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# A Holistic Practice: The Art of Facilitation in International Service-Learning

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A Holistic Practice:  
The Art of Facilitation in International Service-Learning  
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### Abstract

International service-learning (ISL) continues to evolve its academic presence in higher education to encompass a more holistic, transformative experience for students and community partners. One way in which this pedagogy can increase the likelihood of growth and development in its students is through a richer understanding of facilitative techniques involved with reflection and transformative learning. This study aims to help guide those who design courses or programs that use reflection as a means of integrating student learning within ISL and related programs. The following research project investigated the ways in which seven facilitators understood and described their practice in relation to these overarching goals of experiential education. Four themes were derived from coding analysis of semi-structured interviews: relational labor, inter-subjective learning spaces, capacity-building, and ambiguity of role. Key findings are discussed in terms of significance for practitioners seeking to enhance student capacities for learning and civic engagement.

*Keywords:* facilitation, reflection, transformative learning, international service-learning, civic engagement, higher education, experiential learning

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*So come and walk awhile with me and share  
The twisting trails and wondrous worlds I've known.  
But this bridge will only take you halfway there -  
The last few steps you'll have to take alone.*

- Shel Silverstein

*We had the experience but missed the meaning.*

- T.S. Eliot

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

### **Trends and Theorists in Higher Education**

Higher education continues to wrestle with major philosophical and pedagogical shifts that have been presented over the past decades. Educational theorists such as John Dewey, Paulo Freire, and David Kolb have challenged traditional methods of instruction by arguing for educational experiences and teaching strategies that are more active, student-centered, and that can better engage learners with real-world contexts (Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1973; Kolb, 1984). In addition, universities are placing increasingly more emphasis on becoming global entities by incorporating semesters abroad into their curricula. As this process evolves, practitioners continue to consider how they can facilitate meaning from international experiences for their students. Especially in service-learning settings, where students have a more personal involvement within a broader community, there is much potential for meaningful, transformative experiences (Parker & Dautoff, 2007).

Experiential education presents students with the chance to gain valuable perspective through critical thinking and problem-solving within active learning situations (Kolb, 1984; Montrose, 2002). In the current global climate, international experiences focused on language development, cultural immersion, service projects, and the enhancement of student perspectives

hold increasing relevance. Montrose (2002) outlined how the educational aspect of experiential education lies in the analysis of how activities can help learners transition from simply having an experience to gaining an integrated understanding of it. One problem with experiential educational programs such as service-learning and study abroad is this lack of integration between the abroad experience and the learning that can come from it. Bringle and Hatcher (1999) further described how using active learning strategies associated with experiential education produces more student satisfaction with the learning experience, which also encourages future academic persistence and success. These educational outcomes have been shown to be additionally enriched and deepened when learning is perceived by students as relevant and engaging.

In the current academic climate, there has been a surge of interest in experiential educational programs such as study abroad and international service-learning (ISL). According to Parker and Dautoff (2007), service-learning is an example of active learning in experiential education that offers students the opportunity for transformative learning through various levels of community involvement. These transformations can be understood as a connective learning that occurs when experience shifts student perspectives to include a wider worldview. Service-learning is then a branch of experiential education that seeks to connect elements of academia to real-world communities. Its goal is both to allow students to better fit within the globalized world while simultaneously making some kind of social contribution. Service-learning adds this quality of civic engagement to study abroad through connecting experience with learning that also encourages student participation in relevant social change (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011).

Bringle and Hatcher (2011) conveyed how international service-learning takes this concept one step further by combining three different educational components: service-learning,

study abroad, and international education. Each of these categories exists as its own educational domain and provides an important piece of what ISL has to offer. ISL exists in the intersection between these three domains, which can be a delicate sphere to balance and maintain. Like with any intersection, it is formed by more than one crossroad or definition, and its boundaries are more fluid. This fluidity creates much potential for learning but can be difficult to navigate. As a result, experiential education has many arms, one of which is ISL. Study abroad, international education, and service-learning as isolated entities each contribute an important piece to what ISL becomes in this intersection.

Study abroad by itself has become a branch of experiential education that has made education abroad a more visible part of higher education. According to the 2015 Open Doors Report conducted by the International Educational Exchange (IEE), study abroad in the U.S. has increased by five percent. This is the highest rate of growth for study abroad since the nine percent increase from 2007 into 2008, after which study abroad slightly decreased due to the decline in the U.S. economy. In a historical sense, study abroad is at least partially rooted in the consequences of World War II, which consisted of initiatives to reconstruct Europe and prevent the likelihood of another world war. Bolen (2001) has explained how essentially, study abroad was born from government institutions seeking to create a means for students to share culture. He further explained how the market for study abroad has continued to grow as governments and higher education institutions alike emphasize the importance of students becoming workforce commodities by having an abroad experience.

In response to the growth of U.S. study abroad, the IEE has created Generation Study Abroad, a national campaign that aims to double the number of students who study abroad by the year 2020. The campaign advocates to universities and students across the U.S. the benefits of



study abroad and recently released their Year One Impact Report. The key findings highlighted by this report were as follows: 91% of U.S. institutions are creating or expanding programs to offer more international for-credit opportunities; 64% of U.S. institutions are increasing the number of academic programs that offer (or even require) a study abroad component; 77% of international institutions are creating or expanding short-term study (such as internships) abroad opportunities; and lastly, 71% of U.S. institutions are committing to increasing financial support for faculty members to develop and lead faculty-led study abroad programs (IEE, 2015).

This growing trend of study abroad in higher education signifies how universities are attempting to keep pace with global processes such as globalization. Similarly, governments attempt to do so, in order to stay competitive in their respective global markets. Educational institutions have been experiencing an urgency to internationalize their students in order to better prepare them for their professional lives. This quest for global competency and leadership has become a focal point for international education within higher education, with global experience and global knowledge as key components that keep American students involved and competitive in the global marketplace (Pusch, 2009).

Research has been conducted to discover what it means to be a global citizen and a globally competent leader. Both terms relate to a set of skills, attitudes, and intellectual capabilities that are deemed necessary in order to function at the highest levels in the global market. Margaret Pusch (2009) has suggested the complexities inherent in becoming a globally competent leader as having a mind-set, heart-set, and skill-set, along with the motivation to explore, and partake in the process of developing respect, openness, and curiosity about cultures other than one's own. She further explained how an element of risk-taking is important for a leader of this sort: "leaders who must deal with this new era of connectivity are those edge-

walkers who must deal with the endless restructuring of organizations, of alliances, or partnerships, of the pace at which change seems to occur, all at the nexus of different expectations and needs” (Pusch, 2009, p. 79). A global leader takes chances, fails, and learns from those failures as opposed to following set guidelines on what to do, how to think, and how to act.

Due to the growing emphasis on global awareness and global competencies, ISL and study abroad have many implications for higher education. While both ISL and study abroad provide students with contextual learning experiences, ISL exists as a unique pedagogy that adds the elements of civic engagement and community-building to international education and study abroad. Study abroad alone may lack those elements conducive to civic engagement abroad. Instead of merely academic study, ISL engages students with a local organization and enables them to participate in community activities. These individual interactions augment classroom learning through the concept of *learning by doing* and present students with real world challenges that often go missing in a structured learning environment (Bringle, Clayton, & Price, 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2011).

As with study abroad programs, best practices exist for ISL programs; however, the extent to which they are followed are extremely variable, and accountability between programs can be difficult to measure (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Service-learning and study abroad programs alike, while designed to help develop students’ personal, social, and intellectual goals, are often disjointed (Eyler & Giles, 1999). This difficulty in part stems from how students and instructors understand their respective roles in the ISL experience. The evolution of higher education in tandem with the evolution of global processes has created opportunities for instructors as well as students to engage experientially with their learning processes. For ISL,

this also includes creating avenues of trust and reciprocity with host cultures as well by relating with and learning from them (Harrison & Clayton, 2012). Students engaging in ISL require guidance from instructors in order to gain insights from their studies and to properly engage with the communities with which they serve (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999).

The ways in which instructors best guide their students through these civically-engaged, educational journeys currently consists of much gray area. The instrument of reflection is an oft-discussed tool for this kind of facilitation, and has been incorporated into full courses in several service-learning programs. If the aim of universities is to ensure that students are entering the workforce as globally-minded citizens, then enhancing student reflective processes would help better prepare them both professionally and personally for the many dynamics of our globalized world (Ash, Clayton, & Moses, 2009).

### **Purpose of the Study**

Many questions arise when discussing the role of reflection in ISL. The ties between civic engagement and student development are critical to successful service-learning, yet the specific strategies of facilitating those experiences remain varied in their implementation and effect. In order for students to approach these goals of civic-mindedness, it is important for them to be knowledgeable, to be able to use what they know, to possess the capacity for critical analysis, and to be equipped for lifelong learning (Kuh, 2008). The attainment of these educational goals will largely depend on the capacity of facilitators and students alike to align themselves with educational initiatives that are indeed rooted in mutual benefits and reciprocal learning. Given the transformative potential of ISL along with the range of experience during ISL programs, more insight on how students process their experiences and in what ways

facilitators can contribute to that process would aid practitioners in implementing experiential educational programs more effectively.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the ways in which facilitators engage with the process of reflection in order to enhance transformative learning potential in ISL. While much has been written on ISL, transformative learning, the role of reflection, and the benefits of study abroad, less has been discovered regarding the ideal capacities of facilitators who are involved in this sometimes complicated educational process. I was specifically interested in facilitation due to my own experiences in graduate level reflections courses. I became increasingly aware of the gaps in course implementation and facilitation of transformative learning, which then prompted my curiosity to discover the ideal circumstances for enhancing ISL learning experiences. As a result, the following research questions were the driving force of the study:

- 1) How can we understand the role of the facilitator, as well as the role of the student within experiential learning pedagogies such as ISL?
- 2) How do instructors effectively facilitate reflective processes involved with transformative learning?
- 3) How do facilitators design courses to enhance the transformative potential of ISL in conjunction with student reflective processes?

A following review of the literature in Chapter Two will explore these questions further and deconstruct what is meant by the *transformative processes* that can occur from experiential educational programs such as ISL.

### **Significance of the Study**

The exploration of facilitation and reflective processes in ISL is significant for those who believe in the fundamental power of higher education to produce social change. Study abroad is becoming an increasingly prevalent reality for the U.S., and the fusion between study abroad and service-learning is a complicated and nuanced product. As universities continue to adjust their principles to include a more global focus, practitioners will also have to evaluate their own practices in order to keep pace with the many changes presented by growing global processes. With a richer understanding of effective facilitation, instructors can be better prepared to more rapidly acquaint themselves to these changes and better conceptualize how to reach their students. This study in turn may provide a foundation upon which facilitators can build an understanding of how best to engage students in the complex processes involved with reflection and transformative learning in ISL.

### **Nature of the Study**

This basic qualitative study is composed of semi-structured, open-ended interviews that describe facilitator experiences with ISL students. In addition, a survey was created with a Likert-type scale and open-ended questions to discover student perceptions concerning their experiences with reflection in ISL. As the research progressed, it became evident the facilitator interviews provided more appropriate data for analysis, and so they became the focus for the remainder of the study. Collecting qualitative data allows the researcher to better construct meaning from rich data, which then produces recurring patterns and themes (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014). In addition, open-ended questions allow participants the freedom to express their unique experiences, which the researcher can additionally expand upon by probing with follow-up questions. A qualitative researcher is curious about an individual's interpretations of his/her experiences and seeks to construct analytic meaning from this complex data.

Accordingly, the current study allowed facilitators to explore the deeper meaning of their experiences with students and sought to provide a richer understanding of the practice of effective facilitation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe best practices for facilitating reflective processes in ISL students. Mezirow's (1991) theory of transformational learning is the driving theoretical framework used in this study, along with Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning. In addition, less concretely used, but also mentioned are John-Paul Lederach's (2005) theory on peace-building and conflict resolution, as well as John Dewey's (1916) theory of active learning and reflection in higher education. The connection between these conceptual theories lies in how students make sense and derive meaning from their educational experiences, which are often multi-faceted and complex and rooted in the ways in which human beings relate to one another.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms and definitions are provided below for better understanding the context in which they are used throughout the paper.

**International service-learning.** A structured academic experience in another country in which students participate in organized service activities, learn from cultural interactions, and reflect on their experience to gain an understanding of global and intercultural issues that can contribute to an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as global citizens (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011).

**Study abroad.** An educational program where students leave their resident country for an experience in another country (Long, 2013).

**Integration of learning.** The connection, application, and synthesis of information from different contexts and perspectives to construct new insights (Barber, 2012).

**Transformative learning.** A process of becoming critically aware of how our assumptions have come to constrain the way in which we perceive, understand, and feel about our world, and of reformulating those assumptions to permit a more inclusive, discriminating, permeable, and integrative perspective (Mezirow, 1991).

**Critical reflection.** A component of ISL that seeks to generate, deepen, and document learning (Whitney & Clayton, 2011). It is, more broadly, an integrated understanding and intentional analyses of complex processes that can inform individuals how they engage with other people, other cultures, and their experiences.

**Facilitation.** A process that seeks to create transformational possibilities for learning, particularly one that resists reductionist accounts for the learning environment. It promotes critical thinking and the development of teamwork and team learning (Savin-Baden, 2003).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

This study involved a population of mostly college-level facilitators (most of which were faculty) with either previous or current classroom facilitation experience. One participant was a middle school/high school facilitator instead of college-level. As such, purposeful sampling was used to recruit faculty who may be interesting in participating in the study. The following assumptions were made in this research study:

- 1) Those who participated in interviews were honest concerning their experiences with students and as facilitators.
- 2) Interview participants were honest in identifying as current facilitators of ISL or ISL-related activities.

- 3) Student participants provided accurate and honest accounts of their experiences.
- 4) Participant anonymity and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.
- 5) The study focused on best practices for facilitation of reflective processes experiences with ISL students.

In addition, certain limitations of the study included:

- 1) The results of the study were limited to the participants who completed the interviews and returned surveys via email.
- 2) The target population primarily represented college-level faculty and did not account for other service-learning instructor populations.
- 3) The facilitator sample size was relatively small.
- 4) A potential for researcher bias exists as the researcher studies at one of the participant recruitment sites.

### **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

Chapter Two is a literature review that discusses the following: building partnerships and relationships in ISL, the concept of the moral imagination and meaning-making, the role of reflection in transformative learning, and facilitation of reflective processes. Chapter Three presents the methodology for study design, population sampling, data-gathering and recruitment procedures, and data collection and analysis. Chapter Four provides the study's results and analysis of data collected. Chapter Five discusses the significance of the findings as well as limitations of the entire project. Chapter Six completes the study with conclusions and recommendations for future research.



## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Partnerships and Relationships in ISL**

Well-designed ISL and study abroad programs can lead to enriched, transformative learning that is deep and long-lasting. Partnerships in ISL are a significant factor when discussing its effective implementation. The goals of ISL in particular are rooted in enhancing intercultural understanding and personal growth and development (Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; J. Engle & L. Engle, 2003). Bringle and Hatcher (2011) described ISL as a transformative pedagogy in which relationships are the key factor in whether or not projects are successful and offered the following definition of ISL:

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

Essentially, ISL draws its power, relevance, and utility from within the lived experience of a community and depends upon a bond of mutual benefit and interaction between the students and the community. Service-learning is not performed for or done to a community; rather, it is enacted in and with the community through communication and shared activity that produces a mutual benefit and reciprocity of interest (Bringle, Philips, & Hudson, 2004).

A key part of the above definition is the concept of a shared service-learning experience which:

Requires students who enter new communities...to go beyond an approach that emphasizes 'doing no harm'...[and to instead] be prepared to participate in reflective inquiry on the origins and intent on the projects in which they participate, the relationship of the projects to social and power structures of the host community and country, and the degree to which their projects and activities might either perpetuate or liberate political, social, and economic structures. (Bringle and Hatcher, 2011, p. 77)

This kind of diligence is necessary when considering whether or not service-learning programs are truly indicative of a mutually beneficial experience. The concept of reciprocity is a major distinction between ISL and study abroad: ISL is action through and with a community, while study abroad tends to consist of action of and in the community (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Harrison & Clayton, 2012).

