International Service Learning:
Program Elements Linked to Learning Outcomes,
and Six Participant Motivation Factors Revealed

A dissertation presented to
the faculty of
The Patton College of Education of Ohio University

In partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Philosophy

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May 2015

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This dissertation titled

International Service Learning:
Program Elements Linked to Learning Outcomes,
and Six Participant Motivation Factors Revealed

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Abstract

NELSON, LISA V., Ph.D., May 2015, Higher Education

International Service Learning: Program Elements Linked to Learning Outcomes, and Six Participant Motivation Factors Revealed

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Qualitative research that involved the study of participants on a two-week international service learning (ISL) program in Honduras identified six foundational elements (guided critical processing, international border crossing, reciprocal connections and personalizing, group dynamic, non-service activities, and related service project), and found significant connections between those elements and particular learning outcomes and impacts on participants. These findings provided the theoretical basis for a new International Service Learning Group Model for practitioners. Also, findings revealed six factors (leader qualities, service oriented, faculty mentoring, financial assistance, peer recommendation, and connection to area of study) that contributed to students choosing to participate on the ISL program.
Dedication

To my most supportive and encouraging Aunt Ardean, whose inspiration will always be a guiding factor in my life.
Acknowledgments

I offer a special thanks to those who made completing my dissertation possible and Ohio University for the opportunity. Thank you to Dr. Pete Mather not only for all the effort, time and insight that you have provided for this dissertation, but also for the encouragement and support throughout my tenure at Ohio University. Thank you to each of my committee members, Dr. John Henning, Dr. David Horton, and Dr. Michael Hess for your generous assistance, support, and valuable feedback throughout.

A heartfelt thank you goes out to each of the participants in this study who provided their valuable time and insight to make this study possible. I hope that the fruits will be of value in the future to facilitate more impactful international service learning experiences.

Thank you also to the wonderful family and friends who supported and assisted me in various ways throughout this dissertation process. Thank you to my great editing crew Tina Larsen, Karin Flemming, Chris Rusnak, Steve Cayford, Diane Hein, Pam Baster, and Nancy Benitez for not only your great feedback but for making yourselves available on such short notice. Thank you to my sister, Carla Baster, and her family and to my dear friend, Tammy Polovic, for providing the loving support that you did and always do.

Lastly, thank you to the many friends and supporters including Performance Bicycles for making the way in which I wrote my dissertation possible. It was quite a journey and I am forever indebted.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The need for students, who can successfully navigate international settings, continues to grow as various global economic, social, political, environmental, and health issues become increasingly interconnected. Matters that now have the potential for world devastation, such as some environmental issues, energy consumption matters, diseases, and conflicts, all require global problem-solving efforts and solutions. Expanded world perspectives, increased critical conscientiousness, developed views of socio-economic privilege, enhanced multicultural understanding and awareness, greater confidence navigating foreign settings, and improved research skills in international environments, are all outcomes that have been repeatedly reported in international service learning (ISL) studies (Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2003).

According to Crabtree (2008), “International service-learning combines academic instruction and community-based service in an international context” (p. 18). Short-term ISL programs typically occur between two to four weeks over winter, spring, or summer break. The particular factors that impact the overall quality of short-term ISL programs, in terms of desired student learning outcomes and effects on international communities, are the subjects of much discussion within ISL literature. It is unclear from previous studies what specific aspects of an ISL program experience bring about these desired outcomes.

Three aspects of ISL programs have repeatedly been reported as significant foundational elements in previous ISL studies: an international border crossing which prompts new or disruptive experiences for participants (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kiely,
critical reflection (Bringle et. al., 2009; Crabtree, 2008; King, 2004; Kiely, 2005), and participants making reciprocal connections with community partners (Cipolle, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Partnering with community members is found to be most effective when the community members engage in identifying and solving their community oriented problems. This approach advances the social justice orientation which is yet another foundational SL and ISL aspect typically regarded by various scholars as essential to service learning efficacy (Battistoni, 2002; Cipolie, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Martin & Wheeler, 2000). Theorists and studies have suggested various learning models related to SL and ISL programs, but there remains a gap in the research and understanding with regard to cause and effect linkages between specific programming factors and outcomes.

As motivation for this research, I postulate that ISL practitioners should seek to better understand the various ISL factors involved in prompting particular learning outcomes and/or desired impacts in order to design more intentional and effective ISL programs. In addition, because ISL programs are typically more complex and time intensive than traditional classroom courses to create and facilitate, a better understanding of the impacts of program elements on learning outcomes would make it clearer and more efficient for ISL practitioners to design and implement quality programs. As a result, more ISL programs may be encouraged.

Thus, a primary goal of this study was to try to understand what elements of an ISL program were most impactful on the student participants. I was curious to explore whether common themes could be found in the data linking student impacts or learning
outcomes to specific programming elements. This study aimed, in part, to identify those links.

The lack of participation of higher education students in ISL programs is another issue worthy of investigation. Despite the potential desirable learning outcomes that stem from participation in ISL programs, only a small percentage of students (1.4%) in higher education settings participate in any sort of study abroad experience, which is where short-term ISL programs typically exist (based on statistics from 2009/2010 found in IIE, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). While participation in short-term study abroad programs such as ISL programs has grown (increased from 7% to 14% of all study abroad programs), it still only accounts for a small percentage of the total number of students who study abroad (IIE, 2013). Presumably an even smaller percentage of students engage in ISL programs as not all short-term study abroad programs are ISL programs.

I entered into this study with the understanding that some groups, as specified below, who are underrepresented in higher education as a whole are also profoundly underrepresented in study abroad programs including ISL programs. Specifically, the U.S. Census Bureau statistics provide that African American and Latino students are underrepresented on study abroad programs relative to their attendance in higher education. African American students represent about 14.6% of all students studying in higher education, but represent roughly only 5.3% of the participants on study abroad programs. Likewise, Latino students represent approximately 12% of the students in
higher education settings, but only 7.6% of those are participating in study abroad programs (IIE, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

The short-term nature of ISL programs typically suggests a lessening of barriers to participants (i.e., reduced costs and shorter time commitments for students in comparison to traditional semester study abroad experiences). Arguably, due to these lessened barriers, ISL programs should be even more accessible and, therefore, more desirable to the same groups of students that are so often under represented in these programs. Thus, there is great opportunity to enhance student diversity in these programs. But the first step must be for ISL professionals to better understand the determining factors that go into student choices when deciding whether or not to participate in these programs. When these factors are better understood, then recruitment efforts can be more narrowly tailored to factors that matter. As a result, we should see a greater representation of the underrepresented groups previously mentioned plus others including non-traditional students, international students, and those students with fewer financial means.

To this end, a significant research aim of this study was to gain an understanding of how each student came to his or her own personal decision to participate in the ISL program to Honduras. This group of program participants in particular offered a rich array of diversity. The student group offered a composite of diverse economic backgrounds, ethnicities, international origins, genders, varying status’ in relation to marriage and parenthood, as well as differing backgrounds academically with regard to areas of study and universities attended. The study sought to explore the existence of
common themes in regard to what factors attracted this diverse group of students to the ISL program and ultimately secured each individual’s participation.

The hope was that gaining a greater understanding of why and how students chose to participate in an ISL program would enable ISL leaders to recruit not only more student participants to future programs, but also to increase the human diverse on the programs. The latter would enrich ISL programs systemically—filtering down to the ultimate end goal of benefiting the student by offering a more complete and enriched experience. Greater understanding should allow ISL practitioners to develop an evolved recruitment process that is more efficient towards reaching recruitment goals. In the long run, the recruitment process will be aided as well as eased.

**Brief Overview of ISL Program to Honduras**

The data for this study were collected from seven graduate student participants, who participated on a two-week ISL program to Honduras offered through a large public mid-western university during the summer of 2009; two of the participants studied were international students. The students spent two weeks in Honduras. The first week was spent in a rural community engaged in service projects such as building latrines, finishing floors, new home construction, and assisting in educational activities with grade school through secondary age students. Student participants worked alongside community members and engaged in dialogs with local community representatives and leaders of the ISL program’s NGO partner. During the second week, students traveled to other parts of Honduras and engaged in various structured and unstructured programming.
ISL in Historical Context

International education experiences, which grew in popularity extensively after World War II, began with lofty goals such as promoting global understanding and world peace (Bochner, Lin, & McLeod, 1979). These experiences were typically characterized by a university student spending a “junior year abroad,” studying at a foreign university (Crabtree, 2008). The student is the direct beneficiary of such a study abroad experience. By contrast, ISL experiences “are intended to reciprocally benefit communities and their members in addition to students; SL [service learning] benefits to students are articulated in more civic, rather than individualistic terms, such as enhanced civic participation, social responsibility, and commitment to community service” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 20).

ISL Theoretical Foundations

John Dewey’s (1916/2009) concept of hands-on learning experiences outside of the classroom (later called experiential education) provided the foundation from which SL and ISL theories evolved. Experiential education involves moving students outside of the traditional classroom setting and placing them in unfamiliar hands-on environments where they must use their problem solving skills to adapt --frequently applying concepts learned in a traditional setting (Dewey, 2009). The concept is that personal growth occurs from having to navigate unknown, uncomfortable situations, and critically reflect on the experience (Kiely, 2005). Critical reflection is essential to fostering student perspective transformation (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mezirow, 2000; Rhoads, 1997). David Kolb created the experiential learning theory model, which begins by taking a new concrete experience, reflecting upon it, allowing time for new and
abstract ideas to surface, and then applying those concepts (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1974). See Figure 1: Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory Model on p. 24.

Service learning concepts and doctrines emerged out of the experiential education movement, including the pervasive application of Kolb's model, and added another foundational piece to the ISL theoretical framework (Crabtree, 2008). At a minimum, SL involves an academic approach to students engaging in service projects in reciprocal roles along side community partners, and critically reflecting upon what they experienced (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Crabtree, 2008; King, 2004; Mezirow, 1994). Service projects should be driven by community needs, and relationships with community members should feel reciprocal (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2003; Cipolle, 2010).

The student learning outcomes (i.e., perspective transformations, interpersonal growth, identity development, intercultural competence, critical thinking, tolerance for ambiguity, etc.) that result from ISL programs are now well known and documented (Crabtree, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Porter & Monard, 2001). Researchers have reported an increase in students’ appreciation for other cultures and tolerance depending upon the quality of the placement and whether critical reflection was involved (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Nonetheless, there is still need for better understanding on the links between concrete and specific causes (factors) and effects (learning outcomes or impacts) integral to SL.

Much of the SL and ISL research has focused on student learning outcomes. As a result, there is a deficit in studies that generate theory and/or investigate the contextual factors and learning processes in service-learning that lead to reported
outcomes. The focus on the “what” of student learning rather than the “how” leaves us with a theoretical “black box” regarding the contextual and process mechanisms in service-learning that enhance certain cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes — particularly those that are transformative. (Kiely, 2005, p. 5)

Mezirow’s (2000) research resulted in insights into how transformational learning occurs as well as a process-oriented theoretical model: the transformational learning process model. Kiely (2005) expanded Mezirow’s work to the field of ISL by exploring the transformational learning process and transformative outcomes in a longitudinal study of students who participated in short-term ISL programs in Nicaragua. His research findings suggest contextual factors, as well as the well-researched reflection aspect that is central to service-learning practice, impact student learning and that more extensive research needs to be focused on those lesser-explored factors (Kiely, 2005). Some of the contextual factors which he found that contributed to the transformative outcomes were ISL program elements such as the participants' immersive living arrangements, opportunities to dialog with community members, and opportunities to engage in research (Kiely, 2005, p. 9).

Social Justice and Service Learning

Kiely’s (2004) longitudinal case study findings confirm that ISL programs that include a social justice aspect provide transformative experiences impacting student life choices and world-views (p. 15). However, critics of SL argue that more harm than good may come from SL programs (Illich, 1990; King, 2004; Crabtree, 2008). Critics contend
that SL programs have the potential to reinforce negative cultural stereotypes, and exacerbate community problems (or at a minimum provide only temporary fixes to larger problems) (Illich, 1990; King, 2004). This may explain why an increasing number of scholars urge the use of a social justice framework within an SL or ISL curriculum (Battistoni, 2002; Cipolie, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Martin & Wheeler, 2000).

A social justice approach implies that engagement in service should ideally be focused towards solving systemic problems, as opposed to temporary fixes (Barker & Smith, 1996; O’Donovan, 2002). SL scholars suggest that reciprocal relationships with community partners need to occur, and that community partners need to be involved with identifying and developing solutions to solve problems in their communities (Crabtree, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999; King, 2004). Various ISL and SL scholars support the adaptation of various multicultural (Baxter-Magolda & King, 2004; Cipolle, 2010) and feminist (Crabtree, 2008, Naples, 2003) theories or frameworks to address issues regarding power and privilege and multicultural issues that may present when diverse individuals come together as partners, both within the ISL group and between the service learners and the communities served.

**Statement of Problem**

As mentioned above, student participants and educators consistently report that ISL programs elicit valuable transformative student learning experiences. However, in terms of what particular aspects, or factors, of ISL programs provoke these experiences or outcomes is far from clear. As suggested by Kiely (2005), “Instead of narrowly focusing service-learning research on more precise methods, disciplinary-based
outcomes, and reflective techniques, researchers should also generate knowledge of, and
develop theories about, the contextual, visceral, emotive, and affective aspects that
enhance transformational learning in service-learning” (p. 14). Furthermore, very little is
reported on how students come to be participants in an ISL program, as well what value
or impact result from having a diverse group of students participating on an ISL program.

**Purpose**

I sought to understand what attracted this particular group of student participants
to the Honduras ISL program - a group which included diversity in terms of cultures,
gender, ethnicities, age, programs of study, marital and parenthood status, and what
universities they attended. Also, I hoped to obtain a deeper understanding of what
students gained and learned from their participation in the program, and what aspects of
the ISL program may have contributed to these impacts. According to Strauss and
Corbin (1990) research questions should be designed to identify generally the
“phenomenon to be studied” (p. 38). The following research questions guided my
inquiry:

RQ1: What aspects of the ISL program impacted the student participants and how?

RQ2: How do students learn about and ultimately decide to participate in an ISL
program?

**Methodology Overview**

I used a combined case study and grounded theory approach to collect and
analyze data, and then to generate theories. My intent was to obtain the benefits of both
as suggested by Laws and McLeod (2006): “The combined ‘case study/grounded theory’
approach, allowed flexibility within the research site, and produced a rich harvest of fine
grained research data, that illuminated an important research topic” p.17.

I used grounded theory for my investigation to see if any significant theories would emerge. In grounded theory, “[o]ne does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). This is done through a systematized process of analyzing collected data (i.e., documents, interview transcripts, field notes, etc.) by repeated coding and comparing data to produce a “well constructed theory” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

A variety of data collection approaches may be used with grounded theory. In this study, data sources included: (a) semi-structured interviews with seven participants after the service learning experience, (b) journals kept by the participants, and (c) my participant observations recorded throughout the program. Each interview lasted between one to one and half hours and was conducted shortly after the program ended (within six months after students' returned).

Grounded theory uses various coding procedures to make meaning of the data, and look for themes and potential theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I used three primary coding techniques (i.e., open (initial), axial, and focused coding) to organize and analyze the collected data to discover significant patterns, categories, and themes (Charmaz, 2006). The result was the emergence of significant theories related to my research questions.
Significance

SL programs are typically created and led by motivated faculty or student affairs administrators, who have an interest in advancing students’ learning beyond the typical classroom setting. However, a great deal of time and expense can be involved with creating and facilitating such an endeavor in a university setting. Thus, understanding how students come to be on an ISL programs, and what aspects of ISL programs impactful student learning, is important so as to make the most of those precious university resources, and to inform future ISL research.

Context

Qualitative research is context bound, and there are unique features of the proposed ISL program of study that inform the findings. The student participants involved in this study attended a program that occurred in the developing country of Honduras. The university that hosted the program is a large public university in the Midwest, and all of the participants were graduate students. There was diversity within the participant group (i.e., students from different countries, different ethnicities, varying ages, from different schools, different marital statuses, etc.). The organization that the ISL program partnered with in Honduras had a religious affiliation. Thus, a secular university program having a partnership with a non-government organization NGO with a religious affiliation added yet another dimension to the program context for the students to consider.

The particular aspects of this program—its location, unique participants, and the architecture of the program itself, all inform the particular findings of this study. Yet,
because the context is described in detail, ISL researchers and practitioners should be able to use the findings to assist with intentional designs of future ISL programs. Specifically, they can evaluate whether to include the various significant program elements identified in the findings to create future programs aimed at reproducing similar learning outcomes or impacts on students.

Definition of Terms

1. *Experiential Education* involves moving students outside of the traditional classroom setting and placing them in unfamiliar hands-on environments where they must use their problem solving skills to adapt –frequently applying concepts learned in a traditional setting (Dewey, 2009).

2. *Grounded Theory* is "a qualitative research method that uses a systematized set of procedures to develop and inductively derive grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.24).

3. *Guided Critical Processing Activities* are used in this dissertation to mean that an ISL leader facilitates situations that challenge ISL participants’ thinking through the use of various guided activities such as journal writing, group discussions, community dialogs, and research.

4. *Human Diversity* related to ISL student participants refers to anyone who has the potential to add perspective to the group discussions by virtue of being a part of a recognized group including but not limited to those who are disabled, non-traditional students, from other countries, plus students from varying ethnicities,
cultures, religious backgrounds, sexual orientations, ages, marital statuses, socio-economic backgrounds, universities, and programs of study.


6. *Service Learning (SL)*, at a minimum involves an academic approach to students engaging in service projects in reciprocal roles along side community partners and critically reflecting upon what they experienced (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Crabtree, 2008; King, 2004; Mezirow, 1994).

7. *Social Justice* implies an approach to engagement in service or teaching with a focus on facilitating fairness for underrepresented persons or groups, and solving larger problems, as opposed to temporary fixes (Barker & Smith, 1996; Martin & Wheeler, 2000; O’Donovan, 2002).

8. *Transformational Service Learning* refers to the processes through which reflective, as well as contextual factors, foster students learning outcomes and influence change in perspectives within service learning experiences (Kiely, 2005).
Chapter 2: Literature Review

The literature review begins by providing the theoretical foundations for ISL. It progresses through the development of service learning (SL) pedagogy and its evolution into an international context. Scholarly critiques of ISL are presented followed by literature regarding the significance of the social justice aspects of SL and ISL programs. It concludes by presenting findings from ISL studies regarding learning outcomes and impacts on participants.

International Service Learning Foundations

International service learning (ISL) practices and research now pulls from a wide variety of methodologies and pedagogies across academic disciplines. These methodologies and practices for designing and implementing service-learning programs have been evolving for over three decades.

To begin, ISL evolved from the experiential education movement which later divided and expanded into the realm of service learning (SL). John Dewey (1916/2009) is frequently credited with introducing the concept of experiential education from which SL, and then international ISL, evolved. Dewey believed that schooling was essential to affect social change, but that traditional modes of passive learning within a classroom were ineffective. Hands-on (or experiential) learning experiences were necessary to connect students with the material that was important to learn. Students gain a heightened learning experience by immersion into a project (Dewey, 1938). Others have echoed Dewey’s mantra, “In general, experiential learning enhances conceptual understanding, increases student ability to apply abstract concepts, and involves greater
opportunities for general learning (e.g., communication, cooperation and teamwork, leadership skills) than traditional lectures, readings, and examinations” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 26). Learning occurs from problem-solving experiences resulting from being placed in new and uncomfortable situations. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1999), “Educational outcomes are enriched, deepened, and expanded when student learning is more engaged, active, and relevant” (p. 83).

David Kolb is credited with putting experiential learning into a useful and easy to apply multi-dimensional heuristic, the Experiential Learning Model (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1974). It begins with taking a concrete experience, then observing and reflecting upon it, allowing abstract concepts and ideas to emerge, and then the testing or applying of the new concepts. See Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory Model](image)

*Note.* Adapted from Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1974
Subsequently, Kolb’s model has been adopted and applied by many SL scholars. Kolb’s model illustrates the foundations of SL and other experiential educational practice in that it includes direct experience, reflection and academic (e.g., theoretical understandings of concepts). It also demonstrates the relationship among these different concepts within the learning process.

However, Kolb's model is not without critics (Crabtree, 2008). Studies by various SL and ISL scholars have found that participants reciprocally connecting with community partners is a necessary program element --one that is missing from Kolb's model (Crabtree, 2008; Jacoby, 2003; Rosenberger, 2000). “As a program, a philosophy, and a pedagogy, service-learning must be grounded in a network, or web, of authentic, democratic, reciprocal partnerships” (Jacoby 2003, p. 6). Rosenberger (2000) suggests that mutuality is the key distinction between service and charity. Crabtree (2008) states, “The hypothesis is that in well-designed cross cultural participatory development and service-learning projects, both community members and students can be empowered as citizens, and the relationship built through collaboration can be mutually beneficial.” (p. 24). Deep and meaningful interactions across different cultures are core characteristics of effective ISL programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Pusch, 2004), and are essential experiences in fostering the developmental capacity to bridge the gaps that separate people, such as race, socioeconomic class, and culture (Daloz, 2000), and in promoting understanding of structural and systemic dynamics of privilege and oppression (Rosenberger, 2000).

To this end, research shows that developing quality community partnerships, which allow for a reciprocal experience between participants and the community they
aim to serve, are invaluable for developing useful service projects (Jacoby, 2003; Cipolle, 2010). Research has shown “that the more substantive the participation of the community, the stronger the learning outcomes for students” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 24). Literature supports that, ideally, students should be involved as partners with the local community to plan and carry out service projects (King, 2004; Swezey, 1990).

In sum, creating and maintaining reciprocal partnerships with community members appear to be key factors for both maintaining a social justice orientation, and for prompting desired student learning outcomes.

**Service Learning and Critical Reflection**

Many scholars agree that critical reflection is an essential aspect of both domestic and international service learning pedagogy, (Bringle et. al., 2009; Crabtree, 2008; King, 2004; Kiely, 2005). The resulting outcomes of ISL for student participants such as perspective transformation and developing a critical consciousness are now well-documented in the literature (Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2004; Liebowitz, 2000), and will be expanded upon on the next section of this literature review.

Reflection helps students go deeper in their understanding and transformative experience (Maher, 2003). Eyler and Giles (1999) reported a growing appreciation for other cultures and tolerance depending upon the quality of the placement and the involvement of critical reflection (p. 54). Engaging in critical reflection and dialogue is crucial to producing powerful learning experiences for participants on an ISL program, as well as to positively engage with and impact the community (Crabtree, 2008; Dewey, 1933; King, 2004; Mezirow, 1994).
Dewey’s extensive work provided a philosophical foundation for the reflection element of service-learning (Dewey, 1933). In his work, *How we think: A restatement of the Relation of Reflective Thinking of the Educative Process*, Dewey provided the four following guidelines to help maximize the educational impact of reflection for the students—reflection needs to: 1) trigger interest in the student; 2) present problems that stimulate curiosity and prompt a desire to learn more; 3) be of personal value to the student; and 4) spawn an interest over time (Dewey, 1933). Guided reflection after participant exposure to situations and ideas that conflict with previously held beliefs tends to prompt critical thinking (King, 2004, pp. 124, 134).

Various methods of reflection in SL can be useful including having students keep journals, research papers, case studies, directed readings, and class presentations (Bringle et al., 2003). Other useful techniques include creating opportunities for dialog and discussions with community partners throughout projects (Eyler, 2001, pp. 37-38). King’s (2004) interpretive case study of college students who participated in a week-long SL program to Tijuana, Mexico found that students connecting and dialoging with community members was impactful.

The opportunity for direct and ongoing dialogue with those whom they encountered during the course of their service involvement provided both the occasion and the motivation to engage with diverse and potentially challenging perspectives. It was through this engagement that these students came to recognize the partiality of their own perspectives, to question their
preconceptions, and to acknowledge the possibility that current conditions could reasonably be otherwise. (King, 2004, p. 136)

Various models have been developed to guide critical reflection. The DEAL model provides three important sequential steps in critical reflection: “Description of experience in object and detailed manner, Examination of those experiences in light of specific learning objectives (in the case of service learning, at least in the categories of academic enhancement, civic leaning, and personal growth), and Articulation of Learning. The DEAL model requires the development of specific prompting questions in each of the three steps” (Bringle et al., 2003, p. 156).

Feminist pedagogy provides a useful approach to inform critical reflection discussions “that connects self-reflection, critical analysis, and social action for teachers and students alike” (Maher & Thompson Tetrault, 2001). It emphasizes a need to explore the participant’s position of power as one interacts with community members. ISL projects arguably can do more harm than good if implemented without such considerations (Crabtree, 2008, p. 27).

**Evolution of Service Learning into an International Context**

Service learning pedagogy has consistently relied heavily on critical reflection as a foundational element involved in the learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Maher, 2003); however, critics suggest that Kolb’s model and its reliance on critical reflection does not go far enough to explain how learning occurs (Fenwick, 2003; Kiely, 2005). More recent SL research looks to transformative learning theories to understand the learning
process that occurs during SL experiences (Kiely, 2004, 2005), and its transformative effects (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Feinstein, 2004; Kiely, 2004).

Mezirow (2000) developed the transformational learning theory model from his expansive study of women re-entering college after a long time being out of a school environment. In Mezirow’s transformational learning theory model, “learning requires examination of one’s assumptions in relation to new knowledge, leading to reconstruction of meanings through reflection and dialogue that then serves as the basis of action” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 27). Mezirow’s transformational learning model includes the following non-sequential learning processes:

1) A disorienting dilemma, 2) self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame, 3) a critical assessment of assumptions, 4) recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared, 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans, 8) provisionally trying new roles, 9) building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and 10) a reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective. (p. 22)

Kiely’s (2004, 2005) research specifically applied Mezirow’s transformative learning theory model to SL and ISL. Kiely’s (2005) longitudinal study of student participants on short-term ISL programs in Nicaragua found five learning processes that led to transformative outcomes: contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting (p. 9). “These five learning processes add insight to current
notions of transformational learning theory and articulate a conceptual framework for educators to understand and more effectively foster learning processes that lead to transformative outcomes in service-learning” (Kiely, 2005, p. 8). Findings from Kiely’s (2005) transformative learning research suggest that contextual factors, in addition to reflective elements, contribute to the transformative learning that occurs during a SL experience.

