DISSERTATION

COLLEGE STUDENTS' TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING:

AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF AN ALTERNATIVE BREAK

PROGRAM TO KENYA

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

COLLEGE STUDENTS' TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING:

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KENYA

This study describes the processes and forms of college students' learning resulting from a non-credit-bearing, two week alternative break program to Kenya that took place December 2012 - January 2013. It is necessary to understand students' learning on short-term education abroad programs because of three national trends: 1) growing study abroad offerings of eight weeks or less, 2) increased popularity of programs to non-traditional locations, and 3) desire among universities, employers, and legislators to create globally engaged graduates.

This exploratory study uses interviews, focus groups, and participant observation in an ethnographic case study design. Fourteen students, two group leaders, eight host community members, and the researcher participated in the study. Mezirow's transformative learning theory provides the theoretical lens through which research questions, observations, and conclusions are formulated and drawn.

Research is presented in three journal articles bracketed by an introduction and conclusion. The introductory chapter describes the research purpose, questions, significance, theoretical perspective, delimitations, and the researcher's perspective.

Chapter two seeks to uncover how students learn. Findings discuss five processes of student transformative learning, namely 1) learning as a journey, 2) experiencing discomfort, 3) reflecting and relating to one another, 4) building relationships with the community, and 5) receiving support from group leaders.

Chapter three examines the forms, or outcomes, of student learning. It demonstrates that affective, behavioral, and cognitive forms of learning are possible and offers guidelines for practitioners who lead and administer short-term education abroad programs. It also explores students' reentry challenges.

Chapter four recounts in-depth stories of two students as they recall the multiple ways the 2011-2012 program to Kenya impacted their actions, thoughts, and emotions and how it prompted them to return one year later. It pays particular attention to the ways students engaged in reflection and reframing.

The final chapter provides linkage among chapters and results for the study as a whole. This study concludes that dialog, reflection, individualization of experiences, and relationship-building are essential to students' learning during and after an international experience.

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I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the Kenya alternative break leaders, CSU students, and host community members who participated in this study. I am touched and grateful that they allowed me to participate in their program and lives. The most rewarding part of this project was listening to the stories they shared. During our travels, I was inspired by the openness and generosity of the CSU students and Kenyan community members as they interacted with and learned from one another.

DEDICATION

In memory of

Kathleen Byrnes

October 13, 1972 – September 4, 2014

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"It has become cliché to promote study abroad as a 'life-transforming' experience. . . . Nevertheless, I am not sure any of us understands what we mean by the expression 'life-transforming,' or even if students know what they intend. If we are going to make such claims, then we should be certain there is empirical substance to back them up, and if substantive, then find a way to describe what occurs" (Selby, 2008, p. 1).

When abroad "There is always something striking or unusual happening, and you seem to feel everything with an intensity absent in normal life. You can feel yourself growing" (Storti, 2001, p. 29).

One of the most applied for of 21 alternative break programs organized by the Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement office (SLiCE) at Colorado State University (CSU) is the program to Samburu, Kenya. Like the other alternative break programs that SLiCE offers to domestic and international locations, the program to Kenya combines group travel with targeted community service. Students who return from the trip often claim, much as the above quotes do, that the experience abroad was transformative. What, in empirical terms, does this mean?

Utilizing an ethnographic case study approach, this dissertation draws upon education abroad literature and Mezirow's theory of transformative learning to describe what supports and constrains students' transformative learning in alternative break programs and what types of learning occurs before, during, and after travel. I aim to contribute to a growing body of literature that seeks to define and provide recommendations for how best to foster transformative learning in education abroad programs.

This five-chapter dissertation presents findings in three journal articles with an introduction and conclusion tying the reports together. The introductory chapter describes the research purpose, questions, significance, and delimitations as they apply to the project as a

whole. It introduces Mezirow's theory of transformative learning as it applies to education abroad and this study. It also describes the researcher's perspective and defines key terms.

Chapter two examines the processes by which the 2012-2013 cohort of travelers learned. Key findings include five processes of student transformative learning, namely 1) learning as journey, 2) experiencing discomfort, 3) reflecting and relating to one another, 4) building relationships with the community, and 5) receiving support. I discuss how students conceived their own learning as a "journey of discovery," and what personal actions and characteristics were necessary to engage in that journey.

Utilizing the same data set, chapter three explains how students describe what they learned and gained from their participation in the program. Students described personal growth and demonstrated cognitive questioning after their travel to Kenya. Personal growth is defined as clarifying attitudes, motivations, and desires or better aligning behaviors and values. Cognitive questioning occurred when students used their experience in Kenya to question assumptions about individualism and collectivism, the locus of control in aid and charity, and education as a catalyst for change. A third set of findings explores students' reentry challenges. The chapter concludes that students engaged in cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning.

Chapter four tells in-depth stories of two students as they recall the multiple ways the 2011-2012 program to Kenya impacted their actions, thoughts, and emotions and how it prompted them to return one year later. The discussed students are unique because they returned to Kenya, demonstrating a strong emotional connection to the Samburu communities. Our interviews took place more than a year after their first trip to the country, providing them with an analytical distance that the students of the 2012-2013 cohort would not have had at the time of

my data collection. The chapter pays particular attention to the multiple forms of reflection and reframing that students demonstrated (Mezirow 1991, 1998).

Chapter five integrates the findings of each article, provides limitations of the study and implications for education abroad and transformative learning theory when taken as a whole. In the next section, I describe the background for the study.

Background for the Study

The number of U.S. students studying abroad continues to increase annually, as does the diversity of students' ethnicities and majors, as well as program locations and types (Bhandari & Chow, 2009; Institute of International Education, 2012). The number of undergraduate students studying abroad has more than tripled over the past decade. During the 2011-2012 academic year, 283,332 students studied abroad marking a 3.4% increase over the previous year (Institute of International Education, 2013). Increasingly popular are short-term programs, which now make up over one-half (58.9%) of students traveling abroad (Institute of International Education, 2014). Because the Institute of International Education (IIE) only reports credit-bearing programs, thus excluding alternative breaks and other short-term co-academic programs abroad, the number of students traveling abroad for less than eight weeks is likely even larger than the national figures suggest. During the 2013-2014 academic year, 1,372 CSU students participated in education abroad programs. Of these, 534 students (39%) participated in non-credit bearing "field study" programs (Institutional Research, 2013) that were not reported to IIE. Four hundred fifty students (33% of the total education abroad population) traveled without credit on programs less than two weeks in length.

There are many possible reasons for the increase in short-term education abroad programs. Chieffo and Griffiths (2009) argue that loss of wages from employment and the

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demands of an increasing number of students over the age of 25 may result in some populations choosing not to study abroad for a full semester or year (54% of students at 4-year institutions report that they work outside of class, while college enrollment by students over the age of 25 rose by 21% from 2005 to 2007). Short-term programs are more appealing than full semester programs to students with rigorous course loads, such as those in engineering or with double and triple majors and to student athletes with rigorous practice and competition schedules. Short-term programs may be more developmentally appropriate for some students with limited travel outside of the country and may be of interest to those who have studied abroad and want another international experience (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2009). With the large increase in the demand for short-term programs and the diversity of participants, it is important to determine what and how students learn during a short-term international sojourn.

Empirical research on education abroad is contradictory, especially when focused on the outcomes of short-term programs. While some literature shows that longer duration results in greater increase in cross-cultural skills (Dwyer, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2004; Jackson, 2008; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Westrick, 2005), other studies demonstrate that trips of less than eight weeks may result in significant self-perceived changes (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Jackson, 2005, 2006; Kristjánsdóttir, 2009; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004). The research that assesses learning in areas other than language acquisition and cross-cultural sensitivity is limited.

Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige (2009) conclude that teaching interventions may predict the development of intercultural skills better than program length. More specifically, they tested language and intercultural learning in 1,159 enrolled study abroad students from three different universities in a pre- and post-test, comparative groups design and concluded "the

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presence or absence of a well-trained cultural mentor who meets frequently with students may be the single most important intervention to improve student intercultural learning" (p. 25). Learning intervention is a key variable that requires more investigation.

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning can help us to see the development of intercultural competencies in the context of larger cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes. According to Mezirow (2000), the key goal of adult education is to become aware of one's "tacit assumptions." It is necessary, he argues, to logically question them, changing those assumptions that are undefendable, while determining better justifications of those we desire to keep. Assumptions may be intentional or incidental to learning and inside or outside the learners' awareness (Mezirow, 2000). Cranton (2006) summarizes the traditional definition of transformative learning as "a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated" (p. 87). The process of becoming critically aware and eventually reformulating assumptions is what Mezirow (1991) refers to as "perspective transformation."

Transformative learning theory has been used in research examining learning in education abroad and U.S. adults overseas. In a key study examining transformative learning among college students who travel abroad, Kiely (2002, 2004, 2005) determined that a study abroad, service-learning program to Nicaragua affected participants. His findings indicate "each student experienced profound changes in their world-view in at least one of six dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural" (Kiely, 2004, p. 5). His study demonstrates the potential of transformative learning in a study abroad context and has influenced the creation of the interview protocol with student participants in this study.

The program that Kiely (2004) studied is a "six-credit service-learning immersion program during the January winter session in Puerto Cabezas, Nicaragua, a resource-poor community that has been experiencing persistent poverty" (p. 8). Students attended workshops on various topics and worked with local community members to organize and establish local health clinics. The program has "an explicit social justice orientation and is intentionally designed to disrupt students' notion of reality" (p. 8). It is not surprising that a program with the explicit goal to change the way students think is successful in doing so.

The context of the alternative break program at Colorado State University is very different from that in which Kiely worked. Colorado State University's alternative break to Kenya is non-credit bearing and has no academic requirements. It lasts for two weeks rather than four. It is not specifically designed to "disrupt student's notion of reality" or to attract students with a social justice orientation. Nevertheless, there is antidotal evidence that students return transformed. What does transformation mean in the context of a non-credit-bearing program? How does transformative learning occur when learning outcomes are not explicitly tied to assessment of students' learning?

To answer these questions, I adopt a distinction that Kiely (2002) established between the processes of transformative learning and the forms of perspective transformation. While *processes* explain how students learn, *forms* describe what they learn. Chapter two investigates the process of transformative learning by describing the experiences and actions that students encounter and utilize to understand their experiences. What creates dissonance? How do students engage that dissonance and make sense of it? Chapter two describes the role in learning of students' discomforts, processes of reflection, relating to each other and to members of the community. Faculty and community member perspectives are taken into account.

Chapter three examines the forms of transformative learning. The term *forms* is preferred over *outcomes* because it lacks finality indicating transformative learning is lifelong and may not end with the experience that prompted it (Kegan, 2000). Equally as important, the term *forms* suggests that transformative learning is not just knowledge-based learning, but is a shift in epistemologies or way of thinking about what we know (Kegan, 2000). While informative learning changes *what* we know, transformative learning changes *how* we think (Kegan, 2000). This potential to change how one thinks is what makes transformative learning different from other forms of learning (Kegan, 2000; Kiely, 2002).

This study aims to describe the process and forms of transformative learning of participants on the alternative break program to Kenya. I utilize an ethnographic case study methodology to examine the contexts of learning. In this case, the contexts include the concerns and aims of alternative break group leaders, pre-departure orientation meetings, the setting in Kenya, student interactions with host community members, service activities, and reflection activities. This study was conceived in the constructivist paradigm and, in keeping with that paradigm, examines the experience from multiple stakeholders' perspectives with a primary focus on students' learning.

Purpose of Study

The aim of this project is to understand the experiences of the alternative break participants as they prepared to travel, arrived and stayed in Kenya, and returned to the United States. My focus is on what supports or constrains student learning at each stage of the program. More specifically, I describe the processes and forms of transformative learning for students who participated on an alternative break program.

The findings of this study, in chapters two through four, contribute to a better understanding of Mezirow's theory of transformative learning and offer guidelines for educators on how best to organize and facilitate a learning experience for students on short-term education abroad programs at the pre-departure, travel, and reentry phases.

Research Questions

The overarching research question is:

1. What aspects of the alternative break program to Kenya support or constrain transformative learning?

Sub-questions guiding the investigation of the overarching research question and the chapters in which they are explored are:

2. What is the process of transformation for students on the alternative break program to Kenya? How do students define and describe their own transformative process? What activities and experiences are most influential in this process? (Chapter two)

3. How do the group leaders, administrators, and host community members support or constrain student learning? (Chapter two)

4. What are the forms of transformative learning that students experience after their participation on this alternative break program? (Chapter three)

5. How do individual student participants experience and describe their learning before, during, and after travel? In what ways are the explored cases unique or typical? (Chapter four)

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to an understanding of the types of learning that take place on alternative break programs. More specifically, it examines the processes and forms of learning

for students who participated in the alternative break program to Kenya. It also contributes to a better understanding of transformative learning on short-term programs abroad. Ultimately, this study provides a guide for practitioners who are interested in the learning potential of alternative break and other short-term education abroad programs.

Delimitations of the Study

This study examines one cohort of an alternative break program (2012-2013 travelers) at a single institution, so as to understand the experience of the group as a whole during their preparation, sojourn to Kenya, and their return to the United States. It also details the story of two participants who travelled to Kenya with the 2011-2012 alternative break cohort and returned in 2012-2013 independent of but at the same time as the CSU group. The focused nature of this study allowed for thick descriptions and in-depth understanding from both data sets.

While descriptions of the 2012-2013 experience are drawn from interviews, focus groups, a journal and direct observation, the in-depth stories of the students from the 2011-2012 cohort are based entirely on the retrospective accounts they described in interviews thus limiting opportunities for triangulation.

The study is further delimited by the application of transformative learning as the theoretical framework. My understanding and focus on transformative learning theories and models influenced the type of observations, findings, and conclusions I make.

Ethical Concerns

This study was approved by CSU's Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects on October, 19, 2012 (see Appendix A). Letters of consent for students, faculty and staff, and a consent script for Kenyan participants are included in Appendices B, C, and D.

Approved interview protocol for all participant groups, including students, faculty and staff, and host community members, can be found in Appendix E. The question route for student focus groups is Appendix F. The questions I asked in interviews and focus groups varied slightly from approved questions when I responded to individual experiences or modified my research focus based on previously collected data.

Most participants did not receive remuneration for participation in this study. The exceptions are three Samburu community elders who, in keeping with local customs, were provided a small monetary donation for their time and participation in one group interview. Host community participants, other than the elders, took part in one individual interview each. I did not provide any compensation to them, but offered to let each participant ask questions of me after the interview was complete. I was surprised and delighted when most took me up on the offer, often doubling the expected time together as they asked me questions about the United States, CSU, and my personal life. CSU students and group leaders participated in multiple aspects of this study, including individual interviews, focus groups, and participant observation for the entirety of their journey. As a gesture of thanks, I designed and gave each a photo album with images from the 2012-2013 trip to Kenya.

Disclosure

The group leader for the alternative break program to Kenya was a dissertation committee member.

Researcher's Perspective

My interest in this study developed as a result of positions I have held at Colorado State University as Coordinator of International Education and then Assistant Director of Academic Programs. I have had a diverse collection of responsibilities including working with several

interdisciplinary academic minors, managing international education courses, advising students interested in working, interning, or volunteering abroad, overseeing Peace Corps and U.S. Student Fulbright programs, and monitoring noncredit bearing international field experiences, among other duties.

In working with these programs, I have met highly motivated students who desire to travel to resource-poor communities so that they can help to "change the world." After an international experience, many become aware that they returned home with more than they were able to give. This shift in perspective is an achievement in itself. It is often accompanied by a more critical understanding of economic development, U.S. consumerism, and the relationship between the global north and south, as well as a greater appreciation for cultural differences. This suggests that a change in perspective may open students to the possibility of new and complex understandings of global issues and cultures. Moreover, the shift is more than cognitive, it is also motivational and behavioral. Some students change their career direction or major as a result of an international experience, while others come back with a desire to participate in international travel, work, or service.

Yet an enlightened shift in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors is not shared by all students. I have encountered students who are overwhelmed by the knowledge gained in a course or an experience abroad, in which they realize their individual ability to contribute to social change is limited in the face of increasingly complex global issues. International travel, especially to low-income nations, can result in inspired life choices in some instances and disillusionment in others. I have wondered what most influences these varying reactions and to what extent educators may influence learning and help to mitigate the demotivating impact of disillusionment.

The impacts of student visitors on host communities are equally important as student learning. When U.S. institutions of higher education partner with community-based organizations in low-income countries, there is an inherent imbalance of power that is grounded in unequal wealth, legal support, experience, education, expertise, and what is normally a unilateral exchange. This raises both ethical and pedagogical issues that are inadequately addressed in education abroad literature. As a field, we must endeavor to become more aware of how our educational programs impact the communities we work in. We must think critically about how the imbalance of powers at the institutional level impacts our interpersonal relationships and how it should impact pedagogy.

It is not possible to address in one dissertation all of the ethical and pedagogical issues inherent in the subject of educational travel. I focus, instead, on one aspect of education abroad—student learning—while keeping in mind the nature of institutional relationships and impacts on the host community. What role do these have in learning? What role should they have? How can educators encourage students to think more critically about cultural differences and similarities and institutional inequalities? By broadening the focus of students learning from outcomes based assessment to a more holistic look at host community interactions and impacts, we move one step closer to answering some of these questions.

Ultimately I maintain a sense of hope that alternative break and other education abroad programs can be transformative. They are a potential vehicle for mutual understanding and exchange. They may provide a catalyst to understanding the complexity of social, economic, and cultural systems, to thinking and learning more about the role of the United States and global poverty, and to an interest in understanding global issues and concerns. Students who endeavor to travel abroad so that they might "change the world" may be on the right path, but not for the

reasons they initially think. It is not through "helping" others, but through the development of mutually beneficial relationships and then through processes of changing their own thought patterns and behaviors that they are most likely to have an impact. Educational travel has the potential to facilitate both.

The final section of this chapter provides definitions of key terms used throughout the dissertation.

Key Definitions

Alternative break program: noncredit bearing, alternative break programs are faculty- or student-led travel over winter, spring, or summer break that focus on service to a host community. Travel may be domestic or international. I consider CSU's alternative break program to Kenya to be an example of short-term education abroad. I use the term *program* to refer to all official functions associated with pre-departure, travel, and reentry.

Cross-cultural: "pertaining to 1) interaction between members of different cultures; 2) the phenomena involved in crossing cultures, such as the adaptation to different societies and the impacts this has on the members of each culture; 3) the study of a particular group (or culture) and assumptions about how this group compares to other groups along a variety of dimensions, such as individualism and collectivism, communication styles, etc. The first of these usages, common among generalists, makes the term essentially synonymous with intercultural. Specialists in the field tend to prefer the narrower second and third meanings" (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 37).

Education abroad: "Education that occurs outside the participant's home country. Beside study abroad, examples include such international experiences as work, volunteering,

non-credit internships, and directed travel, as long as the programs are driven to a significant degree by learning goals" (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 12).

Frame of reference: "The structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions. It involves cognitive, affective, and conative dimensions" (Mezirow, 2009, p. 16). Frames of reference shape our thoughts, feelings, and perceptions.

Intercultural: "The dynamics involved when people with different lived experiences (cultures) interact" (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 37).

Intercultural communication: "1) How people from differing cultural backgrounds communicate with each other. 2) The field of study that attempt to understand how people from different cultures communicate with each other, and which emphasizes the development of intercultural communication competence. Sometimes used synonymously with cross-cultural communication" (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 41).

Low-income: I have chosen to use the terms low- and high-income to indicate the comparative wealth in a country. The World Bank defines these terms based on the country's Gross National Income. "For the current 2015 fiscal year, low-income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita, calculated using the *World Bank Atlas* method, of $1,045 or less in 2013; middle-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of more than $1,045 but less than $12,746; high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of $12,746 or more. Lower-middle-income and upper-middle-income economies are separated at a GNI per capita of $4,125" (World Bank Group, 2014).

Study abroad: "A subtype of education abroad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student's home institution" (Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 12).

This is the term most commonly used in research literature and databases. It is a subject heading in Education Resource Information Center. It most commonly refers to credit-bearing programs.

Short-term education abroad programs: Summer, January term or any other program that is eight weeks or less (Bhandari & Chow, 2009, p. 21).

Transformative learning: Mezirow (2009) defined transformative learning as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change" (p. 22).

CHAPTER 2: NAVIGATING A 'JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY': STUDENTS' TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING PROCESSES ON AN EDUCATION ABROAD PROGRAM TO KENYA

This article presents findings of an ethnographic case study examining student learning abroad on a two-week alternative break program to Kenya organized by Colorado State University. The focus is on the processes of student learning as perceived by the researcher, faculty leader, and student participants. Findings indicate that the learning process included discomfort, reflecting and relating to each other, building relationships with the host community, and receiving support from group leaders. The students described their learning as a "journey of discovery" in which self-directed and group learning processes supported student growth.

Literature Review

Research from the Georgetown Consortium has changed the way the field of education abroad conceives learning (Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, & Paige, 2009). The authors concluded "the presence or absence of a well-trained cultural mentor who meets frequently with students may be the single most important intervention to improve student intercultural learning" (Vande Berg et al., 2009, p. 25). This observation is important because it clarifies the role of faculty and staff facilitation in the learning process, dispelling the myth that an international experience will alone encourage intercultural competence. It challenges a second myth that the longer students are abroad the more they learn. Rather, the Georgetown Consortium study suggests what many have anecdotally suspected: that short term education abroad programs, if properly facilitated, can result in meaningful student learning.

Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou (2012b) built on the findings of the Georgetown Consortium with a collection of essays that assumed, "most students do not meaningfully develop" unless educators intervene with "well-designed training programs that continue throughout the study abroad experience" (Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012a, p. 21). In a different chapter of the same book, the authors reviewed intervention-based research utilizing the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and concluded that the following activities are the most likely to increase students' intercultural learning:

1. Cultural mentoring and on-going discourse

2. Discussion of cultural context (value orientation, communication styles, non-verbal communication, etc.)

3. Reflection on intercultural experiences

4. Engagement with culture through immersion activities

5. Learning before, during, and after travel

6. Online supplemental activities (in certain circumstances)

7. Comprehensive intercultural intervention woven throughout the experience (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012).

The above-mentioned studies have refocused education abroad research on teaching interventions. Yet, attention remains on credit-bearing programs, learning outcomes captured by the IDI, and the facilitation of intercultural learning specifically (Engle & Engle, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2012b). The learning processes that students engage in while abroad and outcomes outside of intercultural learning are less commonly researched (Hoff, 2008; Kiely, 2010). As Kiely (2010) writes, "There is general agreement in the study abroad field that outcome assessment is important for

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accountability and credibility and that intercultural competence is a key predictor for and outcome of successful intercultural adaption" (p. 251). There is strong reliance on the IDI, and "the majority of the studies focus on pre- and post-test of the effect of the study abroad experience on the growth of intercultural sensitivity or attitudinal change in study abroad students" (Hoff, 2008, p. 56). To fully understand the education abroad experience, we must expand our knowledge of multiple types of learning. This is possible by examining learning *outcomes* and *processes* in both long and short-term programs.