Harrison and Clayton (2012) described how one of the major aspects of service-learning that makes it more effective is its nontraditional, counter-normative nature: it positions all participants as simultaneously teachers and learners, servers and served. It is rooted in mutuality and reciprocity, with the relationships between faculty and students resembling a collaborative effort: a *witness* instead of a *for*ness (Harrison & Clayton, 2012). Teachers are not doing for the student any more than the student is doing for the community. This reciprocity allows service-learning experiences to simultaneously provide educational enhancement for the student as well as integrative engagement within a community (Harrison & Clayton, 2012). Jacoby (2003) similarly outlined the significance of developing authentic reciprocal partnerships between community agencies and learning institutions. She emphasized the importance of ensuring

reciprocity occurs between students and faculty, as they are engaging in a shared experience, much like the institution and its community partners. Students are essential partners in service-learning, and such partnerships should be scrutinized through similar lenses as with campus-community partnerships (Jacoby, 2003).

In regards to the mutuality of campus-community partnerships, Cruz and Giles (2000) conveyed how important details often can be either masked or disregarded through an excessively holistic reference to them, especially on the community side. An overly broad concept of such partnerships risks creating a lack of understanding of the impact and the breadth of service-learning experiences. It can result in less involved and so less effective outcomes of both learning and service (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jacoby, 2003). Service-learning is then nuanced and complicated in the manner in which it attempts to engage different groups for social betterment. In order for such pedagogy to be effective, the bonds between institutions and community partners need to be carefully considered. The inner-workings of these relationships are complicated and so require thorough examination and strategic maintenance (Billig & Eyler, 2003; Jacoby, 2003).

It is useful to envision successful partnerships as authentic, personal relationships that are fostered over time, much as with actual, intimate relationships. Individual relationships affect the quality of partnerships that in turn lay the foundation for effective service-learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Cruz & Giles, 2000). This concept of authenticity is important to sustain from every angle of the relationship paradigm because it translates into trust. Bringle et al. (2009) have referred to the term *partnership* by describing it as a relationship that is comprised of *integrity*, *closeness*, and *equity*. These relationships can be understood as interactions between people that become partnerships as those interactions develop

enhanced closeness. This *closeness* was defined as a range from unaware (or lacking) to transformational (or deep) that depends upon the frequency of interaction, the diversity of activities that constitute the interactions, and the strength of decisions and plans. *Equity* was defined as outcomes that are perceived as proportionate to inputs, and *integrity* was defined as a deeply felt set of inherent values. Relationships with higher levels of equity and integrity are more likely to have higher satisfaction for all parties (Bringle et al., 2009).

Based on these concepts, Bringle et al. (2009) outlined a conceptual model called SOFAR (Students, Organizations in the community, Faculty, Administrators on campus, and Residents in the community; see Appendix A), as well as a nuanced analysis of their interactions. They maintain that such a paradigm is necessary in order to address all people involved with the service-learning process and to acknowledge the difference of perspectives, agenda, culture, resources, power, and goals. The SOFAR framework provides a structural model for organizing a critical examination of each party so that practitioners can develop and improve civic engagement relationships within service-learning.

In order to better understand the nature and depth of how healthy civic and cross-institutional relationships function in ISL, Bringle et al. (2009) also suggested using the E-T-T (Exploitative-Transactional-Transformational) model of relationship outcomes, with transformational relationships as the end goal. The E-T-T conceptual framework of outcomes can be applied to all relationships in SOFAR and can be used to evaluate the status of a relationship and how it can be improved. Because relationships are not static, they can progress (exploitive to transactional to transformational) or regress on the dimensions of closeness, equity, and integrity. These findings demonstrate how it is important to monitor ISL partnerships or relationships in ways that provide feedback to all members in all areas in order to recognize the

entirety of the service-learning process (Bringle et al., 2009; Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). In addition, focusing on the person-to-person relationships formed through mutual collaboration also will help assuage distance created from any formalities between institutions and the communities involved (Bringle et al., 2009; Cruz & Giles, 2000; Jacoby, 2003). SOFAR and E-T-T are tools for faculty to use when communicating their expectations and needs to students and community members as they design and implement service-learning courses. If these tools are properly wielded, work becomes shared, as do the benefits from the outcomes of service-learning.

In summary, as a branch of experiential education, ISL provides students with the opportunity to have richer learning experiences, yet there are significant challenges to its effective implementation. The formation and managing of partnerships, along with student collaboration and cooperation with faculty, are necessary ingredients for its success. These partnerships set the foundation for student, faculty, and community interpersonal relationships. In addition, the international component to service-learning provides a global aspect that can further enhance student development and growth; however, a key challenge that presents itself is how practitioners can ensure students are processing their experiences with proper depth of analysis (Kolb, 1984). Educational practitioners seek to facilitate students' connection of their experiences to meaning and to provide context from which students can build a foundation of understanding. The following section explores this concept of integration of learning and how it relates to transformative learning.

### **Integration of Learning and Transformative Learning**

Experiential learning as described by David Kolb (1984) offers a holistic, integrative perspective that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior. Kolb's theories of

learning have conveyed the idea that learning is largely an issue of personal development that can be extended beyond academic learning and into the realm of adaptability to life events and problem-solving. (Kolb, 1984). Part of this practice is realizing that the process of critical thinking is integral to experiential learning. Knowledge, according to Kolb, is creation and re-creation, rather than a thread of information to be acquired or transmitted.

In a qualitative research study conducted by Barber (2012), 194 interviews with undergraduate students were analyzed to investigate the ways in which students bring knowledge and experience together in order to help educators more intentionally promote the integration of learning. The learning process was broken down into three categories of integration: a) connection, or the discovery of a similarity between ideas that themselves remain distinctive; b) application, or the use of knowledge from one context in another; and c) synthesis, or the creation of new knowledge by combining insights. As Barber (2012) stated:

Learning should be conceptualized as a continuous, iterative process—a habit of mind rather than an accomplishment...challenging students to regularly reflect and reconsider what they know can assist them in developing this frame of reference for integration of learning. (p. 611)

Interestingly, students consistently reported that they desired more mentorship or guidance from faculty members, and conveyed a general eagerness to discuss their learning experiences (Barber, 2012). According to these findings, there is a need for more guidance throughout the learning process in addition to more conversation about what is happening in the educational spaces instructors provide. Barber (2012) has described how students integrate their learning experiences as a:

Demonstrated ability to connect, apply, and/or synthesize information coherently from disparate contexts and perspectives, and make use of these new insights in multiple contexts. This includes the ability to connect the domain of ideas and philosophies to the everyday experience, from one field of study or discipline to another, from the past to the present, between campus and community life, from one part to the whole, from the abstract to the concrete, among multiple identity roles—and vice versa. (p. 593)

This integration of learning in order to alter or transform student perspective is similar to the transformational learning theory suggested by Mezirow (1991), which stated that learning should lead adults to experience perspective transformation or a shifting of their worldview:

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

Transformative learning is a robust topic and has been well documented in the current literature. Theoretical constructs such as integration of learning and transformative learning theory are the basis of many experiential learning programs as well as research. For example, Kiely (2004) expanded on the concept of transformative learning through a seven-year study involving 22 students who participated in a service-learning program in Nicaragua. The research covered the span of five cohorts and was primarily collected through semi-structured interviews that took place during and after the service-learning experience. Research has suggested how service-learning is a transformative pedagogy that inspires students to alter their own lifestyles, perspectives, relationships, and more broadly, institutions or policies that perpetuate inequity

(Kiely, 2004). In addition, students reported developing three main categories of what Kiely (2004) has termed *emerging global consciousness* during and after their service-learning experiences: envisioning, or imagining alternatives for their lifestyles; transforming forms, or ongoing changes in holistic students' worldview; and a chameleon complex, or the struggle to reconcile what was learned upon reentry into the United States. The *chameleon complex* consists of the conflict students experience when they try to translate their perspective transformation into subsequent and meaningful action upon their return home (Kiely, 2004).

Fullerton, Kerrigan, and Reitenauer (2015) conducted interviews with students 3 to 16 years after graduation in an effort to discover the long-term impacts of service-learning experiences. The majority of students reported a significant shift in perspective, a deeper understanding and appreciation for human diversity, enhanced skills for communication, a growth in maturity, confidence and gratitude, and an increase in the desire to serve (Fullerton, et al., 2015). These findings suggest how it is important to consider the length of time it may take for this transformation to occur, as well as the related psychological processing of the experience itself.

While most research regarding service-learning has focused on undergraduate programs, arguments have been made for service-learning programs at a graduate level as well. In a case study of graduate students attending the University of Toronto, Levoke, Brail and Daniere (2014) discovered how service-learning initiatives in graduate programs present an opportunity to amplify further transformative learning by allowing students the potential to become more engaged scholars and professional citizens. Data were collected over approximately three years and included student written and oral evaluations during class meetings, formal mid-term and final evaluations of their experiences, formal feedback and evaluations from instructors, and



extensive notes taken by instructors during class meetings. Overall, students reported they gained practical skills by working in the professional arena of their desired careers and appreciated the space provided to reflect on concepts they had not previously considered. Furthermore, partners reported student contributions to their organizations as of the highest quality and helpful regarding project implementation and engaging with the community (Levkoe, et al., 2014). Service learning then provides students with the opportunity to gain valuable skills that enhance their employability, improve their knowledge, as well as provide avenues to form personal connections with communities in which they work.

One of the complications that arise with transformative learning is that it cannot be guaranteed or forced upon learners, but is rather a method whereby educators “engage with...co-learners in critical reflection, critical thinking, reframing questions, deconstructing issues, and dialogue and discourse” (Alfred & Johnson-Bailey, 2006, p.56). Students involved with this form of learning are being asked to bring their “whole selves” into the learning environment and draw on “multiple forms of being and knowing” through their learning process, which produces in them certain vulnerability (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 86). According to Mezirow and Taylor (2009), this vulnerability can be alleviated by creating a small kind of democracy between student and facilitator (or mentor) via creative, imaginative spaces that supplement processes of reasoning. In addition, they have emphasized how:

It is important to appreciate that even the most profound transformation is rarely spectacular. Learners make the learning not so much because policy or methodological rules prescribe them, but rather from the character of a relationship and the attitudes of the participants in it. This educational collaboration grows gradually and, but for small moments, is often invisible. (p. 86)

Theories surrounding the implementation of transformative learning convey it as a complex process that involves the holistic involvement of an individual (e.g. mind, body, and spirit) in order for transformation to take place (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009; Panitsides & Papastamatis, 2014).

This approach to learning reflects Vygotsky's (1980) theory of social-cultural development that inevitably guides an individual's personal transformation. When students play an active part in the learning process, their roles shift to resemble a more collaborative reality that can provide developmental tools for future social functioning (Vygotsky, 1980). Consequently, this mode of learning has the potential to mediate social environments, the internalization of which contributes to higher-level, creative thinking (Kozulin, 2003; Vygotsky, 1980). These developmental processes are significant to transformative learning in the way they encourage a "unification of contradictory, distinct processes...[that] embody the essence of the whole" (Kozulin, 2003, p. 121). As DiPardo and Potter (2003) further elaborate:

Affect cannot be understood as a state within a state, but only within the systemic context of human thought and action, and within the social-cultural environments from which we draw the raw material of our inner lives. (DiPardo & Potter, 2003, p. 326)

Our internal experiences are therefore directly related to our external ones in the way they involve all elements of our personalities and interactions.

Dirkx (2006) also has noted the role of emotion in creating those imaginative spaces in higher education, especially in regards to the meaning-making process which is integral to transformative learning:

Transformative learning is often characterized by such intense, emotionally laden experiences that are mediated by powerful but often dimly perceived images. Like dreams, the experience of these images cannot be fully articulated through words (p. 23). Emotions dictate largely unconscious forms of meaning that are associated with learning and reveal aspects of a learner's perceived reality. Throughout his research, Dirkx (2006) referenced the Jungian concept of *individuation*, or the process through which adults develop more authentic relationships with the self and with others, as integral to transformative learning. As with any psychic process, certain emotional dilemmas can surface that must be facilitated in ways that contribute to instead of hinder individual and group development.

Ettling (2006) similarly presented the concept of "ethical capacities" involved with engaging students in transformative learning as "competencies that can arise from the practice of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual rigor in our professional self-development, which then can offer us grounding and guidance in our everyday practice of transformative learning" (p. 65). In order to honor these ethical capacities, an effective facilitation practice requires an intentional and consistent examination of instructor methods throughout the learning process. The four capacities described as crucial for ethical facilitation of transformative learning were: openness to cosmic awareness, an attitude of attunement, the art of conversation, and the practice of contemplation (Ettling, 2006). Each of these principles relates to the concept of active reflection and critical thinking that are integral to transformative learning. In this way both facilitators and students are benefiting from and changing with the transformative nature of the learning process in a kind of lived experiment. In essence, the theories of integration of learning and transformational learning rely on students developing critical thought and a dynamic worldview.

In addition, both theories encourage the student and the educator to engage in mutual reflection of the learning process (Ettling, 2006; Barber, 2012).

Integrative and transformative learning are goals of ISL that are accomplished through a necessary component of reflection. As Mezirow (1991) explained, “through reflection we see through the habitual way that we have interpreted the experience of everyday validity made by a previously unquestioned meaning scheme or perspective” (p. 102). However, in order to better understand how to implement this process, it would be helpful to dissect the definition of reflection. In addition, while the above findings have implications for the benefits of transformative learning, less research has been conducted into the methods or strategies of facilitating it, or the role of the learner and the accompanying relationship between learner and facilitator (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). These concepts will be discussed in-depth in the following sections.

### **The Moral Imagination and Meaning-Making**

Martha Nussbaum (1996) described the integrative, reflective process as developing an understanding of one’s individual potential along with, more broadly, the human condition through learning that is rooted in the real. For Nussbaum, reflection is integral to students participating in ISL, through processes of self-awareness, the capacity to think critically, and the ability for moral reasoning. According to her, “our systems of education have long given us far too little information about lives outside our borders, [thus] stunting our moral imaginations” (Nussbaum, 1996, p xiv). The term *moral imaginations* is relevant when discussing the world of ISL as it refers to the way in which students navigate and design their own ways of learning and doing in complex situations.

Related to this concept of moral imagining, John Paul Lederach (2005) mentioned how problems are bound to arise in human partnerships or relationships:

When we attempt to eliminate the personal, [and] lose sight of ourselves, our deeper intuition, and the source of our understandings...we believe in the knowledge we generate but not in the inherently messy and personal process by which we acquired it.  
(p. ix)

According to Lederach, there is a process that is highly creative and imaginative that must be nurtured and developed in order to gain an integrated understanding of our experiences. Harvesting this sort of moral imagination consists of “the capacity to imagine something rooted in the challenges of the real world yet capable of giving birth to that which does not yet exist” (Lederach, 2005, p. x). This concept can be applied for students in the learning environment as well. One component of ISL that is both an opportunity and a challenge is that the unexpected and unplanned are bound to occur, which creates avenues of discovery and potential for new understandings. Constructive social change, as Lederach has described, as well as personal growth and development, is connected to one’s willingness to see beyond that which is explicitly stated.

Concerning the implementation of reflection in ISL programs, these implications are plentiful in how individuals approach one another. Lederach (2005) has further described how connected individual processes are in the creation of communities in which people collaborate and work towards common goals:

Networking is not just about instrumental connections among organizations that help us to achieve our goals or that minimize friction and competition...[it should] locate change processes in the web of how organic relationships occupy social space, how the

connecting points create the flow and function of constructive, life-giving energy, and how pieces and strands of change are located within a larger system. (p. 111)

While perhaps using different language, Lederach essentially described the SOFAR model for partnerships. By tying these concepts together with a metaphor, he has given freshness to the idea that relationships, especially in the realm of ISL, require a tenderness and intuitiveness that will strengthen those connections through challenging moments.

These relational concepts can help guide practitioners in making decisions during similarly dynamic moments in ISL. Because ISL is built upon the concept of institutional partnerships and individual relationships, knowing how to act and react in sometimes confounding, complicated, and personal situations, is a necessary component of the pedagogy. Furthermore, according to Mather (2008), individuals form meaning by exercising their own deeply imbedded values that are dictated by previous personal experiences. Student narratives were found to contribute to this process of transformative learning by constructing meaningful connections to the past, present, and future (Mather, 2008). The implications of these findings help outline how educators can better understand the power of narratives and story-telling in meaning-making processes involved with transformative learning.

