Exploring the Short-Term Impacts of International Service Learning on Adolescent Participants in Cambodia

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of Social and Applied Sciences in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN HUMAN SECURITY AND PEACEBUILDING

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FALL, 2016

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Abstract

International service learning (ISL) programs in secondary and post-secondary education, often in the context of global citizenship education, have exploded over the past two decades; yet limited research explores the short-term impacts of ISL programs on adolescent participants, nor informs ISL curricular development. This study investigated the short-term impacts of the Cambodia Service Project (CSP) on adolescent participants. Twelve female and six male participants, ranging in age from 16-18 years, participated in the three-week CSP designed by Round Square (RS) in collaboration with a non-governmental organization (NGO) in rural Cambodia. Participants attended RS schools and represented seven countries: Australia, Canada, China, England, Germany, India, and Ireland. A case study approach was used and data was collected through participant reflections, interviews, and arts based methods. The research revealed participants were impacted in four areas which guide ISL curricular recommendations: relationship with self, relationship with others, relationship with culture and environment, and relationship with different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing.

Keywords: international service learning, adolescents, short-term impacts, Cambodia, global citizenship
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List of Acronyms

AEE  Association for Experiential Education
CSP  Cambodia Service Project
GSL  global service learning
HSPB Human Security and Peacebuilding
ISL  international service learning
LT   leadership team
NGO  non-governmental organization
RS   Round Square
RRU  Royal Roads University
T2   team two
Acknowledgements

“If the only prayer you ever said was thank you, it would be enough.” ~Meister Eckhart

The desire to embark on the Master of Arts in Human Security and Peacebuilding (HSPB), and ultimately this project, grew from my experiences living and working across six continents, including a decade teaching in secondary school education. However, in reality, it all started at home; my path was unequivocally formed by the open-minded, exploratory, and jovial guidance of my parents. I owe a great debt to my late mother, Jane, for teaching me about the love and empathy that arises from deep connections with others. To my father, Ted, I owe the seed of cultural exploration and a profound respect for the stories and lessons shared by people of all historical and cultural backgrounds. I am grateful to my fellow seeker, Lorna, for her endless support, and for stocking my bedside table with words that have fuelled me through thick and thin. To Geoff, Elizabeth, Sarah, Thomas, and Finlay, thank you for being there for me every step of the way. Nica, my little muppet, you brighten every one of my days. As we all know, life’s journey does not pause for academic research. To my friends who loved me and showed up for me through it all, thank you from the bottom of my heart; I would not be here without you.

I have benefited greatly from my professional community; my colleagues have been a force throughout my career, an engine fuelling my journey. There are too many individuals to name, however my heartfelt gratitude goes especially to Rodger Wright, Shirley Frykberg, Beth McCracken, Clayton Fox, James Ravensbergen, Dominic Killalea, and the incredible faculty at Collingwood School for listening intently, providing feedback, and supporting my passion to explore education in the global arena. I am extremely grateful to the Cambodia Service Project (CSP) participants who shared their experiences fearlessly and honestly; the Beng Mealea
community who opened their hearts to us; and to Liz Gray, David Kyle, and Anez Katre, for their personal sacrifice and commitment to responsible global education.

I have been blessed to be a part of an incredible academic community at Royal Roads University (RRU). The financial support I was awarded through the RRU Entrance Scholarship, the Irving K. Barber One World Scholarship, and the Helen Joy Russell Bursary made this research possible. To my amazing friends in the HSPB cohort who are dedicated to improving global human security: your personal sacrifice does not go unnoticed and your ability to engage with the most divisive issues of our time is inspiring. Thank you for sharing the journey with me, and for the invigorating dialogue, good humour, and tireless support. Lastly, I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Cheryl Heykoop, and committee member, Catherine Etmanski, for contributing their valuable time, creative ideas, and academic rigour; I could not have asked for a more approachable, responsive, and enthusiastic support team. Thank you.
Preface

I came to the field of education by way of a crumbling school house, La Carita Feliz, in the outskirts of Granada, Nicaragua. After earning my Bachelor of Science in Chemistry, yet before I applied for my Bachelor of Education degree, I traveled for one year in Central and South America, literally going door-to-door volunteering in the communities in which I stayed. Along with teaching me about human rights, gender equality, diversity, and politics, my time at La Carita Feliz provided my first real lesson in cross-cultural empathy; I began to think of myself as a global citizen, complete with responsibilities to others beyond Canadian borders.