Research on short-term, non-credit bearing programs that demonstrate substantial gains in student learning often measure learning not captured by the IDI (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004, 2009; Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Dwyer, 2004; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Rexeisen, Anderson, Lawton, & Hubbard, 2008). Qualitative studies that look holistically at learning processes and outcomes have identified a set of learning outcomes that both address and move beyond intercultural learning. In her 2005 and 2006 publications, Jackson found that study abroad students experienced both cultural difficulties and personal growth. Participants experienced difficulties such as cultural shock, interacting with strangers, conflicting beliefs, perceptions of discrimination, and confounding humor, among others (Jackson, 2005, 2006). Participants demonstrated personal growth by developing specific social skills, critical cultural awareness, an ability to recognize and cope with difference, and openness to diversity and new ideas (Jackson, 2006). Dolby (2007) distinguished between the development of a national critical identity and intercultural learning, noting the former is more possible on a short-term program.

Transformative Learning

Increasingly popular in study abroad research is the use of transformative learning theory to frame the questions, *what* and *how* students learn (Lalley, Mangieri, & Berends, 2012). The transformative learning model focuses on how people make meaning of their experiences and how the process of meaning-making leads to significant learning and behavioral changes (Kiely, 2005). This section will explore Mezirow's theory and examine empirical studies of study abroad as well others that focus on intercultural learning.

Mezirow (2009) defined transformative learning as "learning that transforms problematic frames of reference to make them more inclusive, discriminating, reflective, open, and emotionally able to change" (p. 22). "Problematic frames of reference" have been referred to as "uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, [and] perspectives" (Cranton, 2006, p. 87). It is necessary, Mezirow (2000) argued to logically question "tacit assumptions," change assumptions that are undefendable, and determine better justifications of those we desire to keep (p. 4).

Mezirow (2009) listed the ten phases of transformative learning first identified in his 1970s research on women returning to community college.

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 19).

Taylor (1998) published a review of empirical studies that utilize transformative learning about which he later wrote, "confirmed the essentiality of critical reflection, a disorienting dilemma as a catalyst for change, and many of the phases of the transformative process described by Mezirow (1991)" (Taylor, 2007, p. 174). Taylor's (2007) review of empirical literature demonstrated that transformative learning scholarhsip examines specific life circumstances and noted the importance of context in the transformative process. Studies attempted to further define the types of transformation and the length of their impact, expanded the definition and types of reflection, and pointed to the importance of interpersonal relationships in the transformative process.

Empirical studies that utilized a transformative learning model in intercultural settings have supported and challenged elements of Mezirow's theory in similar ways as has empirical research in other settings. Most intercultural studies indicated that travelers experienced a disorienting dilemma or cultural dissonance (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Kiely, 2005; Lyon, 2002; Taylor, 1998). This dissonance sparked a process of understanding, which may include but is not limited to, critical reflection. Understanding may result from activities that are reflexive or non-reflexive, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, and/or relational in nature (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Kiely, 2005; Lyon, 2002; McDowell, Goessling, & Melendez, 2012; Taylor, 1998). At least two studies have indicated that transformative learning is highly personalized. While Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) emphasized the impact a traveler's background might have on learning, Kiely (2005) noted that personalizing the experience abroad is an essential part of the learning process, and Kiely (2002, 2005) emphasized the importance of connecting with

community partners and building on interpersonal relationships as a means of understanding. He developed a model for the processes of transformative learning abroad that is non-linear and context-specific (Kiely, 2005).

There is variation in the degree to which students experience changes in perspectives. Some studies have indicated changes in world view (Brown, 2009; Kiely, 2005; Taylor, 1994a, 1994b, 2009), while others have seen limited changes in perspective (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). For some students on a service program to Nicaragua, there was a disconnect between a changing world view and the ability to integrate new perspectives into their lives after reentry (Kiely, 2004). Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) demonstrated that students who challenge themselves with additional cross-cultural experiences in the year following a short-term experience were more likely to identify and implement changes in their motives and behaviors later in life. These findings suggest that what happens after study abroad may be as important as what occurs during travel.

The above-mentioned research indicates that the context of learning and the background of the individual learner impact the transformative learning process, suggesting variation in the ten steps Mezirow (1991, 2009) outlined and a possible need for multiple approaches to facilitating learning abroad. Findings call attention to the importance of a disorienting experience, reflection, personalization, and relationships in the process of learning in an intercultural setting. The current study contributes to the body of literature on transformative student learning abroad by examining the processes of student transformation on a short term education abroad program to Kenya.

Methods

This study utilized an ethnographic case study approach and was designed in the constructivist paradigm. An ethnographic study is a "study of people in everyday settings, with particular attention to culture—that is, how people make meaning of their lives" (Anderson-Levitt, 2006, p. 279). The findings report both emic and etic perspectives. This case is intrinsically bound, examining one alternative break program to Kenya and participants in the 2012-2013 cohort (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995).

Constructivist research aims to understand human behavior in a natural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and "from the actors frame of reference" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 2). In this case, the actors are the student participants, group leaders, host community members, and researcher.

Participants and Program Description

Students. The twelve students who traveled to Kenya in 2012-2013 all agreed to participate in this study. Eight of the participants were female and four male, ages 19-22. Eleven students reported a GPA at or above a 3.00 and they represented a wide range of majors. Two students were Pell Grant recipients. Eight reported their ethnic identity to be Caucasian (students' term), one Hispanic, one African, and two did not identify ethnically. The program is competitive. All students completed a written application to the program (see Appendix H) and participated in an individual interview with group leaders (see Appendix I) prior to their acceptance to the program.

Group leaders. A faculty member and a graduate student from the College of Natural Resources led the program. The faculty member publishes research focused on the region and had facilitated six annual alternative break programs to Samburu by the

2012-2013 trip. This was the second time the graduate student co-leader provided support for the alternative break program to Kenya.

Host community members. I interviewed eight host community members about the impact of CSU students in their community. Six participants were male and two female. Five of the community members spoke English. Three participated in a group interview with a translator. All participants lived in the Samburu region and six of the eight were ethnically Samburu. All participants were recommended by the faculty leader.

Program description. The non-credit bearing alternative break program to Samburu took place December 28, 2012 to January 12, 2013 with six preparatory meetings during fall of 2012 and three social dinners hosted by the faculty leader in spring 2013. During travel, the group camped at the Kalama Conservancy, where paid conservancy staff provided meal preparation and protection from wildlife. The group engaged in what the application calls "service-learning" activities in cooperation with several local organizations (see Appendix H). These organizations included two women's collectives, a primary school, and the Samburu Youth Education Fund, a non-profit organization founded by the faculty leader, and Girl's Conservation Club. Reflection is a key aspect of the program and leaders guided discussions each evening. As a means of communicating with friends and family, the group leaders and student participants rotated posting a description and commentary on the day's events to a group blog.

Data Collection

I collected the following data for this project: 1) pre-departure interviews with six students (see Appendix E); 2) ethnographic observation before, during, and after travel; 3) two focus groups and one interview with students after travel (see Appendix F); 4)

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interviews with the faculty and graduate student co-leaders (see Appendix E); 5)

individual and group interviews with eight community members (see Appendix E); 6) all

student applications, a group blog, and one student's journal (see Table 1). All data

collected orally were recorded and transcribed with permission from participants.

Table 1: Data Collection Sources

Data Source	Before Travel	During Travel	After Travel
Documents	12 Student applications	1 Group blog 1 Student journal	
Interviews	6 Students	8 Community members	1 Student 1 Faculty leader 1 Co-leader
Focus Groups			Group 1: 7 people Group 2: 2 people

Data Analysis

I examined most closely the student data collected after travel and completed

Initial and Focused coding techniques as described by Charmaz (2006) and Saldaña

(2009). During Initial coding, I used the words of participants then reflected on and

compared codes. I developed consistent Focused codes on the most salient categories.

Key topics included student learning processes and program elements that influenced

learning. From my field notes, I wrote a series of extended descriptions of what I

perceived to be key incidences. I analyzed the group blog, student journal, the group

leader and co-leader interviews, and filed notes, by first using the Focused codes

identified in the student data and then creating new codes as needed. To organize coded

data, I filed instances of each code across datasets. I created themes by comparing and

refining codes and by writing memos to explore and deepen my understanding of key

ideas. I analyzed pre-departure student interviews and host community interviews

separately from the rest of the data.

Throughout analysis I completed analytic and procedural memos to develop

connections and meanings and to record methodological decisions (Charmaz, 2006;

Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2009). The themes presented in this paper appeared in

both student and faculty datasets (see Table 2).

Table 2: Processes of Transformative Learning on an Alternative Break Program to Kenya

Theme	Description
Navigating a Journey of Discovery	Students actively engaged in their own learning by asking questions, building relationships, developing projects, and learning and practicing Samburu and Kiswahili words. Students also maintained personal journals and participated in reflection activities. The structure of the program allowed each student to engage in the activities they found most interesting. Some students called the individualized experience in moving from a state of unknowing to one of experience and understanding a "journey of discovery."
Experiencing Discomfort	Students mentioned being uncomfortable or being "out of their comfort zone" in at least three ways. Students were physically uncomfortable, they struggled with cultural challenges and admirations, and they experienced extreme poverty. In many instances these discomforts prompted reflection that resulted in growth and learning.
Reflecting and Relating to Each Other	Students participated in daily organized reflections and reported these to be an important aspect of their learning as well as a conduit to relationship building within the group. Reflection activities provided opportunities for students to express their emotions, observations and ideas, get feedback from group leaders, normalize their experience, and develop bonds with other students in the group.
Building Relationships with the Host Community	Building relationships with the community was essential to students' learning and personal growth. Students connected to the community by building relationships, imagining the experience of others, sharing activities such as service projects or beading, playing with children, sharing cultural knowledge, and verbal and non-verbal communication.
Receiving Support	Students reported feeling supported in their learning because of the guidance of group leaders and the structure of the program. The leaders treated students "like adults," remained calm in stressful situations, provided guidance in negotiating tough cultural interactions, modeled appropriate behaviors, took advantage of teachable moments, and adjusted to the needs of the group.

Findings

In this section I address the question, "how did students learn" on the alternative break program to Kenya. I discuss five processes of student transformative learning: 1) learning as journey, 2) experiencing discomfort, 3) reflecting and relating to one another, 4) building relationships with the community, and 5) receiving support (see Table 2). In the first section, I discuss how students perceived their own learning as a "journey of discovery," and what personal actions and characteristics are necessary to engage in such journeys. The remaining sections detail specific experiences, program elements, and pedagogies that supported this journey. Ultimately, findings suggest that students actively engaged in their own learning within an environment of both challenge and support, and authentic relationships with other students, group leaders, and host community members were crucial to creating this environment of deep learning. Student quotes are taken from focus group discussions unless otherwise stated.

Learning as a Journey

A student in the first focus group used the term "journey of discovery" to explain both the deliberately hands off approach of the leaders and his experiential learning. Other students further developed the concept. They advised that group leaders allow students the "freedom to experience" and not create "preconceived notions" that might influence expectations. All students were interested in learning from their experiences and many appeared to see the process of their journeys as more important than its outcomes. Ann[1], who participated in the second focus group, described the idea of learning as "magic" when she said,

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[1] All names have been changed.

But you know that is part of the magic of you going? It wouldn't be [magical] if
you're like, "you're going to go, and you're going to be challenged, and you're
not going to like it sometimes." The magic is not knowing what you are getting
into. . . . Because you have to experience it and process it, individually, through
your own lens, rather than seeing it through someone else's lens.

Erin explained how not knowing what to expect was both frustrating and exhilarating, yet

something that enhanced her experience.

At first I was frustrated with that [lack of knowing in advance], because at the
beginning I really wish I would have been able to be more prepared, but looking
back I wouldn't have wanted it any different. I think that it really helped us to be
able to take in the whole experience. Not being prepared for it I think just makes
it that much more impactful and just really hits home, like, "Wow we are in a
completely different place than we were."

For these students, the ability to "discover" the cultural norms of the new location may have

made them more aware and attentive to what was taking place. It allowed them to experience the

place, culture, and people from their own experiences and perspectives.

The faculty leader explained how he deliberately holds back from providing too

much information so that the process of learning can occur for each student individually.

I think one of the most important things is to not over-talk . . . I think the learning
has far more depth and more staying power if the student is drawing those
conclusions on their own from their own observations. . . . That's probably one of
the most important things that my co-facilitator and I do is let the experiences
unfold naturally.

The group leaders allowed this discovery to take place immediately upon entering the

village when the students interact with Samburu women for the first time. Without

providing details of what to expect, the graduate student leader reminded us to be present

and to leave our cameras in the bus as we entered the women's village. As the faculty

leader described,

. . . it's a pretty good moment. That first day, the singing and dancing, and then
they [the Samburu women] get the students all involved in it [by taking people by
the hand and inviting them to join in the dancing]. [Students think] I don't know

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what to do. I think we all get naturally self-conscious about … I don't know what, I don't know how to do this dance, or I don't know what I'm doing. You can't lose. Just go, be uncomfortable, you'll be so much better for it in the end.

As a participant on the program, I too entered the Samburu village for the first time that day. While I had seen videos of the welcome dances performed by Samburu women, to witness them in person was unexpectedly moving and overwhelming. As we exited the busses, several women moved towards us in unison and began to sing a series of welcome songs composed of a few repetitive phrases. They danced by bending their knees and jetting their upper bodies forward. This movement propelled the layers of beaded necklaces to and from their chests, creating a rhythm that accompanied their voices. I felt a sense of awe taking part in this powerful tradition, insecurity in not knowing how to respond to it, and relief when I decided to let go of that uncertainty and see what would happen.

The group leaders signaled the importance of the moment and the need to engage with the Samburu women authentically by encouraging students to enter without cameras, but offered no interpretation, direction, or reason for this advice. This may have been the students' first moment of "discovery." With such moments students identified their learning on the trip as something in which they would actively participate.

Active participation was something students were prepared for in advance. All six of the students I interviewed prior to departure indicated a desire to learn or grow from their travel experience. Some mentioned they wanted a "trip of a lifetime," "to be blown away," or a "life-changing" experience. When asked to define these terms, they shared that leaving the familiar was a way to better understand the world, themselves, and different points of view. The group leader selected participants from as many as 50-80

applicants each year, and in addition to looking for a diversity of ideas and backgrounds, he admits students who are open to "deep learning."

The selected students were invested in their learning throughout the program. They made meaningful relationships with Americans and Kenyans, asked questions of group leaders and host community members, learned Samburu and Kiswahili vocabulary, and actively developed and participated in service projects of their choice. They reflected on and discussed their experiences and observations in organized reflection activities and without guidance among themselves.

These acts of self-guided learning were supported by the program leaders' pedagogical approach, which allowed for personal choice, investment, and discovery. Each night in Kenya, students were given a choice of activities they could take part in the next day. In part because of their choices, students reported feeling invested in the program activities and thought that group leaders treated them respectfully "like adults." Making choices meant that what students learned and experienced was self-directed and active. This structure may have heightened the intensity of the students' experiences creating opportunities for reflection and growth. The Samburu site was thus an environment in which deep, student-centered learning was possible. Discomfort, in some instances, was a catalyst for this learning.

Experiencing Discomfort

Students experienced at least three different types of discomfort. They were physically uncomfortable, they faced cultural challenges, and many witnessed extreme poverty for the first time. These discomforts, the latter two of which might be called *disorienting dilemmas* in Mezirow's theory (1991), prompted opportunities for reflection,

learning, and growth. These challenges and their impacts often overlap and are hard to

separate. I will describe each of these discomforts and the broader impact of discomfort

on students' learning.

Physical discomforts. Students experienced physical discomfort primarily as a

result of the experience of camping, which the group did for 12 of 14 nights. There was

limited access to running water, extreme heat during the day, and pesky insects. Those

more experienced with sleeping outdoors seemed more comfortable with the physical

discomforts than those who were camping for the first time. In addition to camping, the

group ate unfamiliar foods and had limited access to the foods, drinks, technologies, and

media readily available at home. Most adapted quickly to these challenges. Some

experienced great pleasure from the novel surroundings.

Changes in the physical environment prompted opportunity for instrumental and

transformative learning. Students gained instrumental skills that helped them to live

outdoors in an unfamiliar environment. Coping with these difficulties presented students

with an opportunity to reflect on how their lives in the United States were culturally and

materially different from the Samburu. The next two sections will describe students'

perceptions of cultural and material differences.

Cultural challenges. Many students expressed discomfort when they encountered

confusing cultural practices or when trying to speak to people who did not understand

their language. There were aspects of Samburu culture that caused them to question

Samburu behaviors and values. For example during the focus group, several students

mentioned they found it challenging when they saw young children fighting, boys hitting

girls, and one instance in which kids were playing with the carcass of a cat. Several

students noted differences in gender relations or privileges they found troubling. On the other hand, the emphasis on collective decision making, the sense of responsibility for all individuals, and the lack of emphasis on material wealth resulted in students questioning values and priorities in the United States (see Chapter 3).

Jendaya felt "outside of her comfort zone" but also felt a deep connection to the host community "at the same time." In a personal e-mail to me, she elaborated:

> I was taken from a state of having everything I need to living like I had nothing at all. That quick change in someone's life can cause them to reflect a lot on their lives . . . When I was outside of my comfort zone in a different culture, it allowed me to deal with issues differently and it gave me a different perspective on life. It showed me what's important and what's not important. It gave me the chance to view real life issues and question myself, whether my issues were really issues at all. Because I was interacting with people from a different culture, I was able to place myself in their shoes and view them in mine as well, which truly allowed me to absorb the experience. . . there is so much to learn about each other as well as yourself!

Jendaya mentioned a lack of resources and cultural difference as catalysts that caused her to question her own values and develop empathy for those with different life circumstances.

Thus cultural challenges provided a context for cultural comparison and evaluation of one's own life and the lives of others. Such questioning resulted in reflection and growth for Jendaya and others.

Witnessing a lack of material resources. Many participants witnessed subsistence living for the first time. Students observed various impacts of poverty in the women's villages, when they met scholarship recipients, and in schools with limited resources. During an evening fireside discussion, Morgan, a student about to enter her teacher training, said she felt taken aback by the schools we visited that day. She thought people in the United States did not appreciate education because it is free. In Kenya, she

observed students have to pay for education and it is often outside of their families'

means and is therefore appreciated. She wondered if there is a way to encourage

appreciation for education and still make it widely available. Jendaya added that the

Samburu deserved smart classrooms more than U.S. students, because they are more

grateful for their educational opportunities. Others explored the accumulation of material

wealth as a potentially misguided source of happiness. They compared the wealth of the

United States with the lack of wealth in Samburu as well as the attitudes that

accompanied those situations.

The students appeared to be grappling with their own privilege. They collectively

explored the privilege of education, school supplies and equipment, and educated teachers. They

recognized potentially for the first time that those privileges are not granted to all students. Their

observations about material wealth and gratitude in the United States and in Samburu took place

simultaneously as a comparative process.

Poverty caused students to question the nature of international aid, the work of

non-profits, and the role of education in the lives of people from various economic

backgrounds. As Emily noted in the first focus group,

> I know if you do want to make a difference you can't just give out money, you actually
> have to go and work with people and give them the tools, so they can change their own
> lives. I think we need to be more aware of that.

A few students expressed an understanding that giving money was not an effective means of

community development without appropriate community voice and involvement (this theme is

further developed in chapter 3). While some may have encountered community development

theories and practice in their coursework, seeing it in action resulted in increased understanding.

Pedagogy of discomfort. The faculty leader's teaching philosophy for the program suggests that he sees a positive role for discomfort in the process of learning. He explains,

> If you're uncomfortable that means you're growing, and I never want people to be uncomfortable to where they feel their well-being is at stake or at risk, I won't let it get to that point, but I am perfectly happy with students being uncomfortable otherwise.

For the students in this group, much of their learning appeared to occur as a result of examining and coping with discomfort. One way to cope was reflecting and relating to each other.

Reflecting and Relating to Each Other

Each evening, after dinner, the graduate student leader facilitated a discussion or reflection around the camp fire. According to the students, reflection was essential to their learning and growing. In particular, they noted reflection aided in processing their experiences relating to their increasing self-knowledge.

Processing. Several students noted the value of dialog and reflection on the days' events as a means of processing their experiences. These students found that reflection provided a means of 1) talking about the day, 2) normalizing feelings, and 3) making sense of the day's events and accompanying emotions. To illustrate the first point, Ben explained, "being back in that space and just being able to decompress with everyone was so helpful." Jendaya mentioned how listening to others' interpretations both similar and different helped her to normalize her experience, "it gives you that whole different perspective of, okay I'm not crazy." She and Ann noted how reflections prompted them to make sense of the day and their own emotions. Jendaya described how reflections gave her the opportunity to "step back and really see exactly how I'm changing." Ann

felt the reflections supported her in dealing with turbulent emotions in a way that would not have been able to do on her own. "It is overwhelming" she explained, "when you're experiencing that many new things, that many emotions, like so much was just piled on all at one time that you can't really sift through it yourself." The group discussions aided students' ability to make sense of their own experiences and track their own learning and growth. The learning that occurred may not have been as meaningful without a means of processing it with others who shared similar experiences.

Relating and self-knowledge. Others appreciated how the reflections had a positive impact on their relationships within the group and their own self-understanding. Carla told me in an individual interview, "I love the fact that they [the reflections] almost always had to do with appreciating one another, because sometimes I feel like we don't give each other, or we don't give *ourselves* some credit . . . that was really cool to be reaffirmed." Erin found validation from the reflections as well. She shared,

> You feel like, as a person, you want to portray a certain thing. You want to express yourself a certain way. People may or may not view that as you and I feel like I have really learned that the person that I am trying to be is the person that I am coming across as. That's reassuring to me.

Samantha made a direct comparison to an earlier study abroad experience in her journal when she noted "there was really no debriefing during study abroad. The connection we have made as a group in two weeks is awesome."

Because students learned from and supported one another, they developed strong bonds. Students reported feeling a sense of connection to those who traveled on the program. As Erin explained in a focus group,

> It was friendship on steroids. I can see any of you guys on campus and it is just an immediate connection. It is not superficial and I feel like even some of my

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friends at CSU, I don't feel as close to them as I do with people that I spent 14 days with, people I didn't know before I got on the plane.

