy who took the phone. Dunyiswa explained how easy it was for the other learners to return the phone to the U.S. student: “They went outside, they came with him, then the phone was with the boy.”

Bhejile underscored that the U.S. students “must know that this is a dangerous community.” He added that “sometimes, they are putting us in a fearing position” because “they were never exposed to this.” Bhejile pointed to the “level of gangsterism” and “the level of poverty” as factors that bring community issues into the primary school. Peline suggested that
race makes the White U.S. students vulnerable in a predominantly Black African community. She explained that community members “always think that [Whites] have everything.” Despite instances such as the theft of the cell phone, Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline applauded the U.S. students for their resilience. Referencing one particular U.S. student, Peline explained that “she was able to overcome all those challenges . . . because she was fully aware of the environment she’s in.”

Bhejile and Dunyiswa, who are cognizant of and prioritize the safety of the U.S. students, do not leave the primary school when the U.S. students are serving. Dunyiswa emphasized that “you must give them support” because “some learners, when they see different people, they take advantage.” She continued:

And even if [the U.S. students] work after hours, just give support to be at school. Don’t say, ‘No, my hours are gone,’ and then you leave them. Just around, do your work whilst they are also around.

In addition to signaling support for the U.S. students, the learners respect Bhejile and Dunyiswa. Bhejile echoed Dunyiswa’s statement:

Because of the environment that I’ve indicated is having a lot of challenges, I also need to be here . . . until they leave because we don’t know what would happen. So that they see principal at school because some of the learners will tend to be dangerous who are also learners at this school.

One of the primary reasons why the learners respect the principal and deputy principal is because Korhaan School functions as a second home for many of them. In the next section, I restory three narratives that illustrate the ways in which the administrators and teachers at the primary school create a supportive atmosphere for the learners.
Korhaan School: A Second Home

“I always tell my learners, ‘When you go to school, you must look around you,’” began Dunyiswa. She continued:

‘You see those people sitting at the corner there? Please make sure you are not one of them in five years to come. . . . You know those people, they were there before you, but please, make sure you are not one of them.’ . . . Even some of them, they don’t want to be there. But the circumstances put them there. That’s the thing. Because I always tell them, ‘Your background does not determine your future.’

Dunyiswa went on to explain that the role of Korhaan School’s administrators and teachers transcends “teaching these learners just to progress to the next grade.” Rather, they have a responsibility to “give them knowledge that will help them in their future.”

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline were candid about the intersecting social issues in Ithemba and how they affect the learners at the primary school. In a straightforward and fatherly tone, Bhejile stated that “this environment is not a good environment to grow learners or to grow kids at.” Bhejile asserted his determination in overcoming the issues that plague Ithemba:

Those challenges are not stopping us from moving forward. Our aim is to make sure that that goes away. And then it will only fade out if we continue making sure that the change is happening in that environment.

It became clear that Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline strive to create an environment that functions as a second home for the learners. In Dunyiswa’s own words, “Education is not only about education.” She explained that education is about “the relationship” and looking “beyond the learner.” Bhejile added:
These learners, they see when they come to school they’re expecting a lot from us in terms of being also their parents. Because there are lots of things that they are not getting there. . . . They need that warmth from us because they see our role as two. Just to teach, we must also open, you know, a room for certain things that they are not getting where they have been placed.

The following three stories—narratives about the school’s feeding scheme, a cultural practice called *imbeleko*, and a weak learner who needed medication—illuminate the ways in which Korhaan School serves as a second home for its learners.

**The feeding scheme.** Bhejile detailed the feeding scheme that exists at Korhaan School. Since the school is situated in a socioeconomically disadvantaged community, the school fees are waived for learners and they receive food throughout the day. Bhejile stated that “the parents in the community cannot pay school fees” or “provide breakfast for their kids before they come to school.” Before their first lesson begins at 8:00 a.m., the learners receive *pap* (maize porridge) to ensure that “everybody has had something in his or her stomach.” At 10:00 a.m., the learners receive a snack—“any type of fruit that has been delivered” and milk.

Initially, when the feeding scheme was introduced at the school, hungry learners refused to eat due to the negative social stigma associated with accepting free food. Bhejile recounted the situation:

> At the beginning, at the introduction of the feeding, we had a challenge of the learners not eating this food. They were hungry, but not eating because if you eat this food, you will be regarded as not having food at home. . . . You were belabored by others. That will be in their heads. Oh, this one is struggling, this one. . . . They were not eating. They were not eating.
Bewildered, Bhejile took it upon himself to encourage the learners to eat. He assumed a fatherly role and joined the learners during the meal and snack times. Bhejile explained that “the only time I managed to change their mindset is when during the cooking time . . . I was sitting with them.” He recalled telling the learners that “this food has been chosen so that you will be able to learn, and then to acquire knowledge.” Today, the learners are eating the food. Bhejile emphasized that “the food is the things for these learners.” Mindful of the connection between a healthy body and a healthy mind, he now feels a sense of comfort knowing that fewer learners complain about being hungry.

The feeding scheme has become so successful that it draws more learners to the after-school program. However, Bhejile indicated that some of the learners are motivated by the food, not by the co-curricular activities. He hinted that the U.S. students are not aware of this. Bhejile described the situation:

In the after-school program, most of the learners come because there is food. Some will sit at home, and then they know, okay, the meal is coming at probably three or half past three or four. You will see them getting into the yard, they are coming for the food. . . . Now, you see learners coming in towards that period of time, so that they can get food and go without to being involved in all those activities.

Bhejile added that “unless we, as a school, we provide a meal for those learners at that time, they aren’t going to be there.” Yet, he acknowledged that the school must monitor the situation more closely. Bhejile empathizes with the background of the learners at Korhaan School, but he does not want to provide food to learners who do not participate in the after-school activities. Cognizant that the benefits of co-curricular activities translate into the classroom, he wants more of the learners to be involved in the after-school activities.
**Imbeleko.** Korhaan School also functions as a second home for learners in ways that are less literal than the feeding scheme. Bhejile introduced me to the Xhosa tradition of *imbeleko*:

In our culture, we’ve got a belief that there are certain things that the parents have to do for the kid to be right. For us, for example, for us, at my early stage, my child, one of my kids, I have to slaughter a goat, and then my child will be given certain meat from, you know, the four [legs] of the goat to eat it. And then, you know whether the kid is alright, is healthy.

Bhejile added that either a goat or a sheep can be slaughtered. The mother then uses the hide of the animal to carry her child on her back. The purpose of *imbeleko* is to ensure that children are clean and healthy, or in Bhejile’s own words, to be assured that “there’s nothing that you can say that child needs.”

In a community where many of the learners are orphans, some foster parents are uncertain whether their children have received *imbeleko.* Since one possible explanation for misbehavior at school is that the learner has not received *imbeleko,* Bhejile discusses the cultural tradition when he phones foster parents to talk about a learner’s negative behavior:

When the learner is having different challenges at school, behavioral challenges, you regularly call the parent. The parent, when the parent, you will learn that, oh, this kid is a foster kid. When the parent will say probably, ‘It’s because I don’t know his clan. I don’t know his parents.’

Bhejile stated that the foster parents “start blaming the parents of this kids before [they] adopted the child.”

Knowing the Bhejile respects and understands *imbeleko,* the foster parents ask him to perform the tradition for their children. Bhejile remarked that the foster parents know “that all of
us here from the Xhosa-speaking Africans are doing that.” If the learner shares the same clan name as Bhejile, he can perform *imbeleko*:

If [the mother] knows that the child is having my clan name, she can come to me to say, ‘Help this child. She never got *imbeleko.*’ We call it *imbeleko.* ‘She never got *imbeleko.* Can you help us doing *imbeleko* for him because he’s of your clan name?’ I can simply get a goat and do that, and she becomes cured.

**Medication.** Bhejile described *imbeleko* as “the first medicine given to a child.”

Dunyiswa shared a story about giving a learner medication that paralleled Bhejile’s overview of *imbeleko.* She recalled a learner who appeared “very weak” at school. When Dunyiswa phoned the learner’s mother, she was informed that the learner was taking medication:

I said, ‘Okay, is she taking the medication at home?’ Then she said, ‘Sometimes.’ And I asked what was the reason sometimes she would give the medication with no food. Then, the child would become weak and she would become sick.

Just as Bhejile performed *imbeleko* for learners, Dunyiswa assumed a motherly role and took responsibility for giving the medication to the learner:

The medication stays with me. I make sure she eats porridge at the kitchen. Then, I give her that regular medication. . . . Because I wanted to make sure that she eats the medication.

Yet, Dunyiswa can provide only a certain level of support. Following the end of the school day, the learner is supposed to take additional medication in the afternoon. Dunyiswa expressed concern that the learner is likely not receiving the second round of medication at home.

The next section on the positive effects of the international service-learning program draws attention to the ways in which the U.S. students contribute to an environment that
functions as a second home. Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline presented narratives that emphasize the motivation that the U.S. students bring to the learners, the strong relationships that the U.S. students build with the Korhaan School community, and the support that the U.S. students provide in the classroom.

“*We See the Difference*”: Positive Effects of the International Service-Learning Program

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline spoke favorably of the international service-learning program. They shared stories that indicate that the U.S. students positively affect the school, the administrators, the teachers, and the learners. Bhejile commented:

I think the influence of the visiting students is positive to all of us. We feel their presence at the school. Now, we’ve seen that they are a resource that we can use to better our situation in terms of results. We are enjoying their presence.

Dunyiswa echoed Bhejile’s remarks, noting that the international service-learning program has been “worth it” and has “brought change.” Speaking generally, Dunyiswa clarified the changes about which she spoke:

In terms of changing some strategies in terms of methodology. Changing our kids in terms of language, in terms of acceptance, in terms of looking the curriculum the other way around.

She continued:

Because, really, we see the difference in the classroom. In the classroom and in the relationship that they build with the learners. Both inside and outside the classroom.

In the sections to follow, I restory Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline’s narratives to highlight the positive effects of the international service-learning program. The U.S. students (1) increase the motivation of the learners as evidenced by the learners’ more fluid use of English; (2)
establish strong relationships with the Korhaan School community that serve as a catalyst for meaningful interactions; (3) introduce new perspectives to the administrators, teachers, and learners; (4) provide curricular support; (5) and engage in cross-cultural exchanges.

**Motivating the learners.** Linguistic diversity is a hallmark of South Africa. Beyond the eleven languages that are officially recognized by the country’s constitution, several additional languages are spoken across the South Africa’s nine provinces. For the majority of learners—and administrators and teachers—at Korhaan School, Xhosa is their mother tongue. English, the language of instruction starting in grade four, is a second (or third or fourth) language. Despite the Department of Basic Education’s language policy, teachers introduce material in English, but quickly switch to Xhosa to ensure that the learners understand. Dunyiswa suggested that the learners expect the teachers to present the material in Xhosa. Bhejile added that “our learners struggle to acquire this English or to be fluently speaking English” as a result of this approach.

When the learners engage with the U.S. students, they are forced to utilize their English language skills because the U.S. students are not conversant in Xhosa. By observing the learners’ interactions with the U.S. students, Bhejile and Dunyiswa realized that the learners speak and understand English at a much higher level than they originally had believed. Bhejile clarified this benefit:

The students, now, they’ve got a positive influence. In terms of language, I’ll put it in terms of language. Now, the learners will surprise us first of all because you will see them talking with the [U.S. students]. Certain times, we were actually not aware that these learners do not have an English problem. They can, you know, communicate.
Peline concurred that the learners are “positively impacted” because the U.S. students motivate them to improve their English. As outlined in the next section, the U.S. students would not be able to motivate the learners without first establishing trust.