That year was the most formative of my adult life. Since, I have combined my love of global exploration, curiosity for self-awareness, commitment to serving others, and sense of connection to youth as a secondary school teacher. Early in my career, I saw the opportunity to begin designing and leading global experiences for students; I have since traveled with adolescents to a dozen countries across five continents, engaging in humanitarian projects and cultural activities directed at developing responsible global citizenship.

Through my role as the service learning coordinator at the largest private co-educational high school in Canada, I oversee student volunteers from grades 10-12 taking part in various local and global service learning initiatives designed to create positive and sustainable change in the communities, while engaging student leadership skill development, improving intercultural competency, and inspiring global citizenship. These terms themselves are not without complexity, as will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 2; however, they are at the core of all that I do. Specifically, as an educator, I seek to provide meaningful connections that support the space for authentic learning, and in the international service learning (ISL) projects I have been
involved in I have witnessed connections that can be personally and socially transformative. Observing these transformations in ISL participants, I have come to believe that ISL can have a positive impact on the development of cross-cultural empathy in youth. As a teacher of young adults in an increasingly interconnected world, I cannot imagine a more valuable place to direct my energy. It is from this place that I explore the short-term impacts of ISL on participants to inform future ISL curricular development and support adolescents to thrive as cross-cultural, empathetic citizens.
Chapter One: Introduction

For the past twenty years, the development and use of international service learning (ISL) programs in post-secondary education has steadily increased (Bringle, Clayton, & Hatcher, 2012), and more recently has gained momentum in secondary school education (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Although there is no standard definition, ISL programs generally attempt to combine the ideals of service-learning, international education, and intercultural learning opportunities (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011) to create an environment for ISL students to participate in cultural immersion, to assist in community-focused humanitarian development tasks, and to reflect on their experiences (Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004). Recently, there has also been a shift by educators and researchers in the ISL field towards the term global service learning (GSL) (Garcia & Longo, 2013; Hartman & Kiely, 2014b, Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011; Morrison, 2015), recognizing that “the partnerships are international, but the service fosters learning that can be understood as global, if one is asking critical global questions in conversation with globally focused partners” (Garcia & Longo, 2013, p. 113). Hartman and Kiely (2014b) define GSL as:

a community-driven service experience that employs structured, critically reflective practice to better understand common human dignity; self; culture; positionality; socio-economic, political, and environmental issues; power relations; and social responsibility, all in global contexts. (p. 60)

Specifically, ISL and GSL programs are thought to support active citizen engagement, higher level thinking, student ownership, and democratic learning environments (Dary, Prueter, Grinde, Grobschmidt & Evers, 2010; Grusky, 2000; Kiely, 2004; Kiely & Kiely, 2006). Furthermore,
ISL participants have demonstrated perspective and skill transformation in the areas of “intercultural competence, language skills, appreciation of cultural difference, tolerance for ambiguity, and experiential understanding of complex global problems” (Kiely, 2004, p. 5). However, with the complexity and diversity of ISL programs available, it is challenging to suggest that all ISL programs share common goals, principles, and outcomes (Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011).

In this opening chapter, I briefly explore the ISL literature to frame my research problem. This follows with an articulation of my research purpose and questions, noting the community and context I conducted my research in. This is followed by an introduction of my research methodology. In closing, I offer an overview of each chapter of this Master’s thesis, outlining the overarching goal and salient points for each chapter.