Many students expressed tremendous gain from the intensity of these relationships and the validation they provided. It helped them, as Carla's and Erin's quotes illustrate, to gain a better sense of themselves and an understanding of how they appear to others.

For the students who participated on this program, reflection activities provided multiple benefits by helping them to deal with emotions, normalize and make sense of their experience, build relationships with each other, and develop a sense of self-awareness. The benefits of reflection may be mutually reinforcing. Creating relationships allowed people to feel safe when sharing, which resulted in insights derived from reflective dialog. The cumulative results of group travel and reflection provided a means of growth and learning not typical in more traditional study abroad settings that do not include planned group reflection and dialog.

Building Relationships with Community

Students were in regular contact with Samburu people during their travel. They built relationships with the campsite guards, the driver, local school teachers, the women and children of the collectives, and secondary school students. Students connected when they imagined the lived experiences of others, shared activities (e.g., service projects, beading, preparing meals, etc.), communicated nonverbally, shared culture (songs, stories, knowledge about plants, animals, and language), and played with children. Some of these friendships continued after the two week trip. Several students expressed desire to have their families and romantic partners meet Samburu friends, signaling the impact of their new friendships.

Most students expressed a strong sense of connection to both individuals and/or to the community as a whole, as Ben wrote in the group blog, "it is impossible not to feel your soul warm with those here." Repeatedly others mentioned that the relationships formed were the most important part of the trip.

The opportunity for students to interact with a wide variety of individuals in Samburu is by design. Service, the faculty leader argues, is a "conduit," or a "way to facilitate interactions . . . so that you understand more about each other's lives."

The community is also clear on the benefits of creating these relationships. As one woman explained, "Before we were told not to interfere with the tourists. Now [with CSU students] we are able to interact freely. They are good—good in interactions and in supporting us." At least three community members, interviewed individually, said that watching American students engage in manual labor provided inspiration and modeling for children in the community. Consistently, those who chose to interact with the CSU students reported benefits in doing so.

The faculty leader and the community are in contact about the goals of their partnership and the aims of specific projects, contributing to the success of the partnership. This empowering approach impacts student learning in two ways. When the host community members are invested in the partnership they are more likely to have positive interactions with students. Second, giving community voice and encouraging their participation in projects modeled a type of community engagement and development that students may learn from. During post-travel focus groups, at least three students mentioned that the trip prompted them to think about the role of aid and charity. Several mentioned that the program helped them to understand the importance of

involving the community in project development and relationships are at the center of

mutually beneficial partnerships. All students discussed the importance of their

individual relationships with Samburu people. In her journal, Samantha expressed one

way in which relationships positively impacted her experience:

> In everything we have done, we have done it with the community which has
> seriously and profoundly heightened my experience and how much I feel like I
> have actually been able to give back to the community I care about so much.

Service and other activities provided the opportunity for students to build

authentic relationships with community members. These relationships were the basis of

some of the more rewarding moments for students and provided opportunities for

challenging their own beliefs and assumptions in a safe, nonthreatening environment.

Receiving Support

Most students reported that the support and guidance offered by group leaders

aided their learning process. They appreciated the ability of leaders to remain calm and

their connection to, knowledge of, and respect within the community. They valued being

"treated like adults," guidance in negotiating cultural challenges, and in interacting as

part of a group, and the ability of leaders to adapt to the needs of students. The researcher

observed both leaders were able to take advantage of teachable moments and model

appropriate cultural and group interactions and reflective learning.

The following comments demonstrate how students perceived the benefits of the leaders'

knowledge and pedagogical approaches.

> [The faculty member was good at] bringing in so many different big picture
> points that none of us would be able to connect . . . that's really beneficial
> because it really brought life lessons back rather than just like this is what you're
> seeing, "ladies and gentlemen," like a tour. It is a lot more grounded in a very
> satisfying way (Ann).

Continually through the trip that advice was so helpful when experiencing new things and dealing with challenges and stuff like that. Their subtle guidance . . . it was genuine. That helped a lot (Ben).

I really liked that we were independent . . . and that he treated us as equals. That really meant a lot to me, because I'm transitioning from being a child to being an adult. I feel like at this point in my life I don't really know where I am on that (Carla in an individual interview).

[Noting the faculty member's availability] I feel that just rubbed off how much he loves it and how much he actually does enjoy taking kids there. It's not just a job to him (Erin).

The group leaders provided support and passed on knowledge of the host country while at the same time allowing students to feel independent in their journey to Kenya. The faculty member's personal dedication and love of the region encouraged and impressed students, prompting reflection and discussion about the actions of individuals in social justice. This type of immediate and consistent input is less likely on semester study abroad programs that emphasize academic learning rather than community development.

Rather than a strict agenda or lectures, group leaders were able to use down time and casual conversation (in addition to reflection activities) to prompt discussion and thinking. This occurred perhaps most notably when the faculty member asked a group of students over lunch, how they would respond to the question "how was Africa?" He then raised the issue again the following day with the full group in a reflection circle. Students explored how to deal with the challenges of explaining their experiences to those who might not distinguish multiple nations and cultures of Africa. The faculty leader told them to be prepared that they may not fully comprehend the experiences, encouraged them to reflect on them as a means of learning, and warned that others might not grasp the depth of their connection to the Samburu people. During the focus groups a

few months later, several students explained how this discussion helped them deal with the difficult conversations and emotions experienced upon returning home.

Discussion

The findings section presents five ways students learned on the alternative break program to Kenya. Students saw their learning as a "journey of discovery," experienced discomfort, reflected and related to one another, built relationships with host community members, and received support from group leaders. Beginning with general observations, I discuss each of those findings in relation to literature, build connections among findings, and offer recommendations for developing faculty led programs.

This study demonstrates the importance of student-centered learning and individual exploration in education abroad. The students actively sought their own experiences, were given the opportunity to make choices, and participated in activities that allowed them to reflect on their experiences. Faculty-led programs offer the opportunity for group leaders to shape the logistics and learning of an education abroad program. This program suggests, however, that allowing a sense of individual exploration, choice, and investment may have positively impacted students' learning in such programs. This finding supports other research that suggests students need to be able to personalize the transformative learning experience (Kiely, 2005) and reinforces trends favoring student-centered learning (Hoffa & DePaul, 2010). The individualization of learning is likely to benefit participants of domestic alternative break and service learning programs.

Less commonly discussed in education abroad literature is the concept that learning is a result of challenge or discomfort (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). In this study

the faculty leader consciously adopted this idea and allowed students to experience and work through discomfort. The students, unaware of faculty intentions, noted their own "journey of discovery" from ignorance to cultural and physical challenges to reflection and changes in thought or awareness. This journey and the discomfort they felt were central to their learning. Mälkki (2012) demonstrated that disorienting dilemmas were manifested in emotional experiences and challenging emotions triggered reflection in a context in which it was not facilitated. In this program, students actively participated in facilitated reflection as a means of dealing with challenging emotions.

This finding supports the theories of Kim (2001), Mezirow (1991), and Sanford (1966), all of which recognize discomfort as a challenge that can result in learning under the right circumstances. In Kim's (2001) model of cross-cultural adaptation, sojourners on both long- and short- term voyages begin in a state of stress and through a process of adaptation, learn and grow. When balance is maintained among the forces of stress and adaptation, the outcome is transformative. Kim's (2001) theory of cultural adaptation resonates with Mezirow's theory (2009) of transformative learning, which also begins with stress as a disorienting dilemma and results in adaptation in the form of emancipation from limited conventional perspectives. Both models support Sanford's (1966) theory, commonly referred to by student affairs professionals as "support and challenge." In this model people are prompted to change when they encounter a situation requiring new mechanisms of adaptation. For learning to occur, the strain must be relative to the learner's capacity to handle it, thus requiring external support. In their "journey of discovery," students faced many challenges and were receptive to multiple sources of support. Namely, students participated in reflection and group learning

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activities and gained strength from their relationships with one another, the community members, and group leaders. Below I discuss each type of support.

Reflection, mentioned in some education abroad literature as having a positive impact on student learning (Kiely, 2005; Passarelli & Kolb, 2012), provided support for participants in this program. Students referred to reflection activities facilitated by group leaders as a means of promoting their own learning. This form of reflection is dialogic, a means of critically assessing and reflecting upon assumptions, often resulting in changes in habits of thinking in keeping with Mezirow's ideals of critical discussion (Mezirow, 1991, 1998).

Reflection activities served a second function by encouraging the development of relationships within the group. Reflection was a means of relating, normalizing, engaging new ideas and intense emotions, and increasing self-awareness. This finding suggests reflection may provide more than an analytical purpose in group travel. Relationships may encourage both cognitive and affective development by providing the support needed in facing challenges. Additional studies on the processes and outcomes of student learning on group and individual experiences abroad are necessary to clearly identify the benefits of each program's design.

In addition to relationships with others in the group, the CSU students were strongly affected by the relationships they built with the people of the host community. Participants shared activities, exchanged cultural ideas, and communicated verbally and non-verbally with children and adults. These exchanges resulted in acts of imagination and understanding that may lead to increased empathy, curiosity, and understandings of the ways in which social, political, and economic structures affect the lives of individuals

(Flower, 2002). For all participating students, these relationships were profoundly important and central to their fondest memories of the program.

The importance of relationships with other students and with host community members adds to a growing body of literature that suggests that relationships are central to the transformative learning process (Baumgartner, 2002; Carter, 2002) and essential in transformative learning abroad (Kiely, 2005; McDowell et al., 2012). These findings suggest the concept of cultural immersion in education abroad research and practice could be further defined and specified. Students in this program are not fully immersed in Samburu culture the way they might have been in a longer term study abroad program. Yet during their short trip, they had multiple opportunities to create authentic relationships with members from the host community yielding some benefits associated with longer-term immersion. This observation may lead us to question how cultural immersion is best defined. What elements compose an immersive experience? In addition to understanding how the location and actions of students may impact their learning, we must question how students' interactions with host community members offer opportunities for reflection and growth. We must also question how cultural immersion is different from linguistic immersion. This study suggests that the former is possible without the latter.

The group leaders offered support to student learning. They modeled appropriate behaviors, served as cultural interpreters, and provided guidance for reflection and individual investment. This suggests that they were acting in a capacity of "cultural mentors" similar to what the Georgetown consortium identified as most essential to student learning (Vande Berg et al., 2009). The group leaders challenged students by

deliberately providing opportunities for them to engage in observation, cultural experimentation, relationship building, and learning. They offered this challenge in a semi-structured environment that provided ample support and encouraged deep and transformative learning. These findings reinforce the need for "cultural mentors" in education abroad and further define the role in terms of facilitation that provides a balance of opportunities for independent and supported learning activities.

This study confirms findings of research on intercultural learning and transformative learning as described earlier in the literature review. It demonstrates the importance of disorienting experiences, reflection activities, personalization of experiences, and relationships in the process of learning in an intercultural setting. Findings suggest that short term education abroad programs may increase student learning by incorporating several elements of learning. Group leader(s) might consider the following.

1. Challenge students to engage in individual exploration, project development, and selection of activities

2. Support students in negotiating challenging cultural interactions, exploring difficult emotions, and reflecting upon their experiences

3. Encourage dialogue and reflection before, during, and after travel

4. Provide opportunities for community engagement and the development of authentic relationships

5. Remind students that learning may sometimes result in discomfort and build program elements to support students in dealing with discomfort.

6. Create and maintain partnerships that model appropriate community development practices and give voice to community members

7. Be aware that students learn from the modeled behaviors of group leaders. Faculty should be conscious about modeling fair development practices, open communication, and positive group interactions.

This case study recognizes "the pedagogical value of each individual's experience as the basis for learning" in an education abroad context (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011, p. 1149) and outlines some of the ways group leaders may increase student learning. More specifically it is the foundation for two conclusions about student learning abroad. First, an essential aspect of student learning was a balance of challenging and supportive activities in which authentic relationships with other students, host community members, and faculty leaders were essential in prompting reflection and the type of discomfort that resulted in learning. Second, in an environment that offered a balance of challenge and support, students felt invested in their learning and took ownership of it. The role of the educator in study abroad may well be less about teaching and more about facilitating individual and group learning processes. This paper suggests that much can be understood by examining, not only the outcomes, but also the processes of student learning in an education abroad program.

CHAPTER 3: MIRROR AND WINDOW: THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AMONG U.S. COLLEGE STUDENTS IN KENYA[1]

I learned so much about myself as a person.

--Emily[2]

I think it is just important to know that for future students that are going, you can find something you can connect Kenya to—something, anything in your life that will have an impact. It might not be something that anybody else on the trip feels that same way about, but everybody in the group had a profound connection to something that changed their life.

--Erin

Of the 21 alternative break programs organized by the Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement office (SLiCE) at Colorado State University (CSU), the program to Kenya frequently receives the highest number of applications. Like the other alternative break programs that SLiCE offers to domestic and international locations, the program to Kenya combines group travel with targeted community service. Students who return from the trip, like Erin and Emily quoted above, claim that the experience was transformative. What, in empirical terms, does this mean?

Utilizing an ethnographic case study approach, this paper draws upon education abroad literature and Mezirow's theory (1991, 2000, 2009) of transformative learning to describe what forms of learning were identified by student participants on the alternative break program to Kenya during 2012-2013 travel. The purpose of this article is to examine what students learned. I aim to contribute to a growing body of literature that seeks to define and provide recommendations for how best to foster transformative learning in education abroad programs.

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[1] Relevant information from the background and methods sections of Chapter 2 is repeated here, so that chapters may be read independently.
[2] All names have been changed.

Background

This article explores what students learned on the alternative break program to Kenya. I use the term *forms,* rather than outcomes, to explore this question, because of two implications. First, *forms* lacks the finality of *outcomes* indicating that transformative learning is lifelong and continues beyond the experience that prompted it (Kegan, 2000). Second, the term *form* suggests transformative learning is not just knowledge-based learning, but is also a shift in epistemologies (Kegan, 2000). While informative learning changes *what* we know, transformative learning changes *how* we think (Kegan, 2000). What we know can be measured as cognitive and disciplinary outcomes. How we know is harder to quantify, but includes changes in our forms of knowing. The concept suggests a holistic examination of cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes as interdependent.

A greater demand for accountability in higher education combined with an interest in documenting results of "learner-centered, outcome-based learning" has prompted a research focus on cognitive and disciplinary learning (Vande Berg et al., 2009, p. 3). These outcomes are often examined in conjunction with adaption and its cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, a focus developed as early as the 1950s in research on exchange programs (Kiely, 2010).

Two of the largest study abroad research projects demonstrate a focus on cognitive learning. The Georgia Learning Outcomes of Students Studying Abroad Research Initiative (GLOSSARI) examines, through self-report, how the "curricular content knowledge and cognitive understanding" of seven learning outcomes increases (or does not) among study abroad participants (Sutton & Rubin, 2004, p. 68). The Georgetown Consortium Project (Vande Berg et al., 2009) examines three domains, namely language learning, disciplinary learning, and

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intercultural sensitivity of students. Some studies assess dimensions other than intercultural sensitivity and knowledge. Braskamp, Braskamp, and Merrill (2009) utilize the Global Perspectives Inventory to examine cognitive domains of knowing and knowledge as well as intrapersonal (identity and affect) and interpersonal (social responsibility and social interactions) dimensions. There remains a need in the field for additional exploratory studies to examine mutual forms of learning that may not be captured by various inventories and the above studies.

Exploratory investigations are needed on short term, non-credit bearing programs in particular. Short term, credit bearing programs (less than eight weeks in length) now make up over half of the study abroad programs offered by U.S. institutions. Because non-credit bearing programs are not reported at the national level (Institute of International Education, 2013), we lack an understanding of their prevalence. Thirty-nine percent of students who traveled abroad for educational purposes at CSU in 2011-2012 participated in non-credit bearing programs (Institutional Research, 2013). Expected outcomes in non-credit bearing programs are less likely to be stated in syllabi and may be more likely than credit-bearing programs to be affective, behavioral, and epistemological rather than knowledge-based. With continued increase in popularity of short-term travel and the ambiguity of forms of expected learning in non-credit-bearing programs, it is necessary to understand what such programs offer that might differ from longer, credit-bearing study abroad.

Empirical research on the outcomes of short-term programs is conflicting. While some literature shows that a longer duration results in greater increases in cross-cultural skills (Dwyer, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2004; Jackson, 2008; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004), other studies demonstrate that trips of less than eight weeks may result in significant self-perceived changes (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Jackson, 2005, 2006; Kristjánsdóttir, 2009).

Research that assesses learning in areas other than language acquisition and cross-cultural sensitivity is limited. Vande Berg et al. (2009) concluded that teaching interventions may predict the development of intercultural skills better than program length, suggesting that facilitation may be a key factor in student learning. What learning is likely to occur on short-term non-credit bearing programs?

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning provides a framework for exploratory study of cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes on short-term programs. According to Mezirow (1991), transformative learning encourages individuals to be "more liberated, socially responsible, and autonomous thinkers; to make informed decisions by becoming more critically reflective as 'dialogic' thinkers in their engagement in a social context" (p. 29). This definition of learning moves beyond disciplinary learning to a model of personal growth that examines cognitive changes in behavioral, affective, and social contexts. Transformative learning theory has been used by researchers to guide exploration of global citizenship development in education abroad (Hanson, 2010; Tarrant, 2010), pro-environmental behaviors (Wynveen, Kyle, & Tarrant, 2012), and intercultural development in students on official university travel (Kiely, 2002, 2004, 2005), and adults who travel abroad (Lyon, 2001, 2002; Taylor, 1994a, 1994b; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). The purpose of this article is to contribute to that body of literature by examining what students learned and how they think after a non-credit bearing alternative break program to Kenya.

Research Setting and Participants

The non-credit bearing alternative break program to Samburu, Kenya took place December 28, 2012 to January 12, 2013 with six preparatory meetings during fall of 2012 and three dinners hosted by the faculty leader in spring 2013. A faculty member and a graduate

student from the College of Natural Resources led the program. The faculty leader engages in research in the region and had facilitated six annual alternative break programs to Samburu by 2012.

While in Kenya, the group camped at the Kalama Conservancy, where paid conservancy staff provided meal preparation and protection from wildlife. The camp site provided the group with a private space away from community members. It approximated the living conditions of many Samburu people who live in small hand-built homes with no furniture or amenities.

The group engaged in service activities in cooperation with several local organizations. Projects included building shade structures at a women's collective and nursery school. Students facilitated interactive lessons for a local elementary school and Girl's Conservation Club. They interacted with secondary school students who received scholarships from the Samburu Youth Education Fund (SYEF), a non-profit organization founded by the faculty leader. There were often several activities taking place each day as well as the option to opt in or out of projects, allowing students to choose what they were most interested in.

There was unstructured time which students took advantage of by beading jewelry with women in the two women's collectives, playing with or participating in game drives (trained guides would take students and local children to look for wildlife in protected natural areas), helping with food preparation or clean-up, journaling, and interacting in various ways with individuals from the host community. Because of the multiple opportunities for authentic interaction with Kenyans, students left the country feeling that they had made new friends. Leaders guided discussions each evening to help students make sense of what they experienced as reflection was a key aspect of the program.

The twelve students who traveled to Kenya in 2012-2013 all agreed to participate in this study. Eight of the participants were female and four male, ages 19-22. Eleven students reported a GPA at or above a 3.0 and they represented a wide range of majors. Two students identified as Pell Grant recipients. Eight reported their ethnic identity to be Caucasian (students' term), one Hispanic, one African, and two did not ethnically identify. None of the students traveled previously to Kenya, and two had never left the United States. I traveled with them and participated in all pre- and post-trip activities.

Methods

This study utilized an ethnographic case study approach and was designed in the constructivist paradigm. An ethnographic study is a "study of people in everyday settings, with particular attention to culture—that is, how people make meaning of their lives" (Anderson-Levitt, 2006, p. 279). The findings report both emic and etic perspectives. This case is intrinsically bound, examining the alternative break program to Kenya and participants in the 2012-2013 cohort (Merriam, 1988; Stake, 1995).

Constructivist research aims to understand human behavior in a natural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and "from the actors frame of reference" (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975, p. 2). This article explores the forms of transformative learning by examining the students' understanding of their own learning and growth.

Data Collection and Analysis

The majority of the data used in this paper is drawn from two focus groups and one individual interview held between two and three months after returning from Kenya. Of the twelve students who traveled to Kenya, seven participated in the first focus group, two in the second focus group, and one student met me for a one-on-one interview.

I referenced one student journal and a group blog, written during travel. While 11 of 12 students consented to contribute a personal journal to the study, only one student provided me with a copy after our return. Although I provided journal prompts (see Appendix G), the student chose to write freely of her experience and did not directly address my questions. Students and group leaders contributed to a blog that was updated daily with a description and interpretation of the day's events. While the journal and group blog yielded very few new themes, they contained instances that further reinforced themes developed from the focus groups.

Interviews with students prior to travel as well as interviews with group leaders and community members yielded data that contributed to a holistic understanding of the program, but are not directly referenced here.

I completed Initial and Focused coding on each dataset as described by Charmaz (2006) and Saldaña (2009). Initial codes used phrases by participants. After comparing data and codes, I created more consistent Focused codes to bring together various phrases that described the same phenomenon. After coding the focus groups, interview transcripts, blog, journal, and field notes with Focused codes, I filed instances of each code across datasets. I continued to compare each instance of the codes and refine categories then created memos to develop codes into themes. I further refined themes by comparing them to each other and the data. Throughout, I completed analytic and procedural memos to develop connections and to record decisions (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2009).

All students were given the opportunity to comment on the paper as a means of member checking. Their comments were taken into account in the final draft.

Findings

Students identified personal growth, demonstrated cognitive questioning, and experienced challenges after their experiences in Kenya. For the purposes of this paper, I define personal growth as further delineating or clarifying attitudes, motivations, and desires or better aligning behaviors and values. Personal growth is an example of transformative learning as defined by Mezirow (1991), because it demonstrates an ability to critically reflect on and alter attitudes and behaviors. Students described their personal growth in at least five ways. They 1) adopted an attitude for gratitude, 2) rejected U.S. materialism, 3) renewed their commitment to education 4) clarified academic or career choices, and 5) made behavioral changes.

Cognitive questioning occurred when students used their experiences in Kenya to question assumptions about cultural differences and international development practices. These cognitive shifts signified exploration of new information due to their experiences, rather than knowledge acquisition. Students were less likely to identify instances of cognitive questioning than personal growth, but engaged in cognitive questioning during focus group discussions. Students utilized focus group discussions to question 1) individualism and collectivism, 2) the locus of control in aid and charity to others, and 3) education as a catalyst of community change.

The following sections present examples of personal growth and cognitive questioning as coexisting but largely unrelated phenomenon. While students demonstrated evidence of both, one did not appear to prompt, cause, or necessitate the other. Students faced challenges upon returning home in the ways in which they processed, acted on, and explained their experiences abroad.