The identification of historical, programmatic, structural, and personal contextual factors along with multiple types of dissonance in service learning suggests that the process of learning in service-learning is not only much more complex than the kinds of learning processes and knowledge generated in the classroom; it also means that service learning programs in general have more diverse contextual qualities and therefore, should be designed, implemented, and judged with that in mind. (Kiely, 2005, p. 16)

Kiely's (2005) study provided the basis to suggest that transformative learning outcomes are more likely to occur on an ISL program when students are provided structured opportunities to engage in both reflective (i.e., processing activities) and non-reflective (i.e., personalizing and connecting activities) with peers, community members, and faculty leaders.

A unique aspect of ISL programs is that they inherently include a cross-cultural immersion. This border-crossing element tends to prompt disruptions in students that result from the awakening of global awareness (Crabtree, 2008). Kiely’s (2005) identified the cultural immersion aspect of an ISL program as a contextual factor, and
found that the degree of “disruption” to a participant experienced by crossing the border and being immersed in a foreign culture impacted student learning and perspective transformation (p. 10). Minor disruptions might be a border crossing into a new country where one must navigate within and learn a foreign language to more major disruptions, such as a first time encounter with children living without parents in squalor. While major disruptions can prompt even deeper perspective transformations, the student must be properly prepared for and supported throughout the experience (Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2005).

With this “awakening” comes the responsibility of educators to adequately support students along their developmental journey (Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2005). Researchers help provide guidance for understanding the impact of the border crossing/immersion element and offer approaches to educators for exposing and supporting students (Wielkiewicz & Turkowski, 2010).

Various scholars provide practical guidance for educators to approach exposing students to new cultures and unknown situations. For example, bioecological student development theorist, Urie Bronfenbrenner (2006) presented that “in the bioecological model, development is defined as the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings, both as individuals and as groups” (p. 793). For instance, who the person is genetically, and environmental factors can affect development. But also, “proximal processes” are deemed important (p. 815). He described “proximal processes” as presenting the student with increasing more complex
situations, but doing so in a way to support and not overwhelm the person (i.e., challenge and support) (p. 824).

Expanding on the notion of challenge and support, student development theorist Knefelkamp (1993) offers four values of challenge and support in her Developmental Instructional Model (DIM) –which provide a helpful theoretical basis from which to consider the value of ISL programs. The first, structure, refers to the framework and direction provided to the students, on continuum from high to low, depending on where the student is in his or her development. The next value is diversity meaning presenting alternative perspectives to issues or problems. Third, is experimental learning to allow students to connect to the subject in a concrete and hands-on manner. Finally, personalism involves creating a safe environment where students are encouraged to take risks. Knefelkamp (1993) introduced the concept of “plus one staging”, which involves understanding that students will attract to reasoning and embrace concepts that are just slightly more advanced than their current processing. ISL programs that include the four values, and introduce concepts with the “plus one staging” concept in mind, may effectively advance students on their intellectual and personal identity developmental processes.

Kiely’s (2005) research findings are helpful for expanding the DIM to an international context. He advised that “[i]t is important to establish a safe and comfortable climate to allow students space to communicate and work though emotions so that they enhance rather than hinder transformational learning. It is also crucial to reaffirm students’ personal strengths and provide ongoing support so that weaknesses can
be surfaced and evaluated without embarrassment or fear of failure” (p. 16). The “support” element after such a challenge (or disruption) normally comes in the form of critical reflection, group discussions, and one-on-one discussions with leaders and community partners (Kiely, 2005). “Students’ transformational learning is more apt to occur and persist over the long-term if there are structured opportunities for participants to engage in reflective (i.e., processing) and non-reflective (i.e., personalizing and connecting) learning processes with peers, faculty, and community members” (Kiely, 2005, p. 17).

**Critiques of International Service Learning**

Critiques of ISL question whether the programs provide more good, than harm, to the communities served (Cruz, 1990; Illich, 1968). “You [the U.S. volunteer], like the values you carry, are the products of an American society of achievers and consumers, with its two-party system, its universal schooling, and its family-car affluence. You are ultimately-consciously or unconsciously –“salesmen” for a delusive ballet in the ideals of democracy, equal opportunity and free enterprise among people who haven’t the possibility of profiting from these” p. 316. Ivan Illich (1968) argued in an address aimed at stopping U.S. volunteers from participating in a service program in Mexico:

At best, you can try to convince Mexican girls that they should marry a young man who is self-made, rich, a consumer, an as disrespectful of a tradition as one of you. At worst, in your “community development” spirit you might create just enough problems to get someone shot after vacation ends and you rush back to
your middle-class neighborhoods where your friends make jokes about “spics” and “wetbacks.” (p. 318)

Very little SL literature and research focuses on the impact of ISL on host communities or countries (Crabtree, 2008). “In the ISL literature, the discussion focuses overwhelmingly on maximizing student learning; attention to community-level concerns is underwhelming at best…” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 23). “Critics argue that service-learning may actually reinforce prejudice and replicate power differentials between those conferring and those receiving the service.” (King, 2004; Eyler & Giles, 1999). This is particularly problematic with ISL as so many programs include development work. A viable concern of ISL programs is that “projects reinforce for communities that development requires external benefactors; national governments rely on NGOs to respond to the needs in their country” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 19).

The next section shall provide literature from researchers and SL practitioners who advocate for utilizing a social justice approach to ISL to help counter the potential negative effects of international service efforts.

**Social Justice and Service Learning**

Service learning programs have the potential to transform students into socially conscious, civic-minded persons, and have them working toward real problem solving in communities (Battistoni, 2003; Martin & Wheeler, 2000; Elyer & Giles, 1999). Study abroad programs arose out of the desire to expand students' global horizons, and historically the focus of such programs was on the student experience (Crabtree, 2008).
Whereas, SL and ISL programs ideally aim to make a positive impact in a community, as well as provide a transformational learning experience for the student. Service learning pedagogy expanded the notion that community service should have a pedagogical approach that encourages civic engagement and social responsibility, and ideally helps students better understand how to affect political change (Walker, 2000).

Many theorists advocate for a social justice approach to SL, regardless of the domestic and international setting, to address potential negative impacts of SL (Battistoni, 2002; Cipolie, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Martin & Wheeler, 2000). “Social justice involves teaching in an intentionally pluralistic manner that is aimed at ‘leveling the playing field’ for underrepresented groups (we include not only human cultural groups in this definition, but also all flora and fauna of this planet)” (Martin & Wheeler, 2000, p. 136). “Feeding the hungry does nothing to disrupt or rethink poverty or injustice. Tutoring inner-city kids does nothing to secure more resources for schools or ensure that teachers are held accountable” (Walker, 2000, p. 647).

Adding a social justice aspect to SL programs encourages a deeper look at community issues by encouraging students not to be satisfied with just putting Band-Aids on problems. A civic-minded focus encourages student learning regarding civic engagement and encourages democratic participation. “[I]t means facilitating student’s discovery of what problems exist, who they need to contact to address the issues, and what types of projects they will undertake” (Kirlin, 2002, p. 574).

Brazilian educator Paolo Freire (1997) is frequently referenced in SL doctrine for his philosophies and efforts that add a social activism perspective to experiential learning
theory (i.e., immersion experience of a political or social nature). Freire was a proponent of the concept of praxis, which he defined as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (Freire, 1997, p. 33).

Other educators have used such concepts in Freire’s ideology as a framework for advancing a “critical” perspective of theory and practice in SL (Rosenberger, 2000). For instance, Rosenberger’s application of praxis to SL would require participants to “search for ways of acting and reflecting that move society along toward a more just and equitable reality for all people” (p.31). Verba, Schozman, and Brady's (1995) research findings provide some insight for encouraging and engaging students in SL projects with a “critical” or civic-minded social justice agenda. They surveyed 15,000 adults and found that adult participation in civic activities resulted from three primary factors: 1) motivation to become involved, 2) feeling as though one can contribute something to the effort in terms of capacity or skills, and 3) a connection to a network of people who ask others to get involved.

Acquaye and Crewe’s (2012) research of an ISL social work studies program that went to South Africa supported those findings. It provided a model to connect participation in an ISL program to students learning core competencies in their social work major and advancing their practical skills.

The use of international service learning to address the core competency associated with human rights is especially promising because it allows students to reflect on the needs and accomplishments within the country visited as well as within the United States. This application of international service learning is
increasingly relevant as the social work profession continues to grapple with tackling injustices at home while cognizant of the needs abroad. (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012, p. 780)

It should not be assumed that service alone leads to political or civic engagement (Walker, 2000). Susan Cipolie's (2010) findings from a long-term study of SL programs resulted in her Social Justice Model for Service Learning, provide a framework for helping to develop students’ critical consciousness. She found that developing a deeper awareness of social issues and of oneself, gaining a broader perspective of others, and a person seeing her or his own potential to make change, were all essential elements of developing a critical consciousness (Cipolie, 2010).

Research is a notable and potentially valuable social-justice-orientated service that students can offer to a community (Reardon, 1998). “Participatory, action, and feminist approaches to community-based research provide epistemological frameworks essential to linking academic research with civic responsibility and social justice in ISL” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 24). Participatory action research (PAR) aims to involve communities, students, and faculty as co-investigators. Such collaborative research provides the potential to advance students’ scholarly pursuits while also empowering community members through the production of quality research that may lead to social action (Crabtree, 2008; DeBlasis, 2006; Strand, 2000). Ideally, student research skills are advanced while community members are empowered to solve their own problems through the PAR process (Crabtree, 2008; DeBlasis, 2006; Strand, 2000).
Feminist theorists challenge researchers to consider their positions of power and privilege within the community and among those being researched, and encourage accountability within the research so as to not reinforce or promote an unjust dynamic (Crabtree, 2008; Naples, 2003; Reinharz, 1992; Schrijvers, 1995). Feminist theory literature further enhances the application of the various “critical theory” lenses discussed above. Feminist theory supports the social justice aspect of service by adding theory of engagement that does not impose one’s own values and ideals on others. Feminist theory literature supports students engaging with communities as “connected knowers” (Trigg, 2000; Battistoni, 2002). Connected knowers are not mere observers, but rather they attempt to get behind the scenes and see things through the eyes of others in an effort to understand other points of view (Battistoni, 2002). “Paramount to the quest for justice is the building of authentic relationships between students and the communities with whom they serve” (Swezey, 1990, p.87).

The final part of this literature review shall provide more detail as to the student learning outcomes reported from ISL experiences.

**Reported Outcomes from International Service Learning**

A variety of student learning outcomes from participation in ISL programs are well documented throughout ISL literature and scholarship. In particular, identity development (Liebowitz, 2000; Mather et al., 2012) and perspective transformation (Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2004; Liebowitz, 2000) among participants are two outcomes frequently discussed. Other reported outcomes include consciousness raising, cross-cultural understanding (multicultural competency), intercultural competence, recognition
of privilege and power, enhanced critical thinking skills, and personal development in terms of increased course specific skills, research skills, and leadership. The following will expand upon each of these reported outcomes.

**Identity development / privilege and power.** Gergen (1991) suggests that social context is important to identity development, as one’s identity develops out of experience more so than realizing some central element of one’s personality. ISL programs offer opportunities for intense cross-cultural immersion experiences, which often result in personal struggles for the participants. Experiences on SL programs often impacts participants’ previous views of the world and themselves (Butin, 2005a; Butin, 2005b; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005). Participants frequently face complicated and ambiguous life challenges that they must work through (Butin, 2005a, p. 98). Working through these complex situations can transform participants’ perspectives and encourage identity development.

Another frequently reported outcome in ISL literature is students’ expanded views regarding their positions of privilege and power, as part of their identity development (Camacho, 2004; Liebowitz, 2000; Mather et al., 2012). Various ISL case studies have explored the intersection of class and identity (Liebowitz, 2000; Mather et al., 2012).

Majority student participation has been the primary focus in much of the SL studies and literature, and thus resultantly, students’ resistance to accepting and acknowledging their position of power and privilege is a prevalent theme (Butin, 2005a; Butin, 2005b; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005; Leibowitz, 2002; Mather et al., 2012). Researchers suggest that participants’ socio-economic class impacts their service-
learning experiences (Dacheux, 2005; Henry, 2005; Lee, 2005). For instance, in situations where participants reflect on their status as both privileged university students, and from oppressed working class backgrounds (Dacheux, 2005).

A small offering of SL literature makes mention of participants from not only working class backgrounds, but other oppressed statuses, including female, non-white, and gay (Dacheux, 2005; Henry, 2005; Lee, 2005; Liebowitz, 2002; Mather et al., 2012). In Liebowitz’s (2002) case study, women’s study methods were used to explore the student experience of Rutgers Community Service and Study Abroad participants’ five years of involvement in a summer SL program in Limon, Costa Rica. Latino student participants experienced being regarded as “white” by those in Limon was contradictory to their previous identity as Latino in the United States. This prompted thinking about their identities in terms of historical, cultural, and contextual perspectives (Liebowitz, 2012).

Mather further explored this aspect of identity development through the use of two case studies of students, who participated in a short-term SL project in Honduras (Mather et al., 2012). One student was a female international graduate student who had grown up privileged in Japan, and the other identified as a white lesbian graduate student from a working class single-mom household. Each faced disorienting situations and came to make meaning of their relative privilege, and the experiences shaped how they viewed themselves and the world moving forward (Mather et al., 2012, p. 14).

**Intercultural competence.** To have intercultural competence, scholarship provides that a person shall possess a diverse array of characteristics including being
culturally aware, open to new concepts, and flexible in thinking (Deirdorff, 2006; Mather et al., 2012; Hunter, White, & Godbey, 2006). ISL programs provide immense opportunities for students to manage diverse global relationships and develop intercultural competency skills (Camacho, 2004). The development of participants’ multicultural competency or their capacity to relate to people across different cultures is a pervasive outcome identified in SL literature (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Henry, 2005; Morton, 1995; Monard-Weissman, 2003; O’Grady, 2000; Pusch, 2004; Rhoads, 1997). “Empirical studies (Crabtree, 1998; Kauffman, 1982; Myers-Lipton, 1994; Porter & Monard, 2001; Pyle, 1981) have found that participation in international service-learning increases students’ intercultural competence, language skills, appreciation of cultural difference, tolerance for ambiguity, and experiential understanding of complex global problems related to their academic program” (Kiely, 2003, p.5).

**Critical thinking and problem solving.** Additional scholarship shows that SL participation is linked to enhanced academic outcomes such as increased critical thinking, problem solving analysis, and cognitive development (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Root & Giles, 1998).

Research of college students conducted by Eyler and Giles (1999) found that “[s]ervice-learning, particularly service-learning that is highly reflective and where course and community service are well integrated, has an impact on the quality of student thinking and problem solving” (p. 127). Quality aspects of service-learning programs such as those that included the students’ opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of a community, to engage in critical reflection, to be exposed to
diversity, and to be able to connect with community members, were predictors of whether critical thinking was impacted (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Eyler & Giles recommended the use of King and Kitchner’s reflective judgment theory as a useful framework “for viewing the development of problem-solving and critical thinking abilities in college students” (p. 128).

**Global citizenship.** The three dimensions of global citizenship frequently reported in international education literature are global competence, global civic engagement, and global social responsibility. “It is the presence of each of these dimensions that leads to global citizenship” (Morais & Ogden, 2011, p. 449). Studies have found that ISL programs have a positive impact on students’ sense of global citizenship (Fitch, 2004; Hartman & Heinisch, 2003; Monard-Weissman, 2003; Porter & Monard, 2001). Moreover qualitative and quantitative SL studies confirm the development of participants’ civic and research skills (Schensul & Berg, 2004).

Kiely's (2004) longitudinal case study of participants involved in international service learning experiences with a specific social justice focus supports that ISL programs can positively impact students’ global views. “Findings indicate that each student experienced profound changes in their world-view in at least one of six dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural. Importantly, the study found that students who initially expressed a willingness to change their lifestyle and work for social justice experienced ongoing conflict and struggle in their attempts to translate their critical awareness into meaningful action” (Kiely, 2004, p. 5).
Interpersonal development. Given the opportunities for student to interact and connect with diverse people in diverse settings, it is not surprising that researchers report gains in students’ interpersonal development when they participate in SL programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Some of these gains include increased ability to work with others, changes in leadership skills, and increased communication skills (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Eyler & Giles (1999) study found a connection between student participant engagement in SL and increased self-knowledge (ex, learning about personal limitations), spiritual growth, and finding reward in helping others.

Perhaps the most documented aspect of personal growth reported relates to the enhancement of participants’ individual competencies related to their area of study. ISL seems to provide the ultimate in hands no experiential learning. ISL researchers commonly report student participants’ enhanced learning of desired skills related to particular ISL educational course objectives (Niesenbaum & Lewis, 2005; Acquaye & Crewe, 2012).

For example, in a short-term “Environmental and Cultural Conservation in Latin America” ISL program, Niesenbaum and Lewis (2005) reported that the ISL experience prepared students for their future careers, which increasingly demand interdisciplinary problem solving and collaborative work in national and international environments, where students will need to communicate to scientists and non-scientists (p. 259).

Likewise, Acquaye and Crewe’s (2012) study of social work students on a related ISL program in South Africa reported very positive outcomes for the students in terms of
advancing their core competencies, and expanding their perspective regarding social issues globally and at home.

The literature review was useful to provide foundational context to understand the evolution of ISL pedagogy and theory, and where issues and questions remain. Many of the outcomes and impacts on participants found in my research are consistent with those identified in previous studies. Likewise, some key foundational ISL elements identified in the literature were consistent with my findings. However, my research findings clarify, diverge, and expand upon previous studies and begin to answer some questions posed by ISL scholars.

Most significantly my research found connections between ISL program elements and impacts on participants, and identified additional valuable elements of ISL programs not discussed in the ISL literature such as the significance of the group dynamic and diversity within the ISL participant group. Also, my research bolsters Kiely’s findings regarding the value of contextual factors on an ISL program. Finally, ISL literature is extremely limited regarding studies related to understanding participant motivation to join an ISL program. My research findings begin to fill in that deficit in the literature.
Chapter 3: Research Methods

The suitability of using the qualitative methods of a case study combined with grounded theory shall be discussed in this chapter, along with a discussion of the data collection protocols used. It concludes with an analysis of the credibility and trustworthiness of the process.

Suitability of Qualitative Methods

“Qualitative research methods are used to understand some social phenomena from the perspectives of those involved, to contextualize issues in their particular socio-cultural-political milieu, and sometimes to transform or change social conditions” (Glesne, 2006, p. 4). As opposed to starting with a theory and proposing hypotheses, the qualitative researcher seeks to focus on in-depth interactions with participants in a particular environment and be open to issues and perspectives that may arise (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Hypotheses or theories may result, but it is a consequence of this exploratory, open-minded approach. In qualitative research, the researcher is a primary instrument in the gathering of perspectives, observing environments, and collecting data (Glesne, 2006, p. 5).

While ISL programs generally provide valuable learning experience outcomes for students, ISL research is light on studies connecting program aspects with outcomes. Also, ISL literature appears to be limited in providing detail as to how students ultimately come to learn about and decide to participate in ISL programs. With a focus on these aspects, the intent is to conduct qualitative research to develop theory that will be helpful for those who want to develop, support, and execute future ISL programs.
Qualitative Research Methods

Using the qualitative methods of a case study combined with grounded theory research seems appropriate to explore these topics. The intent was to strengthen my research design and findings by combining both of these methods, and utilizing their complementary strengths.

A case study is used to delve deep into understanding the people and how they make meaning of their experiences in a given situation (Laws & McLeod, 2006). "The interest was in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1988, p. 9). The case study approach to research is a way of conducting mainly qualitative inquiry, commonly used when it is impossible to control all of the variables that are of interest to the researcher. Merriam (1988) points out “that the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence, including documents, artifacts, interviews and observations” (p.8). The focus of this study is the group of students who participated on the 2009 ISL program to Honduras.

Based on the desire to gain multiple in-depth perspectives on students’ experiences on an ISL program, and see if any common themes emerge, Grounded Theory was my research inquiry method. Grounded theory is "a qualitative research method that uses a systematized set of procedures to develop and inductively derive grounded theory about a phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.24). The purpose of grounded theory is to “demonstrate relations between conceptual categories and to specify the conditions under which theoretical relationships emerge, change, or are
maintained” (Charmaz, 2002, p. 675). The founders of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967), challenged the conventional deductive approach to qualitative research. In response, they developed the inductive grounded theory approach whereby the researcher employs an ongoing comparative approach to evaluate and re-evaluate data to look for common themes, concepts, and hypotheses (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They emphasized the significance of building theory from within the research, not before, but during the research process.

Purposeful sampling is a frequently used participant selection method used in grounded theory (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002). Sandlowki (1995) defines purposeful sampling “as the selection of participants with shared knowledge or experience of the particular phenomena identified by the researcher as a potential area for exploration” (p.18). The sample in this research included seven of the students from the main campus who went on the 2009 Service Learning in Honduras program.

Service Learning in Honduras: The Program

*Service-learning in Honduras* was an international service learning program offered through the study abroad office at a large Midwestern university, Midwest University (pseudonym), with the organization and leadership of the program coming through the Higher Education department. Two thousand and nine was the third year the program was offered, and twelve students (including myself) participated in the two-week program to Honduras, the third poorest country in the Western Hemisphere. The service aspects of the program occurred during the first week. The group worked in cooperation with a foreign partner, Honduras Outreach, Inc. (HOI), a non-profit
organization based in rural Honduras. Although the organization was faith-based (Christian), the university group was intentionally not involved in any aspect of the faith-based programming. Participants spent five days engaged in service projects alongside local community members in Honduras. Volunteer projects included building latrines, finishing cement floors, creating walls for homes, and interacting with students and teaching English in local primary and secondary school classrooms. Participants stayed the first week in modest dorm-style housing provided by the non-profit, and located near where village where the service projects occurred.

Activities during the first week not only included service, but also, discussions with local community leaders and HOI representatives, teambuilding activities, participant interviews of local adults and children regarding a variety of issues, guided evening discussions among participants and leaders, reflective journal writing, and a final celebratory event with participants and community members.

The second week’s activities took place in other parts of Honduras and included onsite visits of private and public Honduran universities (including a student cultural exchange and lectures), meetings with Peace Corp. workers and personal from other NGOs, engaging with students at an urban primary school, and experiencing cultural and historical tourism aspects (i.e. tour of Copan Ruins, and various natural resources, etc.), and student and faculty-led presentations on various relevant political, economic, and cultural issues affecting Hondurans.
Participants

Twelve graduate students, both Masters and Ph.D. students, participated in the 2009 ISL program to Honduras offered through Midwestern University. See Appendix A for Quick Reference Chart for Honduras ISL Program Participants. Nine of the twelve students were from the main campus, one student was from a regional campus, and two students were from other universities. Three participants were from other countries (Kenya, Japan, and Sudan), one identified as African-American, and the other eight identified as Caucasian-American. There were three males and nine females on the program.

Seven of the student participants were interviewed in person for the study, and all interviewed participants attended the primary campus. All participants on the ISL program were invited to be interviewed for the study. However, the others who did not participate presented reasonable logistical reasons for not doing so (i.e., in all cases, the students were not in close proximity to participate in a face-to-face interview within the six month time frame when the interviews were conducted).

In total, interviews and journals from seven student participants were included in the study, plus my participant observations of all students participating in the program and their interactions and experiences. Interviews and journals analyzed were from five women and two men, and these students were both masters and doctoral students in cultural studies, higher education, and college student personnel. Two were international students who were pursuing their graduate education at Midwestern University—one from Kenya, and one from Japan. Four identified as Causation, and one as African-American.
One of the seven was a student affairs administer at Midwestern University, but a recent graduate of its master’s program in college student personnel.

The following provides demographic background information on each of the seven students who were the primary subjects of the research and a couple of significant impacts on them as participants on the ISL program, information about the ISL program leader, and basic information about the other student participants on the program.
Pseudonyms were used for all of the participants on the program. Here is a list of the participant pseudonyms: Marie, Yuchen, Ken, Kathy, Amy, Tammi, Andy, Nigers, Brenda, Summer, Ida, and Julie. Plus, Dr. P was the program leader. See Appendix A for Quick Reference Chart for Honduras ISL Program Participants.

**Seven participants studied.**

*Marie.* Marie was a thirty-something, single woman from Kenya. She was enrolled in a cultural studies Ph.D. program at Midwestern University. She was engaged in a research project with Yuchen during the Honduran ISL program. Together they conducted interviews of local students at the universities that the participants visited as part of the program. She was an educator back in Kenya and intended to return and continue in the field of education.

Marie appeared to be particularly impacted by her experiences living and working in settings with students from other countries, and by connecting with the local Hondurans. "I know that they appreciated our being there when on the last day they even drew pictures to express their wish for us to stay longer. I made great friends and learned
a few Spanish words. I also could see the link we had developed with the people and how they had started viewing us as part of them," said Marie.

**Yuchen.** Yuchen was a twenty-something, single woman from Japan. She was completing a masters program in cultural studies at Midwestern University. Yuchen engaged in research with Elizabeth on the Honduras ISL program. Together they conducted interviews with locals at Honduran universities that were visited as part of the program.

Yuchen appeared particularly impacted by connecting with local Hondurans, and by observing their culture and contrasting to hers in Japan, as well as by her connections to various students on the ISL program. Here is an example of Yuchen observing and contrasting her culture to the Honduran culture, "There is no new technology and good education system in the village, but people there have something important which we are missing. To live in this village is absolutely inconvenient compared to our lives in the States and Japan, but I really want to live in Santa Rita and know more about people there. It is true that there are many problems in the village, but it seems that people there are happy, and enjoy their lives."

**Ken.** Ken was a late twenties, Caucasian-American, married male from Ohio, who had a pregnant wife at home at the time of the ISL program. He completed the master's program in college student personnel at Midwestern University one year prior to attending the Honduras ISL program, and had had the advisor of the program as an instructor. He was working in student affairs at Midwestern University, and thus, a colleague of the program leader.
Ken seemed particularly impacted by the experience of being silenced on the program due to the language barrier, and by the experience of being faced with his own privilege. Here are Ken's words that express his feelings regarding the language barrier:

Of all these, my most intense struggle is being silenced. Very, very few times in my life have I been silenced. I did not like those times. But those times were different. They were in a place where I chose to remain silent. For example, in a classroom talking about minority development issues, my perspective does not carry as much weight as someone who has lived life from that perspective. I have less to say and must refrain from offering how I see things. Yet even in this, I still have a choice of whether or not to oppress others (this is my privilege). But in Honduras, I did not even have that choice. I had nothing to offer. Nothing. All I could do was remain silent. This was new. Unique. It hurt. It was healthy.