**Research Problem: Meeting an Identified Need**

As ISL programs are steadily increasing, the quality and efficacy of ISL programs vary greatly, and there are vast discrepancies in ISL program development and delivery (see: Billig, 2000; Bringle, et al., 2012; Niehaus & Crain, 2013; Tonkin, 2011; Whitley, 2014). Furthermore, while ISL professionals have a general understanding that ISL programs in practice have a distinct transformative impact on participants (Kiely, 2004), research identifying the specific changes that occur and how and why these changes occur is limited and Kiely (2005) calls for further research to “investigate the contextual factors and learning processes in service learning that lead to reported outcomes” (Kiely, 2005, p. 5). There is also a call for increased rigour in the field of ISL research (Whitley, 2014) guided by a more comprehensive research agenda (Tonkin, 2011) to inform ISL research and practice. Specifically, there is a need for more research
exploring the application of ISL theoretical foundations and existing research findings (Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Whitley, 2014), the breadth and depth of ISL programs (Billig, 2000), and the longitudinal impacts of ISL programs on participants (Kiely, 2004).

Of the ISL research that does exist, most focuses on for-credit courses in higher education and study abroad programming, and little to no research explores ISL in secondary school settings (Bringle, et al., 2012). Adolescent students, aged 15–18 years, likely have different developmental needs and capacities than post-secondary students, and accordingly ISL programming may need to be different. This research begins to address some of these research gaps. It explores the short-term impacts of an ISL program on secondary school adolescent participants, and identifies the curricular elements and processes that contributed to those changes. Where possible, it also seeks to ground adolescent ISL programming in theoretical models applied in practice.

**Purpose and Research Questions**

Working with an international group of participants, aged 15-18 years, representing seven countries: Australia, Canada, China, England, Germany, India, and Ireland, who participated in a three-week ISL program in Beng Mealea, Cambodia, my research sought to inform future ISL curricular development and delivery. First, by identifying the curricular events that ISL participants perceive as impactful, and second, by discussing the ways in which secondary students are learning, processing, and making sense of their ISL experiences. Third, this research has the potential to inform meaningful and ethical interactions between ISL programs and host communities, and inform ISL program design and implementation more broadly.

The following questions guided my research:
Principle Question:

- What are the specific short-term impacts of the ISL experience on adolescent participants?

Sub-Questions:

- What are the specific short-term impacts on participants in terms of their perspectives, behaviour, relationships, attitudes, or actions?
- How do perspectives, behaviour, relationships, attitudes, and actions of participants change over the course of the project?
- What are the triggers (events, emotions, etc…) for the impacts identified above?
- What meaning do participants translate from their experiences in the short-term?
- What recommendations can be made in an effort to inform the development of meaningful, impactful, and ethical ISL programs?

Methodology Overview

To conduct this research, I applied a descriptive case study that will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. To collect a range of participant experiences, I used opening and closing questionnaires; semi-structured individual interviews; and visual arts based reflection. I included written, oral, and artistic methods of data collection to support enthusiastic participant engagement for different types of learners; breadth and richness of information collected; and triangulation of data. Participants also took part in guided journal entries that were not collected for data analysis. All data was analyzed inductively, and themes were identified based on participants’ description of their experiences.
Organization of Study

The study is organized into five chapters.

**Chapter 2: Literature review.** This chapter provides a summary of relevant literature in the field of ISL research and practice. It gives an overview of the evolution of ISL by clarifying the definition of key terms and addressing the concepts of global citizenship education and transformation in learning. This chapter continues with an exploration of current research on the impact of ISL on participants and contextualizes the CSP study within that framework. Finally, I offer an overview of the critiques of ISL programing.

**Chapter 3: Methodology.** In this chapter, I provide an in-depth look into the methodology and methods framing my research. I begin by offering an introduction to descriptive case study as my methodological framework for this study. I describe the specifics of the CSP, including key players, program goals, itinerary, curricular activities, and participant details. I then explore methods used for data collection and analysis, offering a rationale to justify decisions made. In closing, the chapter explores key issues of validity and ethics as they relate to the CSP study, including: program selection; maintaining researcher neutrality and reflexive practice; bias and power relations; working with young people; considerations for the host community; and rigour, trustworthiness, and authenticity.