**Building strong relationships.** Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline were impressed with the strong relationships that the U.S. students have built with the learners at Korhaan School. Dunyiswa remarked that these close relationships “were built on trust,” and as result, “it made [the learners] able to open up.” Bhejile agreed:

> There was that relationship which I observed which I felt if a teacher builds that relationship, it’s telling how together they work. Each one start to trust one another. And then, that trust between the two, now, is taken to the learners, and then it gives us the memories that we have to take.

Bhejile shared a story that captures how the U.S. students develop strong bonds with the learners. He pointed to their active engagement in co-curricular activities in the context of the after-school program:

> [The U.S. students] are not sitting there. They are actively involved. They’ll kick ball if they are playing soccer with them. You understand how close you become. Now, if they are playing basketball or volleyball, they will be there playing with them. That, it creates a certain atmosphere, how you can develop relationship between you as the educator and the learner outside the classroom. And then, when that relationship is there, even the learning inside the classroom is gonna be more effective because the learner can ask, won’t be shy to ask anything, because that shyness is broken when you are playing.

After breaking down barriers in a non-academic setting, the learners feel comfortable opening up to the U.S. students. Some of the learners trust the U.S. students more than their
South African teachers. Dunyiswa suggested that since the U.S. students are not responsible for discipline in the classroom, they are able to establish a “warm relationship” with the learners:

Sometimes, [the learners] would see that the students are they ones that are not strict.

The teachers are the ones that are strict. So, they would speak more to them than to the teachers because they, some teachers would use, they will sometimes beat them because they have done something that is horribly done. Then, the students would say, ‘No, you’re not supposed to do that.’ That they hear that, then they would, ‘Oh okay, this is the best person to speak to.’

Bhejile concurred that the connection between the U.S. students and the learners can sometimes be so strong that the learners share details with the U.S. students “that they are reluctant to share with us.” The strong relationships serve as a point of departure for meaningful conversations. Dunyiswa noted:

With the students, even, these learners will tell them exactly. They will tell them stories, their backgrounds. Sometimes, they would not even tell us, but they told them. Just as the learners fear punishment in the classroom, the learners confide in the U.S. students because they fear judgment from the administrators and the teachers. Dunyiswa illustrated this point with an example:

If a learner disclosed [to] the student that [he is HIV] positive, he knows that the student’s going to leave. And, the student won’t be here and is not part of my life. He’s part of my life at school. And, you go back overseas. But, the teacher is here with me. The teacher can share this story with another teacher. Then, all the teachers would know. Dunyiswa did not interpret this as a defeat. Instead, she reflected on the deeper meaning of the bond between the U.S. students and the learners. Given South Africa’s complex history,
Dunyiswa explained that the learners do not always react positively when they encounter difference. This is not the case with the U.S. students. Even though the U.S. students “belong on the other side of the road” and “are different in color,” Dunyiswa applauded her learners for their open-mindedness, tolerance, and appreciation of difference. She remarked:

[The learners] see different color. They can relate with the different color. And, different color to them now is not a different color. It’s human. It’s human being. It’s not about color anymore.

In addition to the bonds that the U.S. students build with the learners, they establish meaningful relationships with the administrators and the teachers. Peline spoke passionately about one particular U.S. student. Although it took time for Peline to warm up to the U.S. student, the two grew exceptionally close throughout the semester:

I used to call her my sister. We were close. Even though now she’s now back at home, we send each other messages. We chat. She’s here, we meet, we eat lunch. We friends, we sisters. . . . I’m so happy that she came here.

When I asked Peline what the other teachers thought of the U.S. students, she explained that “they were happy to see them here.” Bhejile agreed that the other teachers were positively affected by the U.S. students. He proudly reported that the U.S. students and the teachers are now effectively collaborating in the classroom. Dunyiswa added that teachers who do not currently partner with the U.S. students, such as the grade R (kindergarten) teacher, requested to be more involved with the international service-learning program. However, since Xhosa is the medium of instruction in grades R through three, the U.S. students are limited to informal engagement with the younger learners at the school. Still, Dunyiswa noted that the U.S. students “had a good relationship even with the learners in grade R which they are not teaching.”
**Offering new perspectives.** The third benefit of the international service-learning program has its roots in the story of the theft of the U.S. student’s cell phone. Bhejile and Dunyiswa uncovered the story’s deeper meaning. Following the incident, when the learner who stole the cell phone returned to the primary school, the immediate reaction of the learner’s peers was to resort to physical punishment. Dunyiswa explained:

The other learners wanted to beat the learner. Then, the [U.S.] student said, ‘No, we are glad we have the phone, but you cannot beat. That’s violence, you cannot do that.’

As discussed in the presentation of Ithemba, Dunyiswa pointed to the culture of violence surrounding the learners:

The community, if somebody stole phone, stolen something, they always beat the person. So, they come from culture. So, they wanted to beat the learner because just to show him that what you’ve done is wrong.

The U.S. student presented a new approach to the administrators, teachers, and learners by facilitating a conversation about how to prevent the theft of personal items in the future. The solution, which focused on prevention instead of reaction, inspired Dunyiswa. She explained that by “them coming saying, ‘No, leave him, we are going to talk to him,’ you shift your minds.”

Bhejile, who also recounted the cell phone story, concurred that “as South African educators, we’ll also learn a lot in terms of approach.” He expressed appreciation for the new perspectives that the U.S. students bring to Korhaan School:

They’ve made us to rethinking how we handle certain things, also. In how we handle learners. Because of their approach, which is foreign to us. But, an approach that to
think that is, hey this is an approach, and we have to try that approach. That approach might help us improve in what we have.

Bhejile added that the new perspectives “are making the school grow in different ways.” He continued:

And you end up learning and understanding that, you may think that what you may do is correct, though it’s not in terms of other cultures. And then, that’s making you to learn. Because when you check with the exchange students, how could this be solved if one is not solving in this way, you’ll get a different version.

**Providing curricular support.** In addition to motivating the learners, building strong relationships, and offering new perspectives, the U.S. students positively affect the classroom experience for the teachers and the learners. Peline, who teaches to roughly 50 learners in each of her classes, drew attention to the complexity of working with large groups of learners. She stated that “it’s very hard,” especially when there are learners who “need one-on-one interaction.”

Bhejile contended that the Department of Basic Education does not provide enough teachers to Korhaan School. With a high student-to-teacher ratio, the Department has created a “gap.” Bhejile explained that U.S. students are able to “close the gaps” and “add value to the school.” Peline benefitted when the international service-learning program shifted its focus from after-school activities to the curriculum. Peline told the story of a U.S. student with whom she collaborated:

She was assisting me in maths. She was assisting me in everything. We used to go to class together. She was assisting me in teaching. And, I remember we have, the levels of
our learners are different. There are those with high IQ. There are those with, yeah . . .

So, we used to, she used to take other learners, and I used to take another group.

Dunyiswa discussed the collaboration between the U.S. students and the Korhaan School teachers with excitement. In addition to relieving pressure from the teachers, Dunyiswa noted that group teaching “benefits the learners.” Dunyiswa detailed the partnership:

They were working very closely. . . . It was a group teaching. Because there were two educators in one class. One educator will take another group, then he will take another group. I think they benefitted because . . . the teachers, now they will no longer use that method. Because if they do the class teaching, it’s likely not all of the learners will be able to get what they are saying. But if you work with them in groups, they will learn from one another, they will discuss issues because it’s a group. It’s not the entire class.

Bhejile also underscored the relevance of curricular integration and featured the benefits of group teaching. With respect to the large class sizes, he described the U.S. students as “resources” who provide “an extra hand” in the classroom. Bhejile addressed how Peline has been affected by the presence of the U.S. students in the classroom:

She has been given an extra hand, in that, the students, the exchange students, are able to touch where she’s, areas she’d like to touch, but she’s unable to because of the number of learners that she’s having.

**Engaging in cross-cultural exchanges.** Finally, the international service-learning program creates a space for cross-cultural exchange between the U.S. students and the Korhaan School community. Dunyiswa, aware that “each system has its own advantages and disadvantages,” articulated that the exchange is multidirectional. When the U.S. students serve
at the primary school, “they get to know better of our system, how it works.” Dunyiswa continued:

Then, even for [the U.S. students], they share their stories because they’re on the other side of the town. We are this. It’s an exchange of cultures, exchange of learnings, exchange of the systems.

Peline also spoke about the cross-cultural benefits of the international service-learning program. She shared a story about one of the U.S. students who wanted to learn more about her background and culture:

My sister is staying on the other side, she’s staying in shacks. . . . She wanted to go there.

She wanted to go there to have a meal, to eat there, to sleep.

Peline appreciated the U.S. student’s open-mindedness and desire to know her on a deeper level, but she had reservations about the request:

I didn’t want to say to her, ‘No, I don’t want you to go there.’ Not because I was going to be embarrassed. But, I was more concerned about the safety. Because in those places of shacks, those boys, they are, they stab people for money. Especially if you are White, they think that you always carry money.

The same U.S. student also expressed an interest in traveling to Peline’s home province of the Eastern Cape. The U.S. student wanted to learn more about Peline’s upbringing, ceremonies, and cultural traditions. Although the U.S. student never made it to the shack or the Eastern Cape, Peline was touched and influenced by the U.S. student’s curiosity:

I’ve learned a lot from her. I was not interested in going to other countries. I told myself that I would die in South Africa. But, ever since she came, I really want to go somewhere to learn other cultures.
Speaking more generally about how the U.S. students have affected the Korhaan School community, Peline continued:

They gave us an idea of how things are done in other countries. We’re able to compare ourselves with other countries. To know your cultures, the way you do things. To know your food, your, like your languages, and all those stuffs.

**Showing appreciation.** At the end of the semester, the Korhaan School community acknowledges the benefits that the U.S. students bring to the primary school. With a heavy heart, Dunyiswa remarked that by end the of their semester, the U.S. students “have new families and friends, sisters and brothers, daughters.” Peline added that some of the learners shed tears because of their special bond with the U.S. students.

Bhejile and Dunyiswa work with the teachers and the learners to celebrate the accomplishments of the U.S students. Bhejile explained:

That’s why sometimes we give them a token of appreciation. And then, we are trying to, we try to get something which is a South African token . . .

Dunyiswa interjected:

. . . that will remind them of, ‘I got this in South Africa at this particular school.’ . . . We would give them Xhosa things.

The learners write messages to the U.S. students and take pictures with them upon their departure. Despite the level of poverty from which most of the learners come, Peline noted that some of the learners contribute a small amount of money to purchase gifts for the U.S. students, which speaks volumes:
They contributed some funds, like one rand, not a big amount, to buy something like presents. Also, that [the U.S. students] can remember them for. So, we bought presents, they read messages. . . . They wish that they would come back.

Bhejile stressed the importance of showing appreciation for the U.S. students. He explained that “when people are doing something voluntarily, you recognize that.” Illustrating Korhaan School’s full support for the U.S. students also contributes to the future success of the international service-learning program. Bhejile provided an example of what could happen if the school did not acknowledge the efforts of the U.S students:

If you just, you doing something voluntarily, and then you don’t care, you don’t appreciate it, how do you expect a person to continue? The person will talk about that when he goes back. And you have, not wanting to negatively preach something about your school. It’s normal that a person will say to other exchange students who are coming, ‘Hey, I was in that school in South Africa, I was never appreciated.’

In addition to recognizing the work of the U.S. students and celebrating their accomplishments, Bhejile encourages the U.S. students to continue their efforts after the conclusion of the international service-learning program. He preaches to the U.S. students that “when the exchange is done,” they must “do the same as they have done at our school.” One of the reasons why Bhejile advises the U.S. students to replicate their positive behavior in new environments is because their actions are characteristic of the southern African philosophy of ubuntu.