Efforts to deconstruct the sometimes vague concepts of transformative learning that ISL claims to produce are useful in order to consider the ways in which meaning is created by students, and how that meaning can be maximized through relationships built within ISL. Reflective processing, as discussed by both Nussbaum and Lederach, is essential for integrative, transformative learning in ISL, and it holds much relevance for student development of critical thought.

### **The Role of Reflection**

The process of reflection has been described as something of which individuals are largely unaware and inherently take for granted (Schön, 1983). In relation to ISL, this process is a necessary component. Reflection contributes to students becoming more conscious about their own motivations for service and the concept of ‘doing no harm’ to the communities and partners with which they serve. Reflection relates to the self; it is self-learning and self-growth (Reed & Koliba, 1995). Service-learning practitioners can use critical reflection to engage students in a learning process that examines relations of power, hegemony, ideology, and existing institutional arrangements that marginalize and oppress (Brookfield, 2009). Critical reflection is then a process of self-knowledge and questioning that can bring about new connections based on one’s own experiences.

Educational theorist John Dewey planted many of the philosophical seeds for critical reflection in higher education in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and his theories of learning have managed to remain relevant for contemporary times. Dewey (1916) has described the concept of learning from experience as a conscious connection of activity with analysis: “mere activity does not constitute experience...experience involves change, but change is a meaningless transition unless it is consciously connected with the return wave of consequences which flow from it” (p. 163). A related theorist, Paulo Freire, encouraged the liberation of both students and citizens through the use of free and critical thought. Freire (1973) identified the concept of *conscientizacao*, or critical awareness that develops from social and educational awakening, which he described as crucial for students in higher education. Of his many theoretical and philosophical musings, perhaps his most meaningful one was the concept of *authentic reflection*, which he stated must co-exist with action in order to produce meaningful social change (Freire, 1973).

Dewey and Freire offered a philosophical foundation for the role of reflection in higher education by describing it as essentially a bridge between theory and practice. For ISL, reflection exists as the “primary mechanism that generates meaningful and powerful learning” (Whitney & Clayton, 2011, p. 149). As Whitney and Clayton (2011) have conveyed:

Critical reflection can best be understood as the component of the pedagogy that generates, deepens, and documents learning and that, consequently, can function to improve the quality of the service learning activities and their educational and community benefits....it must be carefully designed with circumstance-specific reflection mechanisms carefully woven into an overall reflection strategy...one that contributes in integral ways to the broader course and program design. (p. 183)

Reflection is an integrated understanding and intentional analyses of complex processes that will better inform how students engage with life, other people, and other cultures.

Pagano and Roselle (2009) elaborated on this idea by describing reflection as the first step in a proposed knowledge development cycle. According to this cycle, reflection is a process where we look at an experience, frame it, and derive meaning from it. Critical thinking is the second step which demonstrates the ability to evaluate relevant information and opinions gathered in the reflection stage in a systematic, purposeful, and efficient manner. The third step, or “refraction” is “the transformative knowledge that occurs which validates the use of critical analysis and problem solving, providing interpretation and conclusions of important issues” (p. 221). Reflection, when practiced through a critical lens, is a tool that can produce more engaged students and experiences. This critical analysis allows transformative knowledge to be gained.

When discussing the role of reflection in ISL, it is useful to consider how personal narratives tie in to the creation of meaning. Narratives can aid in the process of transformative



learning by connecting past, present, and future into a meaningful story through which students learn (Mather, 2008). Typically, these narratives emerge for individuals from complex influences that are based in specific cultural and historical situations (Singer, 2004). Singer (2004) has described how narrative memory creates the building blocks of our ongoing identity and continuous reality. Our narrative lenses allow us to filter life experiences and inform our future actions in a way that integrates the past with the imagined future, which provides unity and purpose for the individual (McAdams & McLean, 2013; Singer, 2004). In terms of reflection, this narrative identity emerges through the intentional processing and is evident in the way students create meaning from their often complex experiences abroad.

The aforementioned philosophical and conceptual definitions of reflection, while useful for creating frameworks from which to guide course design, can be difficult to translate into classroom activities or teaching strategies. The remainder of this section will continue to elaborate on reflection processes using more concrete models and forms of measurement that can be useful for course design and future research. For example, Ahmad et al. (2014) surveyed 250 teachers in three public universities and found a significant positive correlation between service learning and civic development with a 61% correlation regarding civic knowledge, a 64% correlation for civic skills, and a 68% correlation in terms of civic commitment. In addition, they found that reflection significantly moderated the relationship between the service-learning and civic development. To measure the moderating effect of reflection on the relationship between service-learning and civic development, Ahmad et al. (2014) used a scale commonly used to measure service-learning outcomes in quantitative research called the Student Service-Learning Course Survey (SSLCS) first developed by Eyler and Giles (1999). These results convey how the use of reflection in service-learning courses can produce desired outcomes in students.

David Kolb has also proposed an experiential learning model that further dissects the reflection process concerning where it fits in the learning environment. In Kolb's (1984) learning model, observations are gathered from concrete experiences and processed via examining, analyzing, interpreting, and reflecting from different points of view. Individuals find personal meaning through this process by reflecting on the impact of those experiences, and by evaluating the dissonance that can surface during experiential learning situations. Ideally, students are constantly asking questions about their own thought processes and decision-making, and strive to find trends and patterns in their experiences or behaviors to later evaluate and alter (Kolb, 1984).

The learning process that Kolb defined is one that is grounded in experience rather than the transmission of information: "[It is] the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38). This process is a continuous one of learning and re-learning and it consists of modifying old ideas and integrating new knowledge within existing knowledge. Kolb's model is not limited to only classroom settings and, in fact, operates on the assumption that experiential learning is richest when taken beyond the classroom. The model can apply to the entire human growth process and our movements through stages of development that likewise correspond to our integration into the world around us, more broadly as individuals and as citizens (Kolb, 1984).

ISL is a multifaceted and complex experience. As a result, critical reflection can be complicated by as well as designed in response to the particular characteristics of international contexts. Unlike other courses in the curriculum, a reflections course has even more adaptability and flexibility in its implementation as it is rooted in the students' experiences and time spent with community organizations. Because such experiences are dynamic in nature, so too would the course design need to be adaptable to growth and change as the course progresses (Eyler &

Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996). Consequently, it is important for course design to engage with creativity and flexibility in a similar manner as the ISL experience. Reflections courses require creative management so that both rigor and flexibility can be implemented in effective ways. Ideal instructional design begins with identifying learning goals and course outcomes with a strategy that includes overall learning objectives for course activities (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

Eyler and Giles (1999) developed a framework that includes five characteristics for best practices in reflections activities that can be helpful to consider when beginning course design. These characteristics, known as the 5 Cs, are: a) connection between experience and knowledge; b) continuity of reflection before, during, and after the service experience; c) context of applying subject matter to real life situations; d) challenging students' perspectives; and e) coaching and providing emotional support to students throughout the process. These five characteristics can also be supplemented with guided questions developed by knowledgeable reflection facilitators. Bringle and Hatcher (1999) have offered a similar set of guidelines for designing effective reflection in service-learning classes. Reflection activities should a) clearly link the service experience to the course content and learning objectives; b) be structured in terms of description, expectations, and the criteria for assessing the activity; c) occur regularly during the semester so that students can develop the capacity to engage in deeper and broader examination of issues; d) provide feedback from the instructor so that students learn how to improve their critical analysis and reflective practice; and e) include the opportunity for students to explore, clarify, and alter their personal values. Integral to both studies mentioned above is the concept of the purposeful and consistent presence of a knowledgeable and trusted guide or facilitator. Course design for

reflection is then less concerned with specific content and more focused on how facilitators can elicit a process of self-awareness in their students.

Researchers have conveyed how reflection activities should be structured with clear expectations and criteria for assessment (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, et al., 1996). These findings suggest that reflection activities include the role of the students in processing their personal values, civic attitudes, goals, and intentions when first approaching the course. Integral to this design of reflection is student responsibility in considering their intentions for participating in service-learning programs. By giving students a shared responsibility, ideally a more even, collaborative setting can be achieved (Cress & Donahue, 2011; Harrison & Clayton, 2012). This shift in classroom power relations relates to the mutuality between partners in the SOFAR model of relationships in ISL. Similar to how partner organizations and academic institutions model reciprocal and mutual partnerships, so too should facilitators and students practice reciprocity and collaboration.

Best practice guidelines for reflection tend to emphasize the need for regularity, connecting course activities to relevant course content, providing guided facilitation of reflection, and challenging students' perspectives in order to clarify values (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher, Bringle & Muthiah, 2004). One model that clearly addresses each of these points is the DEAL model, created by Ash, Clayton, and Moses (2009). The DEAL model is a tool that deconstructs how facilitators can help learners with the process of "how to think" as opposed to "what to think" (Ash et al., 2009, p. 10). Reflection practitioners are essentially trying to elicit in their students the process of critical thought as opposed to traditional methods of information transmission. According to them, all individuals involved within the learning process should practice critical reflection in order for it to become a habit of learning

self-awareness, self-critique, and how to carefully consider one's own thoughts and beliefs (Ash et al., 2009). Consequently, the use of critical reflection enhances the potential for producing desired outcomes related to transformative learning.

Within models such as DEAL, facilitators can identify student learning goals and teaching objectives, but they are able to do so in a more fluid space where processes of critical thought can be integrated into the entire student experience. This fluid space can create tension as students are transitioning to more active learning that asks them to generate their own learning and create their own experiences. As Ash et al. (2009) have explained, this tension is important because “there are very few textbooks for life, so learning how to learn for yourself can be very empowering. Being ‘reflective-in-action’ is a skill that will serve [learners] well throughout [their lives]” (p. 10).

One unique attribute of the DEAL model is the way in which it is assessed. In order to elicit these processes in a more guided way, Ash et al. (2009) integrated Paul and Elder's (2001) standards of critical thinking to their assessment rubrics: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significant, and fairness. They also added an additional standard of integration, which involves connecting the service experience to the learning content. These standards can be shown in matrixes and are useful as rubrics for reflections entries or group discussions. The DEAL model itself is a three step process for critical reflection whereby students are asked to: a) describe the experience objectively (who, what, where, when, and why); b) examine the experience using reflections prompts based on learning goals (e.g. personal growth, civic learning, and/or academic enhancement); and c) articulate learning to reconsider and reframe the learning via synthesis and evaluation of reasoning (Ash et al., 2009). It is a

flexible model that can be modified and adapted based on instructor and student desired outcomes.

Bettencourt (2015) used action research and the DEAL model for critical reflection to measure student learning outcomes by analyzing reflective journals, surveys, focus group responses, and interviews. Findings indicated a positive correlation between service-learning activities and specific course-related learning outcomes. In particular, 91% of participants reported they were able to express themselves via the DEAL model, which the author associated to the service-learning outcome of communication through guided reflection. In addition, the findings suggest that service-learning outcomes, when carefully designed and clearly defined, provided students with optimal chances for academic success. Learning tasks and service opportunities should align with learning outcomes in order for service-learning experiences to benefit the students and the communities with which they serve (Bettencourt, 2015).

Based on these findings, the DEAL model provides a means of instructors analyzing assignments once reflection has been documented. The primary mode of documenting reflections, in the classroom and regarding research design, asks students to consider how their experiences connect to course content, usually via individual written assignments or group discussion. Written assignments that have students analyze their service experience in relation to their attitudes, goals, and intentions can be powerful aids in identifying existing values (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Endres & Gould, 2009; Eyler et al., 1996). Hatcher, Bringle, and Muthiah (2004) described how there are many ways to accomplish this, not all of which are individual; small group activities that involve collaborative work can create meaningful dialogues that promote the clarification of student values. Regardless of reflection activities, instructors will ideally ask students about personal lessons, obstacles, and challenges in relation to their

community participation in order to help students consider their own perspectives.

Communicating these expectations in the syllabus, assignments, and assessment rubrics is important and will aid student understanding of the role that reflection can play in their own development, as well as their role within the course (Hatcher et al., 2004). The ways in which practitioners approach these processes and engage with their students are integral to how effective courses are to real-life application. There is a bridge that must be crossed in order for this process to move from merely theoretical to practical.

A significant challenge that arises from facilitating reflective processes comes from questions concerning structural design and course mediation. Especially in higher education, structuring reflective learning may be difficult in terms of upholding academic standards of excellence and keeping course material relevant and engaging. Endres and Gould (2009) researched the role of the instructor in creating and maintaining space for viable communication regarding difficult topics such as racism and whiteness theory. When students and teachers were conceptualized as co-learners partaking in a shared experience, their mutual learning created dynamics of reciprocity that helped distract from the inherent power dynamics tied to the more traditional hierarchies of higher education. They concluded that challenging previously held stereotypes and values creates a tension that has much potential for learning if it is structured and facilitated in constructive ways that enable student development (Endres & Gould, 2009).

As a result, instructors assume a pivotal role in service-learning environments. They identify and assess learning outcomes as well as collaborate with community partners to structure student experiences that contribute to overarching academic and civic goals. In correspondence with the concept of partnerships in ISL, and learning with instead of doing for communities, students and teachers also coexist in a fluid environment together. Especially in

ISL, students and instructors have the opportunity to relate to one another as more than distanced, collegiate associates and more akin to partners engaging in a shared experience. Eyler and Giles (1999) found that student closeness to faculty in service-learning was a predictor of increased tolerance, personal and community efficacy, and leadership skills. Higher quality programs were more likely to result in student connection with and closeness to faculty at the end of the experience as compared to less engaging programs. Significant to designing more quality service-learning programs is then more closely evaluating the relationship between facilitator and student.

As suggested by the research, ISL courses strive to incorporate critical reflection by a knowledgeable leader and facilitator with ideal courses consisting of mutual navigation through the service-learning experience via enhanced self-awareness and collaboration (Endres & Gould, 2009; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler et al., 1996; Hatcher et al., 2004). This concept of facilitation ties into underlying democratic principles of quality leadership. Cress and Donahue (2011) have described how service-learning resituates a student's social location from knowledge receiver to co-constructor of reality, so they may participate as an active piece of the learning community instead of a passive object. This process requires intentional leadership so that both student and teacher thrive as co-creators of understanding. However, an associated danger of instructors using a "we" source of knowledge as opposed to "I" is that it can potentially put too much pressure on the student for their own learning in a way that removes responsibility from the teacher and places it on the student (Cress & Donahue, 2011). This risk stems from the ambiguities that exist in the fluid space of facilitation. There is complexity in deciphering the boundaries in facilitation and determining what is too much structure versus not enough guidance.



The question here is how practitioners can design a course that is both indicative of student's developing their own learning goals and processes, while ensuring that their learning objectives are meeting academic standards of higher education. Facilitators are expected to guide students through the process of critical thinking while also allowing them to engage in self-directed learning through their own learning strategies (Pagello & Roselle, 2009). The next section further explores the role of the facilitator as well as current literature regarding facilitation strategies of eliciting transformative learning in students.

### **Facilitation of Reflective Processes**

In order for experiential learning to be considered a worthwhile academic endeavor, critical analysis of the activity must take place (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Dewey, 1916; Montrose, 2002). Because experiential learning associated with pedagogies such as service-learning typically take place primarily outside of the classroom, it is less predictable and structured. It can be difficult for practitioners to structure a learning environment due to this unpredictability of experiential learning opportunities; however, it is precisely this lack of structure that offers potential for transformation (Kiely, 2004). In order to understand how facilitators can properly integrate learning in such an environment, it is then useful to examine the role of the facilitator in experiential learning settings.

One helpful tool that can aid experiential education practitioners is a set of guidelines developed by the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE, 1998) called the Principles of Good Practice. These principles can be used by any program engaging in experiential education with the goal of maximizing student learning opportunities. The eight principles are: intention, authenticity, planning, clarity, monitoring and assessment, reflection, evaluation, and acknowledgment (NSEE, 1998). While these points may appear ambiguous or vague regarding

program implementation, they nonetheless provide a skeleton of experiential education and learning pillars to keep in mind when approaching new groups or new programs.