**Chapter 4: Findings.** This chapter includes a review of the interpretations expressed by the CSP participants through the opening and closing questionnaires, personal interviews, and arts based methods. Throughout I use direct quotes and artistic interpretations to hear the participants’ voices. The findings in this chapter are presented into four themes that emerged from inductive analysis: relationship with self; relationship with others; relationship with culture, environment, and way of living; and relationship with different perspectives, attitudes, and ways
of knowing. For each theme I present young people’s perspectives about the theme and conclude with a section on how participants are learning, highlighting the activities, processes, and pathways by which participants are being impacted.

**Chapter 5: Discussion and recommendations.** This final chapter discusses the research findings as they relate to existing ISL research and practice and global citizenship education more broadly. I also explore the specific curricular elements that contributed to short-term impacts for participants and how these relate to ISL learning theory. In closing, I offer a series of recommendations about how ISL programs could be strengthened to support optimal outcomes for participants and communities. It is important to note that because this research is one of the only studies exploring ISL with adolescents (secondary school students), I particularly emphasize how the findings of the CSP compare to research within post-secondary ISL programs and offer suggestions about how this research could inform and potentially strengthen secondary school ISL research and practice.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Overview

With the steady growth in the field of ISL programming over the past two decades, scholars are calling for an increase in peer-reviewed research that is theoretically grounded in existing ISL literature (Kiely & Hartman, 2011). Whitley (2014) echoes this call, stating the bulk of current case study research in ISL is “rarely based on relevant existing theories” (p. 19) and Tonkin (2011) suggests that “the literature on international service learning (ISL) is less extensive and no comprehensive research agenda appears to exist” (p. 191). In addition, the majority of the research in ISL is at the post-secondary level. As a relatively new pedagogy in secondary school education, ISL is an area in need of further exploration from an educational, humanitarian, and philosophical perspective, with particular reference to the adolescent experience.

This chapter aims to frame this CSP study firmly in the literature. I begin by exploring the definitions of ISL, global citizenship, and transformative learning, three terms that are integral to this study. Next, I delve into the ISL literature, specifically in relation to the impacts of ISL programs on participants, and in closing, I offer an overview of critiques of ISL programming, giving specific consideration to the potential implications of ISL programs on participants and communities. This chapter also helps ground the research and frame the discussion and recommendations presented in Chapter 5.

Definition of Terms

ISL. International or global service learning has its roots in the field of experiential education, combining characteristics of study abroad programs, field placement modules,
humanitarian service, and volunteer travel (Whitley, 2014). The definition of ISL is not universal; however, it is widely accepted to be a supported global service learning experience designed in partnership with host communities to meet identified needs in a given context (Furco, 1996). Furthermore, ISL program participants are often encouraged to investigate the political, social, and economic root causes that led to the need for service (Einfeld & Collins, 2008; Eyler & Giles, 1999) and construct understanding that supports movement from a personally responsible, or participatory citizen, to a justice oriented citizen (as described by Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Until recently, the majority of the literature has used the term international service learning (ISL); however, there has been a shift towards the term global service learning (GSL), which Hartman and Kiely (2014b) define as:

a community-driven service experience that employs structured, critically reflective practice to better understand common human dignity; self; culture; positionality; socio-economic, political, and environmental issues; power relations; and social responsibility, all in global contexts. (p. 60)

Despite this recent shift, I have decided to use the term ISL within this thesis for two primary reasons: it is still the terminology used within secondary school ISL programs and I developed my research tools and processes using the acronym ISL.

Irrespective of ISL or GSL terminology, ISL programs are often oriented to be experiential in nature, where a focus on experience, inquiry, and reflection is central to the learning process (Giles & Eyler, 1994); students participate in a range of activities designed to engage them in intercultural experiences as they assist in a service project in a host community (Hatcher, et al., 2004). Furthermore, ISL programs are often designed to support transformative
learning opportunities (as discussed below) for students to discover the “multiple ways in which individuals perceive, interpret, and act within a particular time and place” (Kiely & Hartman, 2011, p. 294) and negotiate contested meanings, understandings, and perspectives about themselves and the world (Eyler, 2011; Kiely, 2004). In practice, however, the quality and range of ISL programming varies across context, service learning experience, and personal, academic, and cultural programming (Bringle, et al., 2012; Tonkin, 2011; Whitley, 2014); and the impacts on participants, discussed below, are also varied and inconsistent (Kiely, 2004).