Ubuntu

The international service-learning program brings a myriad of benefits to Korhaan School. Despite these benefits, I anticipated that there would be a disconnect between Western
and Africanized notions of service. I was mistaken, similar to my incorrect assumption that the cultures of Ithemba and Korhaan School were distinct. Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline described the concept of *ubuntu* as a cultural framework that shapes their understanding of service and their engagement with others. I first introduce the cultural framework, and then present narratives that represent the ways in which the behavior of the U.S. students aligns with *ubuntu*.

**Defining ubuntu.** Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline provided nearly identical definitions of *ubuntu*. The essence of the philosophy is helping someone who is in need. Bhejile remarked:

> If someone is in trouble or is in a need of something and you have, and you are able to help, we refer that as *ubuntu*. Because, we’ve got that, it’s our own way of doing things.

Similarly, Dunyiswa noted:

> It’s about helping the people. It’s about the needs that they have. You are able to help them with the needs that they do.

Peline’s description paralleled Bhejile’s and Dunyiswa’s:

> It means to me being able to help others when they need you the most. To be friendly to people. And, the career I chose, being a teacher, you must associate yourself with *ubuntu*.

Three brief examples illuminate actions at Korhaan School that are indicative of *ubuntu*. Bhejile explained that *ubuntu* guides the administrators’ and teachers’ decisions and behaviors. He commented that “there’s a cultural thing which is telling you, *ubuntu, ubuntu*, you have to accommodate that.” First, Dunyiswa described how the Korhaan School community comes together to support the family of a learner who passes away:
For example, if a learner passed on, then as teachers, we visit the home. And the learners of the particular class, the learners would go and say prayers. And then, the whole school will give money, contribution money, to help to the funeral.

Bhejile and Dunyiswa co-constructed a second example during the focus group. In the winter months, some shacks in Ithemba catch fire. Often constructed from reclaimed materials such as metal and wood, families use makeshift methods to heat their homes. Bhejile cited a current example:

Presently, a child, grade R child, we were told by a teacher that, their home, a shack where she stays with her mother, everything got on fire. And then, they only have what they have is on their, you know. Now, the teacher told us about this. . . . The following day, teachers, certain teachers come, because they’ve got clothes of that, came with clothes, so that they can be given to that family.

In the final example, Bhejile indicated that he displays ubuntu behavior when new teachers arrive at Korhaan School. In some instances, the new teachers have not solidified their housing when they move to Ithemba. During this transition, Bhejile welcomes the teachers into his home, and he expects nothing in return:

I’ve got teachers here who are coming from East London. Now, I’ve accommodated them at my place. They, I didn’t say that you’re going to rent. They stayed there until they feel they are ready to go and rent a place for them. Because they don’t have family.

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline explained that ubuntu is within them; ubuntu is part of their cultural identity. To some degree, ubuntu and the Quechua concept of ayni that was presented in the second chapter are similar. For example, both cultural frameworks result in an ongoing cycle of selfless service and kindness aimed at bettering the community. However,
unlike *ayni*, *ubuntu* does not call upon individuals to reciprocate with more than they were originally given. Dunyiswa clarified:

> If you are given something, it is, that person gives you from the bottom of his or her heart. Then, you have to appreciate that. So, the fact that you don’t have something, somebody gives you something, you are thankful for that.

I was curious to learn whether U.S. students who viewed service from a Western perspective could exhibit behaviors that aligned with this Africanized framework. “Yes, I mean, they display that in many ways,” answered Bhejile. “They believe in the culture of *ubuntu,*” responded Dunyiswa. Peline also agreed, “Yes, of course, of course.”

**U.S. students’ *ubuntu* behavior.** Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline shared stories that illustrated how the U.S. students’ attitudes and behaviors reflect *ubuntu.* The U.S. students are particularly skilled at identifying and supporting learners who face significant social problems. Dunyiswa referred to these learners as “needy kids,” and Bhejile described them as “vulnerable learner[s].” Peline stated that the U.S. students have “a good eye in identifying learners who have a problem, like at home.” Dunyiswa recalled the behavior of one U.S. student:

> What I liked, she would pick up those who are very poor, who have nothing like shoes, the uniform, all those things. She was easy to see the types of learners who are very much struggling. And she would come to me and ask, ‘What can we do just to help the learner?’ . . . Then, it spread. If she’s not in that class, she was able to see in another class.

Peline shared a similar story that demonstrates how the U.S. students display *ubuntu* behavior by identifying and helping those in need. She told a story about one of the U.S. students who brought farewell gifts to school:
I remember one other day, the day before she left, she brought muffins for teachers and sweets for, candies for kids, for kids from grades six up to grade nine. And also pens. And unfortunately, the pens, there were not enough for grades six to grade nine. It was like 40, 50.

Since most classes consist of between 30 and 50 learners, only one or two classes could receive the pens. Peline continued:

She asked me, ‘Which class do you think I can give these pens?’ And, I’m the class teacher for grade nine. Obviously, I’m very close to my grade nines. I said, ‘Grade nines.’ Not knowing she had an answer at the back of her mind, she said to me, ‘No, I’m not going to give to grade nines, I’ll give grade six.’ And, I asked, ‘Why?’ She said, ‘No, grade six, they, most of the time, they don’t have pens. But for grade nines, they always have a pen.’ I thought, ‘She’s right. Grade six, every time, they don’t have a pen. But grade nines, they always have a pen.’

By displaying a simple act that aligned with *ubuntu*, the U.S. student reminded Peline of the importance of the cultural framework in the daily routine of Korhaan School.

With a focus on the curriculum, Dunyiswa offered two additional examples that highlight how the U.S. students’ behavior is characteristic of *ubuntu*. She recalled a U.S. student who developed such a strong relationship with the learners that she prolonged her stay in South Africa:

She was going to leave. I think the learners were still writing. She had to leave before they wrote their exams. Then, she’s postponed, because she wanted to speak to them whilst they were writing exams. . . . Because I think she wanted them to revise with them
before they write. She wanted to be sure they were prepared for the exams when they started and even during the exams.

The U.S. students impressed Dunyiswa with their dedication and commitment to bettering the lives of the learners. Furthermore, through their selfless acts of kindness, the U.S. students proved that “they did not see themselves as superior than us, than our learners.”

Dunyiswa explained:

They did not say, ‘No, we are visitors, we cannot teach the class, you are responsible for the class.’ So, there were times they take the lessons, teach those learners. If the teacher’s absent, teach the whole day without complaining. They did not complain. And even help with the marking because marking’s a daunting task. It’s a daunting class.

When I prompted Bhejile to distinguish between Western and Africanized notions of service, he resisted the binary distinction, noting that the deeper meaning of service is the same.

Bhejile suggested that differences exists with the approach to service, not the philosophy of service:

Services are given to better the lives of people. . . . And then to feel that there will always be a light at the end of the tunnel. Don’t fold arms. Try and try and try. And then, you will succeed.

Bhejile agreed with Dunyiswa and Peline that the U.S. students “display to us what is original ubuntu behavior.” In fact, he clarified that individuals do not need to come from a particular racial or ethnic background, geographic location, or culture to understand ubuntu:

It doesn’t necessarily mean that you have to be coming from this culture of ours. Your action will say that person is having ubuntu. Because your action may qualify you regarded as a person who’s got ubuntu irrespective of which culture you’re coming from.
As he shared stories about the behavior of the U.S. students, Bhejile reminisced about the evolution of *ubuntu*. Referring to the *ubuntu* of his earlier years, Bhejile noted that the actions of the U.S. students “are the things that sometimes reminded us of us.” With a subtle tone of melancholy, he lamented that in poor communities such as Ithemba, the original *ubuntu* has faded:

Because of certain challenges that we have today, the vulnerability, the challenge of not having what we’re supposed to have, it also changed most of us to behave differently. Not to display *ubuntu*. Because for robbing people, for taking those things that are not yours, that is not *ubuntu*. . . . Now, those are the conditions which are created by poverty. They’ve got poverty. Those are poverty-related things.

**“Why Are They Sending?”: Areas for Improvement for the International Service-Learning Program**

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline offered stories that underscore the benefits of the international service-learning program. The U.S. students motivate the learners, offer support at a school that functions as a second home for learners, bring new perspectives, provide curricular assistance, and engage in cross-cultural exchanges. By helping others in need, the behavior of the U.S. students is characteristic of *ubuntu*. However, two major areas for improvement for the international service-learning program surfaced during my conversations with Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline. First, my participants were unclear about the purpose of the program, which acts as a barrier to continuous improvement. Second, the principal, deputy principal, and teacher expressed a desire for a higher degree of engagement in the life cycle of the program, including more reflection sessions with the program director and the U.S. students.
Unclear purpose of the program. One of the most fundamental components of the international service-learning program—the purpose—remains unclear to Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline. Bhejile, who wondered if the U.S. students served at Korhaan School as a way to fill empty time in their schedules, explained that “we don’t know the purpose of this exchange.” He spoke with concern:

I don’t know . . . what they want to achieve. I always don’t know, whether they just give us these exchange students because they are there. Probably they’ve got nothing to do. Do they have a certain vision or something they want to get out of taking these [students] outside?

Dunyiswa, also addressing the purpose of the program, echoed Bhejile’s remarks:

So, I will say, that’s where we think that it can change. Just to know what’s the purpose. For example, by the end of this, what is it that you want to achieve? What is it that, as a school, we want you to achieve? So that we work towards that. So that we improve.

Alongside the lack of clarity about the purpose of the international service-learning program, the learning outcomes for the U.S. students and the expected outcomes for Korhaan School are unknown. If Bhejile and Dunyiswa are unable to assess the outcomes for the U.S. students and the school, how can they ensure the effectiveness of the international service-learning program and remain committed to future growth? Dunyiswa voiced her concerns:

No, it’s like the purpose of the program, it does not give us, in terms of measuring the output. For example, what is the part they want to achieve with the program? Then, we don’t know where we are. But, if we have something that we can use to measure where we are, then we’d know where to improve. Because the students will come next year,
new students will come, they will not know, even with the previous one, we don’t know whether they achieved what the purpose was for.

Since the academic calendars of South Point University and St. Dominic University are divided into two semesters, new U.S. students arrive at and depart Korhaan School twice per year. For each group of students, Bhejile recommended that “there should be some involvement of some information” about the purpose of the program and what the U.S. students aim to achieve. Dunyiswa’s suggestion paralleled Bhejile’s. She desired more information about “the background of the program” and an answer to the question, “What is it that they want to achieve?” Peline added that “even if it’s just a pamphlet,” more details about the international service-learning program would be helpful.

**Lack of involvement in reflection.** Considering the centrality of reflection and reciprocity in the service-learning paradigm, I asked my participants about the extent to which they are involved in reflection with the director of the international service-learning programs and the U.S. students. Bhejile reported that “there’s never been an opportunity where we debated this, we shared our views about these processes.” He asserted that “there are supposed to be certain meetings where we reflect,” but “it’s not there, it’s not there.”

By facilitating more reflection sessions with the Korhaan School community, Bhejile argued that South Point University, St. Dominic University, and Korhaan School could “together shape the program.” Bhejile called for a meeting between the director of the international service-learning program and representatives of the schools where the U.S. students serve:

Just to organize a meeting of principals or whoever in the schools are involved with this so that to check our expectations, to check for us, to check what the purpose of this
exercise from their side. To us, when you see these [students], we know where to use them.

Similarly, Dunyiswa underscored the need for a higher degree of engagement between the director of the international service-learning program, the administrators at the Korhaan School, and the teachers at the primary school. She suggested a “staff meeting” that would yield “three parts of information.” She also advocated for more reflection with the U.S. students:

They come and go, they come and go, they come and go. . . . We never heard any information from [the students] how the program changed, how the school changed their lives. What is it that they’ve gained after visiting the school?