The first section will examine five themes of personal growth identified by student participants. The section on cognitive questioning draws from specific focus group discussions

and suggests that the discussions were a group exploration of key themes in cross-cultural communication and international development. The third section of the findings draws from material referred to in prior sections regarding challenges students faced after their return home.

Personal Growth

Students reported that the alternative break program to Kenya was a catalyst for change in several areas. All 10 of the students who participated in post travel focus groups or interviews agreed they grew as a person as a result of the program to Kenya. Students described their personal growth in at least five dimensions. They 1) adopted an attitude for gratitude, 2) rejected U.S. materialism, 3) renewed their commitment to education, 4) clarified academic or career choices, and 5) made behavioral changes. Although not all students identified all dimensions of growth, each student indicated growth in more than one of the above listed. Many students explained that after the trip they were able to see their priorities and actions with more clarity and, as a result, could make decisions that had been troubling them prior to travel. The dimensions demonstrate the substantive areas in which they clarified values and behavioral decisions.

Attitude of gratitude. The most common shift in attitude was what the first focus group called an "attitude of gratitude." Several students used this term to indicate a deeper appreciation of their opportunities, awareness of what they were experiencing in the moment, and thankfulness for their material and physical well-being. Ben was aware of a shift in his attitudes while he was traveling and wanted to maintain a sense of gratitude when he returned home. He said,

> The trip helped me have a continued attitude of gratitude, in the sense of like whatever they brought out of the kitchen or whatever we did that day it was like, "Sweet, this is going to be great, whatever it is."

The group blog, written in Kenya, further explains students' gratefulness. "There is a lot of growing happening on the trip, as the value of education, resources, and opportunities felt in my life is humbling." During the focus group, Deric explained, the program "helped me to gain a deeper understanding of what is important in my life." For Matthew, "it helps put things in perspective . . . simple things that I have never had to worry about— a meal on the table and different things like that."

For many students travel to Kenya provided a first contact with people who lived at a subsistence level. They were exposed to a community in which elementary and secondary schooling is not free or common; in which women choose to live in collectives without men to avoid female genital mutilation, early marriage, or spousal abuse; in which material belongings were minimal; in which foreign-built wells prevented women from fetching water from dangerous rivers as they had done in the past. The students returned to the United States feeling humbled by the opportunities in their lives and with an awareness of how their country of birth radically altered their life circumstances. The students began to recognize their privilege in comparison to the Samburu and they expressed this as an increased appreciation for the Samburu ways of life as well as aspects in their lives they had previously taken for granted.

The feelings that resulted from students' contact with structural inequality were not always positive. Many students struggled, after returning to the United States, with conspicuous displays of consumerism and waste.

Rejecting U.S. materialism. Several students found themselves offended by the availability of goods in the United States and critical of wasteful actions. They struggled with how to act on or communicate these feelings to others. They expressed an acute awareness of how others take material wealth for granted, waste water and other resources, and complain

about seemingly little things. Deric and Ben were paralyzed by abundance for a short period of time. Deric explained, "I was really sickened by everything that was available to me. . . I just didn't know what to do with myself for a week and a half. . . . I was like a zombie." Ben similarly explained how choices in a supermarket felt overwhelming immediately after returning.

> I would go in there and I'd be like, "Oh, ah," and I'd go and get a bottle of hot sauce and a frozen pizza and get out of there [laughter], because I couldn't handle going in. . . . I tried to limit brain function for a few days.

> Carla noted, "I realize how much I pay attention to how much we waste. That is really

bothering me. It's crazy." Ben was concerned that his anger of wasteful behavior might be causing tension with loved ones when, for example, he confronted his father about leaving a tap running.

> When I was home a little bit after my dad would wash dishes and he'd leave the water running and he would go grab something and come back. It is like, "Turn the water off," . . ."Be appreciative!" Sometimes I do get mad and I don't know if it causes tension or whatever, but I feel at some level it might.

At least three students felt "sickened" and "bothered" by waste and abundance in their realization of the contrast between subsistence living and U.S. abundance and materialism. In some instances, these feelings resulted in interpersonal conflict.

Samantha and Erin experienced tension in their relationships with others who had not traveled with them, when they found they had less tolerance for complaining. Samantha said, "I really had a hard time adjusting to how immediately people complain here . . . our culture likes to complain because we have a lot, so I think that goes with it." Erin added to the conversation "do we really have any right to complain about anything?"

Complaining was a concern for some students who seem to associate the behavior with a lack of appreciation for their own opportunities, while a wealth of goods and lack of tolerance for waste were concerns for other students. In expressing these concerns, students appear to be

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cognitively processing their understanding of U.S. materialism through a new lens developed as a result of their exposure to Samburu ways of life. Admiration of the Samburu who Jendaya described as, "happy off of nothing" demonstrated Samburu resilience and helped students to put their own problems into perspective. Upon their return home, they lost empathy for others who did not share this point of view, which in some instances resulted in interpersonal conflict.

There is an inherent tension between gratitude for one's opportunities and criticism for the system of inequitable opportunities. This tension resulted in negative emotions that were challenging for some students. Both Deric and Ben described how they were overwhelmed and took time to recover from their new perspective after returning home. Shutting down, "like a zombie" may have been a means of coping with conflicting and unpleasant emotions resulting from the new realizations regarding structural inequality.

Some authors have expressed concern that volunteer tourism can result in superficial interactions that reinforce stereotypes of "happy but poor people" who live in low income nations. The "luck" of having been born in wealthier conditions may prevent discussion on social responsibility and global structural inequality (Guttentag, 2009, pp. 545-547). The students' exposure to subsistence living was short, but had an educational value beyond that of many tourism programs, and students' appear to have come away with more than superficial assumptions about the Samburu and other people living in low-income nations. Rather, they engaged in self-reflection on their own lives, attitudes, and the social structures that support inequality. At times, this process was challenging for them.

Renewed commitment to education. As a key focus on the trip was Kenyan youth's education and access, it is not surprising that students returned with a sense of gratitude and a renewed commitment to their own education.

Ann, a journalism student, completed an interview and added a blog entry entitled "Grace: A Pioneer of Education," which tells the story of the "first women from Samburu to go to school" and expresses Ann's commitment to education. The story opened with a quote from Grace, "You must always remember you are privileged, the most privileged in the world." After detailing Grace's educational challenges, Ann continues to explain how she will be more willing to wake up for an early class and complete assignments on time after having learned about Grace's struggles. Ann concludes her story by saying, "Grace has dedicated her life to fighting for others so that they might eventually get what the U.S. is gifted"—education. In this instance it was from learning about the stories of others, that Ann changed her ideas about education and increased her commitment to it.

The group blog similarly suggests that attitudes toward education began to shift as students interacted and heard the stories of Samburu youth. After meeting with Samburu Youth Education Foundation (SYEF) recipients, one CSU student wrote:

> It was so incredible to hear that their priorities for getting an education were not self-centered; they all described their dreams of getting a good education in order to help their families and community.

Carla, committed to community service, recognized after returning home that she will be better poised to contribute to society after gaining what she can from an undergraduate and possible master's degree. She explained, "I've been blessed enough to experience these things. I just really want to focus on my education and continuing it before I decide how I'm going to give back."

Others mentioned their renewed commitments to education in negative terms, identifying a lack of tolerance for those who take education for granted and in recognizing a shift in their own motivation to attend classes and take greater care on their assignments. Erin stated, "The

whole experience of coming back to school and seeing people complain about going to school—it was super hard."

Ben related his renewed commitment to education showing what he had heard the group leader saying in class. He shared,

> After hearing [the faculty leader's] spiels for four years about, "Do your reading before class," what he calls his "old man speech." He gets mad at undergraduates. It totally makes sense now. You go and see the struggles . . . It's totally makes sense and people are like, "I have four classes today" or whatever it is. It's like, "well, you don't have to drink water that has cholera."

Students in secondary school in Samburu often are not able to afford tuition costs without outside sponsorship. If they receive sponsorship, they move to boarding schools in other regions of the country, where a day is eleven hours of chores and classes plus the time to do homework and other activities. Many are not educated beyond primary school, because of the costs. After hearing these stories first hand from the people of Samburu, the CSU students were able to see their own lives through a different lens and adjust their attitudes and intentions as a result of the experience. Similar to attitude of gratitude, which was accompanied by critical examination of U.S. materialism, a renewed connection to education had positive (desire to be more conscientious in school assignments) and negative (less tolerant of others who take education for granted) attitudes that resulted in self-reflection and clarified priorities.

Clarified career choices. Samantha, Emily, Ben, and Erin felt a sense of calm or peace with decisions they made after traveling to Kenya. All felt clear on what they wanted to do in their careers, because the trip reinforced values that attracted them to their career choices prior to travel. For Samantha, Emily, and Ben, all of whom study natural resources, their time in Kenya reinforced their desire to work *with communities* on conservation efforts around natural resource concerns. As Samantha shared,

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I became more passionate about it and more directional I guess. What I think I want to pursue . . . [is] water conservation and getting people to collaborate together and work together on projects. Seeing that there was really influential to me. Seeing how the community came together was really inspiring.

Erin, who majors in family studies and psychology, mentioned that the trip made her more aware of and interested in international concerns. Yet, it helped her to focus her career goals here in the U.S.

I feel like this trip has really solidified what I want to do—domestic violence work. That's a problem that I can try to help in other places, but help also needs to be done in the United States. I feel like I know that I want to do that because of this trip.

The experience of being outside of a familiar routine in an environment in which solutions are being proposed to problems that they cared about, these two students developed clarity in their career directions that they were unable to gain in familiar surroundings.

Other behavioral choices. The program resulted in students changing their priorities and behaviors in ways that are not directly related to the mission or focus of the program. I provide two examples here. Erin said she was not "interested in world problems" prior to traveling out of the country. After returning from Kenya,

The trip has made me so much more globally aware of different things. . . . Now if I see something on the news or on the Internet I want to read about it . . . The trip has opened my eyes to all of the different things that really are going on.

Jendaya explained how her time in Kenya helped her think through her priorities and make behavioral changes.

I have a new mindset of what makes me happy. Things that used to make me happy was just going out, getting drunk, hanging out with people that I shouldn't have been hanging out with. . . I know it sounds cliché, but I've become a better person. And it pushed away a lot of people that I used to hang out with . . . It's hard to explain to people that I can't do the things I used to do with you anymore, because I'm on a new path. . . . It's just that whole feeling of calmness and just really knowing exactly what I want out of life. I wanted to bring back that whole awareness . . . When you go on vacation it's not life-changing. You're trying to get away from something and I feel that when I went to

Kenya I wasn't really trying to get away from anything. I was trying to more or less make me a stronger person to deal with that situation instead of running away from it.

Erin and Jendaya expressed how travel to Kenya resulted in personal growth that is likely to have long-lasting impact. For Jendaya the experience made her "a stronger person" who was able to deal more effectively with challenges in her own life "instead of running away" from them. For Erin, the program brought her clarity to her career goals in the United States while at the same time increasing her interest and ability to adopt a global perspective regarding social problems.

Summary on personal growth. Many students shared a renewed commitment to education, feelings of gratitude, clearer career or academic foci, and made changes in their personal lives. In so doing, they shared the sentiments Jendaya expressed, "I'm on a new path." The path guiding students to new attitudes and behavior may not have been carved, but appears to have been illuminated by the program to Kenya. Students gained a new understanding of the lives of others and how the choices and options of those they met are constrained by circumstances outside of their control. This may have provided students with lenses through which they were able to view their own lives and a new set of perspectives to consider in their own behaviors and actions.

Cognitive Questioning

Although the program provided many opportunities for reflective dialog before, during, and after the trip, the focus groups were the only planned group discussions students participated in after returning to the United States. I prepared questions that prompted initial discussion, yet encouraged students to ask questions of each other and discuss topics of interest to them, allowing the discussion to be student directed (see Appendix F). Each group explored questions of cultural difference and cultural change as they made comparisons between American and Samburu cultures. This section presents three examples of cognitive questioning. I will examine

how focus group one explored the idea of individualism and collectivism and the processes of

distributing charity and aid in community development. Then I present how the second focus

group discussed education as a catalyst for community development. In each instance, students

tried to make sense of their observations of Samburu through comparisons with U.S. cultures.

Their conversations often did not result in conclusions; rather they demonstrate a collective

curiosity of social and cultural issues.

       Questioning collectivism and individualism. The discussion on collectivism and

individualism began when Erin asked, "Would you guys say that Kenya is, or at least Samburu

is, a collectivist culture? . . . Because I think that could be one of the major differences in the two

countries." Students asked what collectivism was and Erin provided a definition, individuals

acting for "what's best for the group versus the United States, which is individualistic."

       Deric offered a different impression,

> In the U.S. it is like sub-collectivist . . . like someone inside the subculture group cares
> about others in that group and their problems, needs, etc. but they don't necessarily care
> about this [other] group and go and help them.

       Ben later added,

> It is also just like a function of daily living because those groups are only forming,
> because of everyone has the same interests. In Samburu, it is so directly linked to
> livelihood. . . .

> The whole purpose of large mentality of the States is like if, if you work hard enough and
> put in effort, you will succeed, not your community. . .

       The conversation, too long to repeat in full, continued as students discussed differences

between collectivism in Samburu and individualism in the United States. They noted the way in

which cultural orientations impact cultural attitudes and helping, volunteering, personal

achievement, and giving to others. Students hypothesized that some of the greatest influences on

cultural orientation may be material wealth, where a community is located in Maslow's hierarchy

of needs, the economic system organizing a society, and the size of the community. They mentioned some co-cultures in the United States, such as religious groups, cycling clubs, or other interest groups, yet gave less attention to various U.S. cultural groups. They provided examples of behavior that exemplified collectivist orientation in Samburu and individualist orientation in the United States.

Although only one student could define the word, "collectivism" prior to the start of the conversation, the group successfully defined many of the characteristics of collectivist and individualist cultures based on their own experiences (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). In their exploration of these ideas, students began to make connections between macro concepts such as the economy, culture, and material abundance and individual behaviors on a micro level.

The concepts of individualism and collectivism were neither taught by the faculty leader, nor specifically elicited by the researcher. Rather the conversation began organically, as the students were trying to make sense of their observations and experiences after visiting a collectivist culture. For many it was their first exposure to both collectivism and subsistence living and they were trying to make connections between the two. Their conversation after travel suggests a curiosity prompted by the desire to make sense of observed cultural characteristics. One of the gains of international travel may well be the increased interest in observing and making sense of cultural differences.

Questioning the locus of control in aid and charity. Students in the first focus group questioned the dynamic of Americans providing service in less economically developed nations, the effectiveness of charity and government foreign aid, and cultural definitions of helping others.

Samantha questioned when and how outside aid is best administered by stating, "I had a hard time differentiating between things that I want to help with and understanding that maybe they don't want help with that." Others discussed whether their educational privilege and relative material wealth made it their responsibility to "give back" and if so how they could do that most responsibly, or if their presence in another society was somehow harmful. Many of the students in the first focus group agreed that for aid to be properly administered, the involvement of the community was necessary. Emily said this best,

> I know if you do want to make a difference you can't just give out money, you actually have to go and work with people and give them the tools, so they can change their own lives. I think we need to be more aware of that.

While this project did not assess what training or education students had about aid prior to travel, it demonstrates students' desire, after travel, to talk through their observations and questions. Samantha and Emily expressed clear judgments about problematic approaches to development that focuses on giving to a community without a clear assessment of community needs. They demonstrated an understanding of the importance of relationships and partnership building in the process of community development after having seen them in action.

Questioning education as a catalyst of community change. In the second focus group, students engaged in a discussion about the role of education in community change. Ann wondered if the spread of classroom education resulted in the homogenization of culture. She noted a social cost to the community is the consequences that education has tended to motivate migration from villages to cities as educated workers look for jobs, and if that migration indicates or promotes negative assessments of traditional, rural, or pastoralist ways of life. She said,

> I guess I think about if everyone goes all the way to college and get a college degree, what would the world look like? Would everyone live like we do? The world is very rich.

Rich, culturally. What would it look like if everyone had a college degree? . . . Why is it not just being who you are? . . . That is confusing to me because when everyone gets educated there will be no villages in Africa. Where would everyone make that money? Everyone would be living in cities. So it's like, that's very confusing. Why is that right? . . . Our society is built on education but why does that mean that everyone else's society needs to be built on it too.

Ann assumed that attainment of higher levels of education in Samburu will result in migration to larger job markets in urban centers, resulting in the abandonment of traditional ways of life. Ann's questions suggested a deep uncertainty and a lack of clarity. Phrases like "that confuses me" or "I don't know" suggested her learning and own opinions on this complex subject were still nascent.

Jendaya, originally from Zimbabwe, countered Ann's concerns exploring how the gains of education can elevate communities. She pointed out that, while in the United States education serves to advance an individual (and perhaps a nuclear family), in many African nations education aids in the development of an extended family and community, "get educated, be successful, and build your family a house. Help your culture." In Africa, she explained,

You don't hear of people dropping out of school because you're bringing shame upon your family. And no matter where your family is from, whether upper, middle, lower class, or living in a village, everyone knows how important education is.

These students examined education as a catalyst for cultural change and a tool for personal and community development, noting that these two perspectives may be in conflict. They struggled to define the characteristics and evaluate the negative and positive impacts of education. Their conversation demonstrated critical thinking about issues appropriate for a college classroom, but the conversations were prompted by a set of experiences, rather than acquired academic knowledge.

Personal growth, cognitive questioning, and experiential learning. The program to Kenya is a form of experiential learning. The model of the experiential learning process is

described as a transaction between social knowledge, or knowledge of social-historical context, and personal knowledge, the subjective experience of the learner (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012). The experience of traveling to Kenya, meeting Kenyan people, being exposed to different cultures, lifestyles, and a set of context-specific socio-historical circumstances sparked this transmission of the two aforementioned forms of knowledge. Students were able to see a link between themselves and a person or community in rural Kenya. They became invested in the lives of others and thus in the systems and circumstances that impacted the lives of others. Their responses were to think more critically about cultural communication and socio-economic structures impacting the process of cultural change. Travel to Kenya raised their curiosity about academic questions around development practices and the role of education in cultural change. The experience furthered students' commitment to their own education, interest in community development, and shifted personal behaviors. Within the cycle of experiential learning, this is a transforming experience. The experience of transformation is not always easy.

Challenges Returning Home

Students faced many challenges upon returning to United States. Drawing partially from quotes used in previous sections, I will outline four. Some students 1) felt "like a zombie," 2) experienced interpersonal tension, 3) had trouble describing their experience to others, and 4) struggled with the notion of global inequality.

Feeling "like a zombie." The most immediate challenge, expressed by Deric and Ben, was the emotional exhaustion of returning to their everyday lives when they had not yet fully processed their journey. Deric felt "like a zombie." Ben "tried to limit brain function." Both indicated a need to escape from the cognitive demands of their lives in the U.S. immediately after returning home.

Experiencing interpersonal tension. Many students commented on the difficulties they had relating to loved ones following their return. Earlier I mentioned the story that Ben recounted of conflict with his father, which occurred after his father left the tap running and Ben urged, "Be appreciative!" He later wondered if exchanges like this one were a source of tension in the family. Erin felt disappointed in a friend who did not understand her new perspective and the frustration that came with sorting through new ideas. She summarized her feelings of betrayal,

> I have explained to you over and over again what this trip was, and what we did. You of all people are telling me I don't really have a right to feel that way, because they don't know and they don't understand.

Two other students recounted stories that demonstrated a lack of understanding on the part of loved ones of the depth of their experiences. Deric was surprised when his father did not know of or follow the group blog. At a family gathering father asked son, "how was Zambia?" Emily had a desire to share her experience with others, who in some cases, demonstrated a lack of interest,

> I was so angry at my grandparents, because I got home [from the airport] and I was ready to share my stories and show my pictures and the stupid Bronco game was on and they're diehard Bronco fans. Of course the game goes into overtime, so they had watched the end of the game before they even asked me how my trip was. Stuff like that was just like, "Seriously you care about the Bronco game and I just had this life changing experience." Some of my friends asked how the trip is. Then they don't even wait to hear.

Finding friends and supporters who could understand the changing perspectives and the depth of relationships developed and emotions experienced was hard for most students during the first three months of their return to the U.S. When they found people who were willing to listen, some did not know what to say.

Describing the experience. At least six students shared their inability to put into words the depth of their experience. Deric explained,

> I want to share how meaningful the relationships were that I made and connections that I felt while I was there, but I get so frustrated doing that. I feel like I can't do a very good job at all of explaining the significance that it meant to me, so it really gets under my skin.

> Samantha expressed a similar frustration with a sense of absurdity and humor,

> I say, "Kenya was wild! We used to ride elephants. It was great." I can't tell you. I almost defer from explaining it anymore and I am not trying to be uptight about it . . .

Students may have had a hard time talking about their experiences precisely because they expected others not to understand. The cultural expectation that individuals explain their experiences succinctly is an additional challenge. It is likely the students had not fully processed their own ideas and emotions, also increasing their difficulty in expressing them.

Struggling with global inequality. A few students shared that they had a hard time coping with the continued realization that what they witnessed in Kenya was merely one example of inequalities present throughout the world and something they had little power to impact. Ann expressed this most passionately, when she said,

> It creates a ton of internal conflicts because I'm constantly learning about how fucked up our world is, when I'm in the problem. So you go to Africa for three weeks and then you come back to the same fucked up world.

The section on cognitive questioning demonstrated how students worked through the information presented to them during their travels to Kenya. Ann's quote demonstrates this was not just a cognitive process, but also an ethical and emotional one.

Findings on challenges of returning home are in keeping with previous research on reentry shock, which demonstrates that students have a hard time reintegrating their new ideas and values into their lives after international travel (Kiely, 2004). Martin and Nakayma (2010)

argue that reentry is characterized by two qualities. First, the adaptation a traveler has undergone makes them a different person. Second, friends and family do not expect or act receptively to these changes. For the students in this study, integrating their new perspectives into their lives and finding support from others were common challenges.

Discussion

Findings from this study suggest the potential for student learning is high on short term education abroad programs. Students who participated in the alternative break program to Kenya in 2012-2013 demonstrated personal growth and cognitive questioning after their return to the United States. They indicated personal growth with self-described changes in attitudes, clarity of academic and professional goals, and shifts in interpersonal relationships and behaviors. During focus groups, students showed evidence of cognitive questioning in conversations about cultural values, such as individualism and collectivism, and foreign aid and education as catalysts for cultural change. Personal growth and cognitive questioning are examples of ways in which students further defined their own viewpoints, demonstrating perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

The learning that students experienced is holistic, as it is characterized by cognitive, evaluative, relational, and emotional dimensions. Students used prior knowledge to cognitively question what they observed. They expressed positive and negative judgments about U.S. and Samburu cultures. They recognized the impact of relationships as they learned from one another and from the Samburu. Growth from travel experiences impacted the way in which students thought about themselves, the rest of the world, and their way of thinking and behaving in the world. Their experiences sparked curiosity and desire for continued intellectual and personal growth.