**Kathy.** Kathy was a twenty-something, single, female, Caucasian-American. She was a master's student in the college student personnel program at Midwestern University. Prior to being a student, she was a teacher. Kathy conducted research with Amy and Tammi on the ISL program.

Kathy appeared to be most impacted by connecting with the local Hondurans, and by her experiences meeting others on the various excursions that were part of the ISL program, such as the Peace Corp workers who were working in Honduras. Regarding meeting the Peace Corp workers, she said, "I am incredibly motivated by their presentation. I have thought about the Peace Corps since college, and talking to people
who are in the middle of it made it seem real, and like something that I could actually do."

**Amy.** Amy was a twenty-something, married, Caucasian-American. She was a master's student in the college student personnel program at Midwestern University. Amy conducted research with Tammi and Kathy on the ISL program.

Amy appeared to be most impacted by living and working together in a group situation, and by dealing with issues of privilege (by connecting with the local Hondurans in numerous ways). "I hate that we are living in such excess here. My dinner tonight was HUGE! I ate about 1/10 of it. Ridiculous! After dinner Marie and I snuck outside and gave our dinners away to a cab driver," said Amy.

**Tammi.** Tammi was a twenty-something, single, female, African-American. She was a master's student in the college student personnel program at Midwestern University. Tammi conducted research with Amy and Kathy on the ISL program.

Tammi appeared to be most impacted by connecting with the Honduran community, and by living and working in a group setting. "The more I examined how happy, giving and caring the people we worked with were, the more I started to understand that it was not necessary for me to compare every aspect of their lives to ours and that although I often felt bad because the people who lived in the valley did not live the same lifestyle as me. I realized that these people were happy with the accomplishments they made and did not feel pity for themselves but rather were making the best out of their situation," said Tammi.
Andy. Andy was a twenty-something, male, Caucasian-American. He was a master's student in the college student personnel program at Midwestern University. Andy observed most of the research interviews with both groups of researchers as most all of the interviews were videotaped and he was the camera operator.

Andy appeared to be most impacted by the reciprocal connections that he made in the Honduran community where he worked, and by bonding with various participants on the ISL program. He explained, "For those who I am here to serve to turn around and serve me is amazing. They have so little materialistically but they do and give what they can to show gratitude. I have never in my life appreciated and felt so humbled by someone offering me a glass of Coke. As I write, this experience continues to bring tears to my eyes."

ISL leader. The leader of the ISL program studied was Dr. P. He was a late forties, male, Caucasian-American, associate professor in the Higher Education Administration program at Midwestern University at the time of the study. This was the fourth time Dr. P. had led an ISL program to Honduras.

Other program participants. Other participants on the program, who were not interviewed, but whom were observed and whose presence was impactful on the primary seven subjects researched were the following:

Nigers. Nigers was a forty-something, married, male, international student from Sudan. He was completing his Ph.D. in cultural studies in education at Midwestern University in critical studies in education. He was working for the United States military in Kuwait at the time that he learned of the Honduras program.
Brenda. Brenda was a twenty-something, single, female, Caucasian-American. She was a masters student (in college student personnel) but attending a different university than Midwestern University.

Summer. Summer was twenty-something, single, female, Caucasian-American, with a young (approximately age 5) child at home. She was pursuing a masters degree at a regional Midwestern University campus.

Ida. Ida was a twenty-something, single, female, Caucasian-American. She was a master’s student in college student personnel, but was attending a different university than Midwestern University.

Julie. Julie was a twenty-something, single, female, Caucasian-American. She was attending Midwestern University and working on her master’s in social work at the time of the ISL program. She engaged in solo research in Honduras during the ISL program.

Data Collection

In-depth interviews, participant observations, and document obtainment are common data collection methods used with grounded theory (Patton, 2002). All three of these methods were used to gather data for my research. Specific data collection techniques included: (a) interviewing seven participants after the SL experience, (b) reviewing journals kept by the participants, and (c) observing participants during the program. This data was originally collected for use in a proposed qualitative research study similar to the focus of my dissertation. I collected the data, and did initial coding, but did not complete the research, nor publish any findings.
Interviews. The first data collection technique was participant interviews. Semi-structured interviews of the program participants were conducted one month to six months after the program ended. “The term “qualitative interviewing” is usually intended to refer to in-depth, semi-structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing” (Mason, 1996, p. 38.). My participation on the ISL program prompted the development of the specific interview protocol that I used (See attached Appendix D). Interview questions were open-ended to allow participants to use their own words and elaborate as much as they desired (Patton, 2002). Each interview lasted between one to one and half hours. Interview questions focused on the participants’ pre-trip preparation, experiences during the trip, and reflections after the experience. Each person interviewed was asked all interview questions, and supplemental and follow up questions were added depending upon the responses. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Document analysis of participant journals. Another data collection method I utilized involved reviewing and analyzing participants’ journals. The journal writings corroborate that which the participants said in their interviews, thereby adding validity to the themes and theories that emerged (Glesne, 2006). Keeping a journal was one of the requirements for the ISL program. The program instructor provided numerous journal prompts throughout the program (See attached Appendix B). Each journal was reviewed and coded as described in more detail in the upcoming Data Analysis section.

Participant observations. Participant observation was the third type of data gathering technique that informed my research. “The term ‘observation', and in particular ‘participant observation’, is usually used to refer to methods of generation data which
involve the researcher immersing herself or himself in a research setting and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, action events and so on, within it” (Mason, 1996, p.60).

As a research assistant on this program, I was able to observe the participants in various different settings, and I made written observations throughout the experience. I was present every day at the service worksites and on all excursions. I took field notes following these excursions in order to capture “ideas, reflections, hunches, and notes about patterns that seem to be emerging” (Glesne, 2006, p. 55). I was present at all the group reflection meetings after workdays, and accompanied and observed participants who conducted “side” research projects while on the program. I lived with the students and traveled with them throughout the country. I was able to observe first-hand informal conversations in both settings, and took detailed notes throughout the two-week experience. My participant observation notes were coded and included as the third data source utilized in this study as described in detail in the following Data Analysis section.

Data Analysis

I used grounded theory coding practices to organize and analyze the collected data (Charme, 2006). “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). Figure 2 on page 59 shows the key elements of the grounded theory process used in this study.
As data were coded, I engaged in “constant comparative methods” of analysis that allowed me to keep revising my codes and themes as I searched for emerging categories and ultimately generated theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I used multiple levels of coding of the data in an effort to arrive at theories that were grounded in my research. Various coding methods are often utilized as the researcher reviews the data in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz (2006) explains that these include initial, focused, axial, and theoretical coding, but that researchers need not use all of these depending
upon the circumstances. However, Charmaz suggests the use of initial coding and focused coding is fundamental to the process.

Initial coding (also called initial or substantive coding) involves a general coding of all the data collected in an effort to establish some general categories and their properties (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1967). As suggested by Charmaz, I engaged in a word by word, line by line analysis of the data as I generously created categories for fragments of data. I started with initial coding of the three sources of data (participant journals, transcribed interviews, and my participant observation journal), and generated various categories. My initial coding yielded sixty-seven unique codes, which I grouped into three primary category code themes: 1) ISL program elements/aspects, 2) ISL program impacts/outcomes, and 3) ISL motivating factors.

The data sat for a few years without further analysis, so I decided to re-code each source before looking at my initial coding to see if I yielded similar results. Indeed, I came up with very similar codes to those originally identified in the initial round of coding. I pooled both these rounds of coding and listed sixty-nine unique codes, and again divided these into the same three categories (or code families). Unique codes were given to forty-two program elements, twenty-one outcomes/impacts, and six motivating factors. Many of these codes were identified multiple times within the same type of data source, as well as across multiple data sources. For example, the code “privilege” (defined as student’s dealing with privilege issues) appeared in six of the seven participants’ journals (and multiple times in many of those), then again in six of the seven participants’ interviews, and also many times in my participant observation notes.
Because of its repeated emergence, and upon analysis, it ultimately was determined to be one of the fourteen outcome sub-themes, and it was linked to the program being set in a developing country (which was a program element sub-theme).

After the second round of coding, I conducted the literature review. With the use of grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that a literature review not be conducted prior to collecting and mining the data. In an attempt to stay true to this original concept within grounded theory, I waited to conduct a literature until after the data collection and initial coding. This prompted new ways of looking at the data, and the re-categorization of some of the themes and evolving theories, and the coding of some new sub-themes.

Subsequently, I reviewed the data again utilizing focused coding techniques as I took what emerged as “the most useful initial codes” and analyzed, clumped, and subdivide the categories and themes that emerged (Charmaz, 2006, p. 42). Finally I used axial coding to relate categories to subcategories, and put the data back together in a new way (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Throughout the process, grounded theory requires a constant comparative method of analysis be used to try to identify common themes in an attempt to generate theory grounded in the data gathered (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Patton, 2002). As various categories arise, the data sources were re-worked and analyzed to search for more consistent concepts.

The review of the data continued until “theoretical saturation” occurred –that is until all potential themes and theories had been teased out, and the data and analysis
ceases to provide any new categories or information (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As described, I conducted multiple reviews of the data until I could not find any further themes or theories. At that point, I decided that theoretical saturation had occurred. Ultimately six motivating factor themes, six primary ISL program element themes, and thirty element sub-themes emerged as linked to fourteen outcome sub-themes.

"Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about substantive codes and their theoretically coded relationships as they emerge during coding, collecting and analyzing data, and during memoing" (Glaser 1998). I used memos throughout the coding process to write down ideas and relationships as they emerged (Glasser & Strauss, 1967; Glesne, 2006).

**Theoretical Sensitivity**

“Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capability to separate the pertinent from that which isn’t” (Stauss & Corbin, 1992, p. 42). Theoretical sensitivity can come from a number of sources: literature, professional and personal experience (Stauss & Corbin, 1992).

While I did not conduct a literature review prior to being present for the ISL program and the subsequent interviews, I did have prior experience leading service programs both nationally and internationally, including those in another developing country. Also, I had spent extended time in Honduras prior to the ISL program and that provided context for this study. My prior SL and ISL experiences had involved high school students; this was my first time on a program with graduate students.
Additionally, it was my first time on a service program through a university setting. My prior experiences involved service programs through a non-profit organization and through two different for-profit companies that offered high school student summer experiential/service programs – one of which was set in another Latin American developing country.

I think these prior experiences provided a helpful context from which to make observations and develop relevant themes.

**Credibility**

Triangulation was used for data collection and during data analysis. Three data collections sources were used in this study: participant interviews, participant journals, and participant observation. The use of multiple data collection methods, otherwise known as triangulation, adds to the trustworthiness of any themes or theories that emerge (Glesne, 2006). During data analysis, again multiple methods were employed to enhance credibility of the findings. These included the use of rich, thick data description, member checking, and clarification of research bias (Patton, 2002). Member checking in this case meant that I had the student participants review written findings specific to them to ensure that that each person agreed that I represented their information correctly. Specifically, I presented findings relevant to each of the seven participants studied in an email, and asked them to review, comment, and clarify those findings. Each participant responded and clearly stated that he or she agreed with each finding. Clarification of research bias involves the researcher’s on-going reflection and monitoring of subjectivity toward the data gathered (Strauss & Corbin, 1992). I attempted to do this throughout and
after the two-week program by taking notes during data collection and writing in a journal.
Chapter 4: Findings

Two broad categories of findings are reported in two sections. The first section relays six overarching categories of ISL elements (or themes) related to Research Question 1. It includes the many sub-themes that were identified as more specific ISL program elements linked to specific participant learning outcomes or impacts. The second section reports the notable themes that surfaced from the data related to Research Question 2. Specifically, six significant themes appeared as motivational factors that influenced participants' decisions to join the ISL program.

Results for Research Question 1: ISL Program Elements and Connections to Impacts

From the research data, various elements of the ISL program emerged as primary themes that appeared to impact and add value to the students' ISL experience. The six major ISL program-element-themes found were: 1) guided critical processing activities, 2) international border crossing, 3) reciprocal connections and personalizing, 4) group dynamic, 5) non-service excursions, and 6) related service project. Guided critical processing was identified as a significant program element that needed to occur in conjunction with a new or disorienting experience for some learning outcomes or impact to occur. The other five core elements emerged as categories of experiences that in conjunction with guided critical processing were linked to various student impacts or learning outcomes. See Appendix B: ISL 5 ISL Program Elements and Outcome Themes for an overview chart of these five findings.
Guided critical processing activities. Guided critical processing activities emerged from the data as a significant ISL program element theme. Participants critically processing a new or disruptive event appeared to be linked to various learning outcomes depending upon the type of experience being processed.

The term critical is used with processing to contrast it to the mere acquisition of information taken in during a new or disruptive experience. Students appeared to need to critically process a new or disruptive situation in order for learning outcomes or impacts to occur. Thus, critical processing used in these findings implies that ISL participants were challenged to critically think about new situations, experiences, or information. They were encouraged to analysis their assumptions, plus reason, reflect, and explore other perspectives. The term processing is used after critical, instead of the more commonly used term reflection found within SL literature, to make the point that often times participants are in the moment being challenged to critically think about new information. For example, in group discussions, students engaged in critically processing while talking and listening to others in the group. The same was true when students took in new perspectives from community members while engaging in discussions and research. The participants often later reflected about the same experience or conversations in their journals. When the leader provided journal prompts on the same subject, this prompted even more critical processing by the students.

Four types of guided critical processing activities were identified as sub-themes. The research findings supported that these four activities provided opportunities to critical process experiences on the ISL program, which then led to various learning
outcomes depending upon the experience recollected. The four guided critical processing activities were: 1) journal writing, 2) group discussions (within ISL group), 3) dialoging with community members, and 4) participant research. Table 1 below provides a summary of the guided critical processing activities theme and the four critical processing activity sub-themes that were found useful to prompt critical processing (or thinking).

Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ISL Program Element Theme 1: Guided Critical Processing Activities</th>
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<td><strong>Four Critical Processing Activities/ Subthemes</strong></td>
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<td>Journal Writing</td>
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<td>Group Discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dialoging with Community Members</td>
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<td>Participant Research</td>
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Critical processing occurred as ISL participants engaged in a myriad of new experiences and then processed those experiences in writing, verbally, or both. The value of participants engaging in critical processing appeared to be enhanced critical thinking. The ISL participants reflecting and critically thinking about their various experiences during the program appeared to be the lynchpin to various other learning outcomes of the ISL experience, such as increased critical consciousness shifts in cultural perspectives,
multicultural learning, identity development, and various diversity learning outcomes. Each of the various resulting learning outcomes are reported and discussed in this findings section in conjunction with each notable ISL program experiences that prompted the processing.

The various critical processing activities were not found to be mutually exclusive, but rather, seemed to be used in conjunction to enhance critical processing. For instance, some students were engaged in research, and while doing so had conversations with community members that prompted the students to later discuss their thoughts in evening group discussions, and again reflect on the matter in their journals. The students then continued to reflect on the issue when back in the U.S. while working on completing their research.

Not all impacts on participants were linked to critical reflection. Some impacts and learning appeared to occur with or without guided critical reflection, such as learning skills while engaged in service (i.e., how to mix and pour cement floors and build mud homes), and cultural learning that occurs simply by crossing the border into a new country and being immersed in the culture. However, participants' enhanced processing appeared to happen when guided critical processing activities were added to what would otherwise have been a tourist-type of activity like touring a country on a bus. For example, while riding on the bus through Honduras, many of the students began thinking about what was appropriate and inappropriate regarding taking photos in Honduras. Later the topic came up in group discussion. The ISL leader and group members all shared their perspectives, and the evidence was found in the student journals that the
group reflection and their writings added to their processing. Kathy wrote this in her journal after a group discussion:

In our discussion today, we talked a lot about the issue of photography. I do not believe you can ever find the solution to avoid these issues. I think that if you take photos with an awareness of others, and not as a demeaning image (i.e., as long as your intentions to capture images are good intentions), it is okay. However, even then, your act can be misinterpreted or the person viewing the image later can misinterpret it. I also think that, whenever possible, you should ask if you can take their picture.

In the participant interviews, all of the students interviewed expressed that they found all four reflective activities valuable (note that five of the seven students interviewed conducted research). Critical processing activities in the various forms was often, but not always, guided or prompted by the ISL program leader on the Honduras program. Journal writing and group reflection tended to be guided. However, the participants’ conversations with community members and research were sometimes guided, but other times processing occurred among small groups (i.e., within the research groups, and between community workers and students). Each of the four types of reflection activities that were found to impact participants will be discussed in turn.

**Journal writing.** Guided journal writing was identified as a critical processing sub-theme. On the Honduras ISL program, each participant was required to keep a journal as a component of the ISL course. Most days of the program, the faculty leader provided thought-provoking topics to prompt the participants' journal entries. The ISL
faculty leader reviewed the journal entries at the end of the program and provided feedback and comments. Students found the journal writing to be a useful method to process their program ISL experiences not only during, but also after the program. For example, Amy explained during her interview the value of her written journal: "For me it was really hard to process everything while we were there. I think I’m actually still working on it, you know what I mean. So every time I think about it again or read through my journal again, I’ll think about something else. So I do think it was good to actually have to write it out." It appeared significant that the ISL leader provided journal prompts and commented in the journals. Both of these activities seemed to enhance participants' critical thinking.

**Group discussion.** Guided group discussion was identified as another notable critical processing activity sub-theme. Each evening after a day of service, the ISL participants would meet as a group and the faculty leader would facilitate a discussion. The discussions prompted students to critically think about and discuss relevant topics. Normally questions would be posed and each member of the group would be encouraged to share his or her thoughts on the topic. The study found that the human diversity on the program added to participants' perspectives as students shared differing views on topics. More specific findings regarding the impacts of a diverse participant group on an ISL program is provided on p. 107.

The data revealed that all of the student participants found group reflection valuable for prompting critical thinking. For example, Tammi expressed the following after an evening reflection meeting in which the participants were engaged in a
discussion regarding their economic privilege relative to the Hondurans: "The more I considered my feelings and as I began discussing my feelings and thoughts with others the more I was able to broaden my perspective and accept the privileges that I have."

**Dialoging with community members.** The study found that ISL participants engaging in discussions with Honduran community members and representatives of organizations working within the community prompted critical thinking too. Thus, this was determined to be another critical processing sub-theme. These dialogs presented opportunities for student participants to listen to locals and ask questions, which in turn prompted critical thinking -- sometimes about matters participants had never considered. For example, Yuchen commented after a discussion with a local:

> I normally do not have questions in my everyday life. I have never thought the reason why I can go to the graduate school, but some cannot go to even elementary school. Why I can get more than $80 a day in Japan if I do a part time job, but some people get less than $1 a day even though they work harder than me. There are many questions that I come up with now. It is important to develop our critical thinking. There are full of contradictions in the world.

Unlike journaling and group discussions within the ISL program group, dialoging with community members provided valuable opportunities to gain perspectives from those who live and work in the country and communities being served. The data revealed that at various times when locals shared their perspectives on topics, ISL participants were prompted to critically think about and reflect on those subjects. For instance, Amy wrote this after talking to a woman in the community:
After our interview today I got to talk to Cristina. Ale [translator] was there so, lo and behold, I could actually converse. Cristina has six kids and her husband died years ago. Her oldest sons work to support the family because there are no jobs for women. Okay, so far this doesn’t sound like a high. But it is because it was really nice to be able to talk with one of the community members and to know a little bit more about her than I would be able to pick up on my own.

Similarly, ISL participants who engaged in research projects were presented with various opportunities to talk to locals and hear their perspectives, which again prompted critical thinking as described in the next section.

**Participant research.** Student participant research emerged as the fourth sub-theme under critical processing. Five of the seven ISL participants studied were engaged in research projects during the ISL program. All of the research projects were done as small group projects (two students in one group, three in the other), and all involved data collection methods that included interviews with native Hondurans. My research found that all of the students who conducted research engaged in critical processing and thinking about the various experiences they were having while in Honduras, as well as after the program ended.

Those who engaged in research were able to talk with community members through the use of a translator. Community members were able to give their opinions on issues in their communities directly to the students. As a result, the participants began to critically reflect and ponder what the real problems were in the community and how to best help. One researcher, Tammi, said, "After conducting several interviews today for
our research project I gained insight into some of the needs the people within the village feel are vital." Additionally Kelly gained insight into problems facing women in the community:

We interviewed a woman today. She said that there are not jobs for women. She has 6 kids ages 5-22, and her husband died 4 years ago. Her older kids earn money to help her since there are no jobs for her. It was really sad. This woman wants to work and provide for her family, but those opportunities just don’t exist. Some researchers began critically reflecting upon their own research while in the midst of data collection in Honduras, which prompted improved research design. Kathy explained:

I’m starting to think there is a lot of bias in our study. We are in the village with HOI, doing projects for the villagers. We have an HOI employee translating for us. Of course the villagers won’t say anything bad about HOI being there, with our groups doing the work and such a strong HOI presence...I also keep thinking about our research and how difficult it is to get at complaints. We keep adding and modifying questions, and I’m thinking about new directions for research.

Engaging in research was found to prompt participants reflecting and thinking critically after the ISL program experience too as the researchers attempted to make meaning of their data and write up their research findings. They continued discussing their findings and experiences with their co-researchers and the ISL faculty advisor. Amy explained:
I think one of the most valuable things was having the chance to do research while we were there. Particularly because it had me continually thinking about what we did and why we were there and what the people in Santa Rita thought and what they told us. So since I’ve been forced to work that research for the last few months, it’s forced me to keep thinking about it and keep evaluating. So that was good. And you wouldn’t keep doing that after a two week trip. You wouldn’t keep thinking about it for six or eight months.

Conducting research not only was found to be a valuable critical processing tool for participants, but also proved to be a way for ISL participants to connect with the Honduran community as will be discussed in the next section regarding the finding of the impact of reciprocal connections with community members.

In sum, participants critical processing after a new or disruptive experience on the ISL program appeared necessary in order for learning outcomes to occur depending upon the type of learning. Guided critical processing activities were the only type of ISL programming element identified in the study that needed to be linked to another programming aspect, specifically one that involved the participant having a new experience that prompted thinking. Some learning outcomes found in the study appeared to need student participants to engage in critical processing in order for the outcome to occur while others did not.

Five more categories of ISL programming elements emerged as significant themes from the data. Under these, more specific program elements surfaced as sub-themes. These were linked to particular learning outcomes and impacts. The five general
themes or types of ISL experiences were: 1) international border crossing, 2) reciprocal connections with community members, 3) group dynamic, 4) non-service guided excursions, and 5) related service projects. Appendix A provides a useful summary chart of these five other primary program element themes that emerged from the study, plus the related program element sub-themes and linked outcome sub-themes. The following provides the detailed findings related to each theme and their various sub-themes and related outcomes and impacts.

**International border crossing.** The international border crossing aspect of the service program studied was the third overarching theme that emerged from the data as an ISL program element that impacted the student participants in a number of remarkable ways. These different impacts appeared to be connected to the following three sub-themes of the international border crossing primary theme: 1) immersion in a foreign culture, 2) language barrier, and 3) developing country. The resulting outcomes from each of these three sub-themes will be explained in detail hereafter along with each learning outcome that the data revealed as connected to that program sub-theme. These learning outcomes included expanding participants' world views generally, increasing their cultural knowledge of the population served, adding perspective regarding participants' own cultures, increasing participants' empathy towards foreigners, prompting personal struggles related to privilege, expanding participants' identities, and increasing their personal confidence and interest in foreign travel.

**Immersion in foreign culture.** The findings revealed that the cultural immersion aspect of a border crossing (program element sub-theme) was significant to prompt
participants' exposure to and expanded knowledge of the culture in a foreign country (outcome sub-theme), although not necessarily to prompt an understanding or appreciation of it or the people served. That appeared to happen, or at least happen in a heightened way, after the participants connected with the community members in Honduras (See diversity outcome findings on p. 86). Plus, the border crossing appeared to add perspective to aspects of the participants' own cultures. The following expands on those two specific sub-themes of impacts found linked to participants generally crossing the border into a foreign country.

*Increased cultural knowledge.* Not surprisingly, immersion in a new culture in a foreign country immediately appeared to prompt the student participants learning about the culture in Honduras --really from the time they got off the plane in Honduras. Their journals were filled with cultural observations and notable experiences in Honduras -- from the kids begging in the airport, to Honduran life as viewed from the bus, to interactions with community members whom they worked alongside on service projects. While cultural learning was apparent in their journals throughout the entire two week program, it was not until after the participants connected with community members and began to critically reflect on those experiences that the findings revealed evidence of the participants understanding and appreciation of the new culture (See diversity outcome findings on p. 86).

*Added perspective towards one's own culture.* Spending time in a new a foreign country seemed to add to some students' perspectives regarding their own cultures. For
instance, Yuchen had a new found appreciation for her own Japanese culture after a conversation with a local Honduran. She explained,

When we went to the elementary school today, one of the teachers asked me whether I can do Judo, which is Japanese martial art. He said that he does Judo, and he learns it from stuff of JICA. I was so happy to know that Honduran people enjoy Japanese sports, and there are Japanese people who teach Japanese culture in Honduras. I actually did not like my nationality at first because of several reasons. However, I heard that Japanese people contribute to Honduras in many places through my trip, and I saw many people who enjoy Japanese culture, I come to like my nationality and country. I do not know much about Japanese traditional culture like many other young Japanese don’t, and our culture is changing to Western culture little by little. I seldom see Japanese boys who are playing with paper planes outside now like children in Honduras did. However, I thought that we need to keep our own culture for the future. I felt like that I realized more what it means to be Japanese.

It is notable that even in this example, the participant made a connection with a local, so there is a question as to whether she would have had this same appreciation of her culture just through observation in a foreign country.

Ken appeared to want to represent well to others in the new country, and cared about the impression he was giving off as a representative of his country:

I think one of the reasons we (I, at least) wanted to work so hard is because I think (fairly or unfairly) that Americans might be type-cast as soft, lazy, or so
privileged we no longer understand the meaning of hard work (Okay, we are). Maybe this is my own perspective as a first-generation student directly from a blue-collar culture, but regardless, I think part of my motivation to get to work so quickly was to show these people that we not only care about others, that we are not selfish or materialistic, but that we are hard-working. Interesting pride issue here - how I feel like my actions would could either support or debunk a stereotype of “my people…My people” (assuming I ever had people) are no longer white. They’ve broadened here. They - “my peeps” – are American. These findings of reflection and appreciation of one's own culture were seen as significant as they presumably were triggered by the participants being in a foreign country.