In addition to learning how the international service-learning program affects the U.S. students, more reflection opportunities with the U.S. students would create a venue for the administrators and teachers to articulate their appreciation. Bhejile feared that some U.S. students “are not aware of how thankful we are.” He asserted that “you need to have a space to say, ‘Thank you, this has been a fruitful experience.’” Bhejile added that the director of the international service-learning should attend these reflections to develop a better understanding of the ways in which the school benefits from the U.S. students.

“Please Don’t Stop”: The Future of the International Service-Learning Program

South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s partnership at Korhaan School has evolved from an after-school school program with roots in the Hope Foundation to a curricular-based program that brings a myriad of benefits to the primary school. Although there is considerable room for improvement with respect to the purpose, assessment, reflection, and degree of collaboration, my participants expressed a clear desire to continue the program.
Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline spoke about the future of the partnership, including the school’s need for more U.S students and the school’s role in ensuring the program’s long-term success.

**Collaborating with more U.S. students.** I asked Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline what they would say to Arnold, the director of the international service-learning program, about the future of the partnership. Dunyiswa swiftly responded, “I will say, he must keep on with the program.” In addition to words of appreciation, Bhejile would say to Arnold, “Please don’t stop—we need them.”

Since the Department of Basic Education allocates the number of teachers per school, Bhejile and Dunyiswa are responsible for finding creative solutions if they want to lower the student-to-teacher ratio. Smaller class sizes are a priority for the principal and the deputy principal. Dunyiswa emphasized that “to us, it’s about how many classes, how many learners inside the one class.” Bhejile spoke in terms of trying to “close the gap that the Department is unable to close.”

One solution is to host more U.S. students from the international service-learning program. Bhejile asserted, “I would like to see a situation where we get more of the exchange students.” Bhejile outlined his vision:

Our interest will be in getting more of the exchange students which will be helping us or giving us the more hand in terms of we are not getting more educators such that we would like to get. And then, when they are at our school, they close that gap even if they are not staying the whole day. But, for them being at school, including them in the curriculum, use them as educators within school, . . . that makes you to reap fruits.

He continued:
So, the program, we get those [U.S. students] probably three days per week. The problem now is we are getting them on Tuesday. And probably get them Tuesday on another week. Now, if there is way that enough students, whether we get them thrice a week, we won’t say no because that would mean that we’ve got more resources.

Smaller classes are conducive to more effective teaching and learning. Peline remarked that if more U.S. students serve at Korhaan School, “at least we can overcome” the complex demands of large classes. In addition to reducing class sizes, Bhejile and Dunyiswa argued that additional U.S. students would enhance the aforementioned benefits of the program. Bhejile noted that “the more you have, . . . the more value you get.”

Bhejile underscored the importance of working collaboratively with the director of the international service-learning program, the U.S. students, and the teachers at Korhaan School. Since “a school knows where there are challenges,” Bhejile articulated that it is necessary to “sit with [the U.S. students] to get what else they can offer” in order to identify the point where the U.S. students’ strengths intersect with the primary school’s areas for improvement. Bhejile expressed confidence in the collaborative process, noting that “if you work with them, have that in your mind, you’ll reap the fruits of the program.” He clarified the benefits of integrating more U.S. students into the curriculum:

Their role, it becomes, it gives you better results than you are going to get if you’re having a teacher that is alone in a large class. . . . Now, we will get positive results or improvement or development around learner achievement at our school.

**Supporting the U.S. students.** Bhejile and Dunyiswa acknowledged that if more U.S. students serve at Korhaan School, the school must assume responsibility for supporting the students. The principal and the deputy principal spoke about four forms of support. First,
Bhejile described that “as human beings,” there is a level of support that “is expected of us.”

The Korhaan School community emphasizes the importance of creating strong bonds with the U.S. students. Dunyiswa remarked that “we know that each and every time, if a new one comes, we build a relationship with that one.” “And make them feel welcome,” added Bhejile. He continued:

There’s warmth. The learners will welcome them. The teachers will welcome them.

The parents will welcome them in this community.

In a similar regard, a second form of support that Bhejile highlighted was treating the U.S. students as human beings. Bhejile understands that the U.S. students balance their role at Korhaan School with a rigorous academic course load in connection with South Point University and St. Dominic University:

The [U.S. students] are here to learn at varsity. To do their varsity work. We respect that. We cannot say we want those [students] to be here every day. We cannot make that demand. . . . We are not saying we must put more demand in terms of trying to, wanting those students to come regularly because I will respect that they also have to do their school work.

Third, the Korhaan School community needs to support the U.S. students by helping them navigate the complexities that they face at the school and in the community. Dunyiswa emphasized the importance of openly discussing the challenges that the U.S. student face and working collaboratively to find solutions. In addition to the difficult task of teaching young learners, Dunyiswa again asserted that the U.S. students must understand that the cultures of Korhaan School and Ithemba are one in the same:
[The] primary school has so many challenges because we deal with young learners, and most of the time, it’s not only about them, it’s about their parents, as well. . . . If there’s neglection, if there is fostering, there will be some gaps.

The U.S. students cannot become distracted or defeated by the social problems that plague Ithemba. Dunyiswa explained that the U.S. students must concentrate on the learners and exercise patience, flexibility, and perseverance:

You don’t complain that you don’t have A, B, C, D, E because it won’t take you anywhere. You work with what we have. You improvise. Because there are certain things that are beyond your control. So, if you take them as your major problem, you won’t go anywhere. So, there are certain things that you need to suppress. Then, you work with what you have. It does mean that you ignore, but at the back of your mind, you take one step at a time to fix it.

Fourth, Korhaan School supports the U.S. students by facilitating effective partnerships. In the early years of the international service-learning program, the U.S. students and a second group of South Africans competed for learners by offering identical after-school activities. From this experience, Bhejile learned that he must be mindful of effectively integrating the U.S. students into the Korhaan School community:

What is very, very important, make sure that you design your program in such a way that there are no clashes. There is a working together of your educators with them.

Bhejile continued by emphasizing the relationship that the U.S. students must build with the teachers at the primary school:
And then, avoid a situation where also a teacher moves from doing, seeing this as his or her replacement. Giving the tasks to exchange student to do what she’s supposed to do. The teacher must work and learn with the exchange student.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I presented the stories of three South African community members who are affected by an international service-learning program. Bhejile, the wise and respected principal at Korhaan School, told stories that illuminated the interconnectedness of the cultures of Ithemba and the primary school. Dunyiswa, the deeply committed deputy principal, detailed the ways in which Korhaan School serves as a second home for its learners. Peline, a hard-working maths teacher, shared memories that captured the strong relationships that she has built with the U.S. students.

The international service-learning program, which evolved from after-school activities with a non-governmental organization to a program that provides curricular support, brings a host of the benefits to “the other side.” In a community that is darkened by social problems—poverty, parental neglect, crime, violence, and unemployment—the U.S. students collaborate with the Korhaan School staff to provide light by motivating and supporting learners, forging strong relationships, offering new perspectives, and engaging in cross-cultural exchanges. Their actions are characteristic of *ubuntu*, a cultural framework that calls upon individuals to help those in need.

Although Bhejile remarked that the international service-learning program is “a fruitful exercise that needs to be kept,” there is room for growth to make it “more fruitful” and “more effective.” As the program continues to flourish at Korhaan School, the voices of the administrators and the teachers must be amplified. Unclear about the purpose of program,
Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline expressed a desire to be more involved in the program’s life cycle. As detailed in the next chapter, my participants’ stories—and my conceptual framework—serve as the foundation for implications for practice and future research for higher education professionals.
CHAPTER V. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of my research study was to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. I focused on the lived experiences of the principal (Bhejile), the deputy principal (Dunyiswa), and a teacher (Peline) at Korhaan School, a service-learning site for South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s semester-long international service-learning program. In this chapter, I (1) explain my study’s significant findings, (2) detail implications for practice, (3) describe implications for future research, and (4) conclude with an overview of the limitations of my study. This chapter is viewed through the lens of the relevant literature on study abroad and service-learning and guided by my conceptual framework that concentrates on Dewey’s (1938) philosophy of education, democratic engagement (Saltmarsh et al., 2009) or thick reciprocity (Jameson et al., 2011), and Porter and Monard’s (2001) application of ayni in the international service-learning context.

Discussion of Significant Findings

Korhaan School, a South African primary school in the predominantly Black African, Xhosa-speaking township of Ithemba, served as the site of my research study. During a two-week period, I conducted two interviews with each of my participants and a focus group with Bhejile and Dunyiswa. After analyzing my data through a process that included open coding, axial coding, and peer debriefing, I utilized the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space approach as a framework for restorying my participants’ narratives. In this section, I describe three significant findings: (1) the interconnectedness of the community (Ithemba) and the community-based organization (Korhaan School), (2) the positive effects of the international service-learning program, including the U.S. students’ ubuntu behavior, and (3) the need to
infuse the program with more elements that are characteristic of a democratically engaged partnership.

**Interconnectedness of Ithemba and Korhaan School**

My presentation of the South African public system of higher education in chapter two illustrated the significance of context in my research study and, more generally, international service-learning programs. Cizek (1999) asserted that educational institutions do not function as merely academic institutions. Understanding community-based organizations such as Korhaan School requires an awareness of the wider historical, sociocultural, political, and educational contexts. Sutton (2011) argued that international service-learning programs must be framed by a deep and rich understanding of the local context, and Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline confirmed this assertion. The principal, deputy principal, and teacher underscored the interconnectedness of the community and the primary school by clarifying that the cultures of Ithemba and Korhaan School are indistinguishable.

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline drew attention to two key social problems that plague “the other side.” First, the majority of learners—90% according to Bhejile—are raised by their grandmothers or foster parents. Dunyiswa explained that it is difficult to establish trust with the learners’ parents, especially if they do not value education. Without positive role models at home, Dunyiswa suggested that the learners are not being nurtured in environments that facilitate growth and development. Second, with one of the highest crime rates in South Africa, Ithemba is also characterized by a culture of violence. Peline noted that “this community is full of gangsters,” and Dunyiswa shared that the learners “are exposed to crime, people who are doing wrong things, people who cannot motivate them.” The learners at Korhaan School interpret violence as a social norm and see violence as an avenue to safety and acceptance.
In the context of international service-learning programs in South Africa, McMillan and Stanton (2014) explained that “where we do our work impacts what we do and the way we do it” (p. 73). Undoubtedly, this is the case in Ithemba where the aforementioned social problems permeate Korhaan School. Dunyiswa declared that “what happens in this society determines the school culture.” She continued, “Because what is there, you’ll get it here.” As a result of the ways in which the intersecting social issues affect learners at the primary school, Korhaan School functions as a second home. Bhejile and Dunyiswa told three stories—narratives about the school’s feeding scheme, a cultural practice called imbeleko, and a weak learner who needed medication—that illustrated this point. Dunyiswa explained that “education is not only about education” at Korhaan school; it is about “the relationship” and looking “beyond the learner.”

This finding about the interrelated cultures of Ithemba and Korhaan School is significant for three reasons. First, it is imperative that students who participate in international service-learning programs learn about the host community and the community-based organization prior to their departure. Sadovnik et al. (2013) underscored the relevance of analyzing the foundations of education—history, politics, philosophy, and sociology—and the ways in which they intersect with education. This approach is necessary in a community like Ithemba. In addition to learning more about “the other side,” students who participate in South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program must understand that the racist, discriminatory, and inequitable apartheid-era policies created many of the communities and community-based organizations where they serve. Apart from the academic benefits, awareness of social problems can also translate to a heightened level of safety for the U.S. students. Bhejile noted that the U.S. students “must know that this is a dangerous community.”
Second, *ayni* reminds higher education professionals that relationships between a university and a community-based organization must be rooted in the genuine needs of the community. The interconnectedness of Ithemba and Korhaan School illustrates that for an international service-learning program to be effective, higher education professionals must have an intimate understanding of the relationship between community issues, the needs of the community-based organization, and their students’ service projects. Without this knowledge, the work of students may be irrelevant, culturally insensitive, or even disruptive. Bhejile highlighted the importance of meeting with the U.S. students to match their strengths with the needs of the primary school and its learners. Bhejile also stated that “this environment is not a good environment to grow learners or to grow kids at,” and the U.S. students must understand the ways in which they can contribute.