When discussing facilitation in experiential education, Thomas (2010) described five different roles that educators must manage during outdoor educational programs: the facilitator, the facilitative trainer, the facilitative leader, the facilitative consultant, and the facilitative coach. Understanding the purpose of each role can help facilitators better decide which one to perform when and why. Facilitator transparency concerning the movement between these roles in the form of an open dialogue with the group was found to contribute to their overall effectiveness (Thomas, 2010). All members are a part of the educative process in experiential learning. This means that facilitators are ideally also learning from these experiences and applying new knowledge to their future practices.

In ISL, facilitators similarly seek to engage students in the process of transformative learning. Not only do they present the platform for open dialogue and experiential learning via group processing of service experiences, but they also provide students with a means of accessing their own learning through a holistic understanding of themselves. One way in which instructors can engage students is through guided questions and consistent faculty interaction (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, et al., 1996). This helps students navigate through the reflective process while also allowing them the freedom to dictate its specific direction (Pagello & Roselle, 2009). A key ingredient with this strategy is instructor flexibility to recognize the different learning styles and needs of the students in order to facilitate student learning properly (Neville, 1999).

In addition to flexibility, Fransson, van Lakerveld and Rohtma (2009) outlined the importance of facilitator personality in creating the classroom climate. Their findings indicated

that effective facilitators were curious, open-minded, eager to learn, able to cope with criticism, flexible, had a sociable attitude and a positive self-image, engage in life-long learning as professionals, and partake in a constant analysis of their own actions (or self-critique). A similar study conducted by Burrows (1997) emphasized four attributes as critical to effective facilitation: genuine mutual respect, a partnership in learning, a dynamic, goal-oriented process, and critical reflection. Burrows (1997) furthermore offered what she has termed as a “redefinition of facilitation” based on qualitative data collected from her peers in the nursing field: “facilitation is a goal-oriented dynamic process in which participants work together in an atmosphere of genuine mutual respect, in order to learn through critical reflection” (p. 401). Findings from both these studies indicate that the facilitation process consists of the creation and maintenance of a collaborative, democratic environment, regardless of the course content.

Researchers have suggested how an effective facilitator creates the space and presence in which students may process the many complexities inherent with their educational experiences. As a result, facilitation is more than simply knowing and teaching, but is rather “a shift in the way knowledge spaces are used” (Savin-Baden, 2003, p. 142). Especially in an ISL context, where transitions are plentiful and uncertainties are bound to arise, the ideal classroom consists of a continuous dialogue between the facilitator and the facilitated. This on-going dialogue would also ensure that power dynamics are maintained through the proper formation and articulation of learning objectives. Savin-Baden (2003) has conveyed:

At its most basic level, the facilitator’s position is one of being there to ensure that the team works effectively and that team members’ learning needs are met. However, the facilitator is also there to promote the development of a team culture, to challenge, to help the balancing of task and process and to enable students to move from critical

thinking to critical thought and then to critique. The position and type of power and understanding of students' perceptions and concerns are important components in what it means to be effective in the facilitation process. (p. 60)

Including the student perspective is a pivotal aspect in effective facilitation, as is mutual respect, dialogue, and engagement. However, acknowledging students as valuable partners in the process is only the first step. Those that follow involve managing student and instructor responsibility to respectively guide and participate in the opportunities for shared learning. Once again, this is creating collaboration of learning as opposed to more traditional and structured hierarchies. As Savin-Baden (2003) elaborated:

The task of the facilitator is thus necessarily ambiguous, and, therefore, the articulation of it as a role demands that we engage with the tensions, dilemmas and risks implicit in it...what we need to explore is not what constitutes a clear role for a facilitator, but the nature of the boundaries between teaching and facilitation, since the notion of "role" in facilitation is contested ground. Facilitation is not about procedures or rules, but about creating different possibilities for learning, particularly ones that resist reductionist accounts and techniques for becoming. Thus we do not have types of facilitators...instead we have tutors in higher education who speak of the relationship between facilitation and the other types of teaching in which they are involved, in terms of overcrowded and often conflicted positions in which uneasiness about their identities, boundaries and relationships with students are evident...Facilitation has a plurality of boundaries and roles where previous beliefs and practices become vulnerable. (p. 27)

Indeed, many ambiguities are apparent in this process, as are opportunities for growth and development. Can there be best practices for such a role that is constantly changing? How do

instructors maximize these “different possibilities for learning” that create instead of reduce “techniques for becoming?” (Savin-Baden (2003, p. 27). The above quote is reminiscent of Nussbaum (1996) and Lederach (2005), and the notions of enhancing the ambiguous but necessary “moral imagination” in higher education and in service-learning. Inherent in this quote is also the notion of the personal nature of facilitation, and the need to understand the vulnerabilities of both instructors and students.

Researchers have suggested how intuition and trust are integral components of instructors and students wrestling with potential vulnerabilities in ISL. Intuition in transformative facilitation has been described as the concept of certain ‘knowing’ regarding the dynamics of learning, such as whether or not students are doing well and what level of understanding they have regarding the learning process. Belenky, Clichy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) conveyed this concept of *guiding intuition* as a valuable force for teaching. Insights as these can be used as a part of effective learning and facilitation, even if they are not openly articulated by educational staff. When paired with knowledge and skills, intuition could potentially be the guiding force required for elusive student outcomes related to transformative learning. While there are perhaps no means of measuring this intuition per se, there are ways of quantifying its effects via evidence of student development.

These findings indicate how the role of an effective facilitator consists of ambiguities and intuition. Apte (2009) examined these concepts from the instructor perspective through interviews with adult educators concerning their experiences in facilitating transformative learning. Apte (2009) suggested a framework for facilitation that consists of four main components: confirming and interrupting current frames of reference; working with triggers for transformative learning; acknowledging a time of retreat or dormancy; and developing a new

perspective. Apte (2009) conveyed how, in order to increase transformative potential of the learning process, facilitators must strive to create a “mood of possibility” when aiding students in their development of new perspectives. As adult educators, facilitators fill a “provocative role” as they “[represent] relevant, unnoticed ‘truth’” (p. 178). This role is accompanied by certain complexities of identity:

Facilitators are continually making choices about how to traverse the interface of participants’ ideas and the ideas that they might speak for throughout a program. We are receiving, confirming, stretching and/or challenging a participant’s frame of reference, and thus we are recognizing, confirming and interrupting various selves. (p. 179)

The provocative nature of this work lies in the way educators can elicit change within students by creating those possibilities through their practice. Similar to the previously discussed concepts of intuition and intimacy in ISL, Apte (2009) emphasized the emotional aspects of learning that aid in the facilitation of transformative learning. Specifically, program activities that evoke unexpected learning can help students consider what assumptions are being interrupted and provide a window for change. These findings indicate how transformative learning can resemble a circular and often erratic process. Part of this learning process may involve returning again and again to the same issues until a person feels as though they have enough power or capacity to implement the change. As a result of these ambiguities, facilitators operate as educational guides. In essence, they generate opportunities and invite students to take ownership of their own learning process.

In addition to aiding their students in discovering insights, facilitators themselves face a parallel experience (Apte, 2009). Similar to students, they are “navigating complex processes of learning and change” and considering new possibilities for their own facilitative practices by

challenging their previous assumptions about the learning process (Apte, 2009, p. 186). Antelo, Buck, Ettling, and Herbers (2011) examined the experience of four practitioners that took part in a research project as part of a community of practice at the University of the Incarnate Word. Throughout the study, practitioners elucidated points of student learning processes based on their teaching experiences by reflecting critically on their own practice. Their conclusions revolved around the notion that educational actors should be constantly asking questions regarding methods and design, and how they involve students in the discovery and implementation of new strategies. As Antelo, et al. (2011) described:

College students facing multicultural contexts do not learn simply because we teach them, but because they get involved in their own learning process (p. 95)...our vision is that ultimately learners will take responsibility for their own learning, their own way of knowing. (p. 97)

One of the biggest challenges Antelo et al. (2011) discovered in their class sessions involved facilitator assumptions concerning the classroom experience and their ability to perceive classroom contexts enough through the eyes of their students. Facilitators are then subject to the same individual qualities and tendencies of imperfection as students; they are “continuous learners [that seek to create] a space for living knowledge” (Antelo et al., 2011, p.105).

One question that arose from this review of literature is how educational practitioners should approach studying best practices of facilitation. Harvey et al. (2002) have specified how, in the nursing education and healthcare fields, qualitative research has primarily focused on the facilitation process or facilitator roles, while less research has been conducted as to how findings can be implemented into practice. These studies have tended to report on facilitator roles and strategies as a part of a larger goal, usually regarding patient-centered service. The literature on

patient-centered service facilitation has shown that it is difficult to isolate which aspects of the facilitation process or the facilitator role is effective in producing change. In much the same way, facilitation in higher education is difficult to trace in the ways in which it produces transformative learning experiences in students.

In this literature review, I have focused on the facilitation of reflective processes in higher education, ISL partnerships and relationships, the integration of student learning experiences and transformative learning, as well as larger themes of the moral imagination in civic engagement. There are gaps in the research in identifying the role of the learner, in understanding the relationship between the learner and facilitator, and where the responsibility for learning lies (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). ISL as a pedagogy creates a mixture of experience where difficult realities and complex ideas are thrown together to create a stew of potential learning. There is more to the facilitation of this pedagogical form than simple best practices can convey, which creates an ambiguity whereby individuals can discover their practice as an art form. As a result, this review invites universities and practitioners to consider the implications of engaging pedagogies such as ISL that seek to utilize transformative learning as a viable student learning outcome. The discovery of the nuances that comprise this multi-faceted practice was the driving force for the present research which will now be discussed in Chapter Three.



### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

To address the ambiguity involved with facilitation and to explore the methods facilitators use to enhance student learning, the current study was designed to uncover the underlying components of facilitation and reflective processes. As previously discussed, ISL has great potential to provide students with opportunities to grow in transformative ways; however, the best methods of approaching that potential remain varied and unclear. In order to fill the gaps that exist in the literature on facilitation and reflection, this research project sought to discover the unique pedagogies through which each interviewed facilitator approached their practice. The data were collected, transcribed, and thematically coded to offer a more nuanced analysis of facilitation.

The design of this study involved eliciting perspectives from both students and facilitators in efforts to better understand each of their respective roles and motivations within the ISL learning sphere. Approximately 30 students and 15 facilitators (most of whom were currently involved with ISL) were invited to participate in the study. Fourteen students and seven facilitators responded and agreed to participate. Purposeful sampling was used as all students and facilitators were specifically chosen and invited to partake in the study. Student participants completed a Likert-type scale, seven-item survey in addition to three open-ended questions. Facilitator participants were interviewed using semi-structured interviews that averaged between 30 minutes to an hour. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and coded through categorical creation and comparison that illuminated specific patterns or themes.

As the study progressed, it became increasingly clear that student data were not as appropriate for the current research goals. This data was significantly less rich and relevant in regards to the research questions. For this reason, data analysis was primarily concentrated on facilitator interviews. Common trends found in the survey data will be briefly reported; however, the remainder of this study will focus on facilitator interviews as the core data.

### **Design**

A qualitative study was chosen in order to explore more fully the unique experiences of both facilitators and students in regards to the transformative potential of reflection processes and learning in ISL. Qualitative research was chosen because such data can provide researchers with a more holistic understanding of complex processes, as well as the flexibility for cumulative understanding. According to Mayoux (2006), qualitative research captures subjectivity and nuanced data and offers a means of analysis whereby researchers can uncover underlying processes and meaning. Consequently, the current research design used a qualitative research framework in order to develop a more robust and holistic understanding regarding the processes of facilitation.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and student responses to three open-ended items along with a Likert-type survey. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because this method afforded the researcher the opportunity to gain rich data from participants who have unique insights and experiences concerning facilitation of reflection processes (Willis, 2006). Interviewing individuals who were knowledgeable about the ISL field allowed for the discovery of valuable insights concerning the art of facilitation and strategies for enhancing reflection processes in students. For the present study, seven facilitators in the ISL field were interviewed and 14 student surveys were distributed and completed.

## **Participant Sampling**

A population of participants who shared common characteristics was sought for this study. As a result, purposeful selection was used for both students and facilitators. For facilitator participants, the snowballing technique was used to recruit interviewees, which consisted of one contact suggesting other possible contacts thus contributing to the list of prospective participants (Guest, Mitchell & Namey, 2005). All participants came from two main populations: students and facilitators of ISL or related programs. Student participants were either current or past students of the Concordia University Master of Arts in International Development and Service (MAIDS) program and were selected based on availability of contact information. Email was primarily used because a portion of this study was conducted remotely. Student participants were recruited based on their responses to several group distribution emails related to the study. Each email included the student survey and a consent form for participation. Students were reminded that their responses would remain confidential in accordance with Institutional Review Board (IRB) procedures throughout the research process.

Facilitators were invited to participate in the study voluntarily. This recruiting process involved more intentional selection than with the student surveys, because the facilitators were referred by other faculty, or were contacted based on acquaintance networking. For instance, one contact, Dr. Robert Bringle, I met during a higher education conference in Sardinia, where he provided me with contact information and additional introductions to helpful sources, two of which responded and participated in the current study. The other facilitator participants were recruited through faculty networking and recommendations, primarily through the MAIDS program.

Compensation was not provided for participation in this study and all participants were clearly informed that they could terminate their participation at any time. Each participant received an informed consent form that delineated the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures in accordance with the IRB standards at Concordia University. Before each interview, participants were also informed that the researcher would be audio-recording for future analysis. Participants were given code numbers (e.g. "student 1" or "facilitator 1") throughout the data collection process to ensure that identifying names would not appear in any of the data analysis or reporting.

### **Research Design Strategy**

Qualitative research is an invaluable tool when it comes to analyzing data that cannot be easily conveyed in a numerical fashion. Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) have defined qualitative research as research in which the investigator relies upon textual data more than numerical data in order to understand the deeper meaning of human action. Qualitative research is often depicted as a strategy that emphasizes an open-ended approach to the research process that can produce more surprising results and new insights through theory generation or inductive processing.

In addition, qualitative research allows investigators to engage problems that may be less accessible via more quantitative methods; however, qualitative data can be more complex to analyze as it is not a simple, homogenous process. Despite the inherent complexity in analyzing qualitative data, the openness of analytical options provides researchers with a wider range of accepted research methods that allows them to choose the one that best suits their research objective (Miles, et al., 2014). Carrera-Fernandez, Guardia-Olmos, and Pero-Cebollero (2014) have conveyed how, especially in terms of psychology and the social sciences, qualitative

research is becoming a more frequent approach. The current research project represents an investigation of social and psychological characteristics in the way it is designed to examine how individuals relate to both their own processes, along with those of the communities with which they are involved. Qualitative research design was thus established as the most relevant and enriching framework to use for the current research project.

### **Survey Design**

The survey was initially designed to provide a mixed-methods approach through ancillary quantitative information that would serve to triangulate and check conclusions drawn from qualitative data. Survey data, however, were not the main focus for the present research due to low participant numbers which meant low reliability and statistical significance. Seven basic Likert-type items were created that ranged on a scale from one (Strongly Agree) to five (Strongly Disagree), with three representing a neutral stance. In addition, three open-ended questions were provided at the end in order to uncover any additional information that was not captured by the numerical items (See Appendix B for example survey). All 14 participants signed a consent form and filled the survey out to its entirety, and were either previous or current Concordia University MAIDS students. While the return on surveys was small in scale, the reported descriptive statistics provide a basic pre/post analysis of student attitudes towards the reflections process, as well as their experience in reflections courses, which were an integral part of the MAIDS program for each surveyed student. The qualitative data gathered through student's short answers, along with interviews (the primary data of this investigation) provided a more holistic understanding of the complex process of reflection and transformative learning in ISL.

### **One-on-one Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate instructor experiences with facilitation in the field of ISL or related programs. Interviews were chosen as the primary tool for data collection due to the range of information that can be obtained from them. As Willis (2006) has explained, they provide an opportunity to examine processes, motivations, and other kinds of qualitative dimensions that add to a holistic understanding of a topic. Surveys are more limited in the degree to which they can provide explanations for patterns or consider attitudes and opinions. With interviews, the researcher can tailor questions to the particular individual and also develop greater rapport with interviewees and understand their own unique perceptions (Willis, 2006). Interviews followed a protocol with suggested themes; however, there was potential for the participants to develop their responses. In this way, areas that were considered important were able to be covered but with adequate flexibility so unexpected directions could lead to new discoveries about the facilitation process (Willis, 2006; See Appendix C for protocol).