**Global citizenship.** ISL and service learning more generally are recognized as being influential in developing skills that enable students to become active local and global citizens (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004; Hartman, 2009; Kiely, 2005; Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011; Larsen, 2014). However, identifying a common definition for the term global citizenship is challenging (Stein, 2015), and this is underscored by Hartman (2009), who suggests that many institutions leading efforts to create global citizens do not have a “clear articulation of precisely what global citizenship is”, and having such a definition is “extraordinarily rare” (p.1). Stein, who outlines four, sometimes contradictory, positions on global citizenship in the context of American higher education suggests that this limited conceptualization of global citizenship may be linked to the contextual nature of the term, where one’s approach to global citizenship, is rooted in his/her “discursive patterns of thought and action” (Stein, 2015, p. 242), particularly with the way one views others who have different ways of **knowing, being, and relating**.

Despite not having a clear, coherent definition of global citizenship, in the context of ISL programs, the liberal humanist approach to global citizenship seems to resonate most. This
conceptualization is centred around the idea of a common humanity and responsibility for others in a global context (Nussbaum, 2002). Through this lens, Nussbaum (2002) suggested three necessary characteristics of a global citizen, all of which are common to the ISL experience: critical self-analysis, recognition of connections to others, and the ability to imagine oneself in another’s shoes. This conceptualization is also closely aligned with that of Hartman (2014), who argues that global citizenship “should be oriented toward understanding the importance of common human value and therefore working toward new structures that allow that possibility” (p. 7). Stein (2015), however, highlights an important critique of this approach when applied in the context of Western students taking part in development projects in the global South; she draws necessary attention to the possibility that students taking part in service projects can fail to situate themselves within “historically accumulated material advantage” (Stein, 2015, p. 246) and that they run the risk of “understand[ing] themselves as benevolent actors granting knowledge, humanity, resources, or rights to those they perceive to lack them, [thereby] affirm[ing] the supremacy of Western ways of knowing and being” (p. 245-6). Interestingly, this research involved participants from both the global North and South, providing an intriguing window into the multi-national perspectives of the participants on global relationship building.

While a universal definition of global citizenship is lacking and continued discussion is required, goals of global citizenship seem to be articulated more clearly. For example, Hartman (2009) suggests that one of the central goals of global citizenship is the “ability to recognize multiple legitimate, competing streams of values and knowledge while nonetheless retaining the ability to make judgments of value among them” (p. 49). According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2015),
Global citizenship education equips learners of all ages with those values, knowledge and skills that are based on and instil respect for human rights, social justice, diversity, gender equality and environmental sustainability and that empower learners to be responsible global citizens. [It] gives learners the competencies and opportunity to realise their rights and obligations to promote a better world and future for all. (para.1)

To support global citizenship in practice, global citizenship education requires grounding learning in real-life scenarios; challenging stereotypes, ignorance, and intolerance; acknowledging personal power and the choice and ability to change how we behave; recognizing collective power; awareness of inequality and challenging the structures which propagate unfairness; and encouraging the recognition of the ability to learn from others and the responsibilities we have towards each other (Oxfam, 2016). In essence, global citizenship education has the potential to support people to see how they can contribute to making the world a “more just and sustainable place” (Oxfam, 2016, para.1). But even terms such as just and sustainable can be conceptualized differently, highlighting that the practices to support global citizenship are likely embedded in how one envisions and embodies global citizenship.