Third, higher education professionals must include community members as co-educators in international service-learning programs. Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline have expert knowledge about the intersection of Ithemba’s social problems and the work at Korhaan School. Bhejile commented that “a school knows where there are challenges.” To add, Baker-Boosamra (2006), Jacoby (2015), and Worrall (2007) explained that service-learning has the potential to empower community members by giving them an opportunity to share their knowledge of and experience with social issues. As evidenced at Korhaan School, Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline can support students by helping them navigate the complexities that they face at the school and in the community.

**Positive Effects of the International Service-Learning Program**

In addition to the interconnectedness of Ithemba and Korhaan School, the positive effects of the international service-learning program surfaced as a second key finding. Bhejile,
Dunyiswa, and Peline detailed that the U.S. students (1) increase the motivation of the learners as evidenced by the learners’ more fluid use of English; (2) establish strong relationships with the Korhaan School community that serve as a catalyst for meaningful interactions; (3) introduce new perspectives to the administrators, teachers, and learners; (4) provide curricular support; (5) and facilitate cross-cultural exchange. This finding aligns with the literature that highlighted the benefits that students bring to host communities (e.g., Blouin & Perry, 2009; Jacoby, 2015; Leiderman et al., 2003; Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009; Nduna, 2007; Tryon et al., 2008; Worrall, 2007).

Blouin and Perry (2009), Leiderman et al. (2003), and Tryon et al. (2008) found that community-based organizations responded positively to students’ fresh perspectives and insights. Jacoby (2015) agreed that service-learning brings benefits to communities in the form of innovative approaches to problem solving. The story of the stolen cell phone that Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline each shared with me served as a point of departure for discussing the new perspectives that the U.S. students bring to Korhaan School. Bhejile articulated that “as South African educators, we’ll also learn a lot in terms of approach.” He added that the U.S. students have “opened our eyes” and “are making the school grow in different ways.”

Similarly, Blouin and Perry (2009) and Naidoo and Devnarain (2009) argued that students’ expertise and skills benefit community-based organizations. Bhejile acknowledged that the U.S. students “are professionals who are able to give me or give the school the curriculum expertise.” Peline, who has worked closely with the U.S. students in the classroom, recalled that one of the students relieved some of the pressure of teaching to roughly 50 students by “assisting me in everything.” By integrating the U.S. students into the classroom—which was
not the initial focus of the international service-learning program—Bhejile explained that U.S. students are able to “close the gaps” and “add value to the school.”

Despite these benefits, I anticipated that there would be a disconnect between Western and Africanized notions of service. In the second chapter, I highlighted the skepticism surrounding the U.S. approach to service-learning. Erasmus (2011) and Maistry and Ramdhani (2010) called for indigenous conceptualizations of service-learning that reflect the South African context more effectively. However, Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline indicated that the disconnect is not as severe as I originally had imagined.

Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline explained that *ubuntu* is a cultural framework that shapes their approach to service and their engagement with others. The essence of *ubuntu* is helping someone in need. Peline remarked, “It means to me being able to help others when they need you the most.” Although the U.S. students bring a different approach to service, Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline suggested that the U.S. students’ philosophy of service aligns with *ubuntu*. Bhejile expressed that the U.S. students “display to us what is original *ubuntu* behavior.” He continued, “Your action may qualify you regarded as a person who’s got *ubuntu* irrespective of which culture you’re coming from.”

*Ayni*, the Quechua cultural framework that I introduced in the second chapter, and *ubuntu* are not synonymous. However, there are two similar elements that may serve as a catalyst for benefitting the host community. First, in an *ayni* relationship, giving with the body “is complemented by giving from the heart” (Porter & Monard, 2001, p. 12). With both cultural frameworks, an open mind and a positive spirit facilitate cross-cultural engagement and a deeper understanding of the community. By displaying *ubuntu* behavior to learners at Korhaan School, the U.S. students develop strong relationships that serve as a point of departure for meaningful
conversations. Dunyiswa commented that the learners “tell [the U.S. students] stories, their backgrounds” that “they would not even tell us.” Bhejile reminded me that “services are given to better the lives of people.” International service-learning programs must be guided by the needs of the host community—not by the individual, self-serving interests of students, practitioners, or faculty members.

Second, reciprocity based in ayni primarily keeps the cycle of interdependence to a human scale. Although Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline highlighted certain instances when the U.S. students purchased material resources, their stories emphasized intangible benefits, such as increased motivation, strong relationships, new perspectives, and the exchange of cultures. In a simple, yet powerful statement, Bhejile commented that “we feel their presence at the school.” The warmth of the U.S. students’ ubuntu behavior benefits the learners, teachers, and administrators at Korhaan School. Higher education professionals must understand the importance of establishing strong, authentic partnerships with community-based organizations abroad. Moreover, as Jameson et al. (2011) emphasized, universities and colleges must establish long-term, sustainable relationships that focus on capacity building and empowerment. As my implications suggest, institutions of higher education must engage “with the public and not merely for the public” (Saltmarsh et al., 2009, p. 9).

**Need for a Democratically Engaged Partnership**

The third noteworthy finding that surfaced from my participants’ stories was the minimal involvement of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline in the life cycle of the international service-learning program. Despite the centrality of reciprocity in campus-community partnerships, the principal, deputy principal, and teacher emphasized that they do not know the purpose of the program and shared that they are not involved in reflection with the U.S. students or the director
of the international service-learning program. This finding was partially consistent with the
research that drew attention to the challenges that exist for community-based organizations (e.g.,
Birdsall, 2005; Blouin & Perry, 2009; Leiderman et al., 2003; Naidoo & Devnarain; Tryon et al.,
2008; Worrall, 2007).

Researchers have underscored challenges such as students’ inadequate preparation
(Birdsall, 2005), students’ lack of professionalism (Blouin & Perry, 2009), the drain on resources
at the community-based organization (Leiderman et al., 2003; Tryon et al., 2008), community
members feeling patronized by faculty members (Naidoo & Devnarain, 2009), and students’
limited time commitments (Worrall, 2007). The areas for improvement that Bhejile, Dunyiswa,
and Peline articulated align with these challenges, but the lack of clarity about the purpose and
the lack of involvement in reflection were not pronounced in the literature.

First, Bhejile clearly stated that “we don’t know the purpose of this exchange.”
Dunyiswa added, “That’s where we think that it can change. Just to know what’s the purpose.”

Alperstein (2007) added that community members do not have enough influence on “the structure, content,
and design of curricula, other than tentatively guiding, supporting, and facilitating student
learning as they work together on their projects” (p. 65), and this appears to be the case at
Korhaan School.

Second, Bhejile commented that “there are supposed to be certain meetings where we
reflect,” but “it’s not there, it’s not there.” Albertyn and Erasmus (2014) posited that universities
and colleges could enhance reciprocity and flatten power differentials by involving community
members as mutual partners throughout the life cycle of a service-learning program, including during reflection sessions. Crabtree (2013) called for more opportunities for the community members to reflect with the students, an approach that could heighten students’ engagement with the community-based organization (Whitney & Clayton, 2011).

Ayni pushes higher education professionals to be mindful of equity, trust, and mutual ownership. Porter and Monard (2001) noted that “both the institution and the community need to sincerely believe they have something to contribute and gain through the relationship” (p. 14). By following this principle, faculty members and practitioners could ensure that their international service-learning programs are characterized by democratic engagement or thick reciprocity. That is, universities and community-based organizations must construct a vision for mutual development and establish a commitment to shared power. Albertyn and Erasmus (2014) suggested that “a common vision provides the fruitful focus for the interaction between partners in a complex system” (p. 25).

When community members are not involved in the design and delivery of international service-learning programs, the programs are characterized by technocratic engagement or thin reciprocity. Ogden (2007) would argue that these programs cater to colonial students who seek to increase their own cultural and social capital, and Tiessen and Huish (2013) would add that they serve globetrotters, not global citizens. When programs favor academic knowledge over community-based knowledge, they have the potential to burden community members, reinforce stereotypes and historic power differentials, and exacerbate inequalities.

**Implications for Practice**

With insights gained from this narrative study, I am confident in recommending implications for practice for higher education professionals that will inform and inspire new
approaches to international service-learning programs. In this section, I detail the following strategies that are directly connected to the aforementioned findings: (1) involve community members as co-educators; (2) learn from international models of service; and (3) restructure pre-departure programming to incorporate domestic service opportunities, academic preparation beyond surface-level knowledge, and the postcolonial perspective.

**Involve Community Members as Co-Educators**

Writing from the South African perspective, Naidoo and Devnarain (2009) cautioned that as university-community partnerships flourish, “there are serious barriers to collaborative endeavours because of the way in which universities are organised and a history of unequal partnerships” (p. 936). Also speaking in the context of the South African system of higher education, van Rensburg (2014) warned that “some communities still experience [service-learning] engagements with [higher education institutions] as ‘unsuccessful,’ ‘impulsive,’ and ‘negative’—all but enabling” (p. 42). By sharing stories about the unclear purpose of the program and the lack of involvement in reflection with the U.S. students, Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline signaled that there is room for improvement with the program at Korhaan School.

University-community relationships must be “a co-operative enterprise, not a dictation” (Dewey, 1938, p. 85). Education is a social process and everyone involved in the learning process has something to contribute (Dewey, 1938). The restoried narratives of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline that I present throughout my manuscript clearly illustrate that community members have the potential to facilitate student development. By excluding community members from the life cycle of an international service-learning program, U.S. institutions are foregoing expert knowledge and delivering programs with colonial tendencies.
Higher education professionals must be mindful of three key considerations when designing an international service-learning program. First, faculty members and practitioners must begin by contemplating the nature of the commitment between their institution and the host community. Establishing an effective international service-learning program involves learning about the community and community-based organizations, organizing logistical details, crafting the academic program, anticipating unexpected circumstances, and planning for a sustainable partnership. Although the literature on service-learning suggests that “all relevant stakeholders need to be involved in the conceptualisation, implementation and evaluation of service-learning” (Nduna, 2007, p. 70), the program at Korhaan School illustrates that U.S. institutions do not always adhere to best practices. Bhejile expressed a desire to “together shape the program” with South Point University and St. Dominic University. To honor a commitment to thick reciprocity, U.S. institutions must craft a plan for engaging community members.

Second, once a community-based organization has been identified, higher education professionals must concentrate on establishing group cohesion, shared power, and mutual respect (Schroeder et al., 2009). After reflecting on my data collection process and consulting with my South African peer debriefer, I realized the complexity of constructing partnerships in new cultural contexts. I learned, for example, that the first meeting between South Africans is often dedicated to understanding relationship dynamics. By immediately focusing on logistical components of my study (i.e., reviewing the participant consent form, scheduling interviews and the focus group), I disrespected the sociocultural norms of my participants and created an imbalance of power. Faculty members and practitioners must exercise a high degree of intercultural competence when developing a partnership that “will provide productive situations for students as well as genuine resources useful to the community” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 169).
Third, after the foundation of the relationship has been built and the vision of the international service-learning program has been mutually constructed, faculty members and practitioners must involve community members in crafting concrete goals and learning outcomes and a plan for measuring these outcomes. At Korhaan School, my participants shared stories that indicated that they were not involved in this process. Bhejile underscored the unclear purpose of the international service-learning program and asserted, “I don’t know . . . what [the U.S. students] want to achieve.” Dunyiswa, who echoed Bhejile’s remarks, questioned, “By the end of this, what is it that [the U.S. students] want to achieve?” In addition to establishing student learning outcomes, the stakeholders may want to establish separate outcomes for the university, community-based organization, and faculty members. Dunyiswa suggested that a shared vision and mutually developed learning outcomes will strengthen the relationship between the U.S. students and community members and result in more effective outcomes at Korhaan School.