**Language barrier.** The study found that the impacts on participant, as a result of choosing a foreign country where a language barrier existed between ISL participants and community members, were an increased empathy (or critical consciousness) towards foreigners, as well as an increased confidence and interest in studying the local language. Each of these three outcome findings is relayed in more detail hereafter.

**Increased empathy.** Every student participant studied experienced being frustrated at times dealing with the language barrier. Feeling silenced and unable to communicate by relying upon verbal communication skills was very humbling and disruptive for some students.
For instance, one student, who identified as being white male, in a majority role, in the US, prided himself with good communication skills. Upon being silenced in Honduras, he wrote about his struggle:

Of all these, my most intense struggle is being silenced. Very, very few times in my life have I been silenced. I did not like those times. But those times were different. They were in a place where I chose to remain silent. For example, in a classroom talking about minority development issues, my perspective does not carry as much weight as someone who has lived life from that perspective. I have less to say and must refrain from offering how I see things. Yet even in this, I still have a choice of whether or not to oppress others (this is my privilege). But in Honduras, I did not even have that choice. I had nothing to offer. Nothing. All I could do was remain silent. This was new. Unique. It hurt. It was healthy.

As a result of the silencing feeling, some students expressed a new found empathy for non-English speaking immigrants in the US, and their frustrations not be able to speak the language. "However this helped me to understand the experiences foreigners have when they come to the United States and they are not fluent in English only instead of becoming inpatient with us as some Americans frequently become with encouraged me to want to try harder to communicate," said Tammi.

Similarly, Yuchen expressed:

[before I came to the States, I went to an elementary school to observe classes and there was a boy from the Philippines in a class. I now understand his feeling of being the only foreigner in his class, and how hard it is because he cannot use
his native language to communicate with his classmates. In addition to this, I had an international student from Australia, but I did not know how hard it was for her to live in a different country. If I knew it, I would have been more kind to her. We are insensitive creatures, so we cannot understand other’s true feelings until we experience their positions. Therefore, SL is a good opportunity because it provides us different perspectives.

Another student, Kelly, was struck by the double standard wherein there is often an expectation that a person in the US should be able to speak English, and became conscious of the fact that they (the participants) were a whole group of students, none of whom knew any Spanish. Kelly explained:

Members of my family sometimes complain about immigrants and say things like, “if they can’t speak our language, they shouldn’t come here,” which I think is a horrible thing to say, especially because Americans frequently travel to countries where they don’t speak the language and expect everyone to speak English. So I think the experience of being a minority and being unable to communicate is a good experience that can put you in the shoes of immigrants or foreign exchange students. It’s always a learning experience when you’re uncomfortable.

None-the-less, the participants only reported that the Hondurans acted with kindness toward the participants.

*Increased confidence.* Prior to engaging in the actual service work in the Honduran community, all of the student participants expressed various concerns about not being able to speak the language as none of the participants on the ISL program spoke
Spanish, and the Hondurans did not speak English. For example, Yuchen wrote in her journal:

I have been dreaming to go to Latin America for a long time, so I am so excited. But at the same time, I worry about one thing: languages. My English is not adequate and my Spanish equals almost nothing. Because almost everyone is a native speaker of English, I am afraid if I cannot communicate with our group members well. I also have no idea how to communicate with people in Honduras who do not speak English at all.

Another student was afraid that she might inadvertently offend the Honduran people. "I am also worried about not being able to communicate because of the language barrier, as well as possibly offending a member of the Santa Rita village by not participating in the religious activities," said Tammi.

However, as students found themselves able to connect with community members and successfully get tasks done despite the language issue, their confidence appeared to increase. For example Marie expressed in her journal, "What I learned from this experience is that I could overcome the language barrier through doing what others were doing by imitation. Although I could not say much, I was happy to be there working with the community. I felt at home with them because they accepted me despite my short comings especially using sign language at times." This increased confidence regarding navigating within a country with the language barrier can be felt in Kelly's comment too, "I am still struggling with communication. But I am so proud of myself when I make it through a situation (like ordering room service in Spanish the day I was sick...)."
Increased interest in language study. The study found that as students were able to connect with community members despite the language barrier, many students increasingly had an interest in learning Spanish to better communicate with their new Honduran friends. For example, Kelly wrote in her journal, "I am seriously considering the language school here- or maybe somewhere else- but it seems very cheap here, and the sisters who own the school are really nice and welcoming."

While the language barrier might have originally been perceived as a negative aspect of a short-term ISL program, these findings revealed some remarkable learning outcomes connected with that element of the program. Specifically, the participants struggle with the language barrier appeared to increase the participants' empathy towards foreigners, and other marginalized people in their own countries. Plus, evidence in the findings supported an increase in the participants' confidence in navigating in a country with a different language from their own, and in studying the foreign language of the host country.

Developing country. The choice to have an ISL program in a developing country, specifically one of the economically poorest countries in the world, impacted the participants in the following remarkable ways, it: 1) expanded participants' views regarding their privileged economic status, and 2) expanded participants' identities. The following relays each of these impacts.

Increased critical consciousness of privilege. In the case of choosing Honduras, the data revealed that many of the students wrestled with conflicted and frustrating
feelings related to their economic privilege relative to the Hondurans around them. For example, Tammi wrote in her journal:

The hotel that we were staying in was nice however it seemed a little bit contradictory in the sense that the hotel was surrounded by a neighborhood that was not upscale and while we were staying in a comfortable setting enjoying ourselves there were people who were living directly outside of the hotel who probably never were able to stay in the hotel or worse who probably did not have any food to eat.

Some students, including Amy, remarked on how actually being in a developing country had a different impact than just observing or hearing about poverty from afar.

Obviously I’ve considered my privilege before, but have never been so confronted by it as I am here. Because, here, I can’t ignore it. As aware of it as I try to be, I don’t think anyone can really understand until you have an experience like this one. You can read books, “think deep thoughts”, have discussions about identity, but until you really experience or are confronted by your privilege it’s just sort of abstract. This experience makes it concrete. At home I can think about these things when I choose to. And I understand that this is part of the privilege. Here I have to think about it. People here can tell off the bat that I’m different, that I’m not from here, that I don’t belong. I hear people say gringa and I know they mean me/us and it feels awful to hear it. This sort of thing happens at home too, just not usually to me, so I have the luxury of thinking about it, or ignoring it, as I choose.
Some of the participants characterized these conflicted feelings as guilt, and began critically examining their possessions and spending habits. Here's an example by Ken:

The most profound experience I had today involved my shoes. They are a pair of silver Nikes I got on sale for about $90. But today, I thought about them in a way I ordinarily wouldn’t. When asked to play soccer with the children, my immediate reaction was excitement, not to mention I could wear shorts in this heat! But this was quickly brought down by my realization of what a slap in the face my footwear could be to a group of kids, even their parents, who might never dream of owning such a, of what in my life is, such a relatively simple thing...I think I am going to have these thoughts regularly from now on. I am looking at my possessions differently now, and consequently, experiencing guilt differently. What I mean by “differently” is that I have begun, I think, to form an emotional bond with this guilt rather than simply recognize that I have or should have it.

Similarly, Amy expressed: "On my “once a season” shopping trip which makes me feel like I really don’t shop all that much or waste too much money I look for crap to fill up my house just so it will look nice, spend 200 bucks on pretty much nothing, while people here have no beds and empty rooms. Makes you think."

Amy's experience even prompted her and others to engage in various actions related to the privilege issue while on the ISL program. "I hate that we are living in such excess here. My dinner tonight was HUGE! I ate about 1/10 of it. Ridiculous! After dinner Marie and I snuck outside and gave our dinners away to a cab driver," said Amy.
Being faced with issues of one's privilege in a developing country appeared to be an evolving process for the participants. Tammi expressed her experience with this process in her journal:

Now that I have recognized these privileges I am beginning to be more cautious about how I view life and I am able to relate more with people who have faced challenges that I never had to endure. I have also started to inform more people of the privileges that they may have in comparison to others. Discovering ones privileges is not an easy experience to go through there are many stages that one must go through once they have made this discovery such as denial, acceptance, assistance etc.

Some students’ perceptions related to privilege and their identities appeared to shift. While some students believed they were wealthy or privileged by Honduran standards, in the U.S. they typically identified as poor college students. "I definitely feel as though I am privileged, and I do feel the guilt, as I mentioned earlier. Although at home, I don’t think of myself as privileged: I am a poor graduate student; I definitely have more opportunity than most Hondurans. I think I’ve realized that instead of taking a two week trip, I would like to go somewhere and work, i.e. the Peace Corps.," said Kelly.

In sum, the findings revealed that the choice of where to locate an ISL program impacted participant learning outcomes. In this study, three country-related elements served to prompt different participant learning outcomes. Those elements were that the ISL program was located a foreign country, in particular a country with a developing economy, and one that presented a language barrier challenge for the participants.
Reciprocal connections and personalizing. Participants reciprocally connecting with community members was another significant ISL program theme identified in the data. All students reported connecting with or becoming friends with community members as a highlight of their SL experience, and most indicated that it was the most significant part of the program. The findings revealed how and when the connections were made, and the impact of those connections. The obvious way of connecting through verbal conversation was not available to any of the student participants. None of them spoke much Spanish, and the Hondurans did not speak English. Nonetheless, all of the students reported experiences of feeling connected to the community.

Nine reciprocal ways participants and community members connected. In their journals, students described a variety of non-verbal experiences that seem to indicate points of connection to the community members in Honduras. Of significance, all of the moments described involved some sort of reciprocal action that occurred between students and community members during their week engaged in service. Whether smiles, laughs, teaching/learning, etc., the moments were always shared. The following nine different non-verbal reciprocal ways of connecting with community members were identified as sub-themes. Each will be described and at least one example situation provided.

1. Playing. The ISL participants spent time at a grade school in a Honduran community and relayed various reciprocal connecting incidents with the children involving playing. “[W]e played games. You don’t need to talk to have fun. I learned
that I need to try and stop worrying about how I don’t know how to speak Spanish and just have fun and enjoy my time here. These people are great," said Amy. Similarly, Kelly added, "The best part of the day was working with the kids. They helped us find the right words, and were able to play our games. Their energy is fantastic."

2. **Singing.** Singing appeared to connect the participants and children too. Amy described, "The kids were singing for us and they were so excited to do it that they were actually pushing each other out of the way in order to be the next to have a turn." Marie wrote in her journal, "My high light moment was with the children at school because they were very friendly. I sang, played and laughed with them."

3. **Laughing.** Laughing incidents were found to bring the student participants and community members together despite the language barrier. While engaging in service in the Honduran community, Kelly described this moment of connection in her journal:

   But my ah-ha moment was when I figured out that there are ways to communicate aside from talking. While working we joke and laugh as chunks of mud fall off the walls and nearly hit people on the head or when people flick mud at one another. Today I played peek-a-boo through a window with a little boy who was inside the house while we were outside working on his house. He laughed so hard he literally fell off of whatever it was in there that he was standing on. And through these things I realized that these people are happy to have us here.

4. **Smiling.** Student participants mentioned in their journals incidents involving reciprocal smiles, which appeared to indicate that students and community members were connecting. Kelly wrote, "I smile at people I recognize, and they smile back. I wish we
could communicate more. The kids know me now, too. There are some who I have really bonded with.” Amy added:

We all enjoy spending time together even if we can’t talk very much. At the school a young girl named Sadie runs over to me every time I come by and grabs my hand. They seem so excited to see us and seek us out just to say ‘hola’ because they know it’s one of the only things they can say to me that I’ll understand. Their smiles are so genuine.

5. **Researching.** All student participants who engaged in research projects expressed moments of feeling connected to the community during interviews. In these cases, the connection was made through the reciprocal questioning and answering that occurred through the use of an interpreter (i.e., students asked questions to community members through the interpreter). One student researcher Amy said: “Well, not speaking much Spanish, it was one of the only opportunities that I had to really hear what people were saying and understand them. So, that added a lot because I could hear the community members’ perspective and even though I wasn’t having a casual conversation with them, it was, I mean, the most interaction, with the adults at least that I had. So that added a lot.” Another researcher, Katie, added:

It was really nice to be able to talk with one of the community members and to know a little bit more about her than I would be able to pick up on my own. We talked about lemon trees. She couldn’t believe that we don’t have them in our yards and thought it was funny that we were all so interested in the one in her yard. She asked what sort of trees we have at our homes and we talked about that
for a bit. Kind of funny how the best part of my day can be something so small as a conversation about trees.

6. Working together. Not surprisingly another time when students described feeling connected to community members was when they were working together alongside one another on various laboring types of service projects. Marie expressed in her journal, "What I learned from this experience is that I could overcome the language barrier through doing what others were doing by imitation. Although I could not say much, I was happy to be there working with the community. I felt at home with them because they accepted me despite my short comings especially using sign language at times." Similarly, Amy expressed in her journal, "It’s fun making the mud walls and nice to work with all the women. Everyone comes together and even though the work is hard everyone works together and makes it fun. It really is just incredible how all the people here pull together and help one another and they don’t seem to expect anything tangible in return."

7. Teaching each other. Reciprocal teaching experiences connected participants and community members, both younger and older, too. Kelly appeared to connect with children in the community as she described this incident in her journal: "I sat with the kids around a book and worked with them on learning the words. They taught me and I taught them." Andy on the other hand, connected with adult community members when they taught him:

I felt honored at points as well by having them work with me and teach me how to do the work. It seems like they would have been able to do the work quicker
and easier without us getting in the way but they were kind enough to let us help them. It is amazing how the work we did can transcend language barriers.

8. *Kind reciprocal gestures*. Various kind gestures by the Honduran community members in appreciation and celebration of the assistance of the students prompted heartfelt connections. Andy wrote about a special moment of connecting that occurred when the family, whose home he was working on, invited him in to have a seat and a Coca Cola -- again without an exchange of words. He said:

> While we were finishing up his floor, I went inside to look at his floor and how it was coming along. He invited me in to look at his home. While I was inside, his wife Doris pulled out a seat and insisted I sit down. She then opened a brand new 2-liter of Coca-Cola and poured me a glass. It was one of the most humbling experiences I’ve had. For those who I am here to serve to turn around and serve me is amazing. They have so little materialistically but they do and give what they can to show gratitude. I have never in my life appreciated and felt so humbled by someone offering me a glass of Coke. As I write, this experience continues to bring tears to my eyes.

At the end of our week in the village, the community members threw a farewell thank you party for the student participants where more connections and exchanges were made. Amy explained:

> I never thought I’d cry over a coca-cola and a bag of chips. It’s just that these people have so little, materially anyway, and yet they found a way to give to us...It makes it mean that we’re not here to serve helpless people with nothing to
offer. We worked as a team. We gave them gifts and they gave us gifts in return. Just because people are poor doesn’t mean they can’t give. To not allow them to give us gifts only emphasizes that to us they are “poor.”

Yuchen relayed in her journal connecting with children through dancing at the farewell party: "I felt that I could reduce the distance more with children through dancing. Dance does not require language, so I could enjoy dancing with children from the heart. Language is not the only communication tool, but there are several ways to communicate with people. I miss people in Santa Rita.”

9. **Sharing of culture.** A final powerful shared moment that connected the participant group and the community members came with the singing of one another's national anthems at the farewell party. Marie explained in her journal:

It was such a memorable departure when all the nationalities represented were asked to sing their national anthems. I sang the Kenyan tune and others did the same including those from the United States of America, Japan, Honduras and Sudan. This was a very special and enjoyable moment for all of us. The goal of service learning, a cultural exchange time had come.

**Impacts of connecting and personalizing.** My findings suggest that the participants connecting with the community members was a significant element of their service experience, as it ultimately led to some notable participant impacts and learning outcomes. The research revealed that once students connected with community members, then the people and their lives became personal to the students. For my findings purposes, this phenomenon shall be called **personalizing.** A primary indicator
that personalizing was occurring was that students started referring to community members as their *friends*. For instance, Marie wrote in her journal, "I guess we had become a community of friends and we were so much a people with common goals such that we felt we needed each other." Similarly, Ken wrote:

> My own realization today was a sense of happiness and liberty which came from my full appreciation of being part of this community for today and for the next three. It is a special place and I am so glad that I get to be among our new friends. I am grateful.

It appeared necessary that the students were physically in Honduras and meeting the people firsthand, and learning about their culture and needs, for personalizing to occur. Tammi expressed in her journal, "Prior to attending this trip I was aware that undeveloped countries lacked many vital resources that are provided in the United States such as the lack of clean water, food, adequate clothing, shelter and other basic necessities however witnessing it firsthand made the situation become more real to me."

Likewise, Yuchen commented in her journal about the significance of actually being in Honduras:

> I also have learned a lot about current problems in the world in class. However, these issues were far away from my country, and I did not consider them seriously. I still do not know the entire lifestyle of people in Santa Rita, however I now have an idea of how poor they are, and what problems they are facing, especially in education. This firsthand experience in service-learning connects between poor people and me. Now, the people whom I know are having
problems, and living in poor conditions. The issues which were not familiar to me became the issues that my friends are facing. I will never forget this experience and the people there.

The data revealed that after students made reciprocal connections and began to personalize the people in Santa Rita, two general sub-themes of impacts and learning outcomes emerged: 1) multicultural and diversity learning, and 2) increased critical consciousness.

**Diversity learning outcomes.** Four notable impacts on participants related to diversity and multicultural learning appeared as impact sub-themes in the data. These impacts or outcomes surfaced in the data after the reciprocal connections and personalizing occurred. The outcomes were: 1) the debunking of cultural fears and stereotypes, 2) appreciation of Honduran culture, 3) acceptance of differences, and 4) recognition of universality. Each finding will be explained in turn.

1. **Debunking fears and stereotypes.** Participants came into the ISL program with all sorts of preconceived ideas, perceptions and fears related to various aspects of being in a developing country. The study found that those views changed as the participants connected and had positive experiences with the Honduran people. For example, Tammi's misperception of Hondurans as helpless changed as can be seen in this entry in her journal:

   Originally when I thought of service learning I thought of it from the perspective of providing a service to a group of people who not only needed assistance because of a lack of funds but to those who were also incapable of providing or
doing for themselves. From the moment we stepped foot in the village I recognized that this perception was significantly inaccurate. Instead these individuals were likely to be more capable than any of us in the jobs that we were performing...The men who we worked with completed majority of the work and even when tired and hot did not complain or show signs of being annoyed with the job.

Also, most students came into the ISL program with a variety of fears or apprehensions related to worst-case scenarios of being in a developing country. Here are a couple of examples of students expressing these types of concerns. Tammi expressed her fear of death: “The emotions that I have in relation to this trip mainly consist of fear and excitement. I am fearful of not being able to be in contact with my family members for a significant period of time, I am mainly fearful that something will happen to me while being abroad that will prevent me from seeing my family (I know this sounds crazy but I am worried about possibly dying while in Honduras)..." Kelly added another fear of harm: "And I am absolutely terrified of the water here. I even put hand sanitizer on my lips after I washed my face. The good thing is that I’m terrified of putting my hands in my mouth, so I haven’t been chewing my nails. Thinking about this makes me wonder about Pete… Why does he keep coming back every year, even after the story of being sick for months?"

All of the participants indicated in their interviews after the program that none of their fears materialized. Further the data revealed evidence of participants' interest in engaging in future international service programs. For example, Kelly expressed a future
interest in going into the Peace Corp and studying Spanish in Honduras. She stated, "Well having done it once makes me realize how easy it would be to do it again."

It appeared that as fears failed to materialize and the participants connected with Hondurans, and were exposed to positive aspects of Honduran culture, an appreciation developed for the Honduran culture and its people.

2. Appreciation of different culture. Many participants reported how their perceptions of the people of Honduras shifted, and they began to critically think about and appreciate aspects of the Honduran culture relative to their own. Yuchen's comment appears to reflect her expanding worldview:

It seems that they know everyone in the village and they help each other a lot. There was a baby in the house where we worked in the morning. Not only his parents, but also many other people cradled the baby. I felt that this baby is raised by many people in the village, which is lacking in Japan. The way of childcare is very different. Many parents in Japan think that the place children study is only school, so they want their children go to a better school and tend to depend on school for their education too much. However, children learn so many things by being exposed to many adults around them. I think that people in a whole community should take responsibility of children’s education.

Andy supplied another positive observation of the Honduran community members:

I have to say that I was very impressed with how hard the people in the village worked on the projects. Leslie Escobar worked the entire time on pouring the
floors and mixing the cement. Javielle did as well, even though he is only 15. What’s more impressive was that the home we were working on did not belong to either of them, they were simply helping their neighbors. What extraordinary people the people of Santa Rita really are.

Kathy added her appreciation for the community, "There was also such a sense of community. The kids run around, hang out together across ages, and help each other. All the families seem to know each other. It truly feels like the village raises the children."

Tammi was impressed by a sixteen year old:

This faith that Demadis displayed has been exhibited by many other members of the village and is helping me to realize that just because people may struggle to survive does not mean that they do not deter them from striving to accomplish things that to others may seem impossible and it is with this determination and willpower that so many who do struggle defy so many odds and expectations.

3. Accepting of differences. The study found that many of the student participants came to identify, understand, and accept that there were differences between the participants' cultures and the Honduran culture, but that those differences were not necessarily better or worse. Amy expressed her acceptance of the Honduran culture eloquently: "The people here are poor by our standards, but they are rich in other ways. They have things that we don’t have. I don’t really feel like it’s my place to decide what these people need or should have based on what I “need” or have."
Similarly Marie struggled with accepting aspects of the Honduran culture as it is, and pondered the potential negative impacts of trying to change something one does not fully understand. She wrote:

Remembering the tough work these people do, some justice needs to be done for them to better their situation. However, I am also aware of the fact that their culture, standards and their values are different and therefore placing new values on them may be unfair. Telling them that living their normal lives is hard has two possibilities: either to make them work harder or make them frustrated such that even the little they do makes no sense to them. My fear was reducing them to “beggars,” waiting for “others” to do everything for them. This has the possibility of worsening their situation and is what I am struggling with. Maybe if educated a little on this topic, then I will understand it better.

4. Recognition of universality. Another diversity related outcome that emerged from the data as personalizing happened was participants recognizing the universality that existed between themselves and the Hondurans. Evidence of students relating to the lives of the Hondurans can be seen in Kelly's comment in her journal: "We also helped build a house today for a young couple, which I felt really good about. It was so small and has mud walls, but was going to be their own place. I know how that feels to finally have a place of your own and be self-sufficient, independent, and relying on yourself, not on others. I feel good that we were part of what made that possible."

Ken's comment in his journal clearly reflects his feelings of universality between the participants and the Hondurans:
One of my fondest moments came when I heard the four national anthems from our group alone. I realized the pride we all shared from working with one another for a common cause. The difficulties we all shared and overcoming them with one another. You know, it’s not too often that a group of 15 strangers will so openly and in such a short period of time talk about their diarrhea.

All four of the multicultural and diversity learning outcomes found in the data appeared connected to the ISL program providing service opportunities that allowed for participants to reciprocally connect with and thereby personalize the people of Honduras. The participants' world views appeared to expand as they came to appreciate and accept and find universal connections to the various aspects of the Honduran culture. This in turn appeared to prompt the participants' desire to help the people in the community, and students began thinking how they might best do that as explained in the next section.

*Increased critical consciousness.* Additionally, student critical consciousness was prompted in following three notable ways --again after students connected with and personalized the people of Honduras.

1. *Increased desire to help.* The data revealed that after personalizing, the students desired to engage and do more in the community where they were working. They wanted to help their new friends. A child needing an education was no longer just a needy looking far away face, this was someone who the student now knew personally, and it triggered a desire to help him or her. Ken explained:

   Being with the people of Santa Rita, caring about their acceptance of me, hearing their stories, gaining a deeper understanding of their values and how, if anyway,
they are shared with mine – these things create in me a response that is more indispensable because it is now tied to my heart and mind, a congruence between my values in action (coming to Honduras for humanitarian work) and how I value the well-being of friends.

Yuchen echoed that sentiment when she said, "It was interesting to work with people from other cultures and to see how they teamwork in performing important tasks in this village. I felt that I was part of the village and that their problems were mine too." Marie added, "We got many things from people in Santa Rita, and I wanted to do something for them too." Personalizing not only prompted a desire to help, but also, participants began critically reflecting on how to help as explained in the next section.

2. **Critical thinking about helping.** Personalizing prompted participants reflecting on the value of the service they were providing, and thinking about how they might best approach helping their new friends.

After the participants began the service projects and learned more about the people and needs in the community, they began critically reflecting on their SL experience including pondering the value of it. Tammi relayed in her journal, "In my opinion the presence of us being there was more significant than the actual work that we did in the houses." Katie pondered in hers, "Also, I think that we aren’t really there to help at all- they can do the work without us. It’s the money that’s most helpful. So what is the purpose of service learning? Maybe more of a cultural exchange? Talking, enjoying each other’s company, learning about how each other lives."
Here are a few examples found in the data of participants critically thinking about further assistance in the community. Amy expressed:

The people here are poor by our standards, but they are rich in other ways. They have things that we don’t have. I don’t really feel like it’s my place to decide what these people need or should have based on what I “need” or have. And it can’t just be throwing money at people. That doesn’t solve any problem. Puts a band aid on it though, but band aids fall off.

"Remembering the tough work these people do, some justice needs to be done for them to better their situation. However, I am also aware of the fact that their culture, standards and their values are different and therefore placing new values on them may be unfair," said Marie. Also, a number of the students commented about the importance of listening to the people who you are trying to help. For example, Yuchen expressed in her journal, "If we want to do something for them, the most important thing is to ask them what they want and need. Therefore, interviewing people in Santa Rita in this trip is significant in order to extract their needs."

Most of the students commented about how their views changed regarding what they thought the village in Honduras needed once they were actually in Honduras and observing and talking with the community members, and others involved with the community. Tammi said, "After conducting several interviews today for our research project I gained insight into some of the needs the people within the village feel are vital." Andy added:
Something that I’ve learned this past week or so is that it’s hard for an outsider to judge when someone needs something as the outsider has a different perspective. We know what we would want if we were in the same situation but we have our own history and biases that we bring. We also do not have the experiences that they have and do not know what life is like on a daily basis for them. Even though I feel that I have come to know the people of Santa Rita fairly well, I do not see what their lives are like after we go back to the ranch at night. I’m sure that their life is much more complex than I could ever imagine. With that knowledge and understanding, I can only attempt to surmise what the people of Honduras would see as the most pressing needs in their own country. Along with the participants' critical reflection on how to help the people they aimed to serve came struggles and frustrations as will be explained in the next section.