### **Data Collection**

Data collection for this project primarily used one-on-one interviews. Student surveys were distributed and briefly analyzed for breadth of perspective. Maintaining confidentiality was a priority in recruiting, data collection, and interview location. Participants chose the interview time, and if applicable, location, and each interview began with a brief introduction to the study's intent. Follow-up emails were sent to thank participants for their cooperation and dialogue. Likewise, students who completed a survey were sent a follow-up email expressing gratitude for their participation.

All seven facilitator participants who responded to recruiting materials (i.e., emails) were interviewed according to their schedules. Three out of the seven were conducted in person, three were conducted over Skype, and one was conducted over the phone. The in-person interviews

were conducted on campus facilities; two were carried out in Portland, Oregon, at Concordia University, and one took place in Siena, Italy at the Siena Institute of Italian Studies. Interviews ranged from 30 to 60 minutes. Each participant had experience with facilitating student reflection processes and offered their reflections about those experiences during the interviews. Of the participants, four were full-time faculty who had current experience facilitating students in a university setting, two were involved with ISL-related programs that facilitated university students in abroad locations, and one was a facilitator of student learning at a middle/high school level.

Interview questions were designed to allow facilitators to offer their individual narratives of their experiences in the form of anecdotal evidence: describing course structure, elaborating on instruments or tools used, and sharing personal conceptualizations about facilitation and the role of the facilitator. Each interview was approached as a fluid conversation rather than a structured dialogue; especially if it was a first meeting, time was given for introductions and to begin building trust before progressing to the research-focused questions. In order to develop and maintain rapport, questions were initially framed broadly, mostly concerning facilitator practice and were gradually built upon to investigate more personal experiences, opinions, and insights. Questions were posed as open-ended as possible so as not to lead interviewees towards a specific or biased answer.

Furthermore, participants were given space and time to develop their responses and ideas and they were provided as much clarification as possible when there was apparent confusion. In addition to the interview schedule, probing questions were used so interviewees were able to discuss unique thoughts on their specific practice and expand upon the original interview questions, which further developed the conversation (Willis, 2006). Active listening to

participant responses was engaged in order to gain richer answers and deeper discoveries. At the conclusion of each interview, participants were asked if they had anything additional to add before they were thanked for their time and participation.

### **Data Analysis Procedures**

The current research project is an exploratory, descriptive study that used a Likert-type, five-point scale along with three open-ended questions for student participants and semi-structured interviews for facilitator participants. Because interview data were the primary focus of this research, and because the majority of data collected were qualitative, the project is defined as qualitative as opposed to mixed-methods. The survey data were quantitative in nature and will be briefly described using descriptive statistics equated by hand, using a basic calculator and known statistical equations.

The primary data analysis focused on words as the basic medium. The following description of analysis procedures is based on Miles et al.'s (2014) guidelines for qualitative data analysis and coding techniques. For the remainder of this section the term *codes* will refer to labels that assign symbolic meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled via interviews. In the current study, codes were assigned to data *chunks* of 1-2 paragraphs to capture the essence of a section of the transcription. This data chunking represented the first step to coding, referred to as First Cycle Coding (FCC, Miles et al., 2014). During this phase, codes were used to retrieve and categorize similar data chunks to be more quickly clustered into segments relating to facilitation. In this way, preliminary categorical clusters, or chunks, were created for each interview transcription.



If FCC is a way to initially summarize segments of data, Second Cycle coding (SCC) is a way of grouping those summaries into a smaller number of categories or themes (Miles et al., 2014). SCC was used to identify emergent themes from the FCC clusters. Because these codes were explanatory or inferential in nature, they created more condensed units of analysis which made large chunks of textual data smaller and easier to analyze and assess. This cycle of coding created a more cohesive cognitive map for understanding unique attributes about the interviewees' specific facilitation practice and where there was significant overlap across participant responses.

Miles et al. (2014) have conveyed how coding is a form of data condensation that enables researchers to retrieve the most meaningful material and to assemble chunks of data together into more readily analyzable units. It is also described as heuristic, or a method of discovering content and meaning. For the present research, codes were assigned to data chunks to detect recurring patterns. From those patterns, similar codes were clustered together to create a smaller number of categories, or pattern codes. Once these pattern codes were formed, the interrelationships of the categories were then constructed to develop higher-level, analytic meaning for assertion and thematic development. For the purposes of this research, these higher-level meanings were referred to as conceptual themes.

To create the aforementioned codes, an inductive method was used, which means they emerged progressively throughout data collection and analysis. Inductive coding was chosen because it allowed for specific data to develop into contextualized and broader themes of facilitation. Codes did not come from a preexisting list and were instead discovered through an open-ended process. As a means of ensuring code consistency, codes were incrementally added, removed, and reconfigured through constant comparison analysis. This constant comparison

analysis ensured that codes created also related to one another in coherent ways and were likewise part of a unified structure. Not every portion of the interview transcripts was coded; instead, only the main sections were used. Trivial small-talk, introductions, or otherwise unrelated data were not included in analysis in order to maintain the focus of the study. Interview questions that were prepared before every interview provided a rough outline for the resulting transcripts, and coding was focused on that content as opposed to other topics.

For the present research, data were analyzed by first transcribing each semi-structured interview verbatim within 48 hours of interview completion. Each transcript was read through several times for familiarization with the content before approaching the creation of topic codes via the clustering technique. Notes, or memos, were taken after interviews, during transcription, and throughout the coding procedures. In addition, throughout the coding procedure, constant comparison between interview responses was carried out in order to recognize emerging patterns. As new codes inductively emerged during the coding process, previously coded transcripts were re-assessed to see if new codes were applicable across the data pool.

The initial clustering technique consisted of dividing each transcript into sections that the researcher then assigned a two-to-four word phrase to describe the section. Initial categories were presented as text in columns separating the transcript data and the FCC and were constructed from the interview narratives provided by participants. These categories were then manually constructed into text clusters (e.g. by using sticky notes) and laid out for visualization to discover commonalities between each respondent's responses to related questions. Through this constant and comparative coding, patterns, and themes began to emerge in the data. As consistencies were found, text items were matched together and assigned codes that, following further analysis and comparison, became the final themes derived from the data.

Throughout the data analysis process, the researcher consistently appealed to outside support via advisor perspective and other, well-trained qualitative researchers or faculty who could better guide the researcher and offer valuable insights in regards to the best coding procedures. This outcome included providing supportive critiques and different perspectives as to how to interpret data and best analyze the emerging patterns and themes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Ethical guidelines were followed as outlined by Guest et al. (2005) which states that the gathering of qualitative data is centered on empathy and understanding, and may provide participants with the opportunity to discuss issues they have never before been able to communicate. The well-being of research participants was a top priority for this research project, and the core principles of ethical research were reviewed and followed: respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. In addition, the presence of the investigator has an impact on participants, and the more sensitive the content of research, the higher that impact may be (Guest et al., 2005). In order to counteract that potential impact, recruitment and interviews were approached as cautiously and respectfully as possible. Considerable thought was also given to the survey items as well as the interview questions. For each interview, intentionality and deliberation were exercised when proceeding with questions, especially when probing about sensitive or personal experiences (Willis, 2006).

The risks inherent to the current study were minimal and were no greater than those normally encountered during regular classroom participation. For interviews, consent was gained orally prior to the interview, and data were collected in private, audio-recorded interviews. For the surveys, each student participant submitted a signed consent form along with the completed survey. Strict confidentiality protocols were held throughout the process of recruitment, data

collection, and data analysis so that participants were not exposed in potentially vulnerable ways. Names were not used during data analysis, and all paper data were securely stored. As a current student of the Concordia University MAIDS program, the researcher had no supervisory roles or direct influence over any of the participants. A proposal of this research project was examined and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to its onset. The following chapter presents the findings that emerged from these qualitative, methodological processes.

## Chapter Four: Analysis

### Student Surveys

**Descriptive trends.** Fourteen students completed surveys, five of which were male and nine of which were female. The majority of participants were Caucasian and between the ages of 25-30. Two of the 14 were African-American and one identified as Navajo-Native American. In addition, one male was over the age of 30. All participants were either current or past students of the MAIDS program at Concordia University. The sample size of survey responses was too small for quantitative statistical significance; however, there were noteworthy trends in survey data that will now be briefly discussed. First, there was a high consensus among students concerning the importance of reflection processes in ISL experiences. One-hundred percent of students surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed that the practice of critical thought was beneficial for them to study and further understand. In addition, 86% of students surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed that the practice of self-examination was helpful for them to study and understand in reflections-based classes. These findings suggest a basic student awareness that their ISL experiences require a certain dimension of introspection and development of critical consciousness.

Despite the unanimous rating of the importance of reflections processes, students reported varying accounts of how effective the facilitation of those processes were. When asked about their perspectives concerning facilitation of their ISL experiences, only 29% of students surveyed either strongly agreed or agreed that the facilitation of reflections courses contributed to their overall academic growth. These findings indicate a gap between student understanding of reflections processes and the subsequent critical engagement of them in course design.

**Short answer analysis.** Short answer responses concerning student experiences within reflections courses likewise varied considerably. This may be due to the range of cohorts surveyed, as each cohort of the MAIDS program had different components in terms of course design, facilitator personnel, and reading materials. Student responses first were read several times to discover common words and broad categories of topics that were compared throughout data analysis. These categorical topics were narrowed through constant comparison between student data using FCC. Because the sample size was relatively small, further coding was not conducted to discover prominent themes. From this analysis, the following core categorical topics emerged: self-assessment and self-awareness, group dynamics and group dialogue, facilitator use of content and time, proximity to a knowledgeable practitioner, and conceptualizing one's role in the ISL experience. These topics are not an exhaustive analysis of student opinions but were rather the most frequently mentioned.

To begin with, a recurring observation of reflections courses was that there was a disconnect between the academic components of the course and its practical facilitation. There was a majority consensus among students that assigned readings were more of a hindrance than of use and that the reflections process was a personal and individual process that could be difficult to translate into an academic setting. One student commented how "it's more beneficial to learn about ourselves and our personality styles, our learning styles, and leadership styles [and] then relate it to our experiences in our service placements." The impression of repetitive readings was consistent throughout the short answer responses; however, one student did note the following: "Sometimes a recycling of certain notions can be beneficial, especially during tough experiences." It is then possible that materials offered in reflections courses were perceived as redundant because they were not utilized in productive ways. Readings could

potentially be enhanced through the ways in which they are facilitated or used for classroom purposes.

A consistently reported factor that complicated the facilitation of these processes was distance. Remote facilitation was conveyed to have not properly challenged or enhanced the student learning experience while abroad. As one student expressed: “[it is important to have] a consistent person to connect with while the students are abroad.” In order to be more effective, facilitation should then happen locally in order to strengthen connections between theoretical classroom learning and experiential community-based engagement. The concept of consistent facilitation connects to the notion that students are ideally becoming part of a larger community of action in ISL environments, a point that will be revisited more thoroughly in the following sections.

Each short answer response in some manner mentioned the importance of group dynamics or class discussions. Students varied on their opinions on collective reflection activities, yet the majority of students reported the presence of group dynamics as a factor that affected reflections courses, both negatively and positively. In regards to the nature of class communication, one student wrote that “students should be able to challenge each other, offer differing opinions, and validate one another’s experiences [by] examining [their] experiences through discussing them with others that have the same frame of reference.” This quote illustrates the ways in which collective communication can help students develop perspectives of critical consciousness. Another student described: “I think reflections have a place in academia, [but] they need to be facilitated locally, and have a space for large and small discussions in addition to any graded components that are included.” Therefore, the ISL learning space was regarded by most students as one with the potential for rich group dialogue.

In essence, the majority of students reported gaps in facilitation as a significant barrier to ways in which they connected to reflections courses. Nevertheless, these facilitative gaps did not impede all students from engaging their role in their own reflective processes. As one student explained, “I have embodied this course as what it means to me and [have] manipulated it in a way so that I extract all I want from it.” Another student expressed the reflections process as a concept of grounding the self within experience: “It allows me to take a step back and analyze not only myself and my current status, but to also better appreciate or analyze where I am, what I am doing, and how I am adapting to my new surroundings.” Yet another student’s description similarly focused on self-learning and the gaining of perspective: “At times I think [service] can feel like we are just stapling papers, but reflecting can allow us to look at our daily interactions in the placements and see what we can learn from those little moments.” Students can participate in their own self-directed learning, especially with content that is experientially-based. This participation should not be mistaken as students accepting sole responsibility for the learning process; it is instead entering a shared one with instructors and community alike. These data set the foundation for the next section, which seeks to discover how knowledgeable facilitators understand their practice.

### **Facilitator Interviews**

Facilitator interviews were analyzed using inductive coding. Participants were all female with ages ranging from approximately early 30s to late 50s. Six were Caucasian-American and one was Caucasian-Italian. From interview data I found four core, consistent themes concerning the practice of facilitation: relational labor; inter-subjective learning spaces; capacity-building; and ambiguity of role. These themes will now be discussed in their own distinct sections.



**Relational labor.** Relationships in ISL are understood as existing between institutions, communities, and individuals. When examining the labor that is central to the maintenance of these connections, especially interpersonal ones within the classroom, one discovers a microcosm of relationship. Relational labor in this sense refers to the connections between individual students and the facilitator during and outside course activities that consist of genuine and personal involvement.

Each facilitator interviewed reflected upon the importance of building relationships in their practice. Labor of this kind consists of creating emotional safety for students and establishing trust. One strategy that respondents illustrated as a means for achieving this trust was through intentional awareness of student needs within the learning environment. Six of the seven interviewed facilitators discussed the importance of paying attention to student behaviors, comments, and even body language in order to more effectively build the trust required for sharing potentially vulnerable stories or beliefs. Gaining student trust was described as a necessary part of increasing their impact as practitioners, as facilitators felt it gave their students access to a deeper form of learning.

Another dimension of relational labor is the way in which students and facilitators bring their own values into the learning environment, which can additionally affect how individuals relate to one another. A more colloquial term for this is the “emotional baggage” people carry with them, but it is not limited to only emotions; it also includes one’s values, religious or cultural backgrounds, and psychological states based on previous experiences. All of these factors combined create an individual context for each person involved in the learning process. Sharing this kind of personal information throughout the facilitative practice was another way in which respondents built upon their student’s trust. Six of the seven facilitators explained how

they ask students to access vulnerable parts of themselves for analysis in order to contextualize their beliefs and values. This vulnerability was conveyed as a platform from which it was possible to strengthen dialogue on complex and controversial topics. A concept that arose from this point was that of a judgment-free zone, so that this vulnerability is protected, a psycho-social factor that will be further explored in the next section. The nonjudgmental nature of this approach, however, should not be mistaken for neutrality, because each person (facilitators included) has a specific position that is harbored in their own projections and understanding of the world.

These findings indicate that an intentional awareness and observance of one's own relational context are integral for embodying an effective facilitative role. Three facilitators acknowledged how they sought to achieve a real connection with students through the “authentic sharing” of personal values. This authenticity is not to be confused with an emotional equality of sharing; the outcomes are different for the facilitator and the student. If a process like ISL is going to ask students to participate in potentially intimate sharing, then, as one facilitator described, students will similarly have to “feel [her] personhood.” The connection between facilitator and student, while not equal, can still be one of genuine relating.

This personal nature of facilitation was conveyed by each respondent, along with the importance of fostering real relationships with students through the expression of empathy and respect. Two of the seven facilitators referenced this care as “deep listening,” and four of the seven mentioned “emergent relationships” with their students as part of their practice, or the possibility of entering into a relationship that emerges gradually over time. Part of the relational labor inherent in this form of facilitative practice was also described as the encouragement of emotional openness and investment in students to help them establish connections that can

produce richer learning for real world application. This deep investment and involvement in student lives was labeled by one respondent as “taxing work” and by another as “deeply fulfilling.” Yet another explained it as both. More than one respondent compared the facilitator-student relationship to a counseling or therapeutic relationship that can encourage emotive sharing.