The processes of personal growth and cognitive questioning, as indicated by the ways students discussed their ideas in a focus group setting, appeared to be comparative and experiential. Student learning demonstrated a process of experiential learning in which both social knowledge and personal knowledge are drawn upon after the concrete experiences of traveling to Kenya, meeting Kenyan people, and understanding some of the circumstances of individual lives. Students noticed and attempted to explain and evaluate differences in cultural orientations, attitudes, and behaviors based on their individual experiences prior to and during travel.

The program to Kenya was both a window and a mirror for each student. Travel to Kenya exposed students to a way of life that was unfamiliar and challenged them to reflect on what they previously assumed to be norms in education and material well-being. Students saw a way of being in the world that they had not been exposed to previously. The process of comprehending the differences resulted in a critical look at one's own culture and experiences. The window that allowed them to gaze into another culture thus became a mirror through which students saw their own lives reflected with new perspectives.

Some students experienced emotional struggles upon return to the United States in processing, explaining, and integrating their experiences into their lives. This is consistent with what Kiely (2004) referred to as a "chameleon complex" and may be an example of the distinction that Braskamp et al. (2009) made between knowledge and knowing (p. 105). Students gained an understanding of a new place that altered *what* and *how* they think about themselves, cultural and structural differences, and their relationship to others who are different from them. Both the outcomes (what they know) and the forms (how they think about what they know) were altered, indicating an increase in their self-perceived knowledge. One challenge was

understanding how to apply that knowledge and ways of thinking to their everyday lives once they were out of the context in which it was learned. The gap between self-perceived increase in knowledge and self-perceived ability to apply that knowledge may have stalled the transformative learning process and resulted in anxiety within some learners.

This study suggests two possible areas for programmatic reform. First, students were limited in their academic knowledge, but curious about issues such as the causes of structural inequality, stereotyping, the processes of community development, and intercultural communication. Students traveling to low-income nations may benefit from information to increase their knowledge of those topics. Conative questioning suggests an increase curiosity of academic subjects after travel that educators could tap into by suggesting relevant courses. Perhaps more importantly, students experienced emotional and cognitive struggles upon their return to the United States as they attempted to make sense of their experiences, suggesting that participants may benefit from more guided follow-up that provides the language to talk about, cope with, and apply the knowledge they gained.

Several research questions follow from these programmatic observations. What best supports students' post-travel challenges? Does it heighten the potential for student learning to shift emphasis from pre-travel preparation to post-travel debriefing to capitalize on the curiosity resulting from exposure to new experiences and lessen the gap between knowledge and knowing? What topics are best addressed before, during, and after travel? More research is needed to determine the varied ways educators may encourage students' higher level analysis of their overseas experiences and the application of their new found knowledge into their daily lives. The students who participated in this study demonstrated that affective, behavioral, and

cognitive forms of learning are not only possible, but transformative during short-term

educational travel abroad.

CHAPTER 4: RETURNING TO KENYA: TWO STUDENTS' STORIES OF TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING DURING SHORT TERM EDUCATIONAL TRAVEL

> I started thinking back on those [experiences] and realized that I couldn't live my life the same way that I had been. Eve Ensler uses this metaphor of dust. . . . You're covered in it and you can't get rid of it. I read that and I was like, "Oh my God, that's Kenya for me." There's physically dust there. . . .You can't stop thinking about it and you can't get rid of it. That's been my Kenya experience. Now that I've been there, I can't not have been there.
>
> *--Emma*[1]

This article examines the experiences of two students who returned to Samburu, Kenya in 2012-2013 after participating in an alternative break program the year prior. The program was organized by the Student Leadership, Involvement and Community Engagement office (SLiCE) at Colorado State University (CSU). The students returned at the same time as the SLiCE group but independent from it, because they had "unfinished business." There were projects that were not completed and people with whom they wanted to reconnect. There was something else to be gained by returning, although neither was able to fully articulate what. After two trips to Kenya, both want to return a third time or more.

What aspects of their first and second sojourns to Samburu motivate a desire to return? More importantly, what can the experience of these students tell us about the potential for student learning on short term, non-credit bearing programs in low-income countries? I seek to answer these questions by examining the stories of each individual in depth. Then by using Mezirow's theory of transformative learning, I will provide a cross-case analysis of the forms of reflection and cognitive reframing that each student engaged in as a result of their experiences.

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[1] All names have been changed.

Background

The number of U.S. students studying abroad continues to increase annually, as does the diversity of students' ethnicities and majors, as well as program location and type (Bhandari & Chow, 2009; Institute of International Education, 2012). Increasingly popular are short-term programs, which now attract nearly six of ten (58.9%) students traveling abroad (Institute of International Education, 2013). Institute of International Education (IIE) only reports credit-bearing programs, thereby excluding alternative breaks and other short-term co-academic programs abroad. At Colorado State University in 2012-2013, 534 students (39% of education abroad participants) traveled without receiving academic credit (Institutional Research, 2013). Of these, 450 students (33% of all education abroad participants) traveled for two weeks or less. The data from CSU suggest that the national number of not-for-credit short term programs abroad is significant. The increasing popularity of these programs highlights the need for research to examine the learning potential of students on study abroad programs.

Empirical research on short-term education abroad has focused on intercultural learning and sensitivity. Findings are contradictory. While some literature shows that a longer duration results in a greater increase in intercultural competence (Dwyer, 2004; Engle & Engle, 2004; Jackson, 2008; Kehl & Morris, 2008; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004; Westrick, 2005), other studies demonstrate that trips of less than eight weeks may result in significant self-perceived changes (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Jackson, 2005, 2006; Kristjánsdóttir, 2009; Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004). The research that assesses learning in areas other than language acquisition and intercultural competence is limited.

Research from the Georgetown Consortium concluded that facilitation may predict the development of intercultural competence better than program length (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

To date, this is one of the most comprehensive examinations undertaken in study abroad research (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). The study took place from 2003-2007 and examined 61 different study abroad programs with 14 independent variables(Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). The sample of 1,297 students included study abroad participants (n = 1,159) and a control group of non-study abroad students (n = 138). The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview were administered before, immediately after, and five months after travel. From their findings, the authors concluded "the presence or absence of a well-trained cultural mentor who meets frequently with students may be the single most important intervention to improve student intercultural learning" (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012, p. 25).

Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou (2012b) edited *Student Learning Abroad: What Students Are Learning, What They're Not, and What We Can Do about It,* which focused on the theoretical foundations of teaching and learning, program design, and intervention strategies in particular cases, and intercultural learning research measured by the IDI. The book is based on the assumption that while cultural immersion is necessary to learning, "most students do not meaningfully develop unless educators intervene more intentionally through well-designed training programs that continue throughout the study abroad experience" (Vande Berg et al., 2012a). The volume provides useful case studies which demonstrate how one might improve intercultural learning as one potential outcome of study abroad. What other types of learning might occur when students travel abroad?

Mezirow's theory of transformative learning can help us to see the development of intercultural competencies in the context of cognitive, affective, and behavioral changes. According to Mezirow (2000), the key goal of adult education for the learner is to become aware of "tacit assumptions." Assumptions may be intentional or incidental to learning and inside or

outside the learners' awareness (Mezirow, 2000). It is necessary, he argues, to question them logically, changing those assumptions that are undefendable, while determining better justifications of those we desire to keep. Cranton (2006) summarizes the traditional definition of transformative learning as "a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and thereby become more open, permeable, and better validated" (p. 87). The process of becoming critically aware and eventually reformulating assumptions is what Mezirow (1991) refers to as "perspective transformation."

Transformative learning theory has been used to examine the experiences of U.S. adults overseas (Coghlan & Gooch, 2011; Lyon, 2002; Taylor, 1994a, 1994b; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011) and to frame the questions *what* and *how* students learn in study abroad (Lalley et al., 2012). Kiely (2002, 2004, 2005) determined that a service-learning program to Nicaragua "profoundly" impacted participants' "world-view in at least one of six dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural" (Kiely, 2004, p. 5). Reflection and its relationship to a disorienting dilemma have been examined (Mälkki, 2012) but the application of these concepts to the individual participants of education abroad is less common. My study attempts to further define transformative learning in an education abroad context through an in-depth qualitative analysis of the experiences of two students on who traveled two times to Kenya. The research question guiding this study is, "How do individual student participants experience and describe their learning before, during, and after travel? In what ways are the explored cases unique or typical?"

Methods

This project is part of a larger ethnographic case study designed in the constructivist paradigm that serves as the basis for dissertation research (Heath & Street, 2008; Lincoln &

Guba, 1985, 1986; Stake, 1995). I came to the subject of this paper somewhat accidently. My original research focus was students' experiences from non-credit bearing alternative break program to Samburu, Kenya during the 2012-2013 academic year. Both Emma and Nathaniel participated in the 2011-2012 program to the same location and decided to return to Kenya on their own at the same time as the official group trip in 2012-2013. While they did not stay with the alternative break group, the program's faculty leader provided advice and support throughout their travels and they interacted at some points with individuals from the group. After spending time in Samburu, the students opted to travel around other parts of Kenya. I had the privilege of traveling with them for four days after the official group trip.

Several months after our return, I interviewed both students. I found there were two main advantages to hearing their stories in depth. First, both were profoundly moved by their first trip to Kenya, enough so to return. Of the approximately 72 students who have participated in this alternative break program since it began in 2006, fewer than 10 have returned, suggesting they are somewhat exceptional. Thus, there is an instrumental value to their cases (Stake, 1995).

Second, both students spoke about their experiences with a sense of analytical distance—an ability to recount thoughts and emotions as well as an evolution of their interpretations of those thoughts and emotions—that I did not observe in the students who traveled for the first time in 2012-2013. There are likely many reasons for this distance. The process of returning to Kenya allowed both students to reflect on their first experience while at the same time deepening certain aspects of that experience. Coincidentally, each student traveled with a romantic partner who experienced Kenya for the first time. By sharing and comparing their individual experiences with someone they felt close to, the students may have deepened their understanding of their own experiences. Most importantly, the time between their first trip and my interview of

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each, 16-22 months, allowed both students to process their first experiences in a way that those who had recently returned could not.

I analyzed the data gained from my interviews with Nathaniel and Emma by first writing individual vignettes, which summarized in narrative form data gathered from their interviews. I then identified themes related to motivation, learning, growth, and behavioral and attitudinal changes that emerged from their stories by combining and comparing the two vignettes. I created broad themes, which allowed large sections of the data to be grouped together and compared. I then retold their stories again individually, using their words whenever possible. The stories are presented here. To develop a cross-case analysis, I recoded the data deductively by looking specifically for instances of reflecting and reframing as described by Mezirow (1998, 2009). Throughout the process I completed analytic and procedural memos to develop connections, themes, and meanings and to record methodological decisions (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2009).

To ensure that my interpretations of their stories were consistent with what the participants thought of their own experience, I provided an early draft of the paper to both students and received comments back from Emma. The final draft takes into account her ideas.

Stories of Two Students

In this section I retell the stories of Emma and Nathaniel to capture their learning experiences cohesively. Then I provide findings from the cross-case analysis and draw implications for further studies.

Emma

Emma describes her family as "very upper-middle-class." She told me, "I don't have some crazy past; it wouldn't make a good book." She started college immediately after

graduating from high school and then took a few years off to work full time. She returned to CSU in fall of 2009 to complete a bachelor's degree in geosciences, but changed her major to Ethnic Studies by the following spring. After graduating in December of 2011, she continued in the Ethnic Studies program at the Master's level. Her first trip to Kenya took place immediately after she completed her undergraduate degree in December 2011 when she was 28 years old. She returned to Kenya in 2012-2013 to complete research for her master's thesis at the age of 29.

She described the alternative break program as "a continuation of a transition for me on the way that I was thinking about things." It was her way to make sense of the personal and structural causes of inequality that she examined in Ethnic Studies courses. Travel to Kenya, in addition to her coursework, "transformed how I was thinking about life in general."

Emma remembers first being attracted to Kenya when she was 10 or 11 years old. In college, she decorated her college dorm room with safari pictures. She didn't know why she wanted to go to Kenya, but recognized from a young age that it would be a "lifelong pursuit." Emma is not clear why it is that she wanted to return to Kenya after her first trip, but decided that Samburu would be the site of her master's thesis research. Originally, she went to look at water access, but as she completed interviews, changed her research focus to the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the community.

Emma has a daughter who was two years old when she went to Kenya for the first time. Leaving her daughter was the hardest part of her travels. She gained the courage to go, because she wanted her daughter to see her living a meaningful life. Her daughter wants to go to Kenya and Emma has promised her she will take her there when she is older.

At the time of writing, Emma thought she may pursue a PhD, but she wasn't sure. She desired to go back to Kenya, but was cognizant of the expense and thought she might wait a few years before doing so.

Comfort zone. Although Emma had long been attracted to Kenya, during her first trip she had a hard time adjusting. "If you had asked me immediately following my first trip I would have been like 'I'm never going back there.'" She felt physically uncomfortable and emotionally unengaged. "It was hotter than the sun. I was stung by a bee. I was miserable." She explained how her discomfort resulted in a feeling of separation from the Samburu, "even when you're there, you tend automatically separate from [the situation]. This isn't my life and I get to leave. Really, I felt I had to overcome that in order to have any kind of connection with the community."

Emma referred to this desire to disconnect as "the Kenya wall," which she defined as "when you're there and then you just reach a point where you're like 'I have to get out of here.'" She explained how her first trip was about fighting that wall.

> I'm not sure I want to be here but I signed up for this and I should be engaged with what I'm doing. I'm being selfish. That's the only thing that's running through my head. Those two weeks were really a fight with myself on selfishness versus trying to be with the community. It was a really big fight.

When she realized that she was outside her comfort zone, she had to process feelings of discomfort and the influence of her emotions on her thoughts and actions. Mälkki (2010) defined being out of one's comfort zone as those instances when learners are unable to interpret meaning in a way that is consistent with currently held perspectives. This echoes Mezirow's assertion that uncomfortable feelings arise when either meaning making is not possible or when one's perspective is challenged (Mälkki, 2010). During her first trip, Emma was initially not able to make sense of the situation around her because it was outside of her understanding of the

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world and it was physically uncomfortable. But this lack of understanding eventually pushed her

to find a way of making sense of the situation.

> It was so far away from anything that I had ever done before. That turned out to be a
> good thing for me. Because looking back, I really started to look at why I felt the way I
> did about the situation. Then I had to start processing that and figure out why I felt that
> way initially. I realized it was because I was so far out of my comfort zone, that it almost
> pushed me over the emotional ledge. I can't do this. I don't know how to do this. Then I
> had to check myself and be like, People live here. This is people's lives. This is a very
> selfish way to be thinking about this situation.

According to Mälkki (2010), the emotions that signal being outside of one's comfort zone

form a "counterforce to reflection" (p. 55). Emotions serve to indicate a lack of consistency with

new information and existing meaning perspectives. How one responds to those emotions

determines if reflection will be avoided (to maintain the current way of thinking) or embraced (to

make sense of new information). By accepting emotions we are better able to think rationally

about new experiences (Mälkki, 2010).

Emma found that connecting her experience to the lives of Samburu people she

encountered was one way of accepting and then seeking to understand her own negative

emotions. What she referred to as "selfishness" is perhaps a desire to disconnect from the

unfamiliar and stay within the physical comfort zone of her home country as well as the

emotional comfort zone of the meaning perspectives that she had created prior to her travel. To

cope she had to leave the situation or begin to make sense of it. She was successful enough at

the latter to stay the full two weeks and make connections with people in the community on the

first visit.

Connecting. Emma made a strong connection with Violet, a 27 year old mother with two

kids, one of whom was close to the age of Emma's daughter. Violet did not speak English. The

two gestured to communicate and began to develop a bond after Emma showed Violet a picture

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of her daughter. They formed a friendship without being able to communicate verbally. Six months after her return to the United States, Emma asked the group leader to give her regards to Violet during his travels in Kenya. He later emailed Emma to say that Violet was well and had not forgotten her. Emma thought Violet's response signified a connection between the two of them, something that was "real."

Emma learned a lot from interacting with Violet and from what she imagined Violet's life to be like.

> There's nothing different between Violet and I other than the fact that I was born here and she was born there. Why then should I have more of that privilege? We're the same age. That was enlightening to me.

By connecting with a woman her age who had a child the same age as her own, she began to realize how their circumstance had resulted in different opportunities and different life paths. This approaches what Flower (2002) calls the "collaborative construction of a distinctive body of meaning—which reflects the diversely situated knowledges and the interpretive logics of others" (p. 194). In other words, transformation occurs when individuals recognize the social, material, and ideological conditions required for an individual to think in a particular way and the consequences of believing in and acting with that construct (Flower 2002). Emma may have begun to recognize how circumstances limit choices, which is perhaps the first step in a deeper understanding of "the interpretive logics of others" (p. 194).

Ethical concerns. Emma thought extensively about the impact of her travels and the CSU program on the Samburu community. She recognized that she and the other students who travel to Samburu have "potentially life-changing" experiences. She demonstrated concern that the program may unintentionally be "taking advantage" of the Samburu people. By her second trip, she actively sought out more information on this topic by specifically asking the women of

Samburu about their perceptions of the program, critically analyzing the activities of the CSU group, and talking to the group leader and other CSU faculty about her observations and concerns.

During our interview, Emma was able to articulate the ethical dilemma of travel to a developing nation from multiple viewpoints and seemed to have come to terms with her own desire to return to Kenya. One desire to return is motivated by a sense of responsibility to the community. "I think that's one reason I need to go back is because I don't want the community feel like [the group leader] is the only one who comes back every year."

Changes in values. Emma explained that her trip to Kenya "was a challenge to my worldview." First, it challenged the way she thought about poverty and Kenya. She was familiar with commercials for charitable organizations that show Kenyan landscapes and children who were poor and thought that she had a sense of what living at subsistence might be like. But she quickly discovered that the experience of witnessing a way of life and interacting with people in person was very different than on television.

Second, the program reinforced a tendency to think about social structures and develop a more critical view of what she called "privilege and access issues." She explained that her travel to Kenya "checked" her perceptions by allowing her to enter the experiences of others. She felt she was more open to understanding the "reality of most people" and noted that she is part of a group that is "extremely privileged" for economic and social reasons.

As a result of these perceptions, she occasionally struggles with guilt. She gave an example of the thought that attending a play was "uppity." In a struggle with herself, she then thought "Why do I feel guilty about going to a play?" She identified one source of guilt as an unawareness of the fact that others don't have the same life choices and advantages she had

growing up in a middle class family. She also realized how she could make use of this privilege in an ethical way: "I figured out if I have this much access to do things like go to Kenya, then I should probably use them to do good things and not just take advantage of the situation." Part of her desire to return to Kenya a second and third time is to continue a process of "checking" her assumptions and privilege. She recognizes that being able to do this is itself a privilege.

Traveling to Kenya changed Emma's behaviors "in little ways and in big ways." She is more conscientious in her use of water, for example, and wasting water has become a pet peeve of hers. Interestingly, the "big ways" seem to have more to do with the way she thinks than the way she acts. When remembering the people and stories from Kenya she realized that she "couldn't live my life in the same way that I had been." She finds it hard to "come back and worry about trivial kinds of things." She found herself reevaluating her priorities and how she spends her time. As the opening quote suggests, her experience in Kenya stayed with her. Before the second trip to Kenya, Emma invited her romantic partner to travel with her "at the last minute." When reflecting on it later she said "I was really glad that we could share that because it is so important to me and has become a pretty big piece of my life and become a pretty big piece of how I view the world. I think it was really important for him to see that. It's in fact [changed] how he behaves too, I think." The two come from different backgrounds and sharing experiences in Kenya that were meaningful to her brought them closer.

Nathaniel

I almost felt as if I had known Nathaniel before I met him. Prior to travel, the students and faculty leader had mentioned his gregarious personality and how well he had connected with the Samburu people. When he arrived in Samburu for the second time, I saw what they meant. He greeted several of the CSU students and Samburu boys with hugs and laughter. He shared a

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particularly emotional embrace with one Samburu student, Jeremiah. This moment prompted a local school teacher to tell me that their affection is what friendship is and their embrace is what friendship should be. I will return to what this friendship with Jeremiah meant to Nathaniel after providing more on his background.

Background and desire to travel. Nathaniel is a first generation college student who was raised primarily by his mother with support from his grandmother. Although most of the adults in his family had not attended college, he knew that they expected him and his brother to attend a university. When he was in high school, Nathaniel's mother passed away and his grandmother became his primary caretaker.

Nathaniel is an Ethnic Studies major and "geeks out" on politics and race relations. He is active in student government and sees leadership, whether it is among university students or United Nations officials, as a form of service to a constituency. As a teenager he benefitted from having adult mentors and volunteered for at least two mentoring programs that work with high school students. He is committed to issues of educational access and the opportunities that education can bring to individuals.

Nathaniel knew he wanted to go to Kenya after a mentor introduced him to the country. "Everyone says 'Africa', but for me, it was always Kenya." During his second year in college, he traveled with a CSU instructor and his residential learning community to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota. This experience prompted him to act on the desire to travel to Kenya. The trip to Pine Ridge helped him to understand what it was like to be in a culture with a polychronic construction of time, a focus on being rather than doing, and an emphasis on relationships, rather than career accomplishments or material acquisitions.

> It was their understanding of family and commitment to each other, arts and culture, and
> wanting to express themselves with more than just going to a nine to five job and really

having an emphasis on the quality of life not being through material [accumulation] rather than your everyday life and the relationships that you hold.

He found himself drawn to places with similar sets of cultural values and he wanted to be the first to apply when he learned from his residential learning peer mentor about CSU's alternative break to Kenya. When he boarded the plane from Denver to Nairobi, it was to embark on his first trip outside of the United States.

The next year, Nathaniel's primary reason to return to Kenya was to reconnect with people he had met there. He felt it was not until the end of the first trip that he began to build relationships and wanted the opportunity to deepen them. But there was another reason, something he was not able to articulate. He told me, "the connections are one part, but there's just something there that I was supposed to see or get or something and I didn't and that's how I felt . . . 'When does it stop? Do I just keep going back until I'm satisfied?'" The final section of Nathaniel's story will return to what else might have drawn him back to Kenya. Next I will describe the relationships he developed and how those impacted his learning.