During the delivery of the international service-learning program, community members must be considered “co-educators, co-learners, and co-generators of knowledge” (Jameson et al., 2011, p. 260) throughout the program’s lifespan (Hammett & Vickers, 2014). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) concurred that community members must assume the role of co-educators in the delivery of the curriculum. Knowledge production is a two-way process (de Beer, 2014), and in the spirit of thick reciprocity, everyone must share ownership of and take responsibility for the program’s success.

If the partnership is successful for the university and the community-based organization, a commitment to a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship must be established, an idea that Eyler and Giles (1999) and Schroeder et al. (2009) supported. Drolet (2013) agreed that “international experiential learning opportunities and programs work best when there are long-
term sustained partnership agreements” (p. 192). My conceptual framework—buttressed by the principles of democratically engaged partnerships (Saltmarsh et al., 2009) and the Quechua concept of *ayni* applied to international service-learning programs (Porter & Monard, 2001)—aligns with this call for long-term relationships. Complex problems in local and global communities are rarely solved in one summer, one semester, or one academic year. As evidenced by the evolution of the international service-learning program at Korhaan School, universities and community-based organizations must acknowledge the fluidity of communities and the evolutionary nature of the program (Pienaar, 2014). Faculty members, practitioners, and community members must revisit the structural components of the international service-learning program (i.e., agreement, vision, learning outcomes, service projects) to ensure that the program continues to align with the needs and interests of the university and the community-based organization.

Without involving community members, universities risk establishing international programs that are characterized by thin reciprocity, cultural imperialism, and voyeurism. As discussed in the next implication, higher education professionals must explore indigenous conceptual frameworks and non-Western approaches to service. Moreover, faculty members and practitioners need to “create welcoming spaces for local knowledges to be heard, gathered, and shared” (de Beer, 2014, p. 135).

**Learn from International Models of Service**

Service-learning is dominated by North American theory and practice (Brown, 2011). Faculty members, practitioners, and students from the United States must be mindful that Western concepts and models may not always align with the contexts of the host country and community. The stories of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline highlighted the centrality of *ubuntu* in
South African communities. Since the U.S. students were not the focus of my research study, the extent to which the U.S. students understand *ubuntu* and are aware of their *ubuntu* behavior remains unclear. Yet, considering the prominence of the cultural framework, it is imperative that higher education professionals and students at St. Dominic University have a rich understanding of *ubuntu*. Porter and Monard (2001), who drew attention to the Quechua concept of *ayni*, would support this call for enhanced knowledge and awareness of *ubuntu*.

Furthermore, higher education professionals in academic affairs and student affairs must be cognizant of the colonial undertones associated with international service-learning programs. The fact that the Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline are unaware of the purpose of the international service-learning program should be alarming to U.S. higher education professionals. By ignoring indigenous conceptual frameworks and non-Western approaches to service, higher education professionals from the U.S. have the potential to reproduce colonial domination at every stage of an international service-learning program.

Since societies take different approaches to higher education and student affairs (Ping, 1999), faculty members, practitioners, and students in the U.S. have a great deal to learn from universities and colleges abroad (Dalton, 1999; Roberts, 2015) and their work in local communities. The stories that Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline shared about Ithemba would be insightful for St. Dominic University faculty members, practitioners, and students. Langdon and Agyeyohmah (2013) added that “assertions of knowledge claims from contexts other than the West need deeper emphasis if they are to challenge the normalized Eurocentric view North American students have” (p. 48).

Two key avenues exist for learning more about non-Western voices and realities. First, higher education professionals must establish agreements with institutions abroad that facilitate
the exchange of faculty, staff, students, and community partners. Internationalization efforts often concentrate on student mobility, and more stakeholders need to be engaged. In addition to new and enhanced curricular and co-curricular activities, exchange agreements create opportunities for faculty members and practitioners from the United States to collaborate and conduct research with colleagues, students, and community partners from other countries.

Second, if institutional resources do not support exchange agreements that facilitate the mobility of faculty members and practitioners, higher education professionals must explore international opportunities in the United States. For example, faculty and staff could participate in, present at, and network at regional and annual conferences hosted by NAFSA—Association of International Educators, the Forum on Education Abroad, NASPA—Student Affairs Professionals in Higher Education, and ACPA—American College Personnel Association. Higher education professionals can construct new partnerships and strengthen current relationships with international colleagues that can lead to future curricular and co-curricular initiatives on a global scale. Similarly, higher education professionals could also explore collaborations with local immigrant populations as an option for cost-effective, community-engaged research.

De Beer (2014) suggested that “one of the greatest weaknesses of university engagement programmes is often the denial of local knowledge” (p. 135). Despite their knowledge of South Africa, Ithemba, and Korhaan School, my participants hinted that their expertise was not valued as part of the international service-learning program. Pienaar (2014) cautioned that higher education professionals who “regard themselves as the sole producers and repositories of expert and legitimate knowledge may contribute to the disenfranchisement of poor, marginalised and indigenous communities by excluding their voices in knowledge making to solve social
problems” (p. 81). Higher education professionals must push the boundaries of traditional knowledge making from solely universities to universities and communities (Albertyn & Erasmus, 2014), a shift that aligns with Dewey’s (1938) philosophy of education and the characteristics of democratically engaged partnerships (Saltmarsh et al., 2009). One strategy for promoting the relevance of local knowledge and indigenous conceptual frameworks is to add depth and breadth to students’ experiences before they begin an international service-learning program.

**Restructure Pre-Departure Programming**

Preparing students for an international service-learning program is “critical and multifaceted” (Jacoby, 2015, p. 56). Higher education professionals have a responsibility to offer pre-departure programs and services that equip postsecondary students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for successful experiences abroad. In the sections to follow, I recommend three implications for faculty members and practitioners related to pre-departure programming: (1) incorporate domestic service opportunities, (2) provide students with academic preparation beyond surface-level knowledge, and (3) introduce students to the postcolonial perspective.

**Domestic service opportunities.** International service-learning programs cannot be treated as a one-off experience. Engberg (2013) argued that “it is essential to think about an integrated approach to global learning that encompasses a full range of domestic and international off-campus experiences” (p. 478). To enhance student learning and development, participation in an international service-learning program must be paired with other curricular and co-curricular programs. One approach that faculty members and practitioners can take is to design and deliver a domestic service-learning course that is tethered to the content of the
international service-learning program. For example, before St. Dominic University students spend a semester in South Africa, they could enroll in a service-learning course that explores race and racism in the U.S. education system. If it not feasible to construct a new service-learning course, prior to their experiences abroad, students should be encouraged to enroll in other service-learning courses or participate in an alternative break trip that is based in social issues.

Integrating students into local neighborhoods has the potential to result in an enhanced experience for community members like Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline. First, curricular and co-curricular service opportunities that occur in domestic spaces and take place before students participate in an international service-learning program have enormous potential to teach students about service. Crabtree (2013) and McMillan and Stanton (2014) advocated for an intentional process in which students engage with community members and critically reflect on how to be of service to communities. Sharpe and Dear (2013) added that pre-departure service opportunities also create a space for students to deconstruct their desire to serve internationally. Second, Jacoby (2015) suggested that local experiences can facilitate the development of a global perspective. For example, a pre-departure service-learning course that connects St. Dominic University students with primary school children whose first language is not English may contribute to enhanced knowledge, skills, and dispositions that could lead to a more effective and successful international service-learning experience.

**Academic preparation.** In addition to engaging in the aforementioned co-curricular and curricular service opportunities, students must develop a more holistic, contextual understanding of a culture (Deardorff, 2006). Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline’s stories—especially the stories that highlighted the interconnectedness of Ithemba and Korhaan School—support the argument
that students who serve at the primary school cannot ignore the broader historical, sociocultural, political, and educational narratives that bleed into the community-based organization. Baker-Boosamra (2006) recommended a deep exploration of the history, culture, politics, and economy of a country; an analysis of relationship building in the host community; and a substantial introduction to the local language(s). Desrosiers and Thomson (2013) cautioned educators not to gloss over unique distinctions (e.g., religious, socioeconomic, linguistic, tribal), especially in South African society, which is regarded as “heterogeneous, complex, and deeply segmented not only on the basis of culture, race, historical background, language, and religion, but also on economic and/or class status” (Bornman, 2010, p. 239).

Students must also learn about the community-based organizations where they will serve. In addition to a thorough analysis of the organizations (e.g., mission, structure, policies, norms, staff, populations served), Schroeder et al. (2009) recommended that faculty members and practitioners facilitate candid discussions about the potential negative effects of international service-learning programs. Students must consider how power dynamics come into play, examine the ways in which outsiders affect communities, and identify strategies for minimizing negative effects. Although it is impossible to predict whether international service-learning programs will perpetuate power differentials (Camacho, 2004), higher education professionals have a responsibility to make students aware of this danger. One avenue for engaging in discussions about the negative effects of international service-learning programs is to introduce the postcolonial perspective to students.

**Postcolonial perspective.** Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline did not overtly describe the international service-learning program as colonial. However, my participants’ lack of understanding about the purpose of the program is alarming. There are ways in which service
work abroad may be considered “an enactment of privilege that has parallels to colonialism” (MacDonald, 2013, p. 209). Ogden (2007) employed the term colonial student to characterize U.S. postsecondary students who reproduce historical power dynamics during an international service-learning program. Ogden suggested that the colonial student does not develop a sense of belonging in the host community or learn the local language(s), builds superficial relationships with community members, and favors extensive travel over time spent in the host community. Zemach-Bersin (2007), who noted that the rhetoric of international education and global citizenship disguises U.S. imperialist projects, argued that U.S. postsecondary students see the world as “something to be consumed, a commodity that the privileged American student has the unchallenged and unquestioned right to obtain as an entitled citizen of the world” (p. 26).

As part of the pre-departure experience, faculty members and practitioners must introduce students to the postcolonial perspective and engage students in critical reflection. The postcolonial perspective critically examines the continuation or reformation of colonialism from the perspective of formerly colonized countries, regions, and peoples (Crossley & Tikly, 2004). The perspective concentrates on and raises questions about issues such as migration, slavery, resistance, difference, race, and gender (Tikly, 1999) and serves utility “in the analysis of global ethnocentric hegemonies that reproduce and maintain global inequalities in the distribution of wealth, power and labor in the world” (Andreotti & Souza, 2012, p. 1). Khoo (2012) added that the postcolonial perspective draws attention to the historical burdens of injustice and inequality that serve as a backdrop in countries where U.S. students study abroad.

If faculty members do not have the capacity to design and facilitate a pre-departure course that is tethered to the content of the international service-learning program, students must be encouraged to enroll in courses that explore topics such as colonialism, global inequalities,
migration, race and racism, White privilege, international development, and global policy, especially if the topics are examined through a critical lens. Martin and Griffiths (2012) recommended that “in an intercultural learning context that aims to unpack historical, social and cultural influences on worldviews, a critical socio-cultural pedagogy needs to be adopted” (p. 921). Faculty members and practitioners must also advise students about the multidisciplinary nature of the postcolonial perspective. Students may have the possibility to enroll in courses offered by a range of disciplines, including (but not limited to) geography, peace and conflict studies, political science, sexuality and gender studies, sociology, and world literature.