Six respondents specifically recognized the risk associated with accessing student emotions as a means of learning, and two in particular stressed the vulnerability for both facilitators as well as students throughout this process. As there are varying degrees of emotional preparedness and maturity, each party is placed in uncertain relational positions and at times have the potential to get hurt. The same two facilitators specifically acknowledged managing their own emotions during their practice so as not to overstep boundaries with their students. This uncertainty of emotionality is further exacerbated by the ambiguity of the facilitator role, which will be discussed shortly in more depth.

Furthermore, the concept of engaging students in a deep understanding of their own values and perspectives in relation to others was consistently discussed across interviews. In part, the deconstruction of an experience in ISL is the deconstruction of the self; in order to contextualize an experience, a person must contextualize themselves within it. Another way to understand this is building a relationship with the self as well as with others. This self-awareness can also be understood as how the individual self-regulates and self-relates in addition to how they enact their own values in the class sphere. Self-relational thinking is the concept of evaluating and critiquing oneself before evaluating and critiquing others. In relation to facilitation, this means if instructors are going to ask their students to seek a deeper understanding of their own values and beliefs, they must have similarly done so. As one

respondent conveyed, “[it’s having] a growth mindset for yourself [in order to] have a growth mindset for your students.” The goal of this self-examination is to find a shared understanding rather than having a mutual relationship. The difference lies in the overarching purposes of self-awareness and self-evaluation, by both students and facilitators. In this sense, there is a shared connection and potential for discovery about the self and others. This concept of sharing and dialogue will be explored in more depth in the following section concerning learning spaces.

In order to engage with students on a deep, connective level, effective facilitators strive to uphold an attitude of curiosity and interest in the emotive expression of students. Building relationships is a critical piece in the service-learning pedagogy, in terms of partnerships between institutions and communities, and likewise between the individuals that comprise them. Part of the pedagogy consists of students learning how to relate to a diverse range of other people, in both service and classroom communities. As one facilitator described:

It is all about relationships; some of the core outcomes that we want out of service-learning have to do with being able to demonstrate empathy, being able to meet people where they are, [and] work together to achieve some common goal.

For these reasons, facilitation of ISL involves a relational class design that revolves around establishing trust for the examination of controversial topics. Relationships emerge throughout this process and ideally consist of closeness and integrity among its group members. Essentially this process of relationship-building within a learning community also addresses the potential emotional and psychological tensions as they arise. As a result, a significant part of the facilitative practice is the art of relating to individuals and an intuitive guidance of those intimate processes combined with purposeful course objectives. It consists of honoring emotions as a

valid piece of academic engagement, and making emotional management part of the holistic learning process. One respondent expressed:

I believe in terms of the educational enterprise that [facilitation] is deeply personal work.

I think to learn you have to be humble and you have to be open, and you bring your whole person: your morals, your values, your ethics, as well as your intellect, your history, and your psychology. All of that comes into the learning process, if it's truly a learning process.

Part of valuing the facilitative process is therefore recognizing the power of investing in people holistically rather than merely academically. Another facilitator elaborated on this point: “ [In academia] we're coached to focus so much on the cognitive side of ourselves rather than an embodied sense of who we are as teachers, as scholars, as professionals, [and] as human beings in the world.” To resist becoming potentially disembodied representations of human experience, it is then important to take emotional and psychological processes into consideration when discussing student development in ISL.

As a closing thought to this section, it is worth exploring the value placed upon relational and emotional labor in the context of creating and pursuing academic excellence. One respondent mentioned how the service-learning pedagogy can be risky for faculty members to endorse, and often includes working well outside of their compensated job description. Faculty and staff who seek to use relational and emotional labor in their practice often struggle in the way in which it is perceived by the academic community. A by-product of this tension is that they may be disregarded, overworked, or undercompensated, which places them in a vulnerable position. This point will not be explored further in the current study; however, it could be a potential springboard for future research on the value of emotional labor in academia.

**Inter-subjective learning spaces.** If building relationships in facilitation practices can be understood as relational labor, then the spaces in which individuals engage these relational dynamics can be referred to as inter-subjective learning spaces. Facilitator strategies for engagement within this environment included a range of activities and exercises. For the purpose of this thematic description, the following section will focus on the spaces themselves rather than the specific activities that take place within them (and that vary based on course content).

Inter-subjectivity involves the way in which individuals relate to one another in an indeterminate or subjective state, and indicates a more collective or community approach to the psychological processing of ideas (Crossley, 1996). According to Crossley (1996):

To think about inter-subjectivity and to tackle the problems it poses as a concept is to confront the very question of life itself. It is to unpick the fabric of social life and to wonder how it ever fits together in the first place, how we ever manage to coordinate ourselves through time and space, sharing thoughts and meanings, agreeing enough at least to disagree. It is to wonder what thought, meaning and action actually are, such that they can be shared or joint. It is to wonder how the human organism can ever be involved in anything which transcends its spatial boundaries. (Crossley, 1996, p. 174)

As a result, inter-subjectivity refers to the energy that is created and maintained within an environment. This energy is influenced by the psychological and emotional weight of the dialogues that occur between individuals occupying the space. For the current research, the term *inter-subjective learning spaces* represents a shared involvement of both facilitators and students in deciphering what the learning environment represents for the group, along with the dialogue that takes place within it.

A way in which this shared management can be conducted is through open and honest lines of communication. The facilitation space was consistently described by respondents as “nonjudgmental” and a place for “authentic” sharing that required “intentional” maintenance. Six of the interviewed facilitators defined the purpose of the space as providing students with a means to share stories, thoughts, journal entries, and opinions as it related to their academic and service experiences. This inter-subjective environment seeks to offer students creative freedom within set boundaries for measured expression. For one respondent, the supervision of student reflection was acknowledged to be a difficult pursuit to balance, as it attempts to allow simultaneously for students to express creatively as well as to think critically.

One reported way of managing this freedom was through the use of overarching goals in classroom sessions along with clearly communicated, purposeful objectives. Each facilitator independently elaborated on the methods that they used to create direction for their classes that would provide students with a concrete way of processing and analyzing their experiences. One method in particular used a guide for critical thinking as a sort of roadmap for students to examine their thoughts and beliefs as they evaluated their experiences. Another respondent stressed the importance of creating good written prompts, and two others mentioned “purposeful design” to course objectives that included adaptability to student needs based on their ISL encounters. Yet another described this learning space as “an ecology” that must be maintained at many points in its relational sphere in order to provide the ideal conditions for enhancing trust, empathy, as well as critical thought. Such spaces are thus complex and uncertain.

Mixed within this ecology is facilitator interpretation of the context of human behavior. A trained and experienced facilitator may be able to “read the room” relatively quickly as one respondent conveyed, but the collective engagement itself remains unscripted and changes with

each new group. Three facilitators revealed how they existed both within and outside of this environment, all at once observing and interacting with students. The same three respondents described intuiting nonverbal cues and contextualizing student behaviors as part of how they managed their facilitation space. One respondent expressed this as paying attention to “the real learning” within the group dialogue, which meant she had to keep pace with shifts in student reactions to the lesson that may present opportunities for deeper, richer learning. This form of attention requires constant focus on the group and “takes being intuitive and in-tune with your people.” Often this intuition takes the form of facilitator presence within the space, which was acknowledged in one interview as at times voiceless and observant. Facilitator presence consists of a respect for dialogue as exhibited through listening and withholding judgment in order to maintain the safety of that space. It was also described as developing trust and connection with students through consistent contact and stability. Concerning emotional dialogue, this latter point is important: the facilitator serves her students by remaining emotionally non-reactive in potential moments of tension.

Based on interview data, the environment creates the context for relational dynamics discussed in the section above. It contributes to the facilitator’s ability to build relationships with their students by helping them to deconstruct their own beliefs and values in the safety of a trusted presence. A complication with this process comes from group management and dynamics, a point that every facilitator stated as crucial to the learning environment. A significant part of managing group dynamics within this space is through observing and analyzing relational dynamics between students. According to one respondent, “facilitation [can be] messy work...I’m not going to be afraid of naming conflict because my theory of change is



more times than not it's going to be beneficial if we can work at it constructively, but left unattended it tends to get destructive."

Engaging students on a vulnerable level presents certain risks and challenges, which can be exacerbated by drawing out conflict as it arises. The parallels between the risks of peace-building and in the making and sustaining of relationships are seen in the inevitability of conflict arising. When values, beliefs, and other personal processes are consistently questioned and challenged by different viewpoints, the risk of combustible group tension tends to increase. The goal of facilitation is to guide students in identifying the inherent processes that connect them with others in their group, so that they can find a shared understanding. One respondent described it as discovering how to "[see] the humanity" in community and related interactions.

Facilitation therefore seeks to foster a collective culture whereby people relate to and with one another that in many ways resembles a live experiment. The same respondent elaborated how "anybody that's in a group is affecting the group. Nobody is neutral." The cause and effect dynamics of group dialogue prevents the idea of neutrality from being possible: each person has their own position in the way in which they project their beliefs, opinions, and values. Facilitators attempt to utilize this space so that students may question and consider these assumptions in ways they had not done so before: individuals are "[brought] into the possibility of a relationship with one another." Relational interactions and group dynamics form the group climate that informs the entire course design. As one facilitator explained, "the curriculum is in the group; and it's my job to uncover what that curriculum is." In this way, students are able to relate to one another with openness and vulnerability through dialogue on potentially emotionally-charged subjects. Consequently, the course direction is at least in part dictated by student willingness to engage with one another.

Both the dialectic and the managing of this environment were unanimously conveyed to be a critical area for facilitator attention. In order for relational dynamics to be understood, managed, and built upon, there must be engagement between students within the learning space. According to three facilitators, this means creating a “learning community” within the space where individuals can feel safe to collaborate and share their diversity of experiences. Part of creating this safety and trust is through student participation and investment in group dialogue and accepting a co-ownership of the space itself. One facilitator described this as “[inviting] people into the process from the perspective that we’re building a learning environment, and we all have a responsibility to create that environment.” This responsibility can also be understood as a shared commitment to engaging with the space in an intentional way, one that encourages openness and respect of all members involved.

Accordingly, the inter-subjective learning space is one that employs a concept of partnership rather than dependency. One respondent referred to this mutual ownership in the context of power relations with her students, and by striving to enhance the democratic elements of education through collaboration over classroom design. Part of facilitating this learning environment consists of creating boundaries from which students define and assume responsibility for their own learning processes. Another respondent highlighted how the class became less led by an instructor and was rather co-managed or co-led: “I think students should have to understand the dialectic between them and the learning process...instead of this entitled, you owe me this – wait a minute – you enliven your professors and your professors enliven you.” This shared managing of learning objectives was expressed by five of the seven respondents as potentially demanding for students who were unaccustomed to engaging so actively with their education.

Part of contributing to these learning spaces then requires a certain respect for and value of the area itself. As one respondent described, “it’s about facilitating an experience and giving people the tools or the space – I think quite often it’s the space – to have a conversation that they can’t in other parts of their lives.” Within this space the facilitator serves as a mediator of opportunity who helps students to uncover the nuances of their thought process and compare it to the group experience. Once again there is a personal context of self-evaluation within the context of community evaluation. The repercussions of combining these two contextual elements will be explored in more depth in the following section.

Each facilitator interviewed stressed how they work to prepare an environment where students will feel comfortable sharing. This physical preparation could take the form of creative activities, light dialogue or humor, or music, all of which serve to contribute time for pause and reflection before going deeper into class content. Six facilitators highlighted how they move slowly into the learning process, sharing material that is more surface and descriptive to begin with, and then gradually moving students into a deeper space from which to evaluate experiences and potentially develop new insights. There was a unanimous agreement that frequent contact and consistent presence were ideal for effective facilitation. Four facilitators specifically acknowledged the literal engagement of the physical space through student movement and experiential learning activities that would help contextualize and maximize learning outcomes.

Based on these findings, inter-subjective learning spaces represent an intersection of two contexts: individual and collective. The meeting of these two elements creates a rich ambiguity that stems from deconstructing personal psychology processes within the context of a learning community. This ambiguity creates a range of possibility for growth and development, the specifics of which will now be further explored.

**Capacity-building.** Capacity-building through facilitation represents how instructors guide students through the process of developing their own perspectives and critical consciousness. This theme represents what takes place within the learning environment that contributes to holistic student development throughout their ISL experience. The following forms of capacity-building were most commonly mentioned in facilitator interviews: intellectual, emotional, individual, and community. Overlap between these categories can and does exist; however, they were each described as separate entities involved with overall facilitation practices. Certain areas of capacity-building likewise exist in more than one of the categories above. For instance, nearly every respondent at the very least alluded to the goal of building empathy in their students and in helping them to “see the humanity” in others.

Each facilitator interviewed stressed the use of class activities or exercises that build competencies for teamwork. One respondent emphasized how these activities can expose students to a diversity of perspective and thus enable them to develop a capacity for and tolerance of diversity: “I can help them learn how to be respectful to one another across the differences and divides.” This same facilitator communicated how she strives to “normalize diversity” in a way that presents alternate viewpoints as a benefit to group engagement, which can in turn aid in the development of relationships between individuals in addition to community partners.

Another respondent described her methods of enabling students to accept ownership of the learning process through group contracting, or by deciding upon their own terms of class engagement. As a strategy, this contributes to the overarching theme of collective capacity-building through cooperation, problem-solving, and understanding the processes involved with democratic action. The goal of developing a healthy means of group communication consistently

emerged from data, and represents both individual and collective capacity-building in the way it relates to how individuals process information to which they are exposed, as well as a shared processing of the diversity of perspectives. As a result, facilitators strive to maintain an awareness of the contexts that emerge from the group, and guide students in describing and evaluating their experiences in order to enhance their personal and community development. This contextual relating is quick-moving and requires heightened intuition, which can at times consist of letting the experience itself guide the lesson.

In conjunction with these notions of experiential learning, facilitators seek to engage their students within a process of understanding the range of human diversity. Part of this understanding is enhanced by instructors providing structure to a subjective experience so that students may challenge their current perspectives. One way of developing perspective is by examining a person in the context of how they relate to the layers of community with which they are engaging. In other words, it is analyzing one's personhood within an experience. Within the inter-subjective learning space, facilitators sought to achieve broad goals through strategies that built upon students' ability to think critically and connect with one another in empathetic and respectful ways. One respondent referred to this as the dialectic, or the way in which students discuss and dissect their values and opinions. In engaging this dialectic, facilitators aim to help students deconstruct and own their thoughts, opinions, ways, or beliefs, while also being able to challenge and critique them.

Facilitators mentioned the creation of boundaries and intentional space for students to express and share. The intentionality of this process, according to four respondents, includes setting a mood for students that will enable them to better engage with their environment. Because such spaces are complicated, deliberate and purposeful activities can aid in bringing

people closer together. In this way, facilitator capacity-building involves using the relational dynamics within an inter-subjective learning space in order to help students develop intellectual, emotional, and collaborative skills. Facilitators highlighted the use of activities as a strategy for deepening student reflection processes within a learning environment in order to guide them into a discovery of authentic voice, as well as to further expand their worldview.

One way in which this task was strategized was through a critical thinking model that encouraged students to learn the language of critical thought. According to one respondent, part of the space for sharing was developed by using a critical language that encouraged students to examine and analyze their own thinking processes. These critical thinking standards provided a framework for facilitators to give feedback to their students that would lay a foundation for additional development. In a similar vein, another respondent explained how she attempted to “increase the possibility that [students] will be making different types of connections between the experiences they’re having, and different types of learning.”

The ability to make these connections relates to another overarching goal of ISL, which is to teach students how they impact people by helping them develop processes of empathy. This outcome has been previously conveyed as a means of facilitators building a mind-set, skill-set, and heart-set in their students, or capacities that contribute to the holistic educational endeavor (Pusch, 2009). One respondent described this process as enabling the further development of personhood for her students: “I can help them learn how to be respectful to one another across differences and divides...because if I can get inside their hearts and minds and it’s a holistic learning and shift for them – that can be transformative.” This form of transformation is individualized and self-reliant. The same facilitator elaborated how she is “trying to teach an awareness or sensitivity” to her students that will make them more receptive to their potential for

change. This quote suggests how self-awareness and self-change are required before external change or action can be genuinely engaged.