3. *Incited frustration and personal struggle.* While personalizing prompted a call to action, the findings suggest that personalizing sometimes ignited frustrations and feelings of helplessness among the participants. Some students were left with conflicted emotions around wanting to help but not knowing how to do so. Amy lamented,

So I feel very stuck. What do I do now? What do I do when I get home?...I guess I just have to do whatever I feel is right or however much I feel is enough. It would be easier if someone could just tell me what to do to make things more fair. It would also be nice if I could figure out what I need to do in order to make myself
feel better about all this, because that’s a huge part of it too. I don’t feel right
doing nothing, but I’m not really sure what to do or where to start.

Tammi also struggled, "However now as I sit and write in my journal I feel as if I have
already began to betray the people in the village by once again indulging in luxuries that
some may never afford the opportunity to experience, I sit and wonder if I am already
beginning to forget the people of the Algato Valley. The question of how can I help the
members of this village and change my actions persist." Kelly struggled too: "I don’t
want to be a benefactor. I want to be able to help people to be able to help themselves
later on down the road. I’m a teacher- I don’t give answers. I guide students to the
answer themselves. So, what do I do with this? I’m not really sure."

Some students expressed conflicted emotions regarding their NGO community
partner being religiously affiliated. For example, Kelly stated:

I felt a little bit uncomfortable with the religious aspect of it, although we weren’t
a religious, missionary type team, most of the groups that did come in were. So
even though no one said that to us, the villagers, the people of Santa Rita, seemed
to think that we were coming there to bring Christianity and they mentioned
things about God and how we were going to be rewarded for our service and
things. That made me hesitate a little bit...I would rather go under a different type
of organization.

In sum, the significant findings were that ISL participants can reciprocally
connect with community members in a myriad of ways during a service program.

Further, that this connecting and personalizing of the people that program aimed to serve
was necessary in order to prompt impacts such as enhancing a participants’ critical consciousness and instigating various diversity learning outcomes.

**Group dynamic.** Group dynamic surfaced from the data as a major ISL program element theme. The ISL program’s group dynamic appeared linked to various student learning outcomes and impacts. The following five primary sub-themes were identified as more specific program elements linked to particular participant outcomes: True Colors group exercise, group discussions, working together, living and traveling together, and the diversity of participants. Generally speaking the outcomes or impacts that emerged related to the group dynamic included team cohesion, inspiration and motivation, feeling supported and included, relationship building, added perspective, and cultural learning.

Some of the students prior to beginning the program expressed concern regarding how he or she would get along with the other participants, or "fit into group", and like living /working in a group environment. However, as the program unfolded, it was clear from the data that a positive group dynamic emerged. All of the participants studied made reference to their appreciation of the good group dynamic on the ISL program. Here's an example of what Amy had this to say about the group dynamic: "I really like our group. I love, love, LOVE that no one is complaining about anything. We all get along pretty well and I think that everyone actually wants to be here and is having a good time." The following five elements appeared to contribute to the overall positive group dynamic that emerged on this ISL program, plus various other specific impacts as noted in each section.
True Colors exercise. Within the first couple of days the of the ISL program, all the participants took part in a teambuilding activity called True Colors. True Colors was an interactive activity that was designed to provide participants with insights into their own and others personality types. The True Colors sub-theme emerged from the data as all student participants studied reported that the exercise added value to their ISL experience. Tammi expressed how the activity prompted a more positive approach towards working with others:

So when Ken presented the “True Colors” personality identifier activity I gained insight into how I perceive myself, may be perceived by others, and how I can work with others who differ from me and who I would normally opt not to work with...Now that I am more cautiously aware of others personalities as well as their needs I think I can I will be more willing to try working with a variety of personality types and completing task in a different manner than I normally would feel comfortable with doing.

The Kenyan student had this to say about the exercise:

The evening discussion by [Ken] was very interesting and I learned how to critic people without hurting their feelings or offering a soft critic to friends, colleagues and others. This was a self-developing sharing and I learned much from it about how to know people better and how I am like them. In this case, colors were used such as blue, green, orange and golden while I was use to animal characters. I really enjoyed this presentation.
Students begin to learn about one another and consider each others’ strengths and differences relative to their own. Thus, this activity appeared to increase team cohesion and build relationships within the ISL group.

**Participant group discussions.** Participant group discussions emerged as another significant sub-theme related to the group dynamic. The data revealed that the group discussion and reflection sessions also contributed to the positive group dynamic. During these sessions, the participants bonded and offered support to one another. The sessions typically happened each evening after dinner during the first week of service, and then intermittently during the second week of the program. Ken had this to say about in his journal after an evening reflection session regarding the building of a positive group: "I think one of the nice things about this group is that, although we still do not know each other that well, a sense of trust is forming quickly. I see this when people are sharing more about their emotional responses than simply their thoughts.” Andy directly expressed in his journal how the reflection sessions were contributing to the building of community among the ISL group:

I’ve also learned that reflection and group discussion is an important piece as well. This allows a group to discuss issues and challenges they’ve faced, to celebrate achievements and to learn from one another. Sometimes the best a-ha moments come from these discussions. These discussions also allow people to express their discontent for aspects of the trip or their happiness with other aspects. The discussions allow a community to be formed and they help to forge friendships and relationships that will last a lifetime. These discussions may very
well be the most important aspect to the entire trip and are a piece that no group leader should take too lightly.

One of the international students, Yuchen, expressed how the group meetings served to make her fell included and supported: "I was thinking that I also could not speak in the meeting today, but [Tammi] and [Researcher] brought up the stories which we discussed in the village, and threw me a turn. I appreciated that they understood my feelings and I am really happy traveling with these members."

In sum, the following impact sub-themes appeared linked to the participant group discussions: 1) provided support to others in the group, 2) prompted feelings of acceptance within the group, and 3) helped build relationships within the group.

Working together. Working together emerged from the data as another important program element sub-theme. The study found that the attitudes and actions of various students positively impacted their fellow comrades and the group dynamic as students worked together in the community doing the various service projects.

Specifically, the data supported that working together as a group appeared to prompt individual members to work harder than normal. Thus, increased motivation appeared as outcome sub-theme. Comments like the following by Yuchen seem to express this:

I also found that if I have friends around me, I work harder than when I work by myself. I easily give up on something. For example, the work in the village was really hard, and I sometimes felt to have to rest. However, other members kept
working very hard and I was impressed. They also taught me the effective way to work. They act as a good stimulate to me to work more and better.

Her comment reveals that the group dynamic, both with the community members and with the participants, proved to be motivational. Similarly, Ken expressed being motivated by his teammates' actions:

I see many of my colleagues leading by example, jumping at opportunities to help out, sharing their feelings, resisting urges for complacency, demonstrating genuine enthusiasm. These are important to me because it helps motivate me to challenge myself, perhaps to fulfill myself to the extent to which each person in the group might seem to. For example, the look of absolute joy on Summer’s face when she led the children's group. Although this might not be my cup of tea, I would be motivated to work past my own discomfort simply to gain a deeper appreciation for how this experience will have a lasting impact on her.

A teambuilding outcome sub-theme emerged from the data as another notable impact related to participants working together. The student participants began making references in their journals to working "together" and made "we" statements that suggested that they had come to think of themselves as a team. Comments like the following provided support for this notion that the group came together as a team: "The most exciting part was that we all as a group joined hands with a common mind and goal which was accomplished," said Marie. Kelly expressed this regarding her satisfaction with the group:
Everyone in the group seems to get along very well, and are willing to do things in groups. No one is left alone to do their own thing or go somewhere alone, because someone else will always join in. We are also pretty good about splitting the work at the school and construction, so everyone gets to try both and everyone gets to do what they want.

In sum, students working together appeared to motivate and inspire one another, and contribute to feeling of team cohesion.

**Living and traveling together.** Living and working together emerged as another sub-theme that impacted the ISL program's group dynamic. Student participants in the study experienced four different living together situations, and traveled together across the country on various bus excursions.

The students stayed in hotel rooms at three different locations and in a dorm style living arrangement when they worked in the village. In the dorm, all the female students were in one large room and the all the males were in another room, and each had a bed. At the hotels, two students shared a room. These different living environments provided opportunities for students to get to know one another in both a one-on-one basis and in a group environment.

The data revealed that living and traveling together appeared linked to the sub-theme impacts of relationship building and learning opportunities among the group. Kelly expressed this regarding learning about others during bus travel: "I still have a lot to learn from everyone though, so if I sit by someone new on the van, there’s always something to talk about or ask about." Marie made this comment about learning to
appreciate her roommate's differences after they shared a hotel room: "I have learned how to get ready in no time. Staying with [Researcher] who woke up was ready to roll, it was very my time to learn how to do exactly that."

These opportunities for student participants to travel and live together appeared connected to the outcomes sub-themes of relationship building and appreciating differences, which contributed to a positive group dynamic.

**Celebratory events.** Group celebratory events emerged as program element sub-theme (under the group dynamic theme) linked to particular impacts on participants. Two group celebrations occurred during the ISL program, and the data supports that both contributed to these specific impact sub-themes: relationship building within the group, increased group cohesion, and an enhanced ISL program experience. The first celebration occurred at the end of the week of service. The community members organized a celebration to show thanks to the student participants for their assistance, and to celebrate all the work that they did together. This celebration oozed with positive energy, and contributed to the positive feelings among participants that their ISL group had been appreciated by the Honduran community. The student's journals were filled with comments relating positive feelings towards their group's program experience in Honduras. For example, Amy said, "They made such a big deal for our departure. The whole community was there and even though the gestures were small, they were very meaningful...We worked as a team. We gave them gifts and they gave us gifts in return."

Marie's warm feeling towards her group can be seen in this comment of hers regarding the departure celebration with the community: "It was such a memorable departure when
all the nationalities represented were asked to sing their national anthems. I sang the Kenyan tune and others did the same including those from the United States of America, Japan, Honduras and Sudan. This was a very special and enjoyable moment for all of us."

The second celebration occurred the last evening of the ISL program with just the participant group members and ISL leader. The ISL group went for a nice dinner at which time the program leader expressed his appreciation to the group for their efforts, good attitudes, etc. Over a good meal, the students talked, laughed, and reflected with one another on the experiences they shared during the program. After dinner, everyone participated in the following group activity that further enhanced the good feelings among the group. At the top of a piece of paper, the name of each participant was written --one paper per student. Then each paper was circulated to every other participant, and everyone was encouraged to write something nice about that participant. It was obvious that a special moment with the group was occurring. Observations were made of smiles and tears welling up in students' eyes as they read the kind words from their fellow group mates. The subsequent exchange of thank yous and hugs appeared to indicate that a positive group dynamic had emerged on the ISL program.

In conclusion, the ISL students participating in celebratory events appeared to contribute to positive feelings of being part of a team, both within the community served and within the participant group. Also, these activities provided opportunities for relationships and friendships to develop and contributed to students' reporting a positive overall group ISL experience.
Participant group diversity. The diversity of the participants on the ISL program studied emerged as another notable sub-theme under the general ISL group dynamic theme. This study found that the personal characteristics of individuals, specifically the human diversity within the group of student participants on the ISL program, appeared to have various notable impacts on the individual group members. The data revealed that the human diversity within the group of students was linked to the following three sub-themes of outcomes: 1) added perspective, 2) fostered an appreciation of different cultures, and 3) brought support to some students in certain situations. A notable aspect of this finding, one that underpins this entire section relates to the type of diversity that was found to impact participants.

The diversity that added value to the students' experiences was what shall be referred to as human diversity, which implies many types of diversity. The specific human diversity that the data revealed as valuable to the participants' experience included having group members from different universities, different countries, different cultures, different marital statuses, different ages, different educational programs, and different socio-economic backgrounds. Keeping in mind this expanded notion of diversity, the three impact sub-themes that were found to be related to having a diverse participant groups shall be explained hereafter.

For the most part, the student participants expressed valuing diversity within the group in terms of various "different" people adding to perspectives to evening discussion groups. "The diversity of the group is adding a great deal of value to my experience. I enjoy hearing Marie’s and Nigers’s perspectives, coming from different countries and
upbringings," said Ken. He further added, "I had a terrific learning experience in this when we were in Teguçe discussing whether or not our expectations were met with what we were seeing and then hearing Marie – a Kenyan – offer a perspective which I would have never in a million years thought I would hear. I really valued diversity as an educational asset at that moment."

Various comments in students' journals indicated that group diversity contributed to learning about cultural aspects of their fellow participants. For example, Marie explained that "when men were mixing cement, Nigers was singing African songs. He said that when people in his country do hard jobs, people normally sing a song while they are working. This is a different culture to people in this village, but they were enjoying Nigers’s singing." Another cultural learning moment came at the celebratory party (with the student participants and the community members) that occurred at the end of the week of service. “It was such a memorable departure when all the nationalities represented were asked to sing their national anthems. I sang the Kenyan tune and others did the same including those from the United States of America, Japan, Honduras and Sudan. This was a very special and enjoyable moment for all of us. The goal of service learning, a cultural exchange time had come," explained Marie. Not only did the participants and community members learn about one another, but also that cultural sharing experience appeared to add to prompt feelings of good will and hope --like a shared sense of optimism that people from all over the world come together, bond, and help one another.
Also, students found it interesting and valuable to share lodging with previously unknown persons, and persons from backgrounds or cultures different from themselves. I think my experience with sharing a room with an international doctoral student from Kenya was representative. She added to my world perspective as we engaged in many conversations where I learn about her background, culture, personal and professional interests, struggles, and passions. I enjoyed learning about little thing like mangos (and how many types there are), as well as her interests and struggles working within education systems with girls in Kenya. I came to respect and admire Marie, and appreciated the unique opportunity to spend one on one time with her in a close setting. I learned a lot, and the experience certainly contributed to expanding my perspectives and world views.

Another sub-theme impact that emerged from the data was that some students appeared to find comfort in having other participants within the group "like themselves" that they could relate to. For example, Yuchen, an international student from Japan, explained, "If there are people from other countries, I feel less stressful. I’m not the only one from a different country." In another case, Amy, a married person, seem to identify with and find support from Ken another married person on the program. "Ken does random nice things for me like send pictures of me on the ranch to Jim (Amy's husband) because he knows I can’t do it myself...He also knows that Jim is blue (reference to the True Colors exercise) and would greatly appreciate said pictures that I would forget to send so he sends them for me. That was nice of him."
The human diversity within the participant group studied appeared to contribute to various students' understanding and appreciation of different cultures, to provide support to like participants on the group, and to add valuable perspective to group discussions. All of these sub-themes of outcomes appeared to contribute to an overall positive group dynamic.

These research findings suggest that this ISL program had a positive group dynamic, and that five notable sub-themes (i.e., True Colors activity, group discussions, working together, living and traveling together, and diversity within the group) appeared to contribute to various outcomes that suggested a positive dynamic. More specifically these aspects appeared to contribute to a good group dynamic by prompting team cohesion, building relationships, providing support, enhancing cultural learning and appreciation, and providing motivation and inspiration.

**Non-service activities.** The data revealed non-service activities as the final group dynamic sub-theme that positively impacted the participants' ISL experience. These non-service activities included listening to and participating in discussions with the organizers of HOI (the NGO with which the university program partnered), local Peace Corp workers, locals working with other NGOs, educators, Honduran university students, participant presentations, plus traveling to and touring various historical, cultural, and recreational locations.

The findings support that students critically reflecting after some of these experiences appeared to expand and challenge the students' prior knowledge or
understanding of matters related to that particular ISL program activity. The following provides at least one example of how each activity identified impacted the participants.

**Visit with a university class.** Per a personal connection to a Honduran professor, the U.S. students visited a group of Honduran tourism students at their university, and learned and shared from a cultural exchange. Afterwards, some ISL participants reflected in their journals about various things they learned from their visit. For example, Andy wrote: "The class session that we attended was really fun and interesting as they shared some traditional Afro-Honduran dances and a typical Honduran snack with us. The class also gave us gifts of information about Honduras and made large scale maps of tourist spots to share with us. We then sang two songs for them, Hang on Sloopy and Dear Friends."

**Guided university tours.** Guided tours and discussions at three different universities added to the participants understanding and perception of the higher education system in Honduras. For example, Yuchen made these reflections in her journal afterwards: "Today, we went to three universities, two of them are public and one is private. Yesterday, we learned from Nasim’s presentation that only 8% of Honduran people continued to university. We have already studied a little bit about the education system in Honduras, so it helped to us to understand what it means for Honduran people to go to university, and what kind of the people are in the universities."

The visit prompted students critically thinking about who and how the people of Honduras access higher education. Yuchen further expressed this in her journal:
When I was observing three universities, I could not stop thinking about the children in Santa Rita. I wonder how many children there are able to go to university. I guess none of them even though the tuition in public university is almost free. This is a very sad reality that universities in Honduras are privilege only for certain kinds of people. I do not think that going to university is always good, because Japan is an example of a failure country of high advancement rate. The percentage of students who go to higher education is very high in Japan. However, because many people think that going to university leads to entering good companies, many high school students just study to go to universities. Additionally, since many people go to university, the craftsmen’s manual skills are decreasing, and traditional techniques in Japan is vanishing. However it is true that higher education is one of the key points to develop the Third World countries. I do not want this country to become like Japan, which just focuses on entering universities, but I hope that everyone in Honduras will be able to have an equal education opportunity.

**Visit with Peace Corp workers.** The ISL group met with two Peace Corp workers who discussed their involvement in facilitating micro-finance projects in Honduras. Entries in student journals after the meeting suggest that the excursion inspired students and prompted critical thinking about engaging in future service. Marie remarked, "Their experiences were a great lesson to me that I can also make a difference in other people’s lives as a volunteer." For Kelly, it made the possibility of joining the Peace Corp more real: "I am incredibly motivated by their presentation. I have thought about the Peace
Corps since college, and talking to people who are in the middle of it made it seem real, and like something that I could actually do."

**Student presentations.** Each student was required as part of the ISL program to do a presentation to the group on a relevant topic related to Honduras in collaboration with one or more fellow students. Every student indicated in their interviews that they found the various student presentations to be of value in terms of learning more about Honduras, and about service learning too. Marie critically reflected in her journal how one presentation in particular impacted and inspired her. She wrote:

> During the presentation about “Service learning and altruism” by Dr. Mather, I found it very life changing and good to dedicate time to think about people who have supported me in one way or another in my life to where I am today. Sharing this with my friends was like telling the people who have helped me that they really matter in my life. I find service learning being a true move towards happiness where one sacrifices money and time in service of or with others.

**Guided visit to recreational areas.** All of the ISL participants studied took part in a guided boat and rain-forest excursion, and afterwards spent the afternoon at Punta Sol, a recreational beach area in Honduras. Students reflected in their journals that they gained knowledge and appreciation for the natural beauty and rich cultural history of Honduras. Marie expressed:

> Walking inside the forest and along the beach and seeing the crabs was a very interesting part of the experience. As for me, mixing service learning with few exciting episodes which are relaxing makes it more memorable and colors the
trip. If I was asked, having fun filled days while on a service learning trip is very
good so that many people especially myself find a reason to take part in a similar
program which they enjoyed in future.
Kelly added, “Punta Sol was amazingly beautiful. Eating fresh fish, snorkeling, and
drinking straight from a coconut seem like things out of a novel, not something you can
actually do." Her experience just listening and observing conversations while on the
excursion also sparked her thinking about the future. "I heard someone on Punta Sol
say that he opened a surf shop years ago. He had a building, and didn’t know what to do.
Someone told him to put a sign in the window saying “I buy surfboards.” He did, and
two years later, his shop was full. I’m fascinated by these stories of people who don’t
subscribe to the typical American career ladder," said Kelly.

**Guided visit to a zoo.** The student group had a guided tour of a Honduran zoo,
where the participants learned more about the wildlife in Honduras. Marie explained
clearly the learning value that this added to her ISL experience:

By visiting the zoo, I came to understand the climatical conditions of Honduras
better. Although some animals and birds are similar to those in Kenya, some
were so different and new to me. I really appreciated the tour guide because he
was very thorough in explaining to things which I could have assumed or mis-
interpreted about the people or the country.

**Driving.** Simply sitting on a bus while driving through Honduras appeared to
impact students in a few notable ways. Impacts noted in their journal entries included the
prompting of an appreciation for the country's natural beauty, expanded perspectives
about the Honduran ways of life, about the United States’ impact in a developing country, and about taking photos of Hondurans. Hereafter, an example supporting each of these impacts is provided.

The drive across country appeared to prompt the students’ appreciation of the natural beauty in Honduras. Kelly expressed, "Today we drove to Copan- the drive was breathtakingly beautiful. When I thought about Honduras before I came here, I never pictured these beautiful rolling hills. I will from now on."

Also, observing gave students the opportunity to observe Honduran life, which appeared to add perspective relative to their own ways of life back in their respective countries. "As we passed a lot of the houses and small farms on the trip, I noticed a lot of people doing just that- hanging out outside, sitting at tables or on porches. I suppose I haven’t done that in a while, and it looked very nice to slow down and focus more on family and friends- rather than to be focused on going to movies or events," expressed Kelly in her journal. Yuchen added:

I saw that many of them [Hondurans] were just sitting outside of their houses and relaxing and talking with their families in the evening. This is very different from Japan, because many people in Japan work until night and children play video games inside their houses. The number of flagrant crimes involving children in Japan has increased, and many parents do not want their children to play outside. The relationship in neighborhoods has become poor, and it is not rare that people do not know who is living next to them. Therefore, the scene that people are relaxing and talking and sitting in chairs in front of their houses was so vivid and
interesting for me, and I wanted to take photos of this scene, and tell my friends this good point of Honduras relationships with neighbors and families.

However, some observations seemed to invoke negative emotions and prompt critical thinking regarding the impact of developed countries and U.S. businesses on Hondurans. Kelly expressed this:

I was disturbed by a large billboard advertising a department store (Mendel’s) featuring a Caucasian family. It seemed like a place where affluent people would shop. And yet, a Honduran family isn’t featured on the billboard. It gives the impression that to be white/Caucasian is the ideal, and if you shop at Mendel’s, you can achieve that ideal life. It just makes my skin crawl to think that’s what people want.

Similarly, Amy expressed surprise and dismay:

Well, I certainly wasn’t expecting to see Sherwin Williams out the plane window and Auntie Anne’s at the airport. It makes sense that even the developing world would have some elements familiar to me, but I was still surprised. I guess I thought we’d get off the plane and be so far from home that there’d be nothing to remind me of it. At least not right in my face like that. Too bad it couldn’t be the good things, only fast food and commercialism. Looks like just another way that the U.S. is ruining the world. With cheap, chemically engineered “food”.

Finally, the student participants struggled with whether or not they should be taking photographs of the people in Honduras as they traveled along on buses. "I took several photos of towns in Honduras from the bus on the way to Rancho Paradiso. I also
wanted to take photos of people in towns, but I felt that I should not take photos of people because they might feel uncomfortable. In today’s meeting, I realized that other members were also having the same feeling," said Yuchen. On this point, Ken added these critical reflections:

As we were riding on the bus, especially in the beginning, I found myself taking pictures of people as they were simply being. I was only interested in capturing everyday life; however, while doing so, I felt guilty, as if I were at a zoo taking pictures of the animals: “oh, how can these people live like this?” I wasn’t sure how to feel about recording my memories versus feeling American or white guilt (not sure which is greater or exactly how they are different – a paper of its own).

**Meeting with language school owners.** The students meeting with the proprietors of a local Spanish language school in Copan prompted some participants to think about future travel and language study. Kelly added this reflection to her journal after the meeting:

At dinner tonight, we met two sisters who run the language school here. The more I hear about it, the more it sounds like something I would love to do. I always have an itch to travel, but no one that I know has the money or time to travel with me. I think a language school would give me a place to stay and meet people to explore with. I am seriously considering the language school here- or maybe somewhere else- but it seems very cheap here, and the sisters who own the school are really nice and welcoming.
**Guided visit to ruins.** Not only did the students learn about the historical and political background of Honduras on their tour of the Copan Ruins, but it prompted critical thinking about aspects of the archeological site itself. Kelly expressed the following in her journal:

We visited the Mayan Ruins at Copan. I was fascinated by the brilliant red flock of macaws (and their loud braying) flying overhead. I was disturbed by the fact that one of the statues in the middle of the staircase was missing…because it was in Boston. It just seems so wrong that archeologists would ever take something away from a site like Copan, leaving it with a missing hole, just to show it off in America.

The findings from data suggest that all of the aforementioned non-service activities prompted critical thinking, and added value to the participants' ISL program experience. Each activity appeared to contribute to the participants' cultural learning and understanding of Honduras, both positive and negative aspects, and prompted critical thinking specific to the excursion at hand.

**Related service project.** The service project being related to the student participants' area of study or interest emerged as a significant theme from the data. The findings revealed that participants being engaged in service projects in a Honduran community prompted the learning of practical skills such as particular building related skills, as well as learning firsthand how a SL program operated.

The ISL participants spent one week engaged in various service projects in one particular community, Santa Rita, Honduras. On any given day, students were given the
option of engaging in construction projects such as making cement floors, building latrines, or building mud-walled homes, or spending time teaching and playing with children in the community's one school. All of the students engaged in all activities throughout the week.

While the actual service activities were not per se linked to participants' areas of study, most of the participants expressed an interest in being part of a SL program with the thought of potentially developing one themselves in the future. For instance, Andy expressed: "More importantly, I want to learn about service-learning trips in the hope that I might be able to conduct them and teach others." All of the ISL participants had a scholastic interest in either higher education administration or teaching. Both areas provide opportunities through which SL programs can be developed. Ken expressed this regarding the value of his hands-on ISL experience in Honduras, "Working in both leadership and service, I see this applying directly to my work. In fact, I think that the best leadership experiences can be learned through work in service as an application to theories and principals behind leadership styles and understandings." Further, the visits to universities that happened the following week enhanced the participants' learning specific to understanding higher education systems in Honduras (See Non-service activities findings on p. 113).