It is imperative that higher education professionals push students to reflect on their social location and positionality. Clost (2013) and Drolet (2013) drew attention to the role of national identity in how students approach and make sense of their service experiences abroad. As students explore the postcolonial perspective, they must reflect on how their national identity—and multiple, intersecting identities—shape their way of seeing and understanding. Students must also contemplate how members of their host community will perceive their multiple identities. Drolet (2013) argued that “reflective learning paves the way for cross-cultural competencies in spite of the barriers and challenges confronted in diverse cultural settings” (p. 191).

When paired with domestic service opportunities and academic courses that explore historical, sociocultural, political, and educational narratives, the postcolonial perspective can help prepare students for engaging in non-hegemonic service abroad. Although these recommendations for practice will not automatically result in partnerships that are characterized by thick reciprocity, the approaches push U.S. students to contemplate how international service-learning programs affect community members. In addition, a more dynamic and comprehensive
approach to pre-departure programming eases the burden that is placed upon community members for training and orienting U.S. students.

**Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of my study was to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. Since many researchers (e.g., Astin & Sax, 1998; Astin et al., 2000; Boss, 1994; Celio et al., 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Myers-Lipton, 1998; Warchal & Ruiz, 2004; Warren, 2012) have explored the effect of service-learning on students, I concentrated on the host community’s perspective of the experience. In this section, I present four recommendations for investigating how international service-learning programs affect community members. Although it represents a departure from my focus on community members, my final recommendation that concentrates on students is connected to the stories of my participants and the findings of my research study.

First, integrate more stakeholders into future research studies. In my study, I found that Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline were unfamiliar with the purpose of the international service-learning program. Researchers could examine how various stakeholders involved in the program (e.g., higher education professionals at the home and host universities, the U.S. students, individuals at the community-based organization, the on-site program director, local parents in the host community) understand the program’s purpose. Involving more community members amplifies voices that are not represented in the extant literature and underscores the relevance of local knowledge. Magaiza (2014) noted that in the 21st century, knowledge is now generated by many actors and expertise is “no longer guaranteed to be vested in universities alone” (p. 72).

Second, get closer to and diversify community voices. My research study concentrated on one community-based organization in one township in one country. Researchers must
amplify the voices of community members in different cultural and community contexts. As international service-learning continues to grow, researchers must incorporate “the vantage point of the community partners who are so essential to its success” (Gaines-Hanks & Grayman, 2009, p. 87). Furthermore, researchers must engage community members not only as participants, but also as co-investigators. Cannella and Lincoln (2011) recommended that voices from the margins become a new center for researchers. Pienaar (2014) added that “by legitimising the voices of the marginalised it alters the politics of power relations in knowledge making” (p. 81).

Third, explore the effects of different program models on community members. South Point University and St. Dominic University deliver a semester-long international service-learning program. Additional program models include programs organized by third-party providers in which the home university collaborates with a private company; short-term, faculty-led programs in which faculty members design and deliver a program of eight weeks or less; non-credit voluntourism and alternative break programs; and year-long programs. In a similar regard, researchers must also explore how programs facilitated by different institutional types affect community members. St. Dominic University, for example, is a private Jesuit institution with a rich culture of service and deep commitment to social justice. What are the experiences of community members who work alongside students from public, non-denominational institutions of higher education?

Fourth, employ different qualitative methodologies and methods with diverse theoretical perspectives. Although quantitative studies serve great utility in educational research, Clarke (2003) argued that quantitative research has “historically lacked the capacity to capture the process of community impact” (p. 126). Case studies, for example, that rely upon photo elicitation, observations, and/or document analysis to collect data have the possibility to present
new knowledge and perspectives. Additionally, research conducted from a critical perspective would challenge dominant ideologies, counter colonialism, reposition problems toward social justice, and seek ways to reclaim indigenous cultural practices (Cannella & Lincoln, 2011).

My final implication for future research concentrates on students. Although the extant literature is dominated by research that explores the experiences of students who participate in international service-learning programs, the stories of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline in chorus with my review of the literature inspired new questions. When my participants told stories about the race of the U.S. students at Korhaan School, they only spoke about White students. Researchers must amplify the voices of students of color who participate in international service-learning programs, especially in destinations such as post-apartheid South Africa. In addition, based on my participants’ stories, the fields of study of the U.S. students remain unknown. Researchers must also explore the narratives of students who perform service that does (and does not) align with their major. The experiences of students who have varied backgrounds with service in the U.S. are worth examining, as well. The findings of researchers who explore the narratives of students have the potential to improve the design and delivery of international service-learning programs for several stakeholders, including community members.

**Limitations**

As is the case for all research endeavors, there were limitations that undoubtedly affected my research study. First, I attempted to arrange my interviews and the focus group prior to my arrival in South Africa, but I was unable to accomplish this task. During my first visit to Korhaan School, I worked with Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline to schedule the interviews and the focus group. At this time, I learned that due to the school’s daily timetable, Peline was available only during a 30-minute period in the morning between classes. Compared to my 25- and 35-
minute interviews with Peline, my interviews with Bhejile and Dunyiswa lasted between 55 and 80 minutes. Additionally, Peline was scheduled to participate in a portion of the focus group, but she did not attend. Although Peline’s narratives certainly influenced my findings, Bhejile’s and Dunyiswa’s stories are more pronounced throughout my manuscript.

Second, Bignold and Su (2013) asserted that “language is closely linked to identity, and multiple identities can involve multiple languages” (p. 408). Although Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline demonstrated a high degree of familiarity with English, they spoke Xhosa as their first language. English, the common language between my participants and me, was a second (or third or fourth) language for Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline. The raw and unedited narratives with irregular vocabulary and sentence structures that I presented in the fourth chapter illuminate the linguistic and cultural barriers that serve as another limitation of my study. Considering the interconnectedness of language and culture, stories were likely lost in translation and during narration. Given the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural nature of my research study, I likely missed more complex stories that were perhaps hidden within other stories. If I were fluent in Xhosa and if I had conducted my research study in my participants’ native language, I could have understood my research on a deeper level, restoried my participants’ narratives more authentically, and perhaps even discovered new or different findings.

Third, throughout my manuscript, I provide minimal details about the structure of South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program, which Eyler and Giles (1999) characterized as “a consistently important factor in the effectiveness of service-learning” (p. 32). Although I acknowledge the relevance of the structure of international service-learning programs, the stories of my participants did not concentrate on the logistical components associated with the partnership between South Point University, St. Dominic
University, and Korhaan School. Since Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline are not intimately involved in the life cycle of the program, their stories did not focus on the structural elements of the partnership.

**Conclusion**

The theme of internationalization is “ubiquitous in 21st-century higher education” (Renn, Brazelton, & Holmes, 2014, p. 14). As the world becomes more interconnected, higher education professionals must prepare students for life in a globalized society. Since curricular and co-curricular international experiences provide valuable learning (Drolet, 2013), higher education professionals must play a critical role in designing and delivering a myriad of opportunities abroad for U.S. postsecondary students.

More universities and colleges have integrated international service-learning programs into their internationalization plans, and “programs that facilitate these opportunities will likely continue to increase in number” (Travers, 2013, p. 198). International service-learning programs have the potential to serve the dual purpose of facilitating growth in the areas of cross-cultural learning and civic engagement (Niehaus & Crain, 2013). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) boldly stated that international service-learning “may be a pedagogy that is best suited to prepare college graduates to be active global citizens in the 21st century” (p. 3).

With the growth of international service-learning, more questions must be raised regarding how these courses and programs affect communities. Sharpe and Dear (2013) noted that the increase in the number of U.S. postsecondary students who participate in these programs has raised some “troubling concerns, many of which relate to the ways that the actual, on-the-ground activities seem to challenge or contradict the intended and purported aims of [international service-learning]” (p. 49). Blouin and Perry (2009) added that “research on the
community impacts remains sparse and limited” and the voices of community members are
“largely absent in the service-learning literature” (p. 122).

The purpose of my research study was to hear stories about how community members are
affected by international service-learning programs. I concentrated on the narratives of three
community members—Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline—at Korhaan School, a primary school in
the South African township of Ithemba. Korhaan School hosts U.S. undergraduate students who
participate in South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s semester-long international
service-learning program. The model of students from a university in the Global North (the
U.S.) serving in the Global South (South Africa) draws attention to colonial discourse that
surrounds international programs.

My participants’ stories highlighted the benefits and the challenges associated with
international service-learning programs. One the hand, students who serve at Korhaan School
motivate the learners, offer support at a school that functions as a second home for learners,
bring new perspectives, provide curricular assistance, and facilitate cross-cultural exchange. On
the other hand, Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline articulated that they were unclear about the
purpose of the program and communicated that they were not involved in the life cycle of the
program.

I hope that the voices of Bhejile, Dunyiswa, and Peline inspire higher education
professionals to critically examine the policies and practices associated with international
service-learning programs and broader internationalization efforts. I challenge faculty members
and practitioners to think and operate in new ways that foreground the underserved and empower
communities. As we reflect on the power and privilege associated with our international
programs, let us discover new approaches that amplify the voices of the marginalized. Let us
construct more meaningful partnerships that are characterized by thick reciprocity—partnerships that are more inclusive, just, and reciprocal.
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APPENDIX A. PERMISSION TO USE FURCO’S (1996) MODEL IN FIGURE 1

From: Andrew Furco <afurco@umn.edu>
Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2015 12:13 AM
To: Jeremy Robert Doughty
Subject: Re: Permission to use your "distinctions among service programs" model

Hello, Jeremy —

Thank you for your interest in the model. I am glad you find it useful to your work.

You are most welcome to use the model for your dissertation research. To confirm, the citation you provided for the article in which the model appears is correct.

I wish you all the best of luck in your research. I hope you will have an opportunity to share your research with me when it is completed.

Best,

Andy

On Tue, May 12, 2015 at 11:52 AM, Jeremy Robert Doughty <jrdough@bgsu.edu> wrote:

Dear Dr. Furco,

Greetings from Bowling Green State University. My name is Jeremy Doughty, and I am a doctoral student in the higher education administration program at BG SU. My dissertation will explore the impact that international service-learning programs have on community members in South Africa.

I find great utility in your 1996 model, distinctions among service programs, that you presented in Expanding boundaries: Service and learning. I would like to include an image of the model in my literature review. When you get a free moment, could you please let me know if I have your permission to use the image of the model with the following citation?


I look forward to your response. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Best regards,
Jeremy Doughty
jrdough@bgsu.edu

Andrew Furco
Associate Vice President for Public Engagement
Associate Professor, Organizational Leadership, Policy, and Development
University of Minnesota
100 Church Street, S.E.
110 Morrill Hall
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(612) 624-6875 (Diane Gihl, Executive Assistant)
APPENDIX B. PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A Narrative Study of South African Community Members’ Experiences with an International Service-Learning Program

I, Jeremy R. Doughty, am a doctoral student in the Higher Education Administration program in the Department of Higher Education and Student Affairs at Bowling Green State University in the United States. You are invited to participate in a research study on international service-learning programs. This research study is being conducted for my doctoral dissertation. My advisor, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, is supervising my study.

Purpose of Study
The purpose of my research study is to hear stories about how community members are affected by international service-learning programs. I will focus on the experiences of South African community members at Korhaan School who engage with U.S. undergraduate students participating in South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program.

I hope that my findings will inspire faculty members and practitioners to design international service-learning programs that are rooted in the genuine needs of the host community and characterized by reciprocity. I also hope that my findings will push students to be more cognizant of the sociocultural context of their program’s location and their effect on the community. By participating in my research study, you will amplify the voices of community members who are currently underrepresented in the literature, highlight the unique sociocultural context of South Africa, and prompt higher education professionals to include community members throughout the life cycle of a service-learning program.