Relationships. Nathaniel was struck by how welcoming and generous the people of Samburu were and how quickly he felt at home. Describing his first trip, he said:

> We got there and I remember arriving and all the emotion I felt just in Nairobi. When we got to Samburu, the feeling was just undescribable. You are immersed in everything that they have to offer. You share so much when you can't even share anything. You can't speak to each other, but you share so much. [Verbal] communication is not a necessity. It brings tears to my eyes because, the first time I went, I remember I wrote: "I've never felt just at home immediately. . . I've got support around me no matter what happens . . . It is going to be me and the community. I'm not by myself."

Nathaniel developed a particularly strong relationship with Jeremiah, one of the secondary schoolboys who spent a lot of time with the CSU group. Nathaniel remembers them first connecting during group reflections in which Jeremiah would participate. He thought part of their bond formed because they both felt an immense amount of gratitude and love for the single

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mothers who raised them, both of whom suffered from serious illness. He described how his relationship with Jeramiah and others challenged his thinking, "while they were similar, they were so different and it was only because of where we were in the world, but the emotions were exactly the same." He continues, Samburu people "understand it [life] from a different perspective and they can challenge you. He was giving me things to think about that I never thought about my life."

Both Jeremiah and Nathaniel valued family and education above all else, but the way they prioritized each was different. Nathaniel explained that he works hard in school and loves his family. He recognizes that family or school may take precedent at any one time. He thought that for Jeremiah, caring for family and educational achievement were mutually reinforcing and one could not exist without the other. Both remain supremely important at all times. Nathaniel reflected on the way in which Jeremiah talked about his close friends and cousins and how, even if they're going to school in different cities, "they're still together and they can't make it without each other." Nathaniel shared that his cousin goes to school with him and the day of our second interview was the first time they had spoken in two months, "that's what challenges me," maintaining strong family connections in spite of a busy life. When he looked at his life from what he understood to be Jeremiah's point of view, he recognized the extreme importance of relationships and how his action suggested a different set of values.

> A part of me, I think, yearned for some of that. I was yearning for more of that exposure for myself but I was thinking, "Gosh, what an amazing thing it would be if my family was like that as well," and if we had some kind of community-based relationship between my cousins and family friends. It was like a collective approach rather than just the way I felt like my mom who is responsible for me and my brother. In Samburu there's a sense of much more. . . . It was the most beautiful thing but sometimes it's the most painful thing, and it's because we can never have that.

Acting on a new value. Nathaniel had the opportunity to act in a way that reinforced his increased emphasis on family and community. When he returned from his second trip, his grandmother was in the hospital having suffered a stroke. While visiting her, he checked the hospital logbook and found that in his absence very few of his family had gone to visit her. Having just returned from Kenya where the values of family and community struck him as desirable, impressive, and strong, he felt a deep sense of pain at the realization that his family lacked the strength of community he desired. After taking some time to think about his own emotions and attitudes, he convinced his grandmother's sister, who he refers to as his "aunt," to help him organize a family gathering. They checked his grandmother out of the hospital for a day and brought her to a barbecue with all of his extended family. "I remember looking out at the family, and this is the first time that we had ever come together for a barbecue or to hang out without anybody dying or being born for, I got to tell you, years."

Although he does not consider himself "super religious," Nathaniel prays every night for the people he feels closest to as a means of keeping alive his connection to those individuals. After he travels to Kenya he began to prey for some of the people he met there. Through prayer and the focused remembering that takes place during the act of prayer, he is able to strengthen his emotional connection to people who he does not have the ability to be in contact with on a daily basis. His resolve to maintain this type of connection increased after his two trips to Kenya.

Physical resemblance to the community. During his first trip to Kenya, Nathaniel was initially treated differently from the white Americans who traveled with him. He was aware of this difference from the moment he got off the plane when he set eyes on one of the Samburu students, Matthew, who looked as if he could be a brother. Matthew acted embarrassed and had little to say, but clearly expressed a desire to be close to Nathaniel, suggesting that he too felt a

connection because of their similar facial features. Others seemed to think that Nathaniel was a native Kenyan. People in the airport and the taxi driver spoke to him in Swahili, expecting that he would be able to respond. Nathaniel wasn't sure how to make sense of this. At first he said he wanted to be treated like the white CSU students.

When the group got to Samburu, the community greeted him as if he was one of the white Americans. But the children would test his Swahili and Samburu then laughed when he could not respond. Some of the older girls in the village asked him a series of questions about his tribe and heritage. They finally accepted that he was not from Kenya, but were surprised when he could not answer questions about his country or tribe of origin. He explained how slavery had made tracing one's roots close to impossible, an answer the Samburu found hard to comprehend.

The physical resemblance he shared with the Samburu people eventually resulted in a way to further his connections to them. Several of the Samburu women reminded him of his biological family because of how they looked, their culture, and their attitudes. He describes this resemblance:

> She resembles my grandma. I mean to the T. She is loud in-your-face. She'll tell you what she feels. You know what I mean? But she loves you at the same time. You feel welcome. You feel like you have a place, but it's like she's not afraid to smack you. She will do whatever she needs to do. Like, to a T, she is my grandma. Then there's another one, that's my cousin. This is my aunt. . .

The physical resemblance he identified increased his sense of connection to the people of Samburu as well as his interest in a collectivist approach to society.

> That kind of relationship and then also not knowing too much about my family history, knowing that you may have had that family for you to feel free at some point and all of that and they say, "Gosh, I look like twins with somebody's kid." I think it had a different effect on me when I watched them interact together; when I saw kind of that family dynamic . . . that relationship, and it's very community-based. It's very focused around supporting each other. I yearned for that.

During the second trip, he felt he was more cognizant of how physical appearance impacted his interactions. He noticed how he could get around more easily when he was not with other Americans, because the Kenyans assumed that he was one of them. He noticed he got served before white Americans in a shop, purchased goods for lower prices at the bazaar, and was not approached by children looking for presents unless he was with other Americans or was heard speaking English with an American accent.

When he returned to the United States, Nathaniel wore the beaded bracelets and necklaces that were given to him as gifts by his Samburu friends and several people mistook him as Massai, a more recognized tribe in the same language family as the Samburu. Attendants at a local convenience store who are originally from Ethiopia regularly greet him with more familiarity than they did the white customers. A few asked him where he was from and if he speaks Swahili. One offered him a free bag of chips and told him to return to the store if he ever needed anything. Nathaniel called this special treatment "exceptionness" and recognized that because of the way he looked or dressed he could be treated as if he were inside or out of a particular group regardless of his actual sense of belonging to that group. He says these experiences made him "more aware of what your presence does, your physical presence and how that actually plays out."

Nathaniel traveled on the second trip with his partner Anna and doing so enhanced his experience of the trip and brought them closer as a couple. He enjoyed sharing in her enthusiasm for what was now familiar to him and new to her. The two continued to share a sense of gratitude in their own lives after having traveled and remind themselves of this when they argue.

> Even now when Anna and I get into [an argument], all it takes is like "is this really important?" It usually dies because it's not and we both realize that . . . she checks me with that, I checked her with it, and I think it works.

Ethical concerns. Nathaniel benefited from the input of the faculty leader in thinking about his experience in ethical terms. Nathaniel's focus was on his own actions and impact. The faculty member prompted Nathaniel to question when he might stop visiting Samburu, what ending his relationships might look like, and how it might affect both the people of Samburu and Nathaniel himself. Nathaniel explains how he thought about these concerns:

> What is my intent? Am I going because I just want to go? Am I going because I want to teach? Am I going because I want to build another garden? What is the reason I want to go? I needed to go because there's something calling me. . . . Then I was asking myself is it ever going to end? Because if that's my worry, that I'm satisfy myself by going, and that extends to them losing a relationship. Is that the case? It wasn't the case because, it did feel like I would always do something for them and I always will do something to stay in touch with them. I really don't ever see myself not having a connection to Samburu.

He locates his ethical responsibility within the relationships he forms and questions his own motives and actions as they affect others interpersonally. He continues to focus on the ethical responsibility of CSU students to the Samburu people with his work as president of a student organization he co-founded.

CSU for Samburu. In spring of 2013 Nathaniel, Anna, and another student founded a student club called CSU for Samburu as a way for students to stay involved with the community after returning from Kenya. In the fall of 2013 the group was struggling to define their purpose and mission. The leadership group met and asked "what can we do to serve [the Samburu people]?" They wanted to focus on activities that built relationships and required bilateral support rather than unilateral monetary donations.

At the time of writing the group had decided to start a pen pal relationship with students in Samburu, but had not yet figured out the logistics of how it would work. The motivation for Nathaniel was to figure out a way to maintain the connection to and act on the motivation to contribute to the society that had welcomed him, built relationships with him, and provided him

with a new model for how to think about some of life's most important issues. It was essential to him to do it in a way that would be mutually beneficial.

Cross-Case Analysis: What do Emma's and Nathaniel's Stories Share?

In this section I will examine the meaning of Emma's and Nathaniel's experiences and learning. The first section will focus on a summary of their Kenya experiences through a primarily emic perspective—capturing their understandings of their experiences. Then I will examine their stories through an etic, or external theoretical lens, that utilizes Mezirow's transformative learning theory. Their stories suggest that the alternative break program to Kenya resulted in subjective and objective learning (defined below). Relationships with the community played a large role in developing new perspectives and in acting on new understandings.

The Impact of Kenya, an Emic Perspective

A thematic comparison of Emma's and Nathaniel's stories reveals four common elements. First, Kenya was important to both students prior to their travel to the country. Second, both identified a change in thinking and behavior as a result of their travels to Kenya. Third, relationships were central to their learning and the overall impact of their experience. Fourth, the individual identity of each student impacted his/her understanding of the experience. I discuss each of these points below.

Both Nathaniel and Emma created a narrative in which Kenya held special significance prior to travel and continued to do so after their sojourns. Both felt drawn to Kenya before they knew much about the country and mentioned that it was not just Africa, but Kenya that specifically drew them. Both see Kenya as a place they will think about, visit, and act to support for several years to come. Yet neither traveler could fully explain why Kenya held this significance in their lives or precisely why they wanted to return.

While I did not have the opportunity to interview Emma and Nathaniel prior to their first or second visit to Kenya, their retrospective stories suggest they may have been drawn to Kenya because traveling there had the potential of altering the way they think about the world. This is consistent with the 2012-2013 participants who anticipated that their travel to Kenya would in some way change their lives. Nathaniel wanted to travel to a place with polychronic and collectivist orientations that emphasized relationships as a counter to the values he grew up with. Emma said less about her pre-trip motivations but quickly connected her experiences in Kenya to the theories of privilege and social responsibility she was learning in class.

Both students were able to trace a change in thinking and behavior that occurred while in Kenya and a specific way of responding to the changes when they returned to the United States. Nathaniel and his partner collectively used memories of Kenya to recall things they take for granted and to ameliorate quarrels. Emma engaged in continued ethical questioning about her relationship with the Samburu community and extended that questioning to the actions of her day-to-day life.

Relationships were central to these shifts in their perspectives. Emma and Nathanial each felt a sense of connection to the Samburu community in general. They developed meaningful relationships with individuals who shaped their thinking. Perhaps in part because of these relationships, both students thought their own connections to the Samburu community would continue into the future. Nathaniel appeared confident in his assertion that he would always maintain a connection to the region even if the nature of that connection changed over time. The Samburu bracelets and necklaces he wore serve as a physical connection to the people in Kenya (he told me he wore them because they are gifts and a way to remain connected to the people who gave them) and an outward symbol of his changing identity as a result of having traveled

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there. Emma has promised to take her daughter to Kenya when she is old enough, signaling continued interest for herself and the next generation of her family.

The individual identities of each student impacted their ability to interact with the community and what they took away from the interactions. For Nathaniel a physical resemblance to the Samburu shaped his connection to them and interactions with others from Africa after returning to the United States. Emma remembered her experience as a means of understanding her privilege as a White middle class American.

In the next section, I use Mezirow's theory (1991, 1998) of transformative learning to discuss relationships and two forms of learning—reflecting and reframing—as presented in the stories that Nathaniel and Emma shared with me.

Reflection and Reframing

To prepare this section, I engaged in a round of coding in which I looked for instances of reflection and reframing according to Mezirow's classification of objective and subjective reframing (1998). I then made a chart identifying the forms of reflection and reframing that each participant demonstrated. There were multiple instances in which this classification was difficult because one set of actions often involved multiple forms of reflection or reframing. In such cases I attempted to determine the most appropriate label and used only that one. There are cases where participants engaged in partial reframing, or what Mezirow (2000) might call incremental transformation. In such instances, the participants demonstrated that their thoughts had begun to shift, but a new perspective was not yet fully formed.

Below I discuss the ways Nathaniel and Emma engaged in the transformative process. For the purposes of this article, I have assumed that both reflection and reframing are evidence of learning.

Subjective reframing. Subjective reframing is the basis of transformative learning. It "involves critical self-reflection on one's own assumptions" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23). More specifically, subjective reframing is "critical reflection on the psychological or cultural assumptions that are the specific reason for one's conceptual and psychological limitations" (Mezirow, 1998, p. 8). According to Mezirow (1998, 2000) there are multiple types of subjective reframing. The two types of subjective reframing Emma and Nathaniel engaged in are narrative and system reframing.

Subjective reframing of a narrative involves "applying a reflective insight from someone else's narrative to one's own experience" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23). This was the most common type of reframing Emma and Nathaniel demonstrated. Both engaged in multiple instances of narrative reframing as a result of their interactions with Samburu people. Below I provide a salient example of narrative reframing for each participant.

Emma first engaged in reflection after experiencing a disorienting dilemma. When she was out of her comfort zone experiencing what Mälkki (2010) calls "edge emotions" she was forced to question her emotions and perceptions of what was taking place. In keeping with Mälkki (2010), reflection was something prompted by emotional discomfort. Emma had to come to terms with feeling out of her comfort zone and experience a struggle between her "selfish" desire to leave and an equally strong desire to connect to the community. In so doing she began to recognize the basis of her own discomfort. "I really started to look at why I felt the way I did about the situation. Then I had to start processing that and figure out why I felt that way initially . . . Then I had to check myself and be like, 'People live here. This is people's lives.'" By thinking about and imagining the material reality of Samburu people, she began to examine her own assumptions and feelings.

This self-examination continues when Emma created a close connection with a Samburu woman that was transformative. For Emma the process is non-dialogic. The two communicated through the use of gestures and pictures, rather than a shared oral language. Yet her contact with Violet resulted in seeing the world in a new way. This connection helped her to realize how life circumstances provide different options resulting in different choices and life paths. Emma realized her privilege because she met someone who was close to her in age and who had a child at a similar age, but whose life circumstances and opportunities were otherwise drastically different. The difference in their lives is in part due to circumstances outside of their control. After this realization, Emma felt she "couldn't live my life in the same way that I had" and it changed "how I think about everything" and her way of viewing the world.

For Nathaniel a close relationship with Jeremiah prompted him to reflect on his priorities. Over the course of their discussions and the journal writing Nathaniel completed during his travels, he eventually changed his ideas about the nature of familial relationships. Nathaniel's change in priorities came as a result of casual conversation the goal of which was to better relate to and understand another. This is in opposition to a critical point and counterpoint dialog for which Mezirow (2000) advocates. If the motivation for conversation was to learn about and relate to another person, the transformative learning that occurred was not the goal of the dialog but a kind of side effect to it. Nathaniel said, Jeremiah was "giving me things to think about that I never thought about in my life." Later in the middle of specific life circumstances, such as his grandmother's hospitalization, he was able to apply his new priorities.

Other studies have demonstrated that relationship building and resulting conversations are an integral part of transformative learning in various settings (Baumgartner, 2002; Carter, 2002). Research on service learning suggests it is often through authentic interactions that

stereotypes are reduced (Eyler, 1999). The importance of relationships as a source of new ideas and the support needed to integrate new ideas is overlooked in Mezirow's theory (1991, 2000, 2009).

The above paragraphs explain how Emma and Nathaniel engaged in narrative reframing of their observations of other people's lives to examine their own ideas, priorities, and behaviors. For Nathaniel this resulted in a new emphasis on family and community. For Emma the result was continued reflection on her own privilege. For both, the process was relational and incremental, and based in real life experiences.

Memories of relationships with individuals in Kenya provided a catalyst for reflection on the students' own ideas and actions when they returned to the United States. This remembering in an example of what Mezirow (1998) would refer to as objective reframing.

Objective reframing. Objective reframing "involves critical reflection on the assumptions of others encountered in a narrative or in task-oriented problem solving" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 23). In this case the "narrative" is one that is partially told by Samburu people and partially observed and constructed by the students. Objective learning is primarily involved in improving performance and other instrumental learning (Mezirow, 1998). Each student demonstrated a preference for a different form of objective reframing. Emma showed an inclination for ethical questioning while Nathaniel demonstrated a tendency for action reframing, although both demonstrated some instances of each form of reframing.

Emma related what she learned in college to her experience in Kenya and uses that experience to think more deeply about what she learned in classes. She sought advice of others in this analysis. She allowed the experience to change her frame of reference and as a result shifted her actions, thoughts, and behaviors. More specifically, she questioned the assumptions

she held about her privilege in society (narrative), as well as the cultural systems in which we live (systemic), and engaged in moral-ethical decision making. The order of these steps is consistent with Mezirow's theory, which involves a disorienting dilemma, conative reflection, and eventual changes in behaviors.

Nathaniel engaged in action reflection when he thought about how best to act on his desire to place more emphasis on his family and on his relationship with the Samburu people. For example when his grandmother was in the hospital and his family did not visit frequently, he thought about how this might have been handled in Kenya, and how best to act based on differences he identified from on his own perspective as an American and the perspectives of his Kenyan friends.

> I was coming back with this fresh out of Samburu so I'm thinking community is where it's at . . . You need to make sure the core is taken care of . . .

And then,

> I wanted to make sure that when I came into the situation I was going to come into it not with Kenya being my mindset and my view point because we're not in Kenya. I had to stomach that. It took me a while to stomach it and I think it was after sitting back and just thinking about what I went through in Kenya and then looking at pictures and talking about it and debriefing.

After this reflection, he contacted his aunt to organize a barbeque for his grandmother that involved the entire family. He similarly reflected and engaged in dialog with CSU faculty and other students about how to engage the CSU Samburu club that he helped to found. He and his girlfriend collectively engage in action reframing using memories of Samburu when they decide to resolve conflict by thinking of the positive aspects of their lives and relationships. This example reinforces Carter's (2002) findings that memory relationships, which involves recalling the advice of a mentor, may support the transformative process.

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Summary of cross-case findings. Emma and Nathaniel each engaged in multiple forms of reflection and reframing as a result of their travels to Kenya. They learned something about themselves, their values, their place in the world, and the possible reasons for structural inequality. The most common form of reflection found was subjective, narrative reframing in which the students thought about their lives in relationship to the lives of the people they met. Both students reframed their thoughts and changed actions as a result of their experiences and reflections. This reframing continued after their first trip to Kenya and became a new mental habit. Both Emma and Nathaniel described reflection as a result of continued life experiences. Kenya became a construct, or set of ideas and values, through which they could examine their grandmother's illness, attendance at a play, and other events. Reflection and reframing did not occur in Kenya then stop, rather Kenya became a reference by which other life experience could be differently comprehended.

Less common was objective reframing. Both students engaged in ethical questioning about the nature of their own or other's relationships with the community. Both also reflected on their own actions and future actions. There was, however, very little objective reframing of knowledge-based assumptions on subjects such as Samburu culture or structural inequality. This is not surprising given that the program is noncredit bearing and does not include formal learning about the cultural, political, or economic systems of Samburu. Emma was able to connect what she experienced in Kenya to concepts they learned about structural inequality in her Ethnic Studies courses, while Nathaniel made connections to his understanding of racial identity.

Relationships were important for the transformative process for several reasons. First, Nathaniel and Emma shifted their perspectives because of individual relationships each formed while in Kenya. Both used the memory of the individual relationships as a means to continue

reflecting and acting on their experiences after they returned to the United States. Interpersonal relationships were a key reason motivating their desire to return. Relationships were to be a conduit to the transformative process. They sparked curiosity and an examination of priorities that impact the way students acted. Relationships, more than any other aspect of their experiences, provided a source of memories that inspired action and reflection when returning to the U.S. This study suggests that Mezirow (1991, 2009) neglects the importance of communication used in relationship building and overemphasizes "rational," "objective" dialog in transformative learning (Mezirow, 2009, p. 20). Emma and Nathaniel learned from building relationships rather than dialectical discourse.

Conclusion

For Emma and Nathaniel, the alternative break program to Kenya prompted objective and subjective learning as defined by Mezirow's transformative learning theory. The primary form of learning was narrative reframing in which the students began to reflect on and change their understanding of the world based on the lived experiences of others. Authentic relationships with the Samburu people were central to the learning process. Their experiences in Kenya prompted reflection on interpersonal relationships, on their own identity, priorities and actions, and on the lives of others in relationship to systemic and cultural structures. It is noteworthy that both participants sought experiences to increase their exposure to Samburu culture, gain a deeper understanding of the issues of international community development, and reflect on their own privilege as a result of their first trip to Kenya. Their increased and continued curiosity after visiting Kenya for the first time resulted in learning. This learning may have mitigated the risk for misunderstanding that sometimes results from short-term exposure.

The experiences of Emma and Nathaniel suggest that short term programs to low-income nations may result in transformative learning. In particular, authentic interactions with host community members piqued the interest of students in continued reflection and action after their return. Both students reexamined life priorities and changed courses of action as a result of their experiences in Kenya. Yet, each did so by using different cognitive styles and in a way that drew on their identities and backgrounds. Thus, both the processes and the outcomes of their transformative learning experiences were unique. These findings point to the need for students to personalize their experience in short-term faculty-led programs. While students share many group experiences, the way in which they process those experiences and the conclusions they draw may be highly individualized. Further theorizing and research are required to better understand how students' backgrounds, cognitive styles, and countries of destination may impact their learning. As educators, we must build opportunities into programs for students to engage in learning both individually and with others to maximize their learning while on an education abroad program, when they return home from that program, and when they travel abroad again.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the present study including a review of methods used and the conclusions drawn from data presented in chapters two through four. It discusses the implications for action and recommendations for research.

Summary of the Study

As short term programs increase in popularity now making up over one-half (56.6%) of students traveling abroad (Institute of International Education, 2013), it is increasingly important that we understand what types of learning are possible in relation to short term programs. Less commonly studied, but often considered transformative by students, are non-credit bearing programs. Using Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1991) in a constructivist ethnographic case study design, this dissertation provides an empirical examination of student learning in Colorado State University's (CSU) alternative break program to Kenya. Findings are reported in three chapters exploring the processes and forms of the 2012-2013 cohort in chapters 2-3, and the individual stories of two students from the 2011-2012 cohort in chapter 4. Summaries of each chapter are presented after a review of the research design and methods.