Because each person impacts the group as a whole, part of the art of facilitation comes from knowing how to influence group dynamics in order to shift the collective along with the individual's potential for learning. According to this democratic model, students are repositioned to interact with communities and classrooms in a more collaborative manner. Three facilitators mentioned how they can only invite their students to this process, and how transactional understandings of education cannot produce guaranteed outcomes of personal transformations. One strategy used to enhance impact was illustrated as the division of a class into thirds, and focusing the teaching efforts to the middle students. The middle students were described as ones who were unsure of course content, while the other two thirds were polarized extremes who would either likely already be fully engaged or who would remain relatively unreachable. In this way, the facilitator sought to find the ways in which she could most impact her students by focusing her efforts where there was a higher likelihood for positive change.

Facilitation consists of an intuitive teaching of awareness concerning individual impact, and how students can assess and evaluate their impact on others. As one respondent illustrated, “[students] are not going to change the world in a week; [they] are going to change the world by changing how [they] vote, by changing what [they] buy.” The realignment of perspective that is being suggested here places students in a vulnerable and unique position from which to better understand their own motives and values in an ISL experience: “[they] need to learn first before [they] can create some sort of solution.” Being interested and inspired to help is only the first step; students must also know the ways in which they can correctly engage with communities they desire to serve.

This approach to facilitation accepts that a large part of community development is in fact development of the self, and that in order to be an effective community leader one must have an adequate degree of self-knowledge. In some instances, this process of self-evaluation can provide guideposts through potentially challenging scenarios and help to manage external and internal chaos via the development of emotional capacity and maturity. Part of this emotional capacity consists of individuals learning openness, expressiveness, and how to identify, articulate, and compare their values, emotions, and opinions. The facilitation of student development similarly includes how they cross boundaries that separate the self from the systems or communities that surround them. In other words, it consists of how students balance being independent with simultaneously existing as part of a whole. As one respondent described, “[students] are a part of the overall machine [and] are an integral part of the process [so they] have to be able to examine that.”

In this sense, facilitators are emphasizing how to contextualize experiences in a way that gives students a greater understanding of human nature. This understanding includes a diversity of experience, perspective, values and behaviors, and culture and language, and can be a complicated process in the way in which it presents a subjective reality for students to analyze. Contextualizing subjectivity in this way requires certain critical awareness and ability. Students are constantly being asked to evaluate their thoughts, values and opinions, and behaviors, often in new, unfamiliar circumstances. This contextualization resembles a form of problem-solving whereby individuals create their own strategies for solutions.

Students are sorting through a plurality of factors to make logical and ethical decisions, often in instances of conflict. Part of conflict management is knowing not only how to problem solve, but also how to selectively problem solve; it is ordering problems, and strategizing which



problems are more critical to address first. Consequently, problem-solving through conflict management presents a natural connection to both the ISL environment and the world of international development in the ways in which conflict is viewed as a learning opportunity. Conflict in this sense encompasses group dynamics and in individual processes of identifying and managing potentially emotionally-charged situations.

As a final remark, one respondent mentioned developing consistency in her students through the use of positively reinforcing their healthy behaviors. In order to help students develop their own sense of stability and capacity for success, she provided a consistency in presence, which allowed her students to create their own consistent routines and so have a better chance of becoming more independent and engaged learners. This reference to positive reinforcement was an outlier in the data, but could potentially be relevant for future research concerning training through the use of facilitative practices.

**Ambiguity of role.** ISL creates a classroom out of real-world circumstances for authentic experiential learning encounters. The world of international development is a dynamically shifting reality that is often chaotic and messy in its problems and at times with its solutions. Engaging students within this arena can be risky because it is difficult to control the factors that contribute to such unpredictability. Pedagogically, it involves thinking about faculty and students in a parallel way as learners, and it consists of a certain degree of risk for faculty in particular because it is a less traditional approach to education that is full of transition and experiential shifts. Because of these dynamics, the role of the facilitator will likewise be full of ambiguity and transition.

The ISL facilitator is in a position of both learner and instructor, which means there is an emphasis on participation in a collaborative, equity-driven environment. The facilitator role was

described in interviews as a constant shifting from one role to another, which can be difficult for students to follow and understand. The diverse range of contexts in ISL presents a certain ambiguity to what is required of facilitators at any point in time throughout the learning process. In some instances they were conveyed as sharing counseling or therapeutic qualities with instructor-related ones. In others, they seemed to partially represent a chaplain, mentor, or even a colleague or friend. ISL facilitators thus fill a combination of the above roles, depending upon a range of factors.

Consequently, when asked about their role as a facilitator, the majority of respondents expressed a multi-faceted, complicated answer. The most common attributes associated with the practice included: hospitality-minded, open to change, transparent with motivations, innovative, curious, risk-taking, and genuine. Most agreed that the role is highly contextual in that it depends upon the nature of the lesson or the experience. Facilitators are more than a teacher, not quite a counselor, and exist as collaborative leaders. They are also a participant in the live experiment that evolves out of each learning space. Part of engaging with experiential learning comes with this risk: there is no certainty which direction the experience will go. In much the same way, there is an ambiguity to the expected ways in which facilitators move through the shifts and transitions that arise throughout the ISL process. As previously acknowledged, facilitation in this sense can get messy. Human beings are not neutral; and the instructor brings her or his own values and beliefs and emotions into the learning environment.

In this sense, facilitation of ISL is a form of experiential learning itself, for facilitators as well as for students. One respondent described her practice as an ongoing craft or “work in progress” in which she was “always coming back and assessing what worked and what didn’t work, and maybe tweaking it here and there.” According to her, a facilitator’s practice is never a

finished product: “You can always make it better.” This approach to facilitation emphasizes continuous improvement and development, and was outlined by another facilitator as a highly individualized process of “taking best practices from here and here and then putting them together to make something that works for you.” The concept of newness was mentioned frequently in interviews as “there is always something to discover” in ISL environments. This creates a certain ambiguity because of the level of uncertainty concerning how best to approach the process of discovering, which again is rooted in circumstantial variance. It is difficult to prepare for the unexpected circumstance or to embrace a concept that has yet to be fully understood.

For this reason, part of the facilitator’s role is to manage uncertainty and unpredictability in a way that reduces anxiety and enhances possibility. This management consists of individuals constantly deconstructing new situations, scenarios, behaviors, and attitudes, while also adapting to them to redirect and reorient both their own and student learning. This reality of transition signifies how facilitators are shifting between concrete and subjective spaces in the way lessons move from tangible experience to conceptual abstractions. Ideal courses have purposeful design with contextual freedom. As a result, an effective facilitator must be open to newness and change, as well as innovative, quick-thinking, and flexible.

The ambiguity of this role is seen in how facilitators exist as simultaneously a part of a group and as an observant leader of it; they get involved personally with their students while also maintaining boundaries. In addition, they are oscillating between the “head” and the “heart,” as one facilitator described it. As an educator, there are certain academic principles and standards of excellence to uphold, but from the perspective of genuine care, facilitators expressed feeling compelled to feel for their students and reported caring for them deeply. The line that divides

what is considered “too personal” from acceptable closeness was explained by more than one respondent as blurry, and it places both facilitators and students in a potentially vulnerable position. It then can be challenging to gauge what the correct dosage of care or attention is at a given time for a given student. One facilitator highlighted the necessity of setting emotional boundaries with students and managing her closeness with them as a means of controlling her own triggers and maintaining self-care: “I give a portion of me; I don’t give all of me.” An effective facilitator purposely shares personal information in order to foster dialogue and to encourage the development of critical thought in their students, not to gain fulfillment or to meet her needs from doing so.

Another respondent conveyed these boundaries as keeping focused and maintaining clarity throughout the facilitative practice: “You have to stay clear in your role... ‘I know this is about facilitation [and] these dynamics happen.’” Facilitators are “in role” in order to balance this closeness with what is required in order for them to properly perform their duties to students. The fact that these boundaries exist does not mean authentic connections cannot be made; rather, they exist within the context of the learning space as opposed to extended circumstances outside of the ISL environment. More than one respondent stressed the importance of the point that a facilitator does not equally engage with students in terms of emotional sharing; otherwise the purposeful direction of the facilitation is at risk of being lost.

This finding suggests that student-facilitator connections do not represent a mutual relationship, but rather a purposeful relating, which can at times be nurturing: “Part of the real power in facilitation [is] giving people the opportunity to name what it is they’re doing or experiencing or feeling [and] giving them permission to express it.” The practice is not mutual or equal because facilitators are using intentional sharing as a means of contributing to course

outcomes related to student development. It can, however, be a process that strives for equity through a democratic approach: “We can make it more equitable and ensure a greater fairness and increase voice...we can try to find space where there is some co-ownership.” This respondent continued how she “[believes] in the struggle for [equality]” but also understands how certain hierarchies remain. For example, part of the facilitator’s duty still consists of grading and delivering instructions that must be followed by her students, which at times can present a contradiction.

The practice of facilitation as a result involves moving beyond those potential contradictions by knowing how to shift seamlessly from one role to another. This intuition associated with role performance creates an ambiguous zone, the managing of which can be referred to as an art form. The art of facilitation lies within the intuition of each facilitator, in how they read situations and know which role to perform based on given contextual cues. What further complicates this process in terms of democracy and ambiguity is student choice. Students may choose to participate or not, and facilitators cannot entirely manage or control the experience to fit the range of student expectations. Consequently, there is a degree of reciprocity that is required in order for such a pedagogy to be structurally effective. Students must feed their instructors the way instructors feed students, and in this way create a cycle of learning that is more capable of producing real and meaningful transformation. Facilitators should have vision for progress and a direction for student attention, while also giving students the freedom to determine the ways in which they approach their own education.

The themes discussed above are integral to understanding how facilitators of ISL can enhance experiential learning for their students, as well as a few challenges associated with the process of mediating an individual’s change and sharing power in traditionally hierarchical

setting. The next section will further explore the implications of these findings and connect them to the previously discussed theories of learning and community engagement.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

### **Significance of Study**

The purpose of this research was to discover the nuances of facilitation and the reflective learning process in ISL that can enrich and enhance student development. Conceptual themes outlined in Chapter Four emerged in interview data that suggest the facilitative practice is primarily a holistic method of teaching that utilizes capacity-building with students in order to contribute to the entirety of their personhood. This process includes the individual's own involvement in developing a broader sense of humanity through an expansion of their worldview. Facilitators consistently mentioned the importance of students learning how to identify and examine both the emotional and intellectual (or academic) aspects of their ISL experiences, with the purpose of creating a critical awareness from which to live their future lives.

On the whole, the transformative potential of ISL was described as a difficult outcome to guarantee. As a form of experiential learning, ISL changes with the world as it involves dynamic shifts in reality. Nonetheless, the likelihood of desired outcomes occurring in ISL can be increased through the work of personnel who are qualified in facilitating those experiences in order to maximize student potential for holistic growth. These individuals can better guide and prepare students to be successful in academic and community engagement by providing opportunities for enriched understanding of other perspectives, values, languages, and cultures.

ISL endorses a form of facilitation whereby instructors are teaching a process of critical consciousness. This process-driven facilitation focuses on the complexities and challenges of ISL experiences and goes beyond mere exposure to an experience into a more active consideration of it. In this sense, the ISL experience is a teacher itself and envisions the sanctity of the learning

space as a more transferable reality. For this reason, quality facilitators in ISL attempt to build community within a secure learning environment by enhancing capacities in their students so that they can shift the benefits of those inter-subjective spaces to various other environments. In this sense, students realize their own personal mechanisms that enable individual and collective change. These findings parallel research concerning the transformation and shifting of worldview (Mezirow, 1991), the integration of learning (Barber, 2012), and creating an integrative perspective of experience, perception, cognition, and behavior (Kolb, 1984). The proposed theme of capacity-building inherent in facilitation especially relates to ways in which students connect, apply, and create new knowledge from the processes involved with integration of learning (Barber, 2012).

In addition, current data elaborates on the established benefits of students engaging in their own learning via active community interaction as a means of contributing to both their own development as well as social change (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Parker & Dautoff, 2007). Facilitation in ISL classrooms was found to create a microcosm of the larger pedagogical partnerships that exist in ISL. Through the practice of trust and reciprocity, students and facilitators are simultaneously positioned as teachers and learners, servers and served (Harrison & Clayton, 2012). Bringle, et al. (2009) have suggested envisioning successful partnerships as authentic, personal relationships that are fostered over time, similar to intimate relationships. In much the same way, the building of relationships between facilitator and student is an integral part of the transformative learning process and sets the foundation for student development and empowerment.

Contingent with previous studies concerning transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991; Mezirow & Taylor, 2009), these findings suggest a holistic student and facilitator involvement in



creating a democratic learning space. This practice takes deliberate action and is achieved collaboratively, and it is also a process that requires a certain degree of innovation and imagination. A related finding that existed as an outlier in the data was the role of conflict in developing student capacities. In the grander scheme of civic engagement and social change, conflict is inevitably part of the developmental process; change involves identifying and naming a problem in order to better understand how to approach a solution. As a result, ISL promotes the idea of mutual navigation through experience for the student and facilitator (Cress & Donahue, 2011), as well as methods of creative problem-solving and conflict management (Lederach, 2005), both of which contribute to the development of an *emerging global consciousness* (Kiely, 2004).

The practice of facilitation has been previously described as the use of “knowledge spaces” and shifting strategies for engaging them (Savin-Baden, 2003, p. 142). The current findings adhere to these notions of engaging space as a means of enhancing transformative learning, and further deconstruct how the management of those spaces contributes to capacity-building in students. The management of this space relates to the “mood of possibility” that facilitators seek to create through their “provocative role” that is further complicated by ambiguities concerning their identity and role as facilitators (Apte, 2009, p. 178). Part of the power of the relational spaces discussed is also through recognition of the role of emotion in creating imaginative spaces associated with meaning-making (Dirkx, 2006). In a Jungian sense, individuals often relate to one another through deeply subconscious methods of discovery that in the context of ISL can help create certain “ethical capacities” in students (Ettling, 2006, p. 65).

Facilitators have been described as those who seek to create teachable moments that can empower groups to lead themselves in a democratic fashion (Reed & Koliba, 1995).

Accordingly, a key factor for practitioners to consider is ways in which they can emphasize, not for students to save the world, but rather for them to understand how they affect those around them through individual impact. In this way, facilitators strengthen student capacity for expressing empathy in future encounters with community development. Based on the above data, the balancing of individual and collective relationships is integral to the creation of this democratic ecology, as well as the understanding of how individuals relate to one another. This form of facilitation is a dual process of existing as separate and related, involved and apart, and of retaining a stable presence in moments of emotional tension. Within such a multi-faceted practice, individuals are bound to make mistakes. Facilitators are, after all, only human. As a largely unscripted process that is rooted in intuition, facilitation hinges on incorporating elements of continuous improvement and self-directed learning as a means of more effectively engaging students in ISL settings. This will consequently contribute to the overall effectiveness of the ISL pedagogy in creating self-reliant change agents.

The capacity-building with which facilitators engage students links the classroom to the development field in the way in which it demonstrates the creation of sustainable change. Similar to healthy instances of international development, facilitators are attempting to build a capacity for sustainable student development so that they may become more competent actors of global civic engagement. There are certain pedagogical difficulties, however, when blending student development with community development that will require further attention. For instance, questions concerning the outcomes of service-learning for the student compared to the community have the potential to create ethical tensions. Is the purpose of ISL student attainment of personal and professional skills, or rather for community-building and sustainable development? How can these two distinct, yet related purposes be combined in a just manner?

This view of facilitation and development also operates under the principle that human beings desire to be individually empowered, yet also seek leadership and guidance. One of the challenges of both facilitation and international development is then determining how these two concepts, empowerment and leadership, can fit together seamlessly in order to simultaneously liberate and direct communities. This challenge of reciprocity, while familiar to the ISL field, remains an ambiguous reality that requires vigilance and further examination in order to properly manage such classrooms abroad (Harrison & Clayton, 2012).