The students’ journals were full of reflections regarding the various new construction skills they were learning from engaging in various service projects in the Honduran community. Marie expressed this in her journal regarding learning to create floors, "My heaviest task was to keep the water in the 'basin' while mixing sand, cement
and water. However, I learned great deal from the experts and before we left, I was good at it." Katie added, "The work was good --not too hard-- and the Hondurans were good at guiding us. I also think I might use a similar technique to pour concrete in my own basement."

The findings revealed that the opportunity for student participants to learn about ISL programs in a hands-on setting, as well as learn construction skills, proved valuable. These service activities provided the basis for the next ISL program element that was found to be significant: opportunities for reciprocal connections with community members.

**Summary of finding for RQ 1.** Engaging in guided critical processing after a new or disruptive event on the ISL program appeared to be the lynchpin for prompting the critical thinking among participants which lead to a variety of impacts and learning outcomes depending upon the event. Whether critical processing was necessary to prompt a learning outcome appeared to depend upon the type of outcome. A new experience plus critical processing appeared necessary to invoke interpersonal types of learning outcomes such as identity development, and multicultural or diversity learning. However, guided critical processing did not appear necessary to invoke certain types of skill development. For instance, critical processing was unnecessary for the participants to learn construction tasks.

In sum, six general themes were identified in the study as significant ISL program elements that linked to participant impacts or learning outcomes. These were: 1) guided critical processing, 2) international border crossing, 3) reciprocal connections and
personalizing, 4) group dynamic, 5) non-service activities, and 6) related service project. Of these six elements, guided critical processing needed to happen after the participant experienced a new or disruptive event in order to prompt the critical thinking necessary for some of the learning outcomes to occur. Each of the five other ISL themes were identified as general categories of program elements that involved new or disruptive participant experiences on the ISL program. Various sub-themes were identified under each that connected to notable participant learning outcomes or impacts. See summary chart Appendix B: 5 ISL Program Elements and Outcome Themes and Sub-Themes.

**Results for Research Question 2: Participant Motivation to Be on the ISL Program**

During the interviews, the students' motivations to go on the ISL program were explored. Also, I discussions with some students during the trip related to this topic and made notes of such conversations. The aim was to better understand how the various students came to know of and ultimately participate in the ISL program studied. Six primary themes emerged as factors that were determined to be significant: 1) personal characteristics of ISL leader, 2) peer recommendation, 3) service oriented, 4) financial assistance, 5) mentoring, and 6) practically related to scholastics. Details as to each of these findings will be provided hereafter. Table 2 on page 126 provides a summary of the themes identified from the data.
Table 2

*Research Question Two: Six Motivational Themes and Definitions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Six Participant Motivating Factor Themes</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Characteristics of ISL Leader</td>
<td>In particular the enthusiasm and charisma of the program leader.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Recommendation</td>
<td>Fellow students who had previously gone on the ISL program and had positive things to say about the experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Oriented</td>
<td>The ISL program having a volunteer component was identified as a motivating factor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Assistance</td>
<td>Students who received some financial assistance to defray the ISL program costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentoring</td>
<td>Mentoring by the program leader in terms of providing encouragement, alleviating fears, discussing research projects, and problem solving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practically Related to Scholastics</td>
<td>That the learning objectives related to the participants areas of study was identified as important.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal characteristics of the leader.** The enthusiasm and personality of the faculty leader was another clear theme that emerged a factor that incited interest in the Honduras program. Six of the seven participants either interviewed or during informal conversations while on the ISL program made some sort of reference to the ISL faculty leader inspiring interest in the program. For example, when Kathy was asked how she chose to attend the program, her first comment was to relay when the ISL program’s leader, Dr. P, came and spoke to her class about the program. Kathy explained:
Dr. P was so excited about it with his enthusiasm and pictures. He was so excited about going back to the village that he had been in the first time. He had pictures from this village. So just that whole thing. I could picture myself being there.

From my conversations with Ken, while sitting together on a bus ride early on in the program, I learned that he had spent considerable time with Dr. P. and heard for years of his incredible stories and experiences taking students to Honduras. Ken expressed that he had wanted to participate for quite some time.

**Peer recommendation.** Three of the students interviewed reported that they choose the ISL program in part because a friend had previously gone on the program and highly recommended it. One of those students was the female international student from Japan, Yuchen. She explained, "Because one of my friends from Japan joined the Honduras trip the previous year, so she said she really liked it, and she recommended me to go there, so that’s why I chose to go to Honduras. And before I came to the states, I really liked the Latin American countries."

Amy, explained that her interest in going on the trip was sparked before she even began graduate school. She explained:

I knew that I was going to go on the trip before I even started grad school. I knew someone who went on the trip a year ahead of me. [She] went on the trip the year before. When I was considering what grad program to be, I talked to her about the CSP program, and she talked about the Honduras trip, and I just thought it sounded really interesting and I just knew that I was going to go.
**Service oriented.** Another common draw to the ISL program studied, which was expressed among six of the seven of the students interviewed, was that it had a service-oriented focus. The students universally expressed their desire to help and be of service. Tammi explored other programs but explained how the service aspect was the deciding factor for her. She stated:

The service aspect of it interested me more than the other trips that were going on…Yeah, the ones in Australia were more cultural-based, like getting to know people, but it didn’t have the service aspect, and I thought it would be, you know, it would be a better fit for me to have a service component.

For Andy his spiritual interests appeared to underpin his choice of a service oriented program. He explained:

I came and talked to Pete right away when I got here with an interest to go in the trip, and just kind of decided that that would be move valuable to do than an internship or something like that, especially with my interest in spirituality and serving and service learn ties into spirituality a lot…I think definitely the service learning aspect of it is what I was interested in the most.

Students described wanting to have a cultural experience, but not just in the form of a vacation abroad, as stated by Katie:

I’ve never been to Central or South America, and I really like the idea of going somewhere, being able to travel and not being a tourist. So to actually get to sort of live somewhere and work and interact with people and not being the tourist, so it seemed like a unique opportunity to be able to travel.
All but one student on the program, Yuchen, reported having previous volunteer service experiences. Yuchen was the international student from Japan and she was the one student who did not identify service as a motivating factor. However, her interest in learning about service learning as a teaching method was a motivating factor as will be discussed in the final section, Practically relating to studies.

**Financial assistance.** A majority of students on the ISL program received some sort of financial assistance –primarily due to their involvement in research. Receiving some financial support was mentioned by a few students as another factor that contributed to them joining the ISL program. Marie explained:

I didn’t have a lot of money to go for the trip and what happened was I talked to the professor in charge of the trip and sort of we worked out several of the issues to make sure that I was still comfortable money-wise or economically to pay for the trip, to take care of other costs that were involved.

The faculty leader of the ISL program was able to help students who participated in research projects in Honduras to secure some funding to help offset program costs. Those resources were known to the students through the assistance of the faculty advisor.

**Mentoring.** Another key factor in the students choosing this particular program related to the faculty leader's encouragement and support of the participants. For example, Marie, the international student from Kenya, expressed how critical the advisor was to her participation in the program. I wrote in my participant observation notes after spending time rooming with Marie the significance of Dr. P’s support. She reported receiving morale support, assistance with preparing and acquiring international
documents, and help finding financial backing as determining factors regarding her participating in the ISL program.

Tammi expressed choosing the program because of its service aspects but this was after she engaged in one-on-one discussions with the programs leader. “Speaking to Dr. P about the program and the different study abroad options that were available during, I believe it was, the fall quarter of last year. He basically informed me that there was the Honduras trip and the purpose of the Honduras trip.”

Also, almost all of the participants interviewed had the ISL faculty leader as the advisor for their academic program, a professor, or worked on research projects prior to departure. However, it should be noted that four other students who went on the program did not have any relationship to the ISL faculty leader. One was attending school at off-site OU campus, another was working in Iraq the semester prior to the program, and two attended other universities and learned of the program through a faculty listserve email. Dr. P. did know the faculty advisors of the students at the other universities.

**Practically related to scholastics.** In all cases, the ISL program studied related practically to each participant’s area of study. Marie was particularly interested in the practical, hands-on aspect of learning. She explained:

Because the most interesting part of the objective was this is a class that equips you with skills to invoke students in a practical kind of practice, not only the class issues where I have to talk, talk, talk or write, write, write or you know, read something or just, you know, sit there and listen to the teacher and take my notes or to my fellow students presenting something. It is different because it help you
go out there, meet people in their normal day life and work with them. As a student, too much of class time is in an enclosure, so it’s about time went out there and talked to people in their real life situations and see what they are doing, go out and do it with them.

Most all of the students intended to be teachers or administrators in education settings and saw the potential value for their future careers. For example, Yuchen expressed:

The main reason why I have joined this program, besides my longing for Latin American countries, is to learn about different cultures for my future career. I would like to be a high school teacher in Japan, and I want to teach students many different cultures, which they are not familiar with. Therefore, this experience in Honduras will provide me with some ideas of Latin American culture.

Many of the students expressed an interest in wanting to better understand how SL programs worked with the thought of potentially facilitating such an experience in the future. To this end, Andy explained, "More importantly, I want to learn about service-learning trips in the hope that I might be able to conduct them and teach others."

**Conclusions for RQ 2.** The study identified six themes as contributing factors to students' decision to participate in the ISL program studied. These were the personal characteristics and enthusiasm of the program's leader, the service aspect of the program, peer encouragement, financial assistance, faculty mentoring, and practical connections to students' areas of study.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this research was twofold. First, the study aimed to explore whether particular aspects of an ISL program could be linked to particular impacts or learning outcomes on student participants. Secondly, the aim was to gain a better understanding of how ISL participants came to choose to be on an ISL program. This chapter will first present the context for understanding why this study was necessary followed by a synopsis of the study conducted. Then a detailed discussion of the various findings is followed by remarks about the methodology and scope of the research and ethical considerations. It concludes with ideas for future studies and practical application for ISL practitioners.

Contextual Framework for ISL Program Research Findings

Institutions of higher education continue to be pressed to not only recruit and graduate students on shrinking budgets, but to graduate students who will go into the world and succeed personally and professionally as citizens in a global economy and solve global issues (Hayes, 2012). Various scholars have found short-term ISL programs to have a positive impact on students’ sense of global citizenship (Fitch, 2004; Hartman & Heinisch, 2003; Monard-Weissman, 2003; Porter & Monard, 2001), including related positive outcomes such as cross-cultural skills, and intercultural perspectives (Pusch, 2004; Kiely, 2005). While important foundational elements of ISL programs have been identified in various studies, the research has not reported connections between particular elements and impacts on participants (Kiely, 2005). In part, this study aimed to explore
whether connections could be found between ISL programming elements and impacts on student participants.

Further, an aim of this study was to understand students' motivation for choosing to participate in the ISL program studied. Between 2001/02 and 2011/12, student participation in short-term study abroad programs (under which ISL would typically fall) doubled from 7% to 14% of all study abroad programs, whereas participation in traditional semester long study abroad decreased from 39% in 2001/02 to 35% in 2011/12 (IIE, 2013). However, only about 1.4% of students enrolled in college in the U.S. participate in study abroad programs (Based on statistics from 2009/2010 found in IIE, 2013; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).

While participation in a semester long study abroad program may not be feasible for every student, quality short-term ISL programs provide a valuable alternative. In order to increase student participation in ISL programs and make the programs most effective given limited resources in higher education settings, it is important that ISL practitioners understand as much as possible regarding what attracts students to ISL programs, and what aspects of ISL programs impact student learning and development. I had those goals in mind as I approached the study of a group of graduate school students, who participated in a short-term (two week) ISL program in Honduras during the summer of 2009. The hope was that findings from this dissertation research would prove useful to ISL proponents, especially given the expense and time involved with creating and facilitating ISL programs.
Synopsis of Study and Findings

Research methods in this study included the combined use of a case study with grounded theory. The 2009 ISL program to Honduras was the chosen as the case study. Data was obtained through one-on-one interviews with student participants shortly after their participation on that ISL program, and each interview was recorded and transcribed. Additional data was collected from the student participants’ journals which were kept as a required part of the ISL course. My participant observations as a member of the ISL program group were utilized as another data collection technique, and I kept detailed written notes throughout the program.

Initial coding techniques were employed to first conduct a word-by-word, line-by-line, review of the data collected via each of the three methods. After various themes emerged and were coded, then I conducted a thorough literature review. Subsequently, the data was re-coded and analyzed using focused coding to tease out sub-themes. Memoing was used to keep track of themes, sub-themes, and theories that emerged. Throughout the process, a constant comparative process was used to review data, find themes, create categories of sub-themes, and develop theories. Consistent with the traditional grounded theory advanced by Glaser and Strauss (1967), I did not conduct a literature review until after the first round of coding and constant comparative review. Five major themes of ISL program elements, and many sub-themes under each were found to be connected to various impacts and learning outcomes on students.
Two research questions guided my inquiry in this dissertation. Research question one focused on looking for connections between ISL program aspects and impacts on student participants.

RQ1: What aspects of the ISL program impacted the student participants and how?

Six primary themes emerged from the data as significant categories of ISL programming aspects. Many sub-themes of more specific aspects of programming elements emerged under each of those themes. These specific sub-categories of programming elements were found to be connected to specific impacts or learning outcomes.

The first theme identified as a foundational ISL element was critical processing, and the sub-themes of critical reflection activities that prompted it were: 1) journal writing, 2) group discussion, 3) dialog with community members, and 4) research. Critical processing, via one of the four types of processing activities, after a new or disruptive experience prompted critical thinking, and appeared to be the catalyst for inducing the various learning outcomes depending upon the recollection.

The second theme found to be a key element of an ISL program was the type of service project. It was significant that the students were engaged in a service project that provided an opportunity for hands-on, practical application of skills specific to the participants' areas of interest or study. In this case, most notably, the participants learned firsthand how an ISL program was organized and led, as well as, the types of feelings and experiences that participants have on such programs.
The third ISL programming theme identified was reciprocal community connections. Ten categories of ways in which student participants made connections with community members were identified. The reciprocal connections were found to be connected to two general categories of impacts: 1) enhanced diversity learning, and 2) increased critical consciousness. Then four categories of sub-themes under enhanced diversity learning emerged: 1) debunking of stereotypes, 2) appreciation of foreign culture, 3) acceptance of foreign culture, and 4) recognition of universality, and three sub-categories of themes emerged under increased critical consciousness: 1) desire to do more, 2) critical thinking about how to do more, 3) personal struggle with inadequacy or helplessness.

An international border crossing was the fourth ISL program element theme linked generally to various participant impacts. The following three sub-themes emerged under the main theme: 1) foreign country immersion, 2) language barrier, and 3) developing country. Each of these program element sub-themes was found to be connected to specific participant impacts and learning outcomes, which were categorized as outcome sub-themes. Specifically, foreign country immersion was connected to these outcome sub-themes: 1) cultural knowledge, 2) added perspective to own culture.

Choosing a country with a language barrier was related to these outcome sub-themes: 1) increased empathy, 2) increased confidence, and 3) increased interest in language study.

Finally, the choosing a developing country program element sub-theme was connected to these two outcome sub-themes: 1) expanded view of privilege, and 2) identity development.
The fifth emergent ISL program element theme was group dynamic on the ISL program. These five sub-themes emerged as program aspects that contributed to a positive group dynamic: 1) True Colors exercise, 2) group discussions, 3) working together, 4) living together, 5) celebratory events, and 6) diversity. The study revealed that these group aspects contributed to more specific outcome sub-themes related to a positive group dynamic. These included increased team cohesion, relationship building, participant motivation and inspiration, expanded perspectives and cultural learning, and enhanced support and acceptance by fellow participants.

The sixth, and final, ISL program theme that emerged from the data was non-service activities. More specifically, these eight sub-themes were revealed as specific non-service activities that impacted the student participants: 1) visits to universities, 2) visit with Peace Corp workers, 3) visit to zoo, 4) visit to recreational nature area, 5) visit to Copan Ruins, 6) visit with language school owners, 7) bus travel, 8) visit with university class, and 9) student presentations. Each activity prompted student learning specific to the activity.

Research question two sought to explore the motivation for students choosing to participate in an ISL program:

RQ2: How do students learn about and ultimately decide to participate in an ISL program?

Five themes emerged from the data as influential factors for students choosing to participate in the ISL program studied. The six themes identified were: 1) program related to scholastic study, 2) ISL leader characteristics, 3) service-oriented, 4) peer
recommendation, 5) faculty mentoring, and 6) financial assistance. See Table 2 on page 116.

**Discussion of Findings**

A detailed discussion of the various findings from RQ1 is followed by a discussion of those related to the findings from RQ2.

**Research Question 1 findings explored.** With regard to Research Question 1 (RQ1), six themes emerged from the study as general categories of ISL programming aspects that appeared connected to significant participant outcomes. These six program element themes were critical processing, related service project, connecting with community, international border crossing, group aspect, and non-service activities. Within each of these themes various sub-themes emerged that further added detail to the particulars of the program aspects that connected to participant learning outcomes and impacts. Discussions follow related to these six themes, their respective sub-themes and related impacts and learning outcomes. The section concludes with the introduction of the International Service Learning Group program model based on theory that evolved from the findings.

**Critical processing.** Points worthy of discussion related to the critical processing findings in this study include: understanding what types of experiences in conjunction with critical reflection led to learning outcomes, the cumulative use of reflection techniques, the value of four critical reflection methods, and how critical reflection sets an ISL program apart from other service abroad experiences.
My research found that critical processing engaged in by participants after various new or disruptive experiences on the ISL program prompted enhanced or critical thinking. This in turn appeared to prompt various learning outcomes depending upon the type of experiences that they were processing. For example, various research participants were frustrated by not being able to speak Spanish and hence communicate with the locals with whom they were working. They critically reflected upon their frustrations in group discussions and then later in their journals. Their writings provided support for the outcome that the participants began to empathize with foreigners who come to the US and cannot speak the language. Tammi expressed, "...this helped me to understand the experiences foreigners have when they come to the United States and are not fluent in English. Only instead of becoming inpatient with us, as some Americans frequently become, it encouraged me to want to try harder to communicate." Many scholars have found critical reflection to be a key element in prompting the types of learning experiences sought by leaders on SL programs (Bringle et. al., 2009; Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2005; King, 2004). In other words, for ISL participants, engaging in critical reflection after a thought-provoking experience appeared to be the lynchpin to prompting various other learning outcomes.

It appeared that the ISL experiences that prompted critical thinking could be either a new experience or one that proved disruptive to previous ways of thinking. Some participant experiences, like various aspects of being in a developing country, were disruptive and prompted discomfort that led to critical thought about privilege and identity matters. However, other experiences, like participants hearing perspectives on
topics from people from other countries or observing aspects of Honduran culture while engaged in service, were new, but arguably not disruptive. These provided new experiences or ideas that prompted thought; and upon critical reflection added to student learning and prompted new or changed ways of looking at situations, culture, people, etc. This would be an expansion from previous scholarship on transformative learning that fundamentally suggests that an experience must be disruptive or disorienting before transformative learning outcomes can happen.

Enhanced thinking appeared to happen when participants engaged in critical reflection after various new or disruptive experiences on the ISL program, and it appeared that engaging in various types of critical reflection had a valuable cumulative effect. Four sub-categories of reflection techniques emerged from the data: journal writing, group discussions within the participant group, dialoging with community members, and participant research. These four forms of critical reflection activities were each found to enhance critical thinking, and to be of benefit individually and in collaboration. With more reflection comes more critical thinking which presumably can lead to transformative learning outcomes.

SL scholars have consistently found the critical reflection techniques of guided journal writing and group discussions within the participant group connected to prompting critical thinking on ISL programs (Bringle et al., 2009; Crabtree, 2008; Kiely, 2005; King, 2004; Mezirow, 1994). However, the value of dialog between ISL participants and community members as a reflective or processing element has received only marginal mention in ISL scholarship. Keily (2005) is one ISL scholar who

identified the value of dialog with community members. In Kiely's longitudinal study of an ISL program in Nicaragua, he found "that dialogs with, and observations of, community members who maintained radically different political, economic, cultural, spiritual, and social perspectives enhanced study participants' ability to question taken for granted assumptions, engage in ideology critique, identify hegemonic aspects of US, and Nicaraguan culture, and, more frequently than in previous studies, reframed perspectives" (2005 p. 13). This study confirmed that facilitating opportunities for ISL participants to engage in discussions with community members (both guided and non-guided) prompted participants' critical thinking that led to various desirable learning outcomes. An example of this sort of opportunity on the program studied was providing participants with the option to conduct research in the community.

In addition, my findings revealed that students who engaged in research, not only critically reflected on their experiences while conducting research in Honduras, but also, they continued to reflect after the ISL program ended. Again and again, they mulled over their experiences while completing their research projects back in the U.S. Thus, student participants engaging in research proved to be impactful both during and after the program as it provided both a way to connect with community members and a tool to enhance critical thinking about the ISL experience.

The value of participant research as a reflection technique has received little mention in ISL scholarship and is worthy of emphasis. Some scholars have discussed the value of research in terms of it being a potentially valuable service to communities (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Crabtree, 2008; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Whyte, 1991), but little
has been studied regarding its value as a reflection or processing element that prompts critical thinking. Kiely (2005) is again one scholar who found that students engaged in research, as well as other activities, led to processing by those ISL participants. He relayed that "[r]eflective processing occurred during group discussions within the ISL group, dialogs with community members, presentations to the community, academic seminars, research projects, journal writing, reading assignments, and post-program assignments (2005, p. 10). The aspect to emphasize from both Kiely's and my findings is that processing occurs in three forms: thinking, writing, and talking; and that reflection techniques that facilitate any or all of these are valuable for prompting critical thinking that can lead to desirable learning outcomes.

My research findings suggest that the addition of a guided critical processing component is one key factor that delineates the ISL experience from traditional study abroad experiences and volunteer vacations abroad. On a semester long study abroad program, participants go solo to study abroad and live with a family. Typically there is no group travel involved, hence, no facilitated group reflection activities. Even if participants engage in service during a study abroad experience, critical reflection is not commonly part of the program design as a program leader is not normally present to provide guided prompts for reflection in journals, or otherwise. Further, based on my experience working for two large student volunteer travel programs that involved service, guided reflection is not typically part of those program designs, but it could be. All volunteer travel program programs could add reflection to their designs and potentially reap the benefits.
In sum, ISL leaders should begin by identifying learning outcomes or impact goals for their ISL experiences. If a learning outcome is dependent on critical thinking, then some form of guided critical reflection will be needed to induce potential learning after a new or disruptive event. The use of multiple guided critical reflection techniques appears advisable to enhance learning outcomes and impacts on participants.

Service project. All of the student participants on the program were interested in either being educators or administrators in higher education settings. SL courses are normally developed as part of a course curriculum, and often promoted through study abroad departments. Thus, both administrators and educators can benefit from learning about SL. The ISL program in this study provided student participants an opportunity to experience firsthand how an ISL program worked, and then critically reflect on their experiences.

This enhanced opportunity for problem solving and applied learning outside of typical classroom setting is a basic tenet of experiential learning theory (Dewey, 1938), from which service learning theory evolved. Struggling with how to engage in service and how to conduct research while negotiating a language barrier were prime examples of instances in which student participants were presented with problems that directly related to their scholastic studies. Students being able to apply and enhance skills related to their areas of study remains a key component of ISL programs. Also, most of the participants mentioned this as a motivating factor for choosing the ISL program in this study. See Table 2: Themes and Definitions for RQ2 on page 131.
Connecting with community. The findings support the conclusion that the formation of reciprocal connections and the personalization of community members was key to the ISL participants having a positive experience and prompted critical consciousness and diversity impacts on those participants. This section discusses applying the findings to future ISL program design so as to create ISL experiences that not only allow for the reciprocal connections to be made and personalizing to occur, but also to advance a social justice aspect of an ISL program by attempting to channeling the participants desire and critical thinking about helping into options for subsequent engagement.

Personalizing activities. Considering that all of the student participants indicated that one of their favorite and most valued aspects of the ISL program was their time spent engaged in service with the community of Santa Rita, understanding how and when students connected with community members should be helpful to future ISL leaders as they consider and plan service projects that allows for these types of connecting experiences to occur. As the research findings suggested, connections tended to occur during little reciprocal moments such as when laughing, playing games, or working together on service projects. Other ISL scholars reported similar observations on their programs:

At the heart of the diversity movement in higher education has been the assumption that when people work with those who are different from themselves, the personal friendships that are created will lead to other positive gains for people and communities… Many of these connections are built while trying to
achieve a common objective, but sometimes they are simple moments when two lives touch in ways that are not purposive, but allow for an emotional connection. (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 26)

I experienced a similar phenomenon when I led groups of US high school students on week-long sea turtle volunteer programs in Costa Rica (one a week for approximately three months). Despite being advertised as a sea turtle service program, the student feedback after the program each week consistently referred to their time spent volunteering with children at a local elementary school and working together with local community members to repair the school as the more memorable and significant aspects of their experience than their actual time spent working on the sea turtle project (a project that did not allow for reciprocal connections).

**Critical consciousness outcomes.** The bonding and personalizing of community members and their issues appears to be significant because once the personalizing occurred, the ISL participants genuinely wanted to help their new friends and engaged in problem solving and critical thinking related to community issues. However, with a two-week ISL program, this personalizing element occurs and the program soon ends. This leaves a charged up group of participants who continue to reflect on their experiences -- especially if they engaged in research projects that they finish up after the program. The challenge then to ISL leaders is to channel that interest and energy. Such a follow up component to ISL programs has received little attention in ISL literature or research. I would suggest the “fruit is ripe for the picking” --that is, this appears to be a prime
opportunity to be thoughtful about how to further engage students, or at least present
them with options for further engagement.

Channeling the participants’ desire to help fits with advancing a social justice
approach to ISL programs as encouraged by many scholars (Battistoni, 2002; Cipolie,
2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Martin & Wheeler, 2000). If there are pressing needs in a
community, keeping ISL participants engaged after a program could be beneficial to both
the community and the students. Is this not the larger goal of a SL experience with a
social justice orientation --to channel the good energy and personalizing of a community
into social activism or problem solving?

However, as suggested by various SL scholars, service alone does not prompt
Theory model, which provides that three elements must occur for students to develop
critical consciousness. One must: 1) develop an awareness of social issues, 2) widen
one's perspective of others, and 3) see one's potential to affect change. Does becoming
critically conscious mean that students will engage in work to address social ills in the
future? On the ISL program in this study, elements one and two were present, but did the
students see their own potential to make changes? If students could see their potential to
offer or be engaged in the future with potential projects that affected change, would they
engage in some way in the future?