Review of Research Design and Methods

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to describe how and what students learned on an alternative break program to Kenya. Utilizing the researcher's, students', group leaders', and host community members' perspectives, this study describes the process and forms of student learning as well as successful pedagogical techniques and program elements on the alternative break program to Kenya. The aim of this research is to provide guidelines for those interested in developing or improving faculty-led, short-term education abroad programs.

Research Questions

The overarching research question is:

1. What aspects of the alternative break program to Kenya support or constrain transformative learning?

Sub-questions guiding the investigation of the overarching research question and the chapters in which they are explored are:

2. What is the process of transformation for students on the alternative break program to Kenya? How do students define and describe their own transformative process? What activities and experiences are most influential in this process? (Chapter two)

3. How do the group leaders, administrators, and host community members support or constrain student learning? (Chapter two)

4. What are the forms of transformative learning that students experience after their participation on this alternative break program? (Chapter three)

5. How do individual student participants experience and describe their learning before, during, and after travel? In what ways are the explored cases unique or typical? (Chapter four)

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to an understanding of the types of learning that take place on and after an alternative break programs. More specifically, it focuses on the processes and forms of learning for students who participated in the alternative break program to Kenya examining student learning, duration, and facilitation abroad. It also contributes to a better understanding of transformative learning on short-term programs abroad. Ultimately, this study provides guide-

lines for practitioners who are interested in participants' learning potential of non-credit bearing, short-term education abroad programs.

Program and Participant Descriptions

The non-credit bearing alternative break program to Kenya took place December 28, 2012 to January 12, 2013 with six preparatory meetings during fall of 2012 and three organized group dinners at the faculty leader's home in spring 2013. There were twelve student participants, ages 19-22. Two students who travelled with the 2011-2012 cohort and returned at the same time as but outside of the formal CSU program in 2012-2013 also participated in the study, as did two group leaders and eight host community members.

Data Collection

I collected the following data for this project: 1) pre-departure interviews with six students; 2) ethnographic observation before, during, and after travel; 3) two focus groups and one interview with students after travel; 4) interviews with the faculty and graduate student leaders; 5) individual and group interviews with eight community members; 6) all students' applications, a group blog, and one student journal; 7) in-depth interviews with two students who traveled on the alternative break program to Kenya in 2011-2012 and returned a year later at the same time as but separate from the 2012-2013 cohort. All data collected orally was recorded and transcribed with permission from participants.

Data Analysis

For Chapters 2 and 3, I looked most closely at the student data collected after travel and completed Initial and Focused coding as described by Charmaz (2006) and Saldaña (2009). From my field notes, I wrote a series of extended descriptions of what I perceive to be key incidences and coded each incidence. I analyzed the group blog,

student journal, three faculty/staff interviews, and field notes by first using Focused codes and then created additional codes as needed. To organize coded data, I filed instances of each code across datasets. Pre-departure data and interviews with host community members were coded and analyzed separately.

The information in Chapter four is the result of in-depth interviews with two students. I analyzed the data gained by first writing individual vignettes, which summarized in narrative form data gathered from their interviews. I then identified themes related to motivation, learning, growth, and behavioral and attitudinal changes that emerged from their stories by combining and comparing the two vignettes. I created broad themes, which allowed large sections of the data to be grouped together and compared. I then retold their stories again individually, using their words whenever possible.

Throughout analysis I completed analytic and procedural memos to develop connections, themes, and meanings and to record methodological decisions (Charmaz, 2006; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2009). All student participants were given the opportunity to comment on an early draft of papers and their comments were taken into account.

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Summary of Findings

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This section summarizes findings reported in chapters two through four and makes comparisons and linkages among the three chapters.

Chapter two attempts to answer research questions two and three: "What is the process of transformation for students on the alternative break program to Kenya? How do students define and describe their own transformative process? What activities and experiences are most influential in this process?" And, "How do the group leaders, administrators, and host

community members support or constrain student learning?" Findings discuss five processes of student transformative learning, namely 1) learning as a journey, 2) experiencing discomfort, 3) reflecting and relating to one another, 4) building relationships with the community, and 5) receiving support from group leaders. The first theme used the language of students who described their travels to Kenya as a "journey of discovery." By actively engaging they took ownership of their learning. Students identified that physical and cultural challenges as well as exposure to people living at subsistence level resulted in discomfort that sparked reflection and growth. Reflective dialog, relating to one another, authentic relationships with the host community, and guidance and support from group leaders supported their learning.

Chapter three examines the outcomes, or forms, of student learning by addressing the following research questions, "What are the forms of transformative learning that students experience after their participation on this alternative break program?" This chapter demonstrated that students experienced both personal growth and cognitive questioning during and after their travels.

One example of personal growth is what students called an "attitude of gratitude" or sense of thankfulness for many things they had previously taken for granted. At the same time they questioned and rejected U.S. materialism. These two attitudes appear to be related. As students became more grateful for opportunities and experiences, they began to reject excessive material accumulation they associated with U.S. consumer practices. Other forms of personal growth included a shift in attitudes including a renewed commitment to education, clarified career choices, and other attitudinal or behavioral changes.

Students' growth was not just attitudinal. They began to question cultural constructs such as collectivism and individualism based on their observations of American and Kenyan cultures,

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demonstrating cognitive growth. Students questioned the locus of power in charity and aid-based development as well as education as a catalyst for economic development and cultural change. This chapter demonstrates that affective, behavioral, and cognitive forms of learning are possible.

Chapter three also discusses the challenges, both emotional and interpersonal, that students faced upon returning home. I assert that additional attention should be given to students after they return home as this phase of travel may illicit discomfort, further processing of emotions, information, and learning. As the terms "reentry" and "reverse culture shock" imply, after students return home is another period of being outside of one's comfort zone that could result in increased learning. Challenges in reentry and a need for reentry programming have been previously documented (Kiely, 2004; Martin & Nakayama, 2010; Rexeisen, 2013). This study adds to those findings.

Chapter three provides guidelines for practitioners, summarized in the Implications for Action section. It argues that the processes of students' learning are as important to our understanding of students' experiences as are learning outcomes and by researching both processes and outcomes that we can create improved pedagogies for education abroad.

Together chapters two and three indicate that students identified forms of personal growth and cognitive questioning as a result of their program to Kenya indicating affective, behavioral, and cognitive forms of learning. Transformative learning involved the following steps: 1) discomfort, 2) using reflective and dialogic means to process that discomfort, 3) making decisions about values, attitudes, and behaviors, and 4) acting on those decisions. Service activities performed in cooperation with the host community, downtime, and informal interactions between American students and Kenyans prompted reflection on cultural values and

different ways of being in the world. Group leaders and other students provided support to this learning.

Students changed their career or academic paths, reemphasized relationships in their lives, and made other behavioral and relational decisions. Because the program emphasized the importance of education most students felt grateful for the opportunities given to them and motivated to increase their efforts in school.

Chapter four examines the stories of Emma and Nathaniel, two students who traveled to Kenya in the 2011-2012 cohort and returned in 2012-2013 at the same time but separate from the CSU alternative break group. This chapter addresses the research question, "How do individual student participants experience and describe their learning before, during, and after travel? In what ways are the explored cases unique or typical?" Their stories are told separately and then compared.

There were many similarities in the experiences of the two students, perhaps providing a framework for research on repeated short-term education abroad. Both students discussed how they were outside of their comfort zone while traveling in Kenya. Both made personal connections with at least one individual and developed a sense of belonging within the community as a whole. Both demonstrated changes in their values and behaviors after they returned to the United States.

Each student changed their values and behaviors as a result of the program in ways that drew upon their interests and personal backgrounds. For Emma, ethical concerns about the relationship between CSU and the host community and the individual's role in replicating structural inequality prompted her to make changes in her lifestyle and consumer patterns. For Nathaniel, the collectivist emphasis on relationships and lack of focus on material wealth in

Samburu led him to re-examine the role of familial relationships and place new emphasis on them.

Nathaniel's physical resemblance to the Samburu people added another area for introspection and growth. After the program, his sensitivity heightened to the impact of an individual's physical appearance within a social setting and he gained a new understanding of his racial identity.

For these two students, the process of understanding their travel to Kenya was similar. Discomfort and authentic connections with the host community resulted in reflection, dialog, and a search for additional information about their experience. Ultimately, this process resulted in changes in patterns of thought and behavior. Both students engaged in various forms of subjective and objective reframing as defined by Mezirow (1991, 1998), and the process of their transformational learning were consistent with many of the steps Mezirow outlines (1991, 2009). The details of this process of change and the forms (or outcomes) of that change were very different for each student and appear to be based on their interests and backgrounds.

Findings from the stories of Emma and Nathanial are similar to those found in the previous two chapters. Together these studies reinforce Mezirow's theory (1991) that a disorienting dilemma, reflection, and dialog are central to the transformative learning process. Emma and Nathanial's stories indicated, as did the larger group study, the importance of relationships with other Americans students, group leaders, and the Kenyan hosts to the transformative learning process. While relationships were not mentioned in Mezirow's model (1991), other scholars have recognized their importance (Baumgartner, 2002; Carter, 2002; Kiely, 2005; Lyon, 2001). This study reinforces the centrality of relationships in the students' transformative process.

The transformative learning process. This ethnographic case study of the alternative

break program to Kenya yielded much fidelity between Mezirow's (2009) steps of

transformative learning and the experience of the alternative break participants. Mezirow (2009)

listed the ten phases of transformative learning as follows:

1. A disorienting dilemma
2. Self-examination
3. A critical assessment of assumptions
4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action
6. Planning a course of action
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan
8. Provisional trying of new roles
9. Building competence and self-confidence
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (p. 19).

In this model, the first four phases outline the recognition and assessment of new ideas. Phases

five through ten demonstrate how the learner integrates new ways of thinking and behaving.

The participants in the 2012-2013 alternative break program to Kenya were able to list

many ways in which they were "out of their comfort zone," a state comparable to a disorienting

dilemma. They also engaged in dialog and reflection that resulted in critical evaluations of their

beliefs and assumptions. All students recognized that the experience abroad had changed them

and helped them to grow as a person.

The students of the 2012-2013 cohort were less likely, however, engage in steps five

through ten of transformative learning, which are required for reintegrating one's new

perspective. I found some evidence that students were exploring new roles, courses of action,

acquiring knowledge or skills or implementing a plan for self-change in changing majors, more

directed career goals, and in one instance a plan to find a new friend groups. Students' also

faced many challenges and some confusion about how to integrate their new understandings

into their daily lives. The short period of time between their education abroad experience and our focus groups (within three months of travel) was not enough to accurately assess students' long-term reintegration.

The in-depth interviews with Emma and Nathanial, held 16-22 months after their first trip to Kenya, suggested that these students engaged in on-going learning and reintegration. Both students demonstrated instances of reflection, reframing, shifting priorities, and changing behaviors to align with their changing priorities. They continued to reflect on and gain new perspectives form coursework and instructors' feedback. They actively sought ways to integrate their learning into their lives. This process of reintegration was one that each took responsibility for and pursued after the official travel program had ended.

A longitudinal study of the 2012-2013 would be needed to determine the processes and frequency of continued learning. While limited in its ability to assess the final stages of transformative learning, this study suggests that additional support may be required and beneficial for some students after travel to increase their abilities to reintegrate new meaning perspectives.

This study suggests Mezirow's theory of transformative learning (1991, 2009) is relevant to students' learning in the alternative break program to Kenya. Students in the program demonstrated disorienting dilemma, reflective discourse, and changes in frames of reference and behavior supporting Mezirow's model (1991, 2009). It demonstrates that in addition to the processes Mezirow outlines (1991, 2009), relationship-building was central to students' transformative learning.

Limitations of the Study

This section explains the impacts of three limitations to the study: 1) a low number of student journals were collected, 2) limitations to the diversity of host community members interviewed, and 3) the lack of information on the long-term impact of the program.

While all twelve student participants in the 2012-2013 travel cohort consented to sharing journal writings, only one provided me with a copy of her journal. I wanted to collect journals in addition to interview and focus group data for two primary reasons. First, while some students are oral processers and enjoy sharing their ideas and observations in conversation with others, other students may prefer processing their ideas individually. Journal writing would allow students with different processing styles an equal voice and therefore be more likely to capture differences in learning and personality styles. The second reason to examine journal writing is to provide a progressive account of the students' learning experiences. Interviews and focus groups completed after travel capture only a retrospective account of the experience.

I informed students early in the process that journal writing was part of the data that would be collected. Several weeks prior to departure, I provided participants with guidelines and questions for journaling that prompted responses before, during, and after travel. I gave them the option of following the questions provided or sharing all or a portion of what they had written. The journal I received did not specifically respond to the provided prompts. There were other students who asked questions about the journaling process and I observed multiple students journaling, but in spite of several reminders they never provided me with any written materials.

If I were to repeat this process I would provide students with clear guidelines at several points throughout travel and provide them with multiple deadlines. I believe these modifications would result in a higher response rate. On credit-bearing programs and in a situation in which

the researcher is the group leader, there are more options for increasing the response rate for written data. Reflection activities can be tailored to both increase student understanding of their experience and provide data for a required assessment. Data collection that is integrated into the assignments for a credit-bearing program is perhaps the ideal means of collecting written reflections from students, as their efforts to contribute to research need not go beyond course requirements. On this non-credit bearing program, the group blog provided some written data. All students provided at least one comment. In addition to the blog, focus groups, interviews, and field notes were ample data sources.

A second limitation to data is the limited sample of host community members. Because the focus of this project was on student learning, time devoted to collecting data from the host community during my short stay was limited. The eight host community members who participated in interviews were selected by convenience. All were recommended by the faculty leader and invested in or personally benefitted from the relationship with CSU. Five of the eight spoke English, and interacted with CSU students from multiple cohorts. As a result the participants are not representative of the community as a whole. While I was able to create multiple themes around the positive impacts of the relationship with CSU, I was unable to gather concerns or areas of improvement from the host community members about their interactions with CSU. It is possible that with a larger sample, I would have had a more balanced account of the positive and negative perspectives of CSU's involvement in the community.

Another limitation of the data collected from host community members it that I was not able to engage in the same level of member checking with this group as I did with students and the faculty leader. The Samburu culture is a primarily oral one and some participants were limited in their ability to understand English. Under these circumstances, member checking

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would have been appropriately conducted in person. Because this was not logistically possible, I did not conduct member checking on data gathered from host community members. The various limitations to the data gathered from host community members resulted in the decision not to publish works focused on the host community.

A third limitation of this study is that all data were collected within a one year period, thus findings do not report the long-term impacts of the program. Interviews and focus groups with the 2012-2013 cohort were conducted approximately three months after travel. This limitation was partially mitigated by including the interviews with Emma and Nathaniel, who traveled with the 2011-2012 cohort. Interviews with Emma and Nathaniel were conducted 16-22 months after their first trip to Kenya. To truly understand the impact of short-term faculty led programs and the transformative learning that may occur, longitudinal studies should include contact with participants at multiple points in time to measure immediate, mid-term (one to three years later), and long-term (five to ten years later) impacts, as the processes and forms of thinking are likely to change with time.

Recommendations for Research

In this section I discuss the need for empirical studies in four areas. Based on the current project, I suggest research be developed on 1) the impact of education abroad on host communities, 2) how the nature of institutional partnerships between universities and host communities impacts students' learning, 3) long-term impacts of education abroad on students, and 4) focus on global responsibility and intercultural learning.

There is limited research on the impacts of short term travel on host communities. How does CSU's involvement in Samburu impact cultural change in the community? How is that change the same or different as programs to other low-income communities? To answer this

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question researchers must engage in long-term observations with interviews and focus groups with multiple members of the community, including those who are directly involved with as well as those who do not interact with the partner institution's faculty and students. Additional research in Samburu as well as other communities in low-income nations would increase awareness of unforeseen impacts and the ability of universities and others to respond ethically to host community partners with limited resources.

More research needs to be done to understand the how relationship between universities and their host community partners in low-income countries impacts students' learning. Morton (1995) theorizes the nature of the partnership between donor and recipient influences the paradigm of service that students develop. He distinguishes between three paradigms of service, namely charity, project, or social change. More empirical research is needed to better understand how different partnership models impact student learning.

There are a limited number of studies that examine the longitudinal impacts of service learning or international travel on participants. Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011) demonstrated that what students do in the year following an international travel experience influenced the impact the original program had on their attitudes later in life. More studies are needed to confirm these findings and create a nuanced set of recommendations to group leaders to guide post travel facilitation.

Finally, this research suggests that a shift of focus is required within the field of study abroad. The focus of both practitioners and researchers has been on how best to facilitate intercultural sensitivity (Hoff, 2008; Kiely, 2010). Historical circumstances surrounding the growth of the field made intercultural sensitivity a safe subject while issues of social justice, economic, or political concerns were risky, thus resulting in a "theory deficit in international

education" (Skelly, 2013, p. 1). As study abroad to nontraditional destinations increases, including travel to many low-income nations, our responsibility as practitioners and researchers must shift. This study suggests that measures of intercultural sensitivity do not capture the whole of student learning. Additional exploratory studies are needed to increase our understanding of what students learn in high- and low-income countries and how they reintegrate after returning home. International service learning, transformative learning, and global citizenship are various theoretical perspectives that study abroad researchers have and should continue to use to refine learning outcomes and research questions. Expanding the theoretical perspectives that we use to frame study abroad research may ultimately lead to the development of new inventories and research on how best to understand and facilitate student learning.

Implications for Action

In this section, I will discuss implications for action by providing recommendations for 1) educators including group leaders or administrators working with group leaders, 2) student participants on short-term educational travel programs, and 3) host community members. Group leaders and university administrators may be interested in reading each section to better advise students and to create meaningful partnerships.

Findings from chapter two resulted in suggestions for educators to engage in the following practices. Those recommendations are as follows:

1. Challenge students to engage in individual exploration, project development, and selection of activities

2. Support students in negotiating challenging culture interactions, exploring difficult emotions, and reflecting upon their experiences

3. Encourage dialogue and reflection before, during, and after travel

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4. Provide opportunities for community engagement and the development of authentic relationships

5. Remind students that the experience and learning may sometimes result in discomfort

6. Create and maintain partnerships that model appropriate community development practices

7. Be aware that students learn from the modeled behaviors of group leaders. Faculty should be conscious about modeling fair development practices, open communication, and positive group interactions.

In addition to these guidelines, chapter three reminds us of the cognitive and emotional challenges that students face after returning home. Thus I would encourage facilitators of short term trips to think about how to mitigate reentry shock and encourage continued processing and additional experiential and academic learning in the issue areas presented on a short term program. It is helpful to consider that student learning may continue to take place long after the official program is over.

While it is common practice to engage students in pre-departure preparation, reentry debriefing is equally if not more important and is worthy of attention among administrators and faculty who work with short term programming.

For students. The following tips are recommended for students who are interested in participating in short-term group travel to low-income nations.

1. Before selecting a program to a low-income nation, ask questions of organizers about what type of partnership they have with the community. Look for programs in which

students and community members work together on projects that the host communities select.

2. Actively engage in your learning by attempting to acquire and use the language of the host community. Reflect and talk about your experiences in ways that are meaningful to you.

3. Engage in cooperative activities and form relationships with host community members. Much of your learning and growth will take place from these experiences.

4. Continue your learning after you return home through focused coursework, independent reading, and additional service or experiential activities. Recognize that you may need time to adjust to returning home. Not everyone around you will understand the impact of your experience. Seek the company of those who support your continued learning.

For host community members. The following tips are recommended for communities who host short-term travelers from universities or other service organizations. These are useful for universities to consider when developing partnerships with communities in low-income nations.

1. Engage in partnerships by clearly expressing needs and participating in the service programs that your community and your partner collaboratively decide to complete.

2. Interact and build relationships with visitors to your community.

3. Think about hosting visitors as a mutual learning experience in which your community can offer and learn something. Expect your partner to do the same.

4. Work with your partner to increase the ability to make collective decisions within your community and to increase capacity for group decision making. Regard your partner as a supporter of the changes that your community envisions.

5. Make your partner aware of behaviors your community likes to see in volunteers, so that they can encourage those behaviors in their delegations.

Summary

This chapter has summarized the research design and methods for the study as a whole and research findings as presented in three journal articles. Limitations of the study including data collection and sampling concerns were explored as well as suggestions for improving future studies. Further research included recommendations for longitudinal studies, increased focus on host community impacts, and a shift in focus among researchers and practitioners from a narrow focus on intercultural learning outcomes to a broader set of goals surrounding global responsibility. Implications for action included tips for short term education abroad leaders, students, and host community members.

This study suggests that short-term travel to low-income nations is one way to encourage undergraduate students' global learning. It is the role of educators in an increasingly interdependent world to engage students in the life-long acquisition of skills, knowledge, attitudes, and responsibilities that allow them to cooperatively build a secure and prosperous future for all. Are we ready to accept that challenge?

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Notice of Approval for Human Research

DATE:	October 19, 2012
TO:	Makela, Carole, Education

Robinson, Dan, Education, Gardenier, Karen, Education

FROM:	Barker, Janell, Coordinator, CSU IRB 2
PROTOCOL TITLE:	Students' Transformational Learning: An Ethnographic Case Study of an

Alternative Break Program to Kenya

FUNDING SOURCE:	NONE	
PROTOCOL NUMBER:	12-3405H	
APPROVAL PERIOD:	Approval Date: October 19, 2012	Expiration Date: October

16, 2013

The CSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the protection of human subjects has reviewed the protocol entitled: Students' Transformational Learning: An Ethnographic Case Study of an Alternative Break Program to Kenya. The project has been approved for the procedures and subjects described in the protocol. This protocol must be reviewed for renewal on a yearly basis for as long as the research remains active. Should the protocol not be renewed before expiration, all activities must cease until the protocol has been re-reviewed.

If approval did not accompany a proposal when it was submitted to a sponsor, it is the PI's responsibility to provide the sponsor with the approval notice.

This approval is issued under Colorado State University's Federal Wide Assurance 00000647 with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP). If you have any questions regarding your obligations under CSU's Assurance, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Please direct any questions about the IRB's actions on this project to:

Janell Barker, Senior IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1655 Janell.Barker@Colostate.edu
Evelyn Swiss, IRB Coordinator - (970) 491-1381 Evelyn.Swiss@Colostate.edu

Barker, Janell

Janell Barker

Barker, Janell

Approval is to recruit up to 7 alternative break faculty/staff; 20 students, and 10 community participants with the approved recruitment and consent material. FACULTY/STAFF/STUDENTS: The above-referenced project was approved by the Institutional Review Board with the condition that the approved consent form is signed by the subjects and each subject is given a copy of the form. NO changes may be made to this document without first obtaining the approval of the IRB. COMMUNITY MEMBERS: Because of the nature of this research, it will not be necessary to obtain a signed consent form. However, all subjects must be consented using the approved verbal script. The requirement of documentation of a consent form is waived under § _ _.117(c)(2). NOTE: Upon receipt, please submit an amendment to include a scanned file of the signed agreement from Jen Johnson to release the SLiCE applications.

Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Students)

Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: A Case Study of Transformative Learning on Colorado State University's Alternative Break program to Kenya

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Carole Makela, Ph.D., Carole.Makela@colostate.edu, (970) 491-5141

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Karen Gardenier, Ph.D. Candidate, School of Education, (970) 491-0737

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? This study examines the alternative break program to Kenya to help explain what and how students learn. We are requesting consent from each participant in the program.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? Karen Gardenier will be conducting this study with the support of her doctoral dissertation committee, including Dr. Carole Makela, Dr. Louise Jennings, Dr. Eric Aoki, and Dr. Brett Bruyere.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose is to determine what students learn or gain from participating on an alternative break program. Findings may contribute to improving the alternative break and education abroad programs here at CSU and at other institutions.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? You will be invited to participate in a number of research activities on CSU campus and in Kenya (these activities are listed below). Your personal time commitment will depend on your

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level of involvement, and may require anywhere from 0-6 hours beyond what you are already

doing as part of the alternative break program.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? The research activities are divided into two groups.

Group I lists those activities that require no additional effort or time on your part. Group II are

activities that I invite you to participate in that take place outside of the official alternative break

program.

Group I: The following research activities will not require any time or effort on your part

outside of what you have already committed to as a participant in the alternative break program.

1) Direct observation: I (Karen Gardenier) will be a participant on the Kenya program with you.

This means that I will attend orientation meetings with the group during fall 2012 and travel with

the group to Kenya. I will take notes as a means of collecting data from direct observation

during this time.

2) Application materials: I request permission to read, refer to, or quote the applications that

you submitted to the SLiCE office to better understand motivations and backgrounds of the

students participating in this program.

3) Group blog: During past alternative break programs to Kenya, one student has maintained a

blog of group activities that families and friends can access while participants are away. I

request permission to read and possibly refer to or quote material written in the blog.

Group II: I would like to invite you to participate in the following research activities that will

take place outside of official alternative break group activities.

1) Focus groups: During spring of 2013, I will hold two group meetings (focus groups) to share

my observations. The purpose of the focus groups is to see if what I have observed is consistent

with your experiences. The focus groups will be a chance to get together to reflect and talk about your experiences.

*2) In-depth interviews***:** Students who choose to participate in interviews can expect to spend approximately 3 hours in interviews. This includes 1 interview before and 1 interview after the trip to Kenya (1-hour each), and 1-3 interviews that would take place during the trip (15 mins to 1-hour depending on the schedule of the trip).

3) Journals: I will provide suggested journal topics that are designed to help you prepare for your trip to Kenya, think about your experiences while you are there, and process those experiences when you return. You may choose topics that are of interest to you and provide me with 3-5 journal entries. These may be handwritten or typed. I will make copies of handwritten materials and return the originals to you.

If at any point you are not interested in taking part in an interview, focus group, or journal exercise you will not be required to do so. Similarly, if there are specific questions in an interview, focus group, or journal exercise you do not want to answer, you will not be required to do so.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? The researchers have no reason to exclude anyone who participates on the alternative break program to Kenya from participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks to participating in this study. This being said, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? While there may be no direct benefit to you, in other studies that utilize interviews, journals, and focus group, some participants find that they learn about themselves and think more deeply about their experiences.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the option of skipping specific interview questions, focus group questions, or journal exercises if you so choose.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information may be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers and practitioners, we may write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We will publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. We will use pseudonyms in publications.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information or what that information is. For example, your name will be kept separate from your research records and participant names and records will be stored in different places under lock and key.

You should know, however, that there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. For example, the law may require us to show your

information to a court OR *to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.*

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Karen Gardenier at (970) 491-0737 or Karen.Gardenier@colosate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655.

We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on (Approval Date).

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Please initial on the line next to all aspects of the study that you are willing to participate in.

Your name WILL NOT be used in publications.

Please initial if you consent to:

_____ Participating in **direct observation** for this study (Karen Gardenier will accompany the

group in meetings and in Kenya to observe and take notes on what takes place)

_____ Allow researcher access to your alternative break **application materials** submitted to the

SLiCE office

_____ Allow researcher access to the **group blog**

Your initials acknowledge that you are willing to participate in:

_____ Group meeting/**focus group** during spring 2013, which will be recorded for accuracy

_____ **Interviews** that will be recorded for accuracy

_____ Sharing **journal** writings, which will be returned

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this

consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a

copy of this document containing ____ pages.

_____   _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____

Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____

Signature of Research Staff

Consent to Participate in a Research Study (Faculty/Staff)

Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Students' Transformative Learning: An Ethnographic Case Study of Colorado State University's Alternative Break program to Kenya

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Carole Makela, Ph.D., Carole.Makela@colostate.edu, (970) 491-5141

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Karen Gardenier, Ph.D. Candidate, School of Education, (970) 491-0737

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? This study examines the alternative break program to Kenya to help explain what and how students learn. We are requesting consent from you as a faculty or staff member who may contribute to our understanding of student learning on the program.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? Karen Gardenier will be conducting this study with the support of her doctoral dissertation committee, including Dr. Carole Makela, Dr. Louise Jennings, Dr. Eric Aoki, and Dr. Brett Bruyere.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose is to determine what students learn or gain from participating on an alternative break program and how group leaders can better facilitate student learning. Findings may contribute to improving the alternative break and education abroad programs here at CSU and at other institutions.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? This study will last the duration of the Kenya alternative break program. This includes orientation during fall 2012, travel to Kenya from December 28, 2012-Jan 2, 2013, and follow-

up during spring 2013. Your participation in the research will require no more than 1-2 hours of your time.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

I will be conducting direct observation during the pre-departure meetings in fall 2012, travel to Kenya over winter break, as well as group activities that might take place during spring 2013. I will observe and taking notes on the activities of the students and participating faculty and staff at this time.

I request your feedback, through interview(s), on teaching and learning strategies, student learning outcomes, and other subjects related to the alternative break program to Kenya.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? The researchers have no reason to exclude anyone who participates on the alternative break program to Kenya from participating in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no known risks to participating in this study. This being said, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. This study may benefit CSU and other institutions in creating more meaningful education abroad experiences.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the option of skipping specific interview questions if you so choose.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE? We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information may be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers and practitioners, we may write about the combined information we have gathered. We will publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. We will use pseudonyms in publications if you indicate below that this would be your preference. *It may not be possible, even if pseudonyms are used, to maintain anonymity of faculty and staff participants as university positions and names are easily accessible on the internet.*

You should know that the law may require us to show your information to a court OR *to tell authorities if we believe you have abused a child, or you pose a danger to yourself or someone else.*

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the investigator, Karen Gardenier at (970) 491-0737 or Karen.Gardenier@colosate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 970-491-1655. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take with you.

This consent form was approved by the CSU Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects in research on (Approval Date).

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Please initial next to all statements to which you consent:

_____ I am willing to participate in direct observation for this study during pre-departure

orientation meetings, travel to Kenya and/or other alternative break activities that I attend

(if relevant)

_____ I am willing to participate in interview(s) that will be recorded for accuracy

_____ I grant permission for you to use my job title in publications

Select one:

_____ I prefer that you to use a pseudonym in publications

_____ I prefer that you to use my name in publications

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this

consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a

copy of this document containing ___ pages.

_____ _____

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____

Name of person providing information to participant   Date

_____

Signature of Research Staff

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
Colorado State University

I am a graduate student at Colorado State University (CSU). I am doing research on what students learn when they travel to Kenya. The title of the study is "Transformative Learning on CSU's Alternative Break program to Kenya." I value what the community members have to say about their experiences hosting students from CSU. I would like to ask you to be a part of this study.

I am doing this study with the support of faculty members from CSU, including: Dr. Carole Makela, Dr. Louise Jennings, Dr. Eric Aoki, and Dr. Brett Bruyere.

As part of this study I would like to ask you questions about your experience and observations working with CSU students. The purpose of these questions is to help CSU and other schools understand the experience and concerns of students and community members.

There are no known risks to participating in this study. This being said, it is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this study. The study will help us to better understand what is needed in your community and how we can work together as partners.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty.

We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private. We will not use your name in publications.

Please ask me any questions that you have about this study. If you have questions about the study, later, you can contact the investigator, Karen Gardenier at 000-1-970-491-0737 or Karen.Gardenier@colosate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at 000-1-970-491-1655.

If you would like, I will give you a copy of what I have just said to take with you.

Are you willing to participate in this study?
I would like to use a recorder for accuracy. Are you willing to be recorded while we talk?

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

I.   Interview Questions for Students

Prior to travel to Kenya

- Why are you interested in participating in the alternative break program to Kenya?

- You probably have a number of different expectations about the trip, the program, and your own personal experience. Please share with me any of the expectations you have as you prepare for this journey?
  - Follow-up questions may include: What emotions are you experiencing? What do you look forward to? What do you think will be the biggest challenges?

- Could you describe a time when you have interacted with people who are different from you?
  - Follow up questions may include: What did you do in this situation? What do you feel about this experience? What do think about this experience? What is your opinion of what happened? How do you judge this experience now? What did you learn from the experience?

- Please tell me about your previous travel experience both inside and outside of the United States.

- Is there anything else that you would like to share about your background or expectations for participation in this program?

During or after travel

- Could you describe in as much detail as possible a situation in which learning occurred for you while participating in this program?

- Do you remember an occasion when your personal views or beliefs were challenged?
  - Follow up questions may include: What did you do in this situation? What do you feel about this experience? What do think about this experience? What is your opinion of what happened? How do you judge this experience now? What did you learn from the experience?

- How did your relationships with a host community affect your experience?

- How did the group interactions affect the way in which you experienced travel to Kenya?

- How did the group leaders change your views or help you to learn something new?

- How did your experiences in Kenya meet or contradict with your expectations for travel? Did anything occur that was unexpected or surprising? If so, what was the situation and how did you respond to it?

- In what ways might your experiences in Kenya affect your motivations or behaviors in the United States? What do you plan to "take home" from this experience?

- What else would you like to share with me about your experience?

II.   Interview Questions for Faculty, Staff, and Administrators

- What is the purpose of the alternative break program for students?

- What are your learning goals for the students on this program?

- What do you observe of the students? Are there differences—positive, neutral, or negative—between your goals and expectations and what you observe in terms of student participation or learning?

- Many people believe that international travel can be transformative. In the field of education transformative learning is defined as learning that changes perspectives, or causes paradigm shifts, so that individuals are more discriminating, reflective, and inclusive in their assumptions, beliefs, and values (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2009). Could you think of an example or story of a student on previous trips that demonstrated transformative learning?

- Could you think of an example of a student who resisted transformation? Please explain.

- What role do host community members play in student learning? In your opinion, what is most important in creating effective partnerships in the community?

- What role does the group play in facilitating or constraining individual student learning? How do you work with the group as a whole to create meaningful experiences for individuals?

- What else do you think I should know about this program as I move forward with my research?

III.   Interview Questions for Host Country Community Members:

- How was this community different before CSU started to visit you? What has changed since they started to come?

- Many of the students come to Kenya because they want to learn more about the Samburu way of life. What do you most want them to learn about Samburu?

- Could you tell me about a time when a student demonstrated to you that they learned a lot about you or your way of life?

- Could you tell me about a time when you or someone you know learned something valuable from a CSU student?

- When the children in your community become adults, what do you hope the community will be like? How might it be different or the same as is now? How do CSU students and professors contribute to this future?

- What else would you like to share about your community or the visits from CSU?

Appendix F: Question Route for Focus Groups

(2 groups of approximately 6 people each; scheduled for 2 hours)

Introduction: All students know me and each other, so there is no need for formal introductions.

Purpose: The first purpose is to talk about the 2 weeks we spent in Samburu to find out what

your experience was, what you learned, and what was most influential in that learning. The

second purpose is to check to see if what I have observed is in line with what you have

experienced.

Creating a conversational environment: I want this to be a conversation. Feel free to talk to and

respond to each other, rather than to me. If something someone says something that resonates

with you feel free to say so and expand on a point already made. If you disagree with someone,

feel free to explain how your experience was different. If something that someone else says

seems interesting to you, you can ask them to further explain or expand. Think of this as a

conversation.

Opening	1. What were you most excited to do when you came home?
	2. What do you miss most about Samburu?
Introductory/ Transition	3. When you talk about this program with others, what do you most want to usually share?
	4. What you wish you could explain, but sometimes cannot?
Key Questions	5. How many of you would say that you grew as a person as a result of this program (show of hands)?
	6. In what ways have you grown?
	7. What was most influential in this growth?

	(Categories for follow up prompts: How did the a) meetings before we left, b) reflection activities, c) informal conversations around the fire, d) the service activities, e) the relationships you made with Samburu people, f) your other group mates, or g) the interactions with the group leaders affect your learning?
	8. Think back to a moment during our trip when your thoughts on something were challenged. Explain what happened and how your thoughts may have changed.
	(Follow up prompts: How did your thoughts change about people, Kenya, the United States, yourself or others, poverty, race or ethnicity, other perceptions?
	9. In what ways has this program changed your behaviors?
	10. How did what you experience in Kenya differ from your expectations before you left?
	11. Hand out iceberg model of culture. Please take a look at this drawing. As you will see there are many aspects of culture listed. Take a few moments to circle those aspects of culture that you noticed while you were in Samburu. After you are done we will discuss.

Discussion on what people observed or didn't observe about the Samburu culture. Use the discussion to explain model: This is a picture of many aspects of culture. Those things above the iceberg are what we see, those things below it are the aspects of culture that affect |

	our interaction but things we are not always aware of. In this group, we noticed . . .
Ending Questions	12. If you were advising a faculty member on how to lead a short-term program like this one, what would you tell him or her to do to encourage student learning-before, during, after?
	13. When I write up my research, I want to be able to portray the depth of the experience that you all had. I also what to understand what makes this experience meaningful. What haven't we talked about? Or what did I miss?
	14. Discussion on how to keep the experience alive for individuals and the group: brainstorm resources for involvement. [Samburu youth education foundation, English language partners, cultural mentor, connecting with friends in Samburu and in the US, venues from writing, such as blogs, Glimpse: your stories from abroad, etc.]

Appendix G: Questions for Journaling and Personal Reflection

1. **Pre-departure:** Before you travel, think about any expectations you have about yourself, the group, and the host community. You may choose to explore 2-3 of the following topics, or come up with something that is meaningful to you:

   • What do you hope to gain, accomplish, or learn in Kenya (you may choose to think about this in general terms or in relation to specific activities planned)?

   • What do you think your impact (and the impact of the group as a whole) might be on the host community?

   • What might be the impact of this experience on you?

   • Reflect on what you know about the culture, history, and language of Samburu and what you expect the community is like. How might differences in personal background impact your interactions with the people in Samburu?

   • Think about issues facing the community of Samburu and their relationship to larger global issues.

2. **Experience in the field:** While in Kenya, please reflect on experiences, events, stories, or concerns that are meaningful to you. You might think about 2-3 of the following topics:

   • Your personal growth (changes in knowledge, skills, understanding of self, understanding of others, etc.)

   • Your interactions/relationships with members of the community or other CSU students and faculty

   • Your perception of the impact of your actions on the community

   • Specific activities such as service, group reflection, or other events

   • How your experience in Kenya is different from or the same as what you expected

   After you have selected a topic, you might consider guiding your reflection on one of the above listed topics by considering the following questions:

   • What happened?

   • What surprises were there?

- How did I feel about what was happening? What changes did I feel in my body (i.e., "I felt scared and my breath became shallow" or "I felt so excited that I started speaking quickly")?

- What did I think about the situation/event? Describe those aspects of the event that are positive, negative or hard to evaluate. Have my thoughts about the event changed now that I am away from it?

- How have I changed from this experience? What have I learned? What may I take away?

- How does this change my way of looking at the world? How is it changing my ideas about myself, my country, other people, my understanding of local and global issues? How might it change my behavior?

3. **Reflection on how your experience has changed your life after returning home**:

   After returning home from the alternative break program to Kenya take time to reflect on the experience and how it may have impacted you. Some questions to explore are:

   - In what ways has your participation on an alternative break program resulted in a lasting impact since returning?

   - Explain how you are adjusting to being back in the United States.

   - How is what you are now experiencing similar or different from what you expected before you left?

Questions 1-2 adapted from Kiely (2002); question 3 influenced by Younis and Yates (1997).

Alternative Break 2012-13
Kenya Trip Application
Applications due no later than: March 30, 2012 by 5pm to SLICE Office in LSC.
NO EXCEPTIONS.

Name:_____Phone:_____

E-mail:_____

The mission of the Alternative Break program at Colorado State University is to nurture active citizens that think about and seek solutions to societal problems and continue to contribute to their respective communities as a lifelong process. The Alternative Break program is an immersion experience into different cultural, environmental and socioeconomic communities across the nation. Students provide service in exchange for education about current social and cultural issues facing the host communities.

Note: This application is specifically for the Kenya trip that will take place December 28, 2012 – January 12, 2013.

The Kenya Alternative Winter break provides a unique opportunity for students to participate in service-learning while immersing students in local culture. Students will work with numerous organizations: the Umoja village, a local women's village; Gir Gir & Muslim Primary Schools, both K-8 local schools; the Samburu Youth Education Fund, a US-based non-profit that works to improve educational access for Samburu youth; and Save the Elephants, a non-profit wildlife research organization.

Umoja (pronounced oo-moe-juh; Swahili for "we are one") and Unity Women's Villages
These two village of 12-15 women each comprise women who left their homes following violence, abuse, early pregnancy or a similar circumstance. The women operate as a co-op, producing beaded necklaces and bracelets primarily for purchase by tourists. Service will be a variety of projects, including coordination of a girls' conservation club and various village projects.

Gir Gir Primary and Muslim Primary Schools
Gir Gir and Muslim are two primary schools in the community of Archer's Post in Samburu. Gir Gir is the largest school with more than 900 students, and both schools are traditionally under-resourced in terms of teachers, supplies and materials. Participants' primary experience will likely include teaching students and leading them on field trips to nearby protected areas.

Save the Elephants
A conservation-based NGO that studies the habitat and conservation of the African Elephant, STE also monitors the behavior and movements of all mammals in Samburu National Reserve. Our work with STE will be in conducting wildlife counts using STE's established methodology.

Samburu Youth Education Fund
SYEF focuses its efforts on improving access to secondary school for Samburu youth. With tuition and room/board costs for secondary school starting around $450+ annually, it is difficult for youth from impoverished parts of the country to enroll. We will assist SYEF by convening its youth recipients to check in about their school progress, celebrate their successes and gathering stories for SYEF to use in its future fundraising. In addition, Alt Break – Kenya students will be responsible for coordinating one SYEF fundraising event after the trip in Spring, 2013.

1. Why are you interested in the Alternative Break trip to Kenya?
2. When you are part of a group that is coming together for the first time, what role do you usually take?
3. Please describe any recent (within past three years) experiences in being an active member of your community.
4. What goals do you have for yourself that this trip might help you work toward?
5. How did you hear about Alternative Break? Please identify all previous AB trips or similar experiences.

Trip expenses

Group Expenses (paid to SLICE)

Airfare (estimate as of March 2012)	$1800 (estimate)
Food & Lodging	$395
Transportation (vehicle rentals, drivers, fuel)	$350
Local services and facility use fees	$110
Staffing	$180
Conservancy / National Reserve fees	$140
Total	**$ 2,975**

Individual Costs (not paid to SLICE; these costs will vary from student to student)

Immunizations	$200-300 (varies)
Entry Visa	$50
Other meals (en route & in Nairobi)	$75 (estimate)
Passport	$125
Travel insurance (required by CSU)	$25
Personal souvenirs, snacks, etc.	varies

Kenya Payment Schedule

May 4th
- $500 Program Fee Due (cash/check to CSU); checks will not be deposited until July 1, 2012

August 31st
- $1400 Program Fee Due (cash/check to CSU)

October 4th
- Balance Due. Amount TBD based on flight costs (cash/check to CSU)

Please initial next to **each of the following** statements to acknowledge your understanding.

_____ By initialing here, I agree to the above payment schedule.

_____ AB trips require a program fee which is used to support both trip expenses as well as the general Alternative Break program.

_____ I understand that all of my deposits are **non-refundable**. I understand that my first payment of $500 is due on May 4th, my second payment is due on August 31st, and my third payment is due on October 4th.

_____ For your safety, we ask that all participants be covered by health insurance or purchase a temporary insurance plan. By initialing here I confirm that I have health insurance coverage or intend

to purchase temporary insurance. Policy information will be collected prior to trip departure and kept on file for emergencies. If you need help finding health insurance, please contact the SLICE office for more information.

_____ Trip participants are responsible for managing their own fundraising activities and efforts. The SLICE office can serve as a fundraising resource, however fundraisers for AB trips are individual and group initiatives. Fundraisers are not formally sponsored CSU or SLICE events.

_____ Attendance at ALL of the following meetings/events is mandatory. **Please initial each date below** to confirm that you have read and understood the meeting times. If you are unable to attend one of the times listed, please indicate below.

FALL SEMESTER	SPRING SEMESTER
_____ Monday, October 22 5-6:30pm – Group Meeting	_____ December 28, 2012 – January 12, 2013 Alternative Winter Break!!!
_____ Monday, October 29 5-6:30pm – Group Meeting	_____ Dates/Time TBA End of Year Slideshow and Reception!
_____ Monday, November 5 5-6:30pm – Group Meeting	
_____ Monday, November 12 5-6:30pm – Group Meeting	
_____ Monday, November 26 5-6:30pm – Group Meeting	
_____ Monday, December 3 5-6:30pm – Group Meeting	

Thanks for taking the time to fill out an application. You will be notified of your application status no later than May 7. Applicants invited to an interview for a trip will be contacted directly by the Site Leaders.

I have read and agree to the above information:

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature (required if under the age of 18): _____ Date: _____

Please return to:
Student Leadership, Involvement, & Community Engagement – Main Level, Lory Student Center – 491-1682.
Application deadline is March 30, 2012 @ 5:00pm. No Exceptions.

Appendix I: Program Interview Questions

Applicant Name: _____

Year in School: Fr   Soph   Junior   Senior   Grad

1. Tell us about yourself.

2. Why are you applying for this trip?

3. What do you think you can contribute to this group that might be unique?

4. Tell us about any previous international travel experience.

5. Tell us about your previous experience in the outdoors.

6. What do you think is the role of service on a trip to a location such as this (remote, vastly different culture, etc.)?