Procedure
My research study will include three participants at Korhaan School: the principal, the deputy principal, and the teacher who collaborates with the U.S. undergraduate student assigned to the primary school. My research study does not involve any engagement with the U.S. undergraduate student or the Korhaan School students. All participants must be at least eighteen-years-old to participate. I have obtained permission from the principal of Korhaan School to conduct my research at the school. I have also obtained permission from the director of the international service-learning program.

As a participant in this study, your involvement will consist of four steps. I will visit Korhaan School for two weeks in mid-October 2015. I will conduct an initial two-hour interview, a two-hour focus group, and a one-hour final interview with you at Korhaan School. Upon my return to the United States, I will email a synopsis of my findings to you. You will have two weeks to send me your feedback, and I will treat your suggestions as additional data. The total time expected on your part for your participation in my research study will be approximately seven hours.
Voluntary Nature of the Study
Your participation in the research study is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. During the data collection process, you may decide to skip a question, not do a particular task, or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or explanation. Deciding to participate or not will not affect any relationship that you may have with Bowling Green State University, South Point University, St. Dominic University, or Korhaan School.

Confidentiality and Anonymity
The interviews and the focus group will be digitally recorded and transcribed. I will keep the audio files and the electronic transcripts of the audio files on my password-protected computer that is only available to me. The audio recordings will be deleted one year after the conclusion of my research study. All hard-copy documents will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my personal home. In addition, since you will be participating in a focus group, I encourage you to respect the other participants and keep the information that will be discussed during the session confidential.

Pseudonyms have been selected for the two universities (i.e., South Point University, St. Dominic University), the school (i.e., Korhaan School), and the community (i.e., Ithemba). In addition, I will not reveal your identity. You will create a pseudonym, and all personal identifiers will be removed from my transcripts. When I report my results, I will associate your quotations with the pseudonym that you select. I will keep a list of real names and pseudonyms on my password-protected computer that is only available to me. Since you will be participating in a focus group, the other participants in my research study will be able to identify you. Additionally, since the director of the international service-learning program is supporting my research study, he will also be able to identify you.

Risks and Benefits
The anticipated risks to you are no greater than those normally encountered in daily life. By participating in my research study, you will help me fill a void in the current literature on international service-learning. Universities typically focus on how a service-learning program affects students. Your stories will prompt universities to reconsider how they engage with community-based organizations and community members in international contexts.

Contact Information
If you have any questions or comments about my research study, you may contact me, Jeremy R. Doughty, on +1 920 740 2888 or jrdough@bgsu.edu. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, on +1 419 372 7382 or mewilso@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University on +1 419 372 7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

Signing this consent form indicates that you have read the form and consent to participate in the research study. You will be given a copy of the signed consent form for your records.
APPENDIX C. RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear (name),

Warm greetings from Bowling Green State University in the United States.

I am conducting a research study on the effect that international service-learning programs have on communities. I will focus on the experiences of South African community members at Korhaan School who engage with U.S. undergraduate students participating in South Point University’s and St. Dominic University’s international service-learning program. My research study will fulfill the dissertation requirement of the Higher Education Administration doctoral program at Bowling Green State University.

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study. By participating in my research study, you will amplify the voices of community members who are currently underrepresented in the literature, highlight the unique sociocultural context of South Africa, and prompt higher education professionals to include community members throughout the life cycle of a service-learning program.

As a participant in my research study, your involvement will consist of an initial two-hour interview, a two-hour focus group, and a one-hour final interview. I will conduct my research at Korhaan School during the weeks of 19-23 October and 25-30 October. The interviews and focus group will take place at Korhaan School in place where you feel comfortable. Upon my return to the United States, I will email a synopsis of my findings to you. You will have two weeks to send me your feedback, and I will treat your suggestions as additional data. The total time expected on your part for your participation in my research study will be approximately seven hours.

Please let me know whether you would like to participate in my research study. You may reach me at jrdough@bgsu.edu or on +1 920 740 2888.

If you have any questions or comments about my research study, please do not hesitate to contact me. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Maureen E. Wilson, on +1 419 372 7321 or mewilso@bgsu.edu. If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Board at Bowling Green State University on +1 419 372 7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to hearing from you.

Best regards,

Jeremy R. Doughty
APPENDIX D. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #1

A Narrative Study of South African Community Members’ Experiences with an International Service-Learning Program

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Interviewee:

Role/Position of Interviewee:

Procedures Before the Interview

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Review the Participant Consent Form
3. Explain the logistics of the first interview (including the emphasis on stories)
4. Turn on recorder
5. Ask for the participant’s permission to record the interview

Questions

1. Tell me about yourself.
   a. How long have you been working at Korhaan School?
   b. What are your responsibilities at Korhaan School?
   c. Tell me more about Korhaan School (e.g., notable historical moments, student body).
   d. Share a story about Korhaan School that is representative of the school’s culture.
2. Tell me more about the community of Ithemba.
   a. How would you describe the culture of Ithemba?
   b. Tell a story that illustrates the relationship between Korhaan School and Ithemba.
3. In what ways are you involved with the service-learning program?
   a. What role do you play in the design of the service-learning program (e.g., the development of projects for the U.S. students)?
   b. How frequently do you engage with the U.S. students?
   c. Describe your relationship with the U.S. students.
   d. Share a story (or multiple stories) about a U.S. student who has served at Korhaan School.
4. Over the years, what projects and programs have the U.S. students and the Korhaan School staff worked on together?
   a. Share a story about how a U.S. student has engaged with Korhaan School students.
   b. In what ways have the U.S. students collaborated or engaged with the Korhaan School staff?
5. How is Korhaan School affected by the service-learning program?
   a. How has the service-learning program affected the Korhaan School students?
b. How has the service-learning program affected the teachers and administration at Korhaan School?
c. How has the service-learning program affected you—personally and professionally?
d. How has the service-learning program affected the community of Ithemba?
e. Are there any other stories that you would like to share about the effect of the service-learning program?

6. Imagine that the director of the service-learning program is in this room:
   a. What would you say to him?
   b. What stories would you share with him?
   c. What recommendations would you offer for enhancing the service-learning program?

7. What should the future of Korhaan School’s relationship with the service-learning program look like?
   a. What responsibilities should the future U.S. students have?
   b. What projects should Korhaan School and the U.S. students implement?

8. If you could meet with the next group of U.S. students at St. Dominic University before their arrival in South Africa, what would you tell them about:
   a. Korhaan School?
   b. Ithemba?
   c. South Africa?
   d. Broader sociocultural, historical, political, and educational dynamics that might shape their experiences?

9. Are there any other stories that you would like to add during our first interview?

**Procedures After the Interview**
1. Turn off recorder
2. Thank the participant for sharing his/her stories
3. Debrief with the participant
4. Review next steps: Focus group
APPENDIX E. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL #2

A Narrative Study of South African Community Members’ Experiences with an International Service-Learning Program

Date:  
Start Time:  
End Time:  

Place:  

Interviewee:  
Role/Position of Interviewee:  

Procedures Before the Interview
1. Welcome
2. Revisit the purpose of the study
3. Ask the participant if he/she has any questions following the first interview and the focus group
4. Explain the logistics of the second interview (including the emphasis on stories)
5. Turn on recorder
6. Ask for the participant’s permission to record the interview

Questions
1. To begin, I would like to review the facts and my interpretation of the stories that you told me during the first interview:
   a. Provide overview
   b. What would you like to add to my understanding?
   c. What stories would enhance my understanding?
2. Imagine that you are writing a story about the service-learning program:
   a. What is the title of your story?
   b. Describe the plot of your story.
   c. What five words best describe your story?
      i. Explain why you selected each word.
      ii. Did you consider adding other words to the list? If so, what words? Why?
3. How do you define service?
   a. What feelings does the word elicit?
   b. How does the service-learning program align (or not align) with your understanding of service?
4. From your perspective, what is the purpose of the service-learning program?
   a. Tell me about a moment with the service-learning program that captures this purpose.
   b. Share a story that illustrates when this purpose was lost or not met.
5. Imagine that the U.S. students from the service-learning program—former and present—are in this room:
a. What would you say to them?
b. What stories would you share with them?

6. Are there any other stories about your experiences with the service-learning program that you would like to share with me during our final interview?

**Procedures After the Interview**

1. Turn off recorder
2. Thank the participant for sharing his/her stories
3. Debrief with the participant
4. Review next steps: What is the best way to follow up with the participants (for member checking) once I am back in the United States?
APPENDIX F. FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

A Narrative Study of South African Community Members’ Experiences with an International Service-Learning Program

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**Procedures Before the Interview**
1. Welcome
2. Revisit the purpose of the study
3. Explain the guidelines for the focus group:
   a. There are no right or wrong stories or responses
   b. Listen respectfully to others, even if there is disagreement
   c. There is no need to come to a consensus
   d. Engage with and react to each other, not only with me
   e. Positive and negative stories and responses are helpful
   f. Respect the confidentiality of information
4. Turn on recorder
5. Ask for the participant’s permission to record the interview

**Questions**
1. How long has Korhaan School been involved with the service-learning program?
   a. How did the relationship get started?
   b. What was the service-learning program like in the initial years?
   c. How has the program evolved from the beginning until now?
   d. Why is Korhaan School a good fit for the service-learning program?
2. Thinking back over all of the years that you have participated in the service-learning program:
   a. Share stories about what has gone particularly well.
   b. Share stories about challenges that you have encountered.
   c. What experiences stick out in your minds?
   d. What are your reactions to the other participants’ stories?
3. To the Quechua people of South America, *ayni* is an indigenous concept that promotes an ongoing cycle of reciprocity. The concept is woven throughout the fabric of their culture and informs their relationships with others, including service-learning partners.
   a. What local cultural frameworks, concepts, or philosophies shape your relationships with others?
   b. Share stories that illustrate this framework, concept, or philosophy.
4. Imagine that you are inviting a colleague at another South African school to participate in the service-learning program:
   a. What stories would you tell your colleague about the service-learning program?
b. What benefits would you highlight?
c. What challenges would you identify?
d. What are your reactions to the other participants’ stories and responses?
5. Next, I would like you to collectively build a story. The first participant will begin the story, the second participant will continue the story, and the third participant will end the story. I will facilitate this process.
a. Share a story about an effective or ideal day with the service-learning program.
b. In addition to what you presented in the story, how would you describe an effective or ideal service-learning program?
6. Imagine that the President of St. Dominic University and the Rector of South Point University are in this room:
a. What would you say to them?
b. What stories would you share with them?
c. What recommendations would you offer regarding the service-learning program?
7. Are there any other stories about your experiences with the service-learning program that you would like to share with me

**Procedures after the Interview**
1. Turn off recorder
2. Thank the participants for sharing their stories
3. Debrief with the participants
4. Review next steps: Final interview
APPENDIX G. HSRB APPROVAL LETTER

DATE: September 21, 2015
TO: Jeremy Doughty
FROM: Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board
PROJECT TITLE: [784362-1] A Narrative Study of South African Community Members’ Experiences with an International Service-Learning Program
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project
ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: September 17, 2015
REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category # 2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has determined this project is exempt from IRB review according to federal regulations AND that the proposed research has met the principles outlined in the Belmont Report. You may now begin the research activities.

Note that an amendment may not be made to exempt research because of the possibility that proposed changes may change the research in such a way that it is no longer meets the criteria for exemption. A new application must be submitted and reviewed prior to modifying the research activity, unless the researcher believes that the change must be made to prevent harm to participants. In these cases, the Office of Research Compliance must be notified as soon as practicable.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Kristin Hagemyer at 419-372-7716 or khagemy@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board’s records.