I would argue that this is a necessary element of an ISL program in order to
actually be of value to the communities that students aim to serve, and to channel
students' desire to help in the future towards meaningful efforts. What would it take to keep students engaged after the SL experience?

Future research and ISL program models would benefit from paying attention to this concept of providing meaningful ways for students to be of future service. Many of the participants mentioned in their journals a desire to share with others what they learned on their ISL experience. Thus, an obvious way to channel some of that energy would be to have a system set up for students to share their experiences with others. Interestingly, this fits appropriately with the usefulness of sharing positive experiences as a valuable recruitment tool for future ISL programs. See discussion on p. 167 regarding recruitment of ISL participants.

How to offer assistance specific to any particular community is obviously going to vary depending upon the issues and the community partners involved. One general thought to consider is the potential value of online technology. Specifically, it might be beneficial to establish an online resource network of that allows participants, perhaps from other schools and organizations, to share experiences and build off the experiences of one another. The network would provide for contact with international partners and allow for transparency regarding service goals and initiatives.

Student participants reported gaining new insight regarding what the Honduran community members felt they needed (or did not need) in their community. For example, numerous community members expressed a need for another school and an irrigation system. Conflict arose when the U.S. students were helping pour cement floors and build latrines, but were being told of these different needs. This resulted in confusion among
the student participants as to whether their efforts were aligned with community needs, and how to further support the community they just served. In addition, the community partner (NGO) having a religious affiliation appeared to foster skepticism among some participants regarding the NGO's motives.

When a community partner has a religious affiliation, it appears that a heightened need exists to clarify the mission and accomplishments of the NGO in order to instill confidence that students are not supporting an agenda based on proselytizing. This issue appeared to become even more important after the personalizing. Students cared how they were helping their new friends.

For future ISL projects, collaboration with a non-religious community partner, or if a partner should be considered. If a partner is religiously affiliated then providing more clarification regarding the NGO's mission and accomplishments should be prioritized. The take away is that channeling student energy for future service is worthy of exploration and a valuable to consider in future ISL program models and research.

*Diversity learning outcomes.* Four sub-themes related to diversity learning outcomes emerged as findings as participants began to observe and connect with community members. Specifically, the data revealed that the participants' perceptions and knowledge of Honduran culture and people expanded, and that they came to develop an appreciation and acceptance of the same. Universality was identified as the fourth sub-theme as participants came to see commonalities between themselves and the Hondurans.
The students having an opportunity to immerse themselves in service work situations alongside the Hondurans provided positive first-hand experiences which served to correct some negative misperceptions that participants held of the people and culture in Honduras, a developing country, prior to the program. These impacts on participants can be categorized generally as diversity learning outcomes.

Studies of SL and ISL programs frequently report multicultural learning outcomes (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Henry, 2005; Morton, 1995; Monard-Weissman, 2003; O'Grady, 2000; Pusch, 2004; Rhoads, 1997). Additionally, a plethora of service learning programs set within the US report diversity learning outcomes like those found in my study. Mathew Holsapple (2012) conducted a review study of diversity learning outcomes that were reported from 55 different SL programs in the US. Interestingly, five of the areas of diversity learning Holsapple identified as resulting from the various program were consistent with the these diversity outcomes found in my research: stereotype confrontation, knowledge about the population served, appreciation for value of diversity, tolerance of difference, and recognition of universality.

He added as a critique or limitation of the various studies the fact that the researchers did not provide information as to what elements of the SL programs were linked to the reported outcomes. I concur with Holsapple's (2012) observation that reported SL studies appear scant in making connections between diversity (or multicultural) outcomes and SL programming elements. This study begins to fill that void as the findings revealed programmatic elements that appeared to connect to various diversity outcomes. In particular, the service projects in which the students engaged
allowed for reciprocal connections to be made between community members and participants, which in turn prompted the personalizing of those being served. The result of these connections and experiences within the community, together with critical reflection of those experiences, appeared to prompt the various diversity related outcomes.

The findings revealed that the participants entering a country and culture different from their own was impactful on them in various ways, but that those impacts varied depending upon other aspects related to the country chosen for the ISL program. The subsequent section discusses in depth the three sub-themes which further emerged under the international border crossing theme that appeared to connect to specific participant learning outcomes. These three sub-themes were: 1) foreign country, 2) country with a language barrier, and 3) developing country.

Foreign country. The findings revealed that the participants' crossing into a new country prompted exposure to and learning about cultural elements, but did not necessarily connect to participants' understanding or appreciation of the Honduran culture. Rather, it was not until after the participants connected with and personalized the Honduran community members, and reflected on their experiences that evidence of cultural appreciation, acceptance, and feelings of universality were found as themes in the data.

This finding supports what critics suggest could be a negative impact of said ISL programs -- that exposure to a different culture, without critical reflection or an opportunity to make positive connections to people within the culture brings with it the
risk of reinforcing inaccurate stereotypes --both negative and positive (Cruz, 1990; Illich, 1968). Thus, this finding highlights the importance of service projects that allow for reciprocal community connections and utilize critical reflection methods as foundational elements on an ISL program. These elements, in addition to a border crossing, appear more likely to increase ISL participants' understanding and appreciating a foreign culture.

Language barrier. All of the ISL participants studied experienced discomfort and frustration while navigating in a foreign country with a language barrier. Honduras being a Spanish speaking country, and none of the students speaking Spanish, caused personal struggles that appeared to connect to some notable positive impacts. While the students wished they could speak to the community members, being silenced prompted new found feelings of empathy with persons in minority positions, in particular foreigners who come to their respective countries. This silencing was a significant experience that prompted changes in perspective and development of students' critical consciousness, a result which presumably would not otherwise have occurred on an ISL program without a language barrier.

Also, as students successfully navigated the language barrier and connected with community members, their confidence in traveling appeared to increase as well as their interest in Spanish language study. It would be interesting to engage in a follow up study to see whether students did actually engage in more travel or language study.

Interestingly, that which may have at first been perceived as a negative, a language barrier, proved to prompt valuable learning outcomes on the ISL experience. If
these are learning outcomes desired by an ISL leader, then having an ISL program take place in a foreign country with a language barrier should be considered.

**Developing country.** The findings revealed a number of learning outcomes connected to the ISL program being set in a developing country.

A significant finding was the impact of participants being immersed in service work in a developing country on their perceptions about their privileged economic status relative to the Hondurans. Various SL scholars have reported similar findings related to students dealing with issues of privilege when economic disparity exists between the participants and community members (Butin, 2005a; Butin, 2005b; Dacheux, 2005; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005, Leibowitz, 2002; Mather et al., 2012).

Uncomfortable situations like a participant wearing tennis shoes while those around him went barefoot, or having excess food after dinner while the Hondurans around them were going hungry, prompted more discomfort and disruption for the participants. These personal struggles prompted the students to critically reflect upon and examine their own wealth, possessions, and standards of living in the US.

Also, the findings suggest that being in a developing country contributed to expanding aspects of some students' identities. In particular, some participants' identities appeared to transform from those who otherwise identified as a "poor graduate student" or "African-American female" in the US for example, to seeing themselves as privileged in a larger world context. An ISL program's ability to impact student identity development is consistent with findings by other scholars (Butin, 2005a; Butin, 2005b; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005; Mather, 2012), although none of these
scholars specifically make the connection of identity development to choosing to locate an ISL program in a developing country. If ISL leaders desire participant learning outcomes related to identity development, or consciousness raising that comes with students struggling with issues of privilege, then the choice of have the program in a developing country should be considered.

In sum, ISL leaders should give thoughtful consideration to the country chosen for the ISL program as it appears to have the potential to impact the participants in various aforementioned notable ways.

**Group dynamic.** The findings revealed that the group dynamic proved to be a key impactful program element of the ISL program studied, and that six things appeared to impact the group dynamic. The six aspects that were identified as contributing to the group dynamic and a discussion of the significant outcomes related to those aspects will be discussed with special attention to the finding related to the value of a diverse participant group.

**Contributing elements.** The six program aspects that appeared to contribute to various positive group dynamic outcomes were: the True Colors activity, evening reflection that encouraged a supportive and inclusive environment for all, working together on service projects, living and traveling together, celebratory events, and the diversity of participants within the group. Interestingly, ISL research and studies offer little on the topic of teambuilding, nor the significance of building and maintaining a positive group dynamic. While reported program designs in both SL & ISL typically make reference to “pre-departure” and team-building activities, these aspects are given
very little attention within actual ISL research (Crabtree, 2008). However, various SL practitioners provide some guidance on the subject.

Kathy Farber (2011) dedicated a full chapter to teambuilding in her book *Change the World with Service Learning: How to Organize, Lead, and Assess Service-Learning Projects*. “The skills --collaboration, teamwork, and communication --that come from working together in small groups are essential for our students. The nitty-gritty work of teams is not always easy, but in service learning (as in life) it produces the greatest rewards, products, and processes” (p. 41). Farber (2011) provided “Tuckman’s Team Development Model” as a useful framework to apply to working with service-learning groups, which sets forth the various phases that groups move through called: 1) forming 2) storming, 3) norming, and 4) performing (p. 42).

Cheryl Stevens (2008) echoes the importance of understanding team development in her book, *Service Learning for Health, Physical Education, and Recreation: A step-by-step guide*. “If students are going to be expected to work as a group, they need time to learn about each other, to trust each other, and to appreciate the special talents each can bring to a situation” (Stevens, 2008, p. 37). Stevens provides various practical techniques for building effective teams which focus on developing effective communication skills, developing “group-process skills”, and understanding team development and leadership principles (p. 18). She includes a helpful “Team Development and Leadership Model” for application to SL programs (p. 34).

While the ISL program in this study had a few formal meetings to discuss various aspects related to traveling to Honduras and what to expect, two of the international
students interviewed suggested a non-formal pre-departure get together such as a potluck dinner in an attempt to get people starting to know one another. This seems like a good idea for program leaders to consider if the time and opportunity are available.

**Group dynamic outcomes.** The ISL student participants bonding and coming together as a group or team appeared to be significant to the students having a positive experience on the ISL program, and it appeared to impact the way in which they worked within the community. Students reported working harder and staying positive upon seeing their fellow classmates working hard and display positive attitudes. No doubt an ISL program’s group dynamic significantly impacts service participants’ ability to work successfully together and effectively execute service projects. Perhaps as more consideration is given to the impact of ISL programs on communities, SL and ISL literature will address the significance of teambuilding activities between participants and with community partners too.

Further, it follows that if a positive group dynamic is fostered on an ISL program, that the individual participants are likely to have a positive and enjoyable experience. Consequently, the participants are likely to spread the good word about their experiences, thereby encouraging others to participate in the program in the future. The value of former ISL participants assisting in recruiting future participants is further discussed in the section regarding ISL participant recruitment on p. 167.

**Participant group diversity.** The research findings supported that human diversity within the ISL group positively impacted the student participants' experiences and led to some remarkable outcomes related to multicultural learning and group support.
Interestingly, the research found that a wide range of diversity added value to the ISL participants' experiences. Notably impactful sources of diversity on this ISL program included students from different countries, single and married students, different ethnicities, participants with children, differing sexes, age diversity, and diverse socio-economic backgrounds and areas of academic study. Other scholars have reported the value of diversity within the student participant group (Camacho, 2004; Heilman, D. C., 2012). Diversity within this group was found to impact students in three significant ways worthy of the following discussion.

Not only did the group dynamic appear to foster team development aspects of coming together to work on projects, but it also provided the opportunity to share and hear diverse perspectives related to the ISL experiences. Having participants from different backgrounds, countries, ethnicities, ages, etcetera, offer their opinions and insights during group discussions was found to be valuable. Students appeared to appreciate the various diverse perspectives that simply came from there being a large group observing and experiencing the same thing, but having a different take or opinion or way of processing. Moreover, many students reported appreciating the perspectives of students from countries different from their own. This seemed to expand students' worldviews. Other scholars found similarly: “This [ISL] experience also reminded the participants that learning not only occurred in the interactions with the Hondurans, but also through engagement with a diverse class of students --students who look at their experiences through a different lens” (Mather et al., 2012, p. 11).
The potential for diverse participants to learn about and from one another was found to be further enhanced on an ISL program as the structure provided the unique opportunity for participants to live and engage in service work alongside one another in a foreign country. The findings revealed that this prompted participants to learn about and appreciate one another's differences. “The appreciation of different cultures and reduction of stereotyping is perhaps a first step in the process by which service-learning brings about personal and interpersonal development” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 26).

Another notable impact was that students in "like" groups seemed to take comfort and find support in finding others like themselves. For example, the international students took comfort from and related to other international students, and. married people supported other married people. Thus, if an ISL leader aims to attract particular kinds of diversity and wants those participants to feel supported, it follows that having more than one participant representing that diverse aspect would likely add to a supportive group environment.

Given the positive experiences that all of the students reported specific to the value of a diverse group of participants, it appears valuable for ISL leaders to focus efforts on recruiting diverse participants on an ISL program. Unfortunately, not many studies or statistics are available to indicate the diversity of students who participate in study abroad, or ISL programs in particular. The only reported diversity that I found relates to some ethnic groups' participation in study abroad programs which would include short-term ISL programs. Specifically, African American and Latino students are reported as two ethnic groups that are significantly underrepresented in study abroad
programs including short-term ISL programs (IIE, 2013; US Census Bureau, 2012). The most recent US Census Bureau statistics reported that of the students attending higher education, 14.6% identify as African American and 12% as Latino. However, of the students participating in study abroad, only 5.3% were African American (IIE, 2013) and 7.6% were Latino (US Census, 2012). How to increase African-American student participation has been the subject of some ISL research (CIEE, 1993; Penn & Tanner, 2009). See p. 165 for discussion on issues related to recruitment of a diverse ISL student group.

ISL programs appear to provide opportunities to advance multicultural and diversity education related to both the countries visited and within the participant groups. Understanding this potential impact on student participants’ learning and development, as well as how to recruit diverse participants and facilitate diverse groups, offers a vast area for future ISL research.

**Non-service activities.** Non-service activities were found to enhance the learning by student participants on the ISL program. This study found that the students meeting with and talking to other locals, from Peace Corp workers, to educators, to leaders of NGOs, all added to the students' perspectives and understanding of Honduras --its people, culture, politics, history, and challenges. Further learning occurred when students traveled to and experienced guided tours of various universities, historical, cultural, and recreation sites. These outings also served as times when students were able to spend time getting to know their peers in a more relaxed environment --seemingly adding to a
positive group dynamic. The value of non-service excursions is supported the literature by other ISL scholars:

Seizing unforeseen learning opportunities, such as impromptu side trips, visiting lectures by host-country experts, cultural performances, or serendipitous moments from everyday life such as seeing an important detail previously unnoticed while walking a routine path down (just a few possible examples), is a critically important aspect of ISL experiences, and reflection strategies (and those who implement them) would have the flexibility to respond to these opportunities.

(Bringle et al., 2003, p. 168)

Also, some of these non-service activities presented opportunities for student participants to dialog with others living and working in Honduras, which was already previously discussed as a valuable technique to prompt participants’ critical thinking (See p. 143 for discussion). The type of participant learning that occurred was specific to the type of activity experienced by the student. Thus, ISL leaders can, and should, enhance student learning specific to their ISL program goals through the addition of non-service excursions.

**Conclusion.** This study identified six impactful ISL program element themes, their respective sub-categories of more specific activities, and their connections to various respective impacts or learning outcomes. Of those, these five program aspects all represent categories of new or disruptive experiences: 1) international border crossing; 2) hands on service project; 3) reciprocal connections with community partners; 4) non-service activities; and 5) group dynamic. The sub-categories under each provide
guidance to ISL practitioners to design ISL programs that are likely to prompt the various outcomes listed. Critical processing, using one of four critical reflection techniques, is the sixth foundational ISL element which proved instrumental in prompting critical thinking after new experiences that led to the various impacts or learning outcomes on participants. ISL practitioners can use the findings as illustrated in Appendix A as a guide to help design ISL programs that effectuate desired impacts and learning outcomes.

The findings from this study confirm many of the previously reported impacts and transformative learning outcomes reported by ISL scholars such as various aspects of identity development, diversity learning outcomes (expanded knowledge and appreciation for other cultures), increased world perspective, and personal skill development specific to one's area of study.

The findings further bolster those of other scholars regarding proposed foundational ISL program aspects, in particular the importance of a new or disruptive experience followed by critical reflection, an international border crossing, and service projects with a social justice orientation that allow for reciprocal community connections and personalizing. This study's findings add to ISL scholarship by providing dimension and depth to those foundational elements in terms of particular aspects related to each foundational elements that connect to particular impacts and learning outcomes. Further, the study found that two other ISL program elements, the group aspect and non-service activities, significantly impact participants too.

The findings support some of those in Kiely's (2005) ISL study in that both contextual and non-reflective activities were found to be significantly connected to
participant outcomes. However, this study deviated from Kiely's findings as to the
particular contextual factors that were found to be significant. Only those contextual
factors that could be directly linked to impacts on participants were identified as
significant. For example, a major deviation from Kiely's work was that the history and
other personal characteristics of participants were not identified as significant as no direct
connections to outcomes were made. However, this study's findings support the value of
reflective processing, and the various guided reflective techniques identified by Kiely as
valuable, including journaling, group discussions, dialoging with community members,
and engaging in research projects.

As a result, these findings provide the basis for theory to suggest a practical ISL
program development model, International Service Learning Group (ISLG) program
model (See Appendix B), based on these six foundational program elements: 1) internationa border crossing, 2) hands on service project, 3) reciprocal connections with
community partners, 4) non-service activities, 5) group dynamic, and 6) critical
processing. ISL practitioners are encouraged to use the ISLG program model as a guide
to develop future ISL programs --in particular ones that result in desired learning
outcomes and impacts on participants.

Research Question 2 findings explored. The study sought to explore the
participants’ motivation to be on the ISL program. Given the value of ISL programs and
the time and effort involved with organizing and leading an ISL program, gaining a better
understanding of how students came to be on the Honduras ISL program is significant for
thinking about efforts to recruit future students to ISL programs. Moreover, as a result of
the findings regarding the value of having a diverse participant group, it is important to understand what attracted the various diverse students, and ultimately motivated them to join the program.

The Honduras ISL program related to all of the students' areas of study, although interestingly, the construction service project itself did not relate to any of the students' areas of study. However, the concept of ISL as a teaching or administrative tool/concept related to all of the students' future career interests in being either instructors or administrators in educational settings. Also, the various planned trips to local universities related to the students' general interest in education. Thus, it appeared that the students were attracted in part to the ISL program because it related to their areas of study. This is consistent with findings in the literature regarding other students on other ISL programs.

Unfortunately, four of the student participants on the ISL program (the student from the regional campus, two students from other universities, and one OU student who was working abroad) were not interviewed about their motivations to participate in the Honduras ISL program. This would be valuable information as those four students did not have a connection to the faculty ISL leader. From the faculty advisor, I learned that the two of the students who were from other universities learned of the program via a faculty listserv that goes out to college student personnel students. The student at the regional campus and the other OU student had access to advertised Study Abroad programs. Future studies would obviously benefit from interviewing all ISL participants regarding this topic. **Mentoring.** Another significant factor identified by many of the students in choosing this particular ISL program was the enthusiasm, encouragement, and
assistance of the ISL program faculty leader. Additionally, prior to the trip, the faculty leader was either an advisor, instructor, or engaged in research with seven of the twelve participants (all of the participants interviewed in the study). The relationship to the various students appeared significant too, at the very least from the standpoint of having access to students to tell them about the program and encourage their participation. My experience was similar to those reported by the other participants in that the faculty leader’s interest, enthusiasm, and support impacted my decision to be a part of the ISL experience.

The importance of faculty mentoring in ISL programs has been echoed by various scholars (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012; Waldron-Moore, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Faculty mentors have been found to be important not only in encouraging participation, but also, in supporting participants during and after ISL programs (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Eyler & Giles (1999) found that forming close personal connections to faculty members is a positive predictor of SL outcomes. “The [faculty mentor] relationships prove invaluable for students during and post-program” (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012, p. 775). On Acquaye and Crewe’s ISL program to South Africa all students have a faculty mentor to support them during the program, and with reflections on re-entry after the program.

Some SL programs encourage the engagement of more experienced peer role-models as mentors as a way to cultivate student learning, for both mentors and mentees, in particular the development of leadership skills for the mentors (Cipolle, 2010; Wells & Grabert, 2004). The use of peer-mentor role models to recruit and support potential
future ISL students seems very appropriate in light of the next findings regarding peer encouragement.

**Peer recruitment.** Three of the students interviewed from the Honduras program specifically reported that they had heard positive things from peers who had gone on the ISL program the previous year. This highlights the importance of having prior students share their positive experiences and encourage the participation of future students.

Also, attention should be given to using a diverse array of former participants to recruit future students if the goal is encourage a diverse future group. Since almost all students identified "how he or she would fit into the group" as a concern, this supports the notion that students will tend to relate to other students with whom they can identify. Thus, if you want to recruit international students, or married students, or GLBT students, or African-American students, etc., the point is to have students from these different groups sharing their experiences with potential participants.

**Economic considerations and timing.** Multiple students identified receiving some financial assistance to help defray the cost of the program as significant. The students were made aware of that assistance and how to acquire it through the faculty advisor. Given that finances were noted as a factor for a majority of the students, and half of the participants were married, and one with a young child at home.

While most of the research studies in the literature address the under-representation of African American students in ISL programs particular, arguably the lessons learned from that research are applicable to recruitment efforts generally, and in particular efforts to encourage underrepresented or minority student participation.
Hembroff and Rusz (1993) at Michigan University conducted a study of enrollment data combined with a survey of African-American students and white students found four factors that potentially impacted African-American students’ participation in study abroad programs: 1) choice of major (i.e. less African-Americans in Arts and Literature where study abroad was more encouraged; 2) low attrition rates (i.e., less African-American students remaining in college until their junior year when students typically opt for an international experience), 3) low exposure to international travel and thus, heightened perceived risks; and 4) lower financial resources than their white peers (p. 29).

Penn and Tanner’s (2009) subsequent study of African American students found some distinctions from Hembroff and Rusz’s (1993) earlier research. Their findings resulted from a survey of 41 high school graduates who were participating in a six-week summer college preparatory program at an HBCU, and who identified as African-American. The findings supported that the major reasons that for African-American students not participating in international education were: 1) students not understanding the value of the experience and/or seeing a connection to their career goals; 2) lack of exposure to the concept of ISL, especially by someone who “looks like them”; 3) lack of mentors to encourage and assist with making it happen; and 4) financial constraints (p. 278). The researcher’s recommendation was to encourage short-term ISL programs.

Penn and Tanner’s (2009) research was further supported by findings from a case study of an ISL to program to South Africa offered through the social work program at an HBCU, researchers presented “lessons learned” regarding four barriers to African
American student participation (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012). These four barriers were “(1) financial constraints, (2) encouragement and support from faculty, (3) anxiety about the unfamiliar, and (4) correlations between international competence and career objectives” (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012). Pre-program preparation meetings and discussion boards were recommended to attempt to alleviate fears of the unknown regarding traveling abroad and living and working in another culture (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012).

ISL researchers agree that timing of ISL programs should be considered when addressing financial constraints (Acquaye & Crewe, 2012; Hembroff & Rusz, 1993). Often semester long and summer programs are not practical for students. “[S]ince many study abroad programs occur in the summer, students must confront not only the direct costs of going but also the cost of rewards forgone (e.g., of not earning money during the summer that could help pay for education expenses the next academic year)” (Hembroff & Rusz, 1993, p. 4). Ultimately the model ISL program recommended by Acquaye & Crewe (2012) was offered during Spring Break.

Although the question of timing was not asked directly of this research group, the fact that the program was in the summer and shorter than a typical study abroad program was likely a consideration given that more than half the group was either married, had children, from another country, or from another school. That question would be good to be explored and confirmed with future research. Certainly the timing of the program should be a consideration when planning an ISL program aimed at encouraging a diverse group of participants.
**Service.** Finally, all but one of the research participants indicated that the program having a volunteer or service component was a notable factor. These students wanted to participate in a program that involved a "serve" aspect, as opposed to just it just being a cultural vacation. This points up that a place to recruit (or develop) students for ISL programs may be through the community service department at a university.

**Conclusions related to ISL participant motivation.** Six factors were identified as contributing to the participants' choice of the ISL program. These factors were that the program related to their area of scholastic study; included a service component; was peer recommended; had an engaging and encouraging faculty leader; and provided financial assistance. Table 2: Research Question Two: Six Motivational Themes & Definitions provides a visual for these findings on p. 116. ISL practitioners might consider each of these, plus the timing of offering an ISL program, in recruitment efforts.

**Methodological Assumptions and Scope of the Study**

A qualitative study allows for themes and theory to emerge from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This study's use of the qualitative research methods of a case study combined with grounded theory enabled a productive inquiry that yielded significant findings. A strength of the study was the use of both approaches as suggested by Laws and McLeod (2006). The particular ISL program studied was a typical short term (two week) program set in a developing country, offered over summer break through a large, mid-western, public university, and included a diverse participant group. All of these factors make it arguably representative of ISL programs offered at other state public
institutions of higher education, hence the study's findings too can be useful to ISL practitioners at like schools throughout the US.

Utilizing a constructive grounded theory approach allowed for themes and theory to emerge from the data without a preconceived idea of what those themes would be (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Consistent with the grounded theory process advanced by Strauss and Corbin (1990), a literature review was not conducted until after the initial coding of the all the data sources had occurred. After various themes emerged from the coding and comparative process, conducting the literature review was then instrumental in introducing new ways of looking at the data, and re-characterizing and grouping the data in some cases. Because I was not versed in ISL or SL theoretical models prior to conducting my research, the validity of my findings were enhanced as I found themes that were consistent or different from those in other studies. I believe that my fresh look at the data, without bias from knowledge of existing theory, enabled the discovery of subtle but important differentiations and expansions of existing SL & ISL theory such as the significance of the group aspect on an ISL program. Thus, the findings are particularly grounded in the data, and supported by theory.

In qualitative researcher, the research is the instrument that collects the data (Glesne, 2006), and as such, the strength of this study was the ability to draw from my own experiences related to the topics being studied as I collected the data. Actually being present on the ISL program allowed me to be both immersed in the experience while also observing the happenings and interactions around me. This strength has the potential negative effect of possibly skewing observations in the data collection process due to
researcher bias. Qualitative research theorists have suggested various methods to add validity to findings (Glesne, 2006; Patton, 2002), many of which I employed in this research.