Capacity-building encompasses ways in which students engage in their own learning as well as how facilitators can guide students towards new discoveries. This process was described as multi-faceted, complex, and inherent to transformative learning. As previously mentioned, helping students to develop the mind-set, skill-set, and heart-set to navigate the world of international relations effectively and ethically will help them to become more globally competent leaders (Pusch, 2009). Learning how to fail and self-critique are integral to this process, as is a certain degree of risk-taking. One implication of creating learning communities using ISL facilitation is the opportunity to learn valuable skills associated with leadership. Enhancing leadership competency in students within a structured learning environment will enable them to be more holistically empowered through the transfer of those qualities into new spaces. In essence, students have the opportunity to internalize valuable learned capacities to become more competent agents of change. The implications of expanding upon these leadership capabilities will be further explored in the following chapter.

Another key finding relates to emotional labor and how it is critical to facilitation. As a pedagogy rooted in notions of relationship and partnership, ISL requires certain emotional dimensions in order to function as an effective form of learning (Bringle et al., 2009). Two

respondents in particular mentioned how they have struggled in implementing ISL due to the lack of understanding of the value of emotions in higher education. Emotional labor is an important aspect of instruction due to the ways in which it allows for “affective freedom and the collective action strong emotion can inspire” (DiPardo & Potter, 2003, p. 324). DiPardo & Potter (2003) explain how, specifically in academia, there is a “persistent difficulty in escaping the pervasive tendency to drift into a language of false binaries, separating self from context, mind from body, and emotion from intellect” (DiPardo & Potter, 2003, p. 327). Consequently, the consideration of the role that emotion plays in learning is a significant concept for further investigation, especially in contexts that seek to engage individuals in community-building and engagement. The concept of emotionality in higher education as well as other noteworthy findings will be discussed shortly in Chapter Six in regards to suggestions for future research.

### **Limitations and Weaknesses**

The limitations of this research parallel those associated with limitations of qualitative research in general. Qualitative research provides flexibility for unexpected directions that can lead to new discoveries about nuanced processes. This largely unscripted manner of conducting research can be difficult to measure and code. For instance, qualitative data may lack clear focus because is filtered by subjective interpretations and analysis, which inevitably varies from person to person and so is open to researcher bias. It also presents a form of never-ending analysis whereby there is always something new to discover from any given data set, and so focus can be difficult to direct (Miles et al, 2014).

Because the present qualitative study was small-scale, generalizability of findings may be more difficult to achieve. The use of anecdotal evidence for research can exacerbate issues of researcher bias in later analysis and discussion of findings. In regards to the sampling methods

for this research, the small number of participants limits the ways in which data can be made transferable to other populations of facilitators. Efforts were made to target as diverse a range of participants as possible; however, unfortunately no male facilitators could be recruited. As a result, data were not representative in terms of gender. In addition, the target population for facilitators primarily represented college-level faculty and did not fully account for other service-learning instructor populations (e.g. outdoor or related experiential adult educators).

The results of the study were limited to the participants who completed the interviews and returned surveys via email. Ideally a larger number of students would have responded so that these data could have been made more robust. As far as interviews and open-ended questions are concerned, there was also the potential for reporter or participant bias in responding to items. In a similar vein, the potential for researcher bias exists as the researcher studies at one of the participant recruitment sites and is an ISL student herself.

## **Chapter Six: Future Research and Conclusion**

Leaders in ISL seek to demonstrate how they approach challenges of making ongoing adjustments and realignments in order to create a better, more just world (Kiely, 2015). In a similar way, facilitators model desired behaviors and expectations within a learning space. Perhaps the crux of reflection and its facilitation in ISL consists of how to help individuals think for themselves, and how to encourage self-motivation to act through problem-solving associated with career-planning and civic engagement. A challenge for current and future generations of students stems from an unlimited access to the wealth of information online. One area for future research would be concentrating on better understanding how to convince individuals of the value in being more deliberate in processing their behaviors and beliefs, and about making constructive changes through an active commitment to learning and to life. Additionally, the role of the internet throughout this process would be a pivotal area for future investigation.

One way in which instructors can guide their students to embrace the reflective practice is by creating a space for it and by inviting them to engage with diversity within it. This plurality of perspectives can help shape students into more awakened global citizens who can make a difference, even if only in small ways, and even if only within themselves. A goal of facilitation in ISL is to build community with individuals through shared learning, group problem-solving, and teamwork.

The findings from student surveys indicate the difficulties inherent in teaching a process such as reflection, and the ambiguities involved with both ISL experiences and facilitation of them. Student engagement with learning is pivotal in order for them to maximize their ISL experiences and should be considered in tandem with facilitator efforts to guide, direct, and connect with students. Part of this comes from teaching students a more complete understanding

of diversity and the diverse range of opinions, perspectives, and behaviors. Indeed, an investigation of facilitator approaches to teaching diversity and critical thought would be a significant area for future research on learning and civic engagement.

One of the most critical findings from this research suggests that the foundation for quality facilitation, similar to quality development work, is through the formation and maintenance of meaningful relationships. A concern for this form of relational or emotional labor is how it is supported in academic institutions. If part of student development and success in ISL relies on the ability to relate to others and build competent empathy, then it must be considered as critical to the learning process. The value of the labor itself is directly connected to the transformative potential it is capable of producing. If the processes of emotional and psychological capacity-building are not properly supported and maintained for faculty and staff, the likelihood that the pedagogy will be successful is significantly decreased. It is the opinion of this author that more emphasis is placed on honoring emotional and relational labor in the context of producing holistic academic achievement.

The goal of ISL to create global citizens raises a related point concerning responsible development abroad. The ways in which students are immersed in vulnerable communities as well as the ways in which community partners are engaged will require further examination. As pedagogies incorporating international studies and service-learning continue to grow, more attention to these points will need to be sustained in order to promote ethical international interactions. Universities understandably struggle to keep pace with the global market, yet a closer investigation of the ways in which this keeping pace relates to issues such as globalization and the often accompanying power hierarchies and unequal distribution of resources will be required in order to maintain a clearer course of global ethics.

Another area of tension that has been previously mentioned is the concept of how facilitators manage democratic intentions with academic standards such as grading. In order to create a collaborative, civic space, ISL practitioners strive to share control over how knowledge is constructed, which destabilizes normative concepts of authority and expertise created by more traditional academic models (Kiely, 2015). This form of facilitation encourages students to question more actively their own habits and social structures, yet also creates zones of ambiguity in terms of authority and facilitator role.

Accordingly, further consideration of where responsibility for learning lies will be required. This would include a deeper examination of not only the facilitator's role, but also the role of their students. An important point to consider here is student contribution to the learning process and what the student's role is in implementing effective ISL. It is possible that in such an evolving pedagogy as ISL, the role of the student encompasses similar contextual factors as the role of the facilitator. Consequently, there are gaps in our understanding of the role of learner as well as the role of the facilitator. Future research could explore these ambiguities in further depth, as well as potential associated burdens of each role.

In addition to further examination of the faculty-student relationship, more attention can be given to the effects of group dynamics on transformative learning processes and the ways in which a group setting (e.g. the cohort model) impacts the overall learning experience. These interactions may hold more relevance for successful ISL experiences than is currently perceived, as demonstrated by both student surveys and facilitator interviews. One way in which this could be achieved is through a longitudinal analysis of a given ISL cohort that investigates both the individual and the group in the context of international community development.



In relation to inter-subjectivity and the possibilities for group learning, much remains to be discovered about the intragroup and intracultural dynamics that exist within ISL learning environments. An aspect of this examination would include intercultural competencies, or the external factors that contribute to a student's processing of their abroad experience; however, an analysis of the ways in which individuals relate to one another on an internal or "intra" level would be worthwhile to explore. These dynamics may be integral to the ways in which students transfer their intercultural knowledge and competencies to new situations as well as to interactions with new people. Is it a choice to engage in these inter-subjective spaces, or is it rather a choice to acknowledge them? As individuals, we impact one another regardless of intention or desire to do so: "We are inter-subjects. Our actions and thoughts aren't reducible to us alone" (Crossley, 1996, p.173).

In addition, inter-subjectivity as a concept is a complex line of reason to follow. The notion of inner processes and what lies beneath cognition can be difficult for students to appreciate and understand. For this reason, an investigation of how student understanding of psychological processes affects the overall ISL experience would be helpful in determining how to structure courses, as well as how to engage students within these unique spaces.

A similar area for future research is leadership in facilitation and the implications of group dynamics and shared course management. In order to better understand these dimensions, a more extensive investigation of facilitator leadership in relation to collaboration within ISL learning environments could be conducted. Additionally, future research could likewise explore how practitioners produce leadership capabilities in ISL students and incorporate capacity-building for global competency into course design. Such research could use leadership trainings for students and also involve community partners through the use of Participatory Action

Research (PAR). This method would additionally allow researchers to consider goals connected to responsible service-learning and sustainable development, such as the needs of community partners, in order to enhance the equity of each practice.

Related to the concept of leadership trainings, future research could also consist of comparing and contrasting the different roles of facilitation as outlined by Thomas (2010) in contexts other than outdoor experiential education. For instance, researchers could examine the similarities and differences of facilitation and leadership based on contexts such as sports and corporate or business-oriented environments. Similar to facilitation in education, a deeper understanding of capacity-building in group dynamics, conflict management, and leadership skills would further enhance the literature on community engagement and team-building.

Facilitators of ISL play a pivotal role in transforming lives by providing rich learning opportunities. It is the opinion of this researcher that leadership and conflict management (or problem-solving) trainings are the next step in the evolution of this pedagogy. In this way, practitioners would be educating not only a community of learners, but also a community of leaders. This research would further increase the likelihood of gaining insight regarding student development of leadership and life-long learning skills. Enhancing these qualities in students will create more competent agents of civic engagement.

As a final thought, the practice of facilitation is both an art and a science. Facilitators catalyze learning in creative yet methodological ways. One area of critical consideration for future research, as well as for facilitative practice, will be learning the ways in which practitioners can balance the artistic and ambiguous aspects of facilitation with the quantifiable methods of enhancing student learning outcomes. The challenge that remains is to discover how to measure or clarify learning objectives and best practices without minimizing individual

teaching and learning styles. Indeed, this variance and flexibility in course management and design is very much one of the many strengths of facilitation and transformative learning in ISL.

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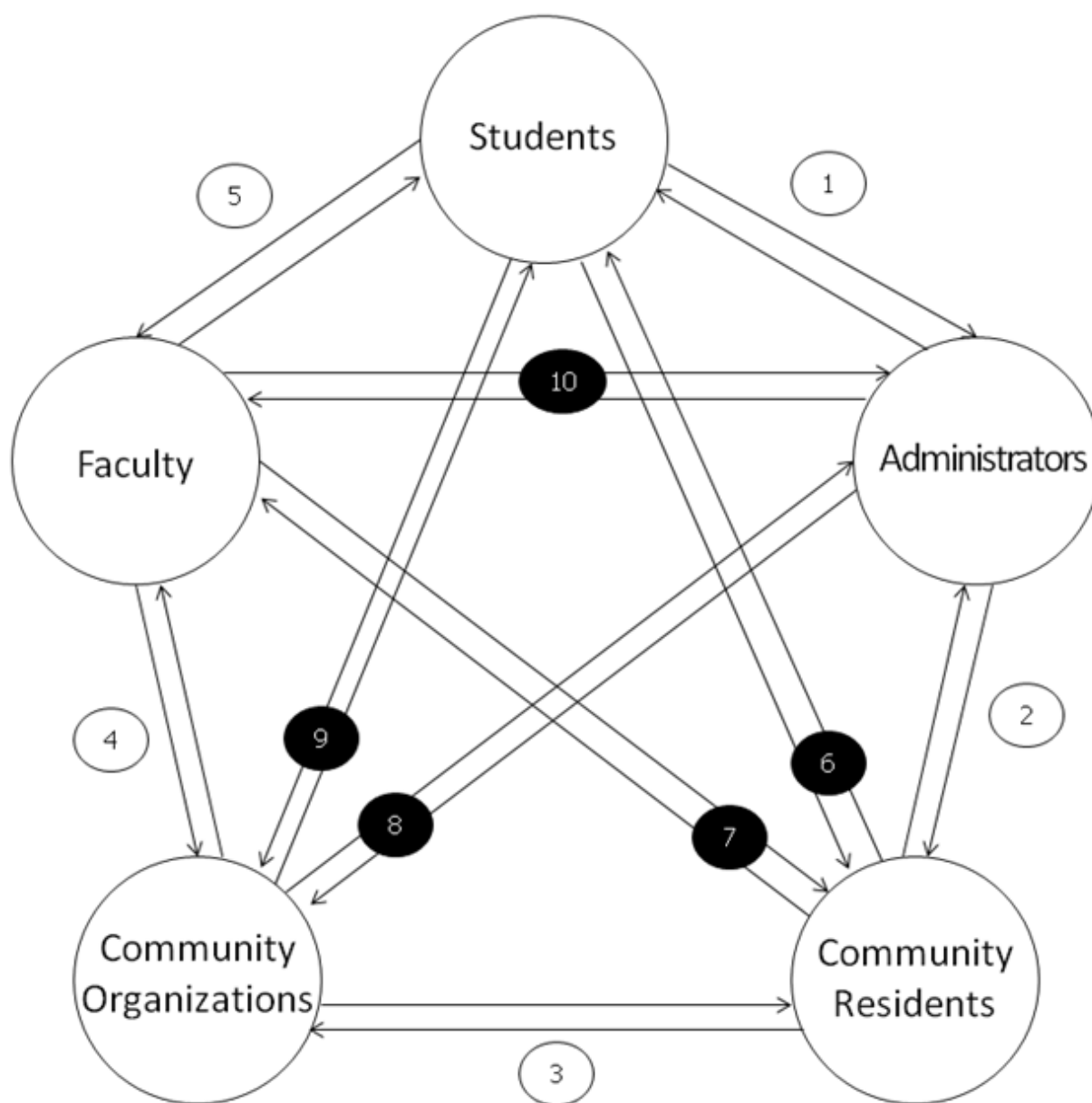
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## Appendix A

The SOFAR Framework: Students, Organizations in the community, Faculty, Administrators on the campus, and Residents in the community, as composed by Bringle, et al., 2009.



## Appendix B

### Sample Student Survey on Reflections Processes in ISL

Dear student,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback is much appreciated and will be used to offer constructive insights into the structure and practice of reflections facilitation. Please mark how strongly you either agree or disagree with the following items, and then answer the final three items in the spaces provided. Thank you once more for your participation!

**1) The facilitation of Reflections courses contributed to my personal growth.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**2) The facilitation of Reflections courses contributed to my understanding of civic engagement.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**3) The facilitation of Reflections courses contributed to my overall academic growth.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**4) The practice of critical thought is beneficial for me to study and understand.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**5) The practice of self-examination is beneficial for me to study and understand.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**6) Reflections courses are necessary for International Service-Learning (ISL) programs.**

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	No Opinion	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

**7) Reflections courses helped me to better understand my overall purpose as an ISL student.**

1	2	3	4	5
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Strongly Agree

Agree

No Opinion

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

**8) Please describe the role of “reflection” (i.e. the process of reflecting) in your experiences as an ISL student.**

**9) How has the facilitation of Reflections courses either assisted or hindered your overall ISL experience?**

**10) How can Reflections courses be structured so they are more meaningful for students?**

Appendix C  
Semi-structure Interview Sample Questions

1. What facilitation techniques do you feel you have developed through your experiences with students?
2. What surprises (if any) have you encountered in terms of student reflection on their abroad experiences (either in service or academic settings)?
3. What challenges have you encountered when facilitating student reflection processes (e.g. in terms of assignments, assessment, motivating students, teaching critical thinking skills, learning styles, etc)?
4. What characteristics or qualities about yourself do you think have aided your effectiveness as a facilitator?
5. Please describe one example of successful facilitation (either a course, a situation, or an experience with a student) you have experienced in your history as a practitioner.
6. Please describe one example of a situation with a course (or a student) where you learned constructive improvements to make for your future facilitation practice.
7. Can you think of a specific example or experience either positive or negative that helped inform your facilitation practices?
8. What do you expect from your students?
9. What do you expect from yourself?
10. Do you have anything to add or does anything else come to mind in regards to your experience or methods of facilitating?
11. Thank you very much for your time!