Triangulation of the data collection methods (Glesne, 2006), as well as triangulation during data analysis, adds to the validity of a study (Patton, 2002). With regard to Research Question 1, triangulation as used in the data collection process by employing three data collection methods: participant interviews, reviewing of journals, and participant observation. Specific to research question one, only when a theme emerged repeatedly in all three data sources, would it be advance coded into a category as significant. These significant categories were used as the basis to modify and expand existing ISL theories. The grounded theory research process ultimately led me to put the data together in a way that suggests a new theoretical approach for creating ISL programs with more intentional learning outcomes and impacts.

Regarding enhancing validity during data analysis, member checking was one method used to ensure that I had captured and characterized accurately the data gathered from the participants. Specifically, I emailed my finding to the various participants studied and asked them to review, comment, and correct any inaccuracies. My dissertation committee chair also reviewed the findings and provided feedback. As he was the leader of the ISL program studied, and a scholar within the ISL field, his feedback was helpful and insightful to this research process. Additionally, I attempted to add credibility to my written findings by providing accurate support from the data in the
form of detailed descriptions and direct quotes from the participants’ interviews and journals.

A few limitations of this study relate to Research Question 2, and the findings regarding the participants’ motivation to participate in an ISL program. The findings related to that inquiry were based on participant interviews only. Thus, while triangulation occurred in the data analysis process, it did not occur in the data collection process. Also, a question arises as to the appropriateness of generalizing the findings given the relatively small sample size of seven. I would suggest that the findings add understanding to why ISL participants attract and participate generally in ISL programs, but need to be enhanced by further study. Some of the reasons provided were echoed by multiple participants, but other reasons were given by only a couple participants. For example, five of the students interviewed mentioned the infectious enthusiasm of the ISL program leader, but only two participants mentioned that a friend had previously gone on the program and recommended it. I included peer recommendations in the findings as a potential contributing factor to deciding to be on an ISL program, but arguable a sample size of two is small. Yet peer encouragement was mentioned as a factor in other studies related to study abroad recruitment; therefore, I chose to include it as a significant factor.

Additionally, not all of the ISL program participants who went on the Honduras program were interviewed. In particular, none of the students from the other universities or branch campuses were interviewed, so it is unclear if their motivation for participating in the program was the same or differed in some respects from those ISL participants
who were interviewed. Future research would certainly benefit from including all participants on the ISL program, especially those from remote campuses.

**Ethical Considerations**

This study was officially approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University, and adhered to the accepted ethical standards within qualitative research. See Appendix D: IRB Approval.

All participants on the ISL program studied were aware that research was being conducted, and their consent was obtained prior to data collection that took place in Honduras. Targeted participants on the ISL program received an email after the program ended requesting their participation in a follow up interview, and explained that their consent was desired, but optional. Each participant's informed written consent was acquired prior to each in-person interview. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

To ensure the confidentiality of the research participants, pseudonyms were used in the write up of the findings. Transcribed interview and journal documents were kept on a password protected external hard-drive, as was a key to the participant names.

I used triangulation in both the data collection and analysis processes to enhance the validity of my findings. Three resources were utilized for data collection for this study (participant interviews, participant journals, and participant observation). Themes that emerged from one source would be seen as significant when they arose again in the subsequent sources.

The triangulation of methods used as I coded and interpreted the data added further validity to my findings. Member checking was utilized to ensure that the findings
accurately represented the information obtained from participant data. Specifically, individual findings were sent via email to the research participants for their review and comment. Further, I relayed my findings in the dissertation using thick, rich detail, and included a substantial amount of quotes from participants to relay data as accurately as possible. Moreover, I had another researcher, who was also the leader of the ISL program studied and my dissertation chair, review my data and findings for accuracy. I used detailed memoing throughout the coding and interpretation process to allow for transparency by this reviewer, and future reviewers, of my data analysis research process.

I worked professionally for over ten years with justice systems in Ohio conducting research that included frequent, almost daily, interviewing of children and adults. Said experience conducting interviews lends credibility to the information acquired in this study, as I have extensive experience establishing rapport with interviewees, asking relevant impromptu follow up questions and subsequent versions of questions to clarify or extract more information while making use of memoing to capture relevant thoughts and ideas throughout the interview.

**Implications for Future Research**

1. This is the first ISL study of its kind in that it aims to not only identify learning outcomes and impacts from an ISL program, but also to connect those to particular elements of an ISL program. Future ISL research would benefit from testing and confirming the links between programming elements and outcomes found in this study. A researcher might attempt to use the qualitative findings in this study to create an
instrument to conduct a quantitative inquiry exploring those connections using multiple ISL programs.

2. Four critical processing activities were found to be instrumental to prompting critical thinking: journaling, within group discussions, dialoging with community members, and researching. It may be beneficial to better understand the value of each technique individually, as well as the cumulative effect of engaging in multiple types of reflection activities.

3. Participants dialoging with community members provides the only time when participants have an opportunity to potentially gain different perspectives about the experiences and information they are taking in on the ISL program. This opportunity is especially important when a language barrier exists. It differs in that regard from the other guided reflections techniques of participant group discussions and journaling --as those only involve people within the ISL program adding their perspectives. Future research would benefit from understanding the specific impacts of dialoging on the participants and perhaps exploring strategies for engagement.

4. Various ISL scholars have suggested that understanding the impacts of the ISL programs on the communities they aim to serve is an area much in need of research (Crabtree, 2008). Studying the impacts on communities fits with advancing a social justice orientation of ISL programs. Critics of ISL programs argue that it is morally and ethically wrong to not thoroughly understand the needs of and impacts on communities (Cruz, 1990; Illich, 1968). Dialoging with community members arguably fits with a social justice orientation as participants gain information and insight directly from
community members. Future ISL research might explore both the potential benefits of
dialoging with community members on participants and on the community members the
program aims to serve.

5. ISL participants connecting with and personalizing community members
inspired the students' desire to help and to critically think about solutions to problems.
Future ISL studies would benefit from exploring how to channel motivated students and
engage them after an ISL program.

6. ISL programs present a unique opportunity for participants to live and work
alongside one another. This aspect on an ISL program provides an environment in which
to explore diversity issues within the group. This study found that the human diversity
within the group of participants on the ISL program appeared connected to some
significant impacts. While many service learning studies have reported diversity learning
outcomes, very few ISL studies have made specific mention of, nor studied, the benefits
of diversity within the group. This is an area of future study that is open and worthy of
exploring. With a better understanding of diversity impacts, the potential exists to design
future ISL program that intentionally prompt diversity learning outcomes for participants.

7. This study found that the ISL program's group dynamic significantly impacted
service participants’ working together and executing on service projects. Future research
might focus on better understanding of the effects of the group dynamic and ways to
improve it. This would enable ISL leaders to create programs with groups that work
more affectively together (hence more effective in the communities they aim to serve),
and to enhance the ISL participants' experiences. Studies specific to teambuilding and
group dynamics on ISL programs are void in ISL literature and research, and offer a ripe and needed area for future research.

8. Future studies that focus on understanding what attracts and motivates students to participate in ISL programs would be beneficial. Gaining that feedback from ISL participants at various types of institutions of higher education would be useful too. Additional studies that focus on what attracts various underrepresented populations to ISL programs would be beneficial for future recruitment efforts of participants from those or like groups.

9. Timing can impact participation on an ISL program --that is whether the program is offered during winter, spring, or summer break. Some scholars suggest that students with lesser economic means are more likely to participate in programs that happen over spring or winter break --as it is often necessary for those students to work over summer break, as opposed to participate in a study abroad program (Hembroff & Rusz, 1993). Thus, future research regarding motivation to participate in ISL programs would benefit from including ISL participants on spring and winter break programs, plus students who wanted to participate but did not.

10. A longitudinal study of the participants on ISL programs would be useful to explore the impacts on participants after ISL programs. Specifically, it would be interesting to know whether participation in ISL programs is linked to future engagement in service types of activities, and if so, the nature of that engagement.
Implications for ISL Practitioners

This dissertation explored whether particular ISL programming elements linked to particular participant learning outcomes, plus student motivation for participating in ISL programs. The following provides practical considerations and applications of the findings for ISL practitioners. Considerations for motivating student participation in an ISL program are followed by various suggestions for designing and implementing ISL programs.

**ISL participation motivation.** Six factors were identified in the study as impacting the student participants’ decisions to participate in the ISL program. These included the charisma and enthusiasm of the program leader, the service aspect of the program, how it connected to the participants' programs of study, peer recommendation, faculty mentoring, and the program cost (or financial assistance available). ISL practitioners should consider all of these factors in the planning and recruitment efforts. Although more study is needed, the timing of an ISL program, in terms of when during the school year it is offered, should also be a program consideration.

The findings revealed that some students chose to participate in the ISL program in part because a friend had previously gone on the program and relayed that it was a positive experience. This provides another reason to engage ISL participants after their experience; in particular to help recruit future participants. ISL practitioners should give special thought to who they are seeking as participants on the programs, keeping in mind that *like* students tend to attract *like* students. For example, if the goal is to attract more
international student participation, then it would be wise to utilize international students in recruitment efforts.

**Creating an ISL program: Initial considerations.** In order for ISL practitioners to know what programming elements to include in their program design, they should first be clear as to the particular impacts or learning outcomes they desire. I recommend that ISL practitioners begin the ISL planning process by identifying their program goals and desired outcomes.

**Use of Appendix B.** The findings from this study provide theoretical support for the International Service Learning Group Model (ISLG) --an ISL program design model that provides a simple reference for identification of six foundational elements to consider when developing a service learning program or course: 1) guided critical reflection activities, 2) international border crossing, 3) reciprocal connections with community members, 4) group dynamic, 5) non-service activities, and 6) service related to area of study. See Appendix B: International Service Learning Group Model. The model can be used as an outline for program development.

**Use of Appendix A.** Practitioners can utilize Appendix A to decide upon more specific program elements to include in order to attempt to facilitate desired participant impacts and learning outcomes. The next sections offer practical suggestions related to each of the six foundational elements as supported by the findings in this research.

**Guided critical processing.** The study found that four critical processing activities (i.e., participant group discussions, journal writing, community dialogs, and participant research) were significantly linked to various desired learning outcomes
depending upon the experience being processed. Table 1 on page 64 provides a quick reference for each critical processing activity. It appears that the more opportunities presented to ISL participants to critically process experiences, the better in terms of prompting various learning outcomes. Thus, I would encourage practitioners to plan for the inclusion of all four critical processing activities, when possible, on an ISL program. The following offers some practical considerations for each critical processing activity.

**Group discussions.** For those students who do not feel as comfortable talking in group settings, journal writing provides yet another opportunity for participants to critically reflect on their experiences. Providing ISL participants with journal prompts and feedback on their written entries was found to be valuable to the student participants. I recommend that ISL participants be encouraged to keep journals during the program.

**Participant research.** Participants engaging in research proved to be valuable for multiple reasons. Research provided an opportunity for the participants to connect with community members, while also potentially providing a valuable service to the communities served. Conducting research in a foreign country offered students an opportunity to develop advanced research skills. Engaging in research projects was found to enhance critical reflection as the participants continued to reflect after the ISL experience while completing their research. Also, students who engaged in research received some funding for their efforts, which the findings suggest was an instrumental factor for some students choosing to participate in the ISL program. For all these reasons, ISL practitioners should consider engaging ISL participants in research, and
explore PAR research paradigms and theory to gain a better understanding of how to structure and facilitate valuable research projects.

**Dialoging with community members.** Opportunities for ISL participants to ask questions and dialog with community members were found to positively impact the participants. Dialoging with community members provides ISL participants with valuable opportunities to gain perspectives from people actually living in the communities served. It was found to enhance participants critical thinking and linked to them personalizing the community members. Understanding the issues of communities from the perspective of people who live in those communities is essential for an ISL program advancing a social justice focus. Dialoging opportunities presented while conducting research, engaging in service work in the community, during meetings with various community leaders and other locals, and during guided non-service excursions. I recommend that ISL practitioners plan opportunities for participants to dialog with community members during an ISL program, and be open to unforeseen opportunities that may present during a program.

**Journal writing.** As journal writing was identified as important processing activity, I would encourage to ISL practitioners make time and put forth effort towards developing quality journal prompts and explore the vast resources available, especially those related to social justice considerations.

**Reciprocal connections.** Critical consciousness raising, multicultural learning, and diversity learning are all potential outcomes that stem from participants connecting and personalizing members of the communities in which they serve. Thus, ISL leaders
need to facilitate service opportunities that allow for these types of reciprocal connections to be made between participants and community members. This must occur regardless of the particular educational focus of the program if these sorts of outcomes are desired.

**Choice of community partners.** One of the most challenging aspects of developing an ISL program is finding and developing quality international partnerships. Given the short timeframe of an ISL program, it is often not practical to have student participants initially involved with finding those partnerships and identifying community needs. Thus, this important responsibility typically falls to ISL leaders. The findings from this study revealed the importance not only of establishing those partnerships, but also of ensuring students understand the nature of those partners and their role in the community served. This duty appeared heightened as the community partner was religiously affiliated. I would suggest that ISL leaders not only take the time to find quality partnerships, but also make sure that they provide the participant group with detailed information about community partners and encourage dialoging between participants and those partners.

**Channeling participant desire.** The findings revealed that the ISL participants became particularly motivated to help and find solutions within the communities where they were working only after connecting and personalizing the people in those communities. Thus, the participants were particularly motivated to serve just as the ISL program was coming to a close. This suggests exploring the potential of focusing attention on channeling that energy and desire after an ISL program ends. I challenge
ISL practitioners to think about various ways to do just that. This might include the online resource idea suggested on p. 146.

Choice of country. The country where the ISL program studied was located impacted the student participants in this study. Immersion into a foreign culture in particular one in a developing country and which included a language barrier were all elements that impacted students. Thus, ISL practitioners’ choice of country for the service program should be aligned with desired learning or impact goals. For example, if an ISL leader’s objective is to have students become critically conscious of their privileged status in the world, then choosing to engage in service in a developing country should be considered.

Group dynamic. The group dynamic aspect of the ISL program studied appeared to impact students in a number of significant ways including their motivation to serve the community, their dispositions during the experience, and diversity learning. Here are three practical considerations.

Teambuilding activities. I suggest that ISL program leaders spend time researching various teambuilding group techniques and include them in their program designs. Celebratory events should always be included. Plus, encouraging students to take photos, shoot videos, blog, make scrapbooks, and offering program specific t-shirts, not only can be good teambuilding activities that capture memories for future reflection, but also can be valuable as future participant recruitment tools. I recommend that practitioners think through and encourage memory capturing aspects as part of the ISL program design too.
**Unique diversity learning opportunity.** ISL programs present unique opportunities to learn from and about others within the participant group as they live and work alongside one another throughout the ISL experience. ISL leaders are encouraged to seize this special opportunity and explore various resources regarding facilitating diverse groups prior to leading an ISL experience.

Also, practitioners should be thoughtful about choosing accommodations for participations as students living together and/or with community members (i.e., homestays) have the potential to facilitate diversity learning outcomes and build relationships.

**Reflections**

I am pleased that I chose the subject that I did for my research. I have long seen the value of programs that put both children and adults in helping roles. Working first-hand with service programs, I have seen the life altering impacts on both children and adults --including privileged and delinquent high school students, undergraduate students, and now graduate students. However, like many other service program practitioners, I knew service programs and experiential education programs could have profound effects on participants, but I only speculated as to the reasons why. The findings in this research confirm and expand many of my preliminary observations. For me personally, the findings in this study are very valuable as I hope to continue to be involved with organizing and leading SL programs, both domestic and abroad. Further, I want to encourage and make it easier for others to do the same. Leading service programs is not only affords a valuable experience to the participants and community members, but it can
be a life altering experience for program leaders too --or so it has been in my case. I hope the findings in this dissertation will be useful to practitioners in educational settings of all levels, as well as those in the service tourism industry.

One aspect of ISL programs which I think deserves special mention is the social justice aspect. Based on my experience and research, I concur with other scholars that an ISL program, or any SL program, should be mindful of social justice considerations. Not only is it desirable to create programs that explore social justice themes relative to the particular program, but also care should be taken to engage community partners in problem solving efforts. Regarding community partners, while many charitable organizations engage in wonderful important work throughout the world, plenty do not. No doubt most ISL programs will positively impact participants, however the impact on the communities served is under-researched. From my personal experience I have seen well-intentioned people volunteering their time with some unfortunate programs in foreign countries (e.g., an orphanage in Guatemala that was primarily a unethical --and now illegal--baby acquiring and selling operation). It is incumbent on ISL leaders to understand who their community partners are and what work they actually do in communities they purport to serve. While finding and developing ISL partners presents a heightened challenge in another country, it is all the more important as it is even easier to be ignorant of supporting an unsavory effort from afar.

Another aspect of my research and writing process that I feel compelled to comment on is the last six months of the experience during which I worked from my bicycle. I shifted my home to my bicycle to see if I could indeed write my dissertation
while cycling and camping throughout the world. Additionally, I have an idea for a future community-engagement-oriented cycling program that I hope to develop further through a university. Bicycle tourism presents a form of experiential education. However, I had not led an educational bicycle program, nor done an extended bicycle tour in over fifteen years, and that was pre-cell phones, iPads, solar batteries, internet, etc. True to a fundamental premise in experiential education --one learns by hands-on engagement and problem solving outside the classroom and then reflecting upon those experiences --I wanted to experiment with various concepts and technology from my bicycle before launching the envisioned program.

I thought it would also be an interesting way to simultaneously work on my dissertation (with the caveat the entire time that if I could not do it, I would just stop and go back to living somewhere stationary while I completed my writing). What I did not know was how various aspects of my cycling trip would add to my research analysis and writing process. For instance, I found myself cycling in a country where I did not speak the language and they did not speak English. Thus, I experienced feelings of being silenced --like the students on the ISL program I was studying. I had not personally had that experience in Honduras as I spoke reasonable Spanish. The bicycle trip allowed me to feel first hand those feelings that many of the ISL participants described in their journals and interviews. This added perspective to my own thoughts about the value of that particular program aspect.

I credit cycling with providing a unique way to spend long periods of time thinking about the research data in an especially focused way. My "normal" process was
to cycle for a day or two, and then stop and write for two or three days. If I found a particularly good camping set up (i.e., with power outlets, WiFi, a table, and a nearby grocery store), I might stay for as long as five days. After a couple solid days of writing, I normally needed to think or re-think about themes and theories. Being on my bicycle for five to ten hours a day allowed me ample time to organize my thoughts--especially in Europe. I lucked out in Germany, Austria and Italy as these countries had incredibly well-marked bicycle trails so I could easily follow signs while thinking about various topics in my dissertation.

The entire experience of researching and writing this dissertation proved to be life altering. I am thankful for the opportunity and for everyone who made it possible to happen.
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Walker, T. (2000). The service/politics split: Rethinking service to teach political


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Wielkiewicz, R.M. & Turkowski, L.W. (2010). Reentry issues upon returning from
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Appendix A: Quick Reference Chart for Honduras ISL Program Participants

(In Alphabetical Order)

* Note that Dr. P was the ISL program leader.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonyms</th>
<th>Data Included in Study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>International Student</th>
<th>University Attended at time of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amy</td>
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<tr>
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<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Other University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Single</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Pregnant Wife</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Administrator at Midwest University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudonyms</td>
<td>Data Included in Study</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Children</td>
<td>International Student</td>
<td>University Attended at time of program</td>
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<td>Married</td>
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<td>Yes (Sudan)</td>
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<td>Summer</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
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<td>Midwest University (Branch Campus)</td>
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<td>Tammi</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Single</td>
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<td>Yuchen</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Single</td>
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<td>Yes (Japan)</td>
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<td>* Dr. P</td>
<td>ISL Leader</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Yes (2)</td>
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</table>
Appendix B: 5 ISL Program Elements and Outcome Themes and Sub-Themes

(*Note that Themes are bolded and subthemes are in italics*)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 Program Elements Themes &amp; Sub-Themes</th>
<th>+ Guided Critical Processing Activities (GCP)</th>
<th>= Outcomes/Impacts Sub-Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 1:</strong> International Border Crossing</td>
<td>+ GCPA</td>
<td>= International Border Crossing Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immersion in culture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increased cultural knowledge, added perspective towards one’s own culture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language barrier</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increased empathy, increased confidence, increased interest in language study</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Developing Country</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increase critical consciousness about privilege issues</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 2:</strong> Reciprocal Connections &amp; Personalizing</td>
<td>+GCPA</td>
<td>= Reciprocal Connection &amp; Personalizing Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Ways: teaching, working together, sharing moments (smiling, laughing, singing), celebrating, kind reciprocal gestures, cultural shares, researching</td>
<td><strong>Increased appreciation of culture, acceptance of differences, recognition of universality, increased desire to help, critical thinking about how to help, incited frustration and personal struggle, debunking of fears and stereotypes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theme 3:</strong> Group Dynamic</td>
<td>+GCPA</td>
<td>= Group Dynamic Outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teambuilding activity (True Colors)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Increased team cohesion, built relationships</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant group discussions</strong></td>
<td><strong>Built relationships, provided support, fostered feelings of acceptance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Working together**  
*Increased motivation, increased team cohesion*

**Living and traveling together**  
*Built relationships, fostered appreciation of differences*

**Celebratory events**  
*Increased team cohesion, built relationships, enhanced ISL program experience*

**Participant group diversity**  
*Fostered appreciation of differences and culture, provided support, added perspective*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme 4: Non-service Activities + GCPA</th>
<th>= Non-service Activity Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit with university class</strong></td>
<td>Learn about the university experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guided university tours</strong></td>
<td>Learning about higher education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visit with Peace Corp workers</strong></td>
<td>Learn about social issues and proposed solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student presentations</strong></td>
<td>Learn about various aspects of Honduran culture, teambuilding, relationship building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guided visit to recreational area</strong></td>
<td>Learn about flora and fauna of Honduras, relationship building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guided visit to zoo</strong></td>
<td>Learning about the fauna of Honduras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Driving</strong></td>
<td>Appreciation of natural beauty, expanded perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting language school owners</strong></td>
<td>Prompted thinking about future travel and language study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guided visit to historical site</strong></td>
<td>Learn about historical aspects of Honduras</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme 5: Related Service Project + GCPA</td>
<td>Related service project outcomes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ISL Program related to students’ areas of study</strong></td>
<td><strong>Practical skill development regarding ISL courses</strong></td>
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### Appendix C: International Service Learning Group Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Program Element</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>More Specific Sub-Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Guided Critical Processing Activities | Four activities found to prompt critical processing: | • Group discussion  
• Journal writing  
• Dialogs with community members  
• Participant research |
| 2. International Border Crossing | Aspects of international experience that can impact participants: | • Immersion in foreign culture (country)  
• Language barrier  
• Developing country |
| 3. Reciprocal Connections & Personalizing | Activities that allow for reciprocal connections & personalizing between ISL participants and community members: | • Teaching  
• Working together  
• Celebratory events  
• Shared moments  
• Laughing  
• Singing  
• Researching  
• Smiling  
• Cultural shares |
| 4. Group Dynamic | Activities that can contribute to a positive group dynamic: | • Teambuilding activities (True Colors)  
• Celebratory events  
• Working together  
• Living & traveling together  
• Group discussions  
• Diversity within ISL group |
5. Non-service Activities

Other activities that add to the participants’ experience:

- Guided university tours
- Guided zoo visit
- Guided visit to recreational sites
- Visit with a university class
- Visit with Peace Corp Workers
- Guided visit to historical site
- Participant presentations
- Bus travel
- Meeting with foreign language school owners

6. Related Service Project

Significant aspects of service project:

- Connected to area of study or interest
- Social justice focus involving quality community partners
Appendix D: IRB Approval

The amendment, detailed below, and submitted for the following research study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University.

Project: Service Learning in Honduras: Meaning Making Among Graduate Students in Education

Amendment: Add Lisa Nelson as co-investigator.

Primary Investigator: Peter Mather
Co-investigator(s): Lisa V. Nelson

Advisor: (if applicable)

Department: Counseling and Higher Education

[Signature]  
Robin Stack, CIP, Human Subjects Research Coordinator  
Office of Research Compliance

[Date] Oct. 8, 2014
Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Preparatory Experiences

- How did you come to be a participant on the Honduras program? (Why did you choose to go on the Honduras trip?)
- What had been your experience participating in community service before going on this trip? What, if any, types of community service experiences have you had before going on the Honduras trip?
- What, if any consideration, did you give to engaging in a service learning trip in the United States?
- Do you feel that you were prepared for the experience in Honduras?
- What do you think was helpful in preparing for the Honduras trip? What, if anything, do you think could have made you more prepared for the Honduras experience?
- Was there anything that you wished you had known about before beginning the Honduras experience?
- What initial apprehensions or fears did you have coming into the trip?
- Did any of those fears materialize into reality on the trip?

During the Trip Experience

- What importance, if any, do you feel the ice breaker (2 truths and a lie) had to the experience? Would you have liked to have seen more icebreakers early on?
- What are your thoughts on participating in the True Colors leadership exercise? Do you think it was valuable? If so, why do you think it was valuable? Do you have any suggestions for improving this exercise?
- If you engaged in research during the trip, what, if anything, do think this added to your experience in Honduras?
- If you did not engage in research in Honduras, do you wish that you had? Why? . . . and if you did, how did it contribute to your experience?
- What, if anything, do you think evening discussions added to your experience?
- What, if anything, do you think journaling added to your experience?
- Do you have any suggestions to improve the reflective portions of the Honduras experience?
- What if any value do you think the group presentations added to your experience?
- If you did a presentation in Honduras, how did you feel about having to do your presentation during your experience?

Reflective Experience

- What, if anything, did having a diverse group of students add to your experience?
• Did you feel that you were in a minority status of any sort on the trip? If so, could you explain how that felt? Are there ways that you might suggest to improve future minority participant’s experience on the trip?
• What, if anything, do you think makes the experience of going to Honduras different than a short-term service trip within the United States?
• Do you feel that any of your perceptions changed as a result of your Honduras experience? If so, what are they? What were they before? What are they now?
• What, if any interest, do you have in engaging in future service work? If so, what type of service experience is of interest to you?
• What, if any, interest do you have in future international travel?
• What were the most valuable aspects to you of your Honduras experience?