In ISL programs, educators have observed that direct experiences with people who are affected by diverse, and often inequitable, political, economic, social and religious systems can potentially have a profound impact on students, “mov[ing] students from a charity orientation toward more of a social justice orientation on issues such as global awareness, service, development and the roles of individuals as agents of change” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 26). This idea is reflected in the Westheimer and Kahne’s (2004) discussion of three types of citizenship: personally responsible, participatory, and justice oriented. Where a personally responsible citizen
acts responsibly in their community by doing such things as following laws, helping others in need during crisis and acting in an honest way, a justice oriented citizen goes further in their sense of responsibility to others and is able to critically assess social, political, and economic structures and “consider collective strategies for change that challenge injustice and, when possible, address root causes of problems” (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 243). Justice oriented citizenship is an important aspect of global citizenship, and as Westheimer and Kahne (2004) suggest, justice oriented citizenship also fosters intercultural competence, where students learn capacities to interact and learn with others with varying perspectives. Hartman (2014), however, suggests that global citizenship encompasses and transcends intercultural competence, where “[i]ntercultural competence encourages capability for interacting in another culture while global citizenship or consciousness should be oriented toward understanding the importance of common human value and therefore working toward new structures that allow that possibility” (Hartman, 2014, p. 7). I would propose that one is a step on the path to the other, where intercultural competence is a foundation of global citizenship.

If we accept the notion that global citizenship involves recognizing and strengthening a sense of responsibility over the wellbeing of others, the potential for using ISL as a venue for global citizenship education becomes evident. ISL is also thought to encourage students to explore multiple perspectives: “Students confronted with challenges to their view of the world will be forced to evaluate alternative perspectives and perhaps develop more complex capacities for judgment” (Eyler, 2011, p. 234). Not surprisingly, service learning in a global context is also widely being adopted as a method to assist in the development of competencies critical for responsible global leadership (Pless, Maak, & Stahl, 2011). Recognizing the value of ISL to
nurture global citizenship and global leadership more broadly, how can we as educators use international service learning to *teach* global citizenship? To help explore this question, I address the concept of transformative learning and then delve into an investigation of the existing literature exploring the impact of service learning on participants, both domestically and internationally.

**Transformative learning.** In addition to constructing new understandings, participation in ISL has the potential to result in profound perspective transformation (Kiely, 2004). According to Stevens-Long, Schapiro, & McClintock (2012), transformation “refers to a deep and lasting change, equivalent to what some people term a developmental shift or a change in worldview (p. 184). This path of transformation can be described as “a cyclical process in which one uses a newly acquired knowledge to examine previously held assumptions through critical reflection and dialogue, leading to meaning reconstruction” (Whitley, 2014, p. 20). And, as Mezirow (2000) notes, the process of change or transformation is a “continuous effort to negotiate contested meanings” (p. 3). As ISL programs present many opportunities for participants to *negotiate contested meanings*, the idea of collective and individual transformation by learning provides a lens through which to understand how ISL students experience and interpret shifts in perception during their experience (Eyler, 2011; Kiely, 2004).

**Exploring the Literature on Impacts of ISL on Participants**

There is growing evidence that service learning in general impacts participants in the areas of personal, academic, social, and behavioural outcomes, as well as civic engagement (Eyler, 2011). For example, Kiely’s (2004) longitudinal case study found that ISL post-secondary participants in Nicaragua had a profound shift in one or more of the following aspects
of worldview transformation: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural. Kiely (2004) explains, “the central premise underlying the program’s service learning theory is that experiential dissonance combined with critical reflection and deeper connections with community through service learning activities will lead to profound changes in students’ worldview. (p. 8) Understanding the impacts of the CSP on participants, including any perceived changes and transformation in worldview, is at the heart of this study.

As previously noted, research in the field of ISL participant experience have focused predominantly on short-term positive impacts (Whitley, 2014) and research into the specific impacts on adolescent participants is still in its infancy. Along with a call for a greater quantity of research into the long-term impacts of ISL programming on participants (Bringle, Hatcher, & Jones, 2011; Kiely, 2004; Tonkin, 2011), there is a need for new research to identify “program factors that help students translate envisioning into concrete actions that help foster social change” (Kiely, 2004, p. 17). From my review of the literature, there is little to no research in the area of impacts on adolescent ISL participants specifically and, therefore, I hope to add quantity and quality to that area of research. Furthermore, it is important to note, that my research was conducted in Cambodia, and none of the research in this literature review considers the same Cambodian context, nor is the research conducted in the same context; therefore findings need to be extrapolated from one study to the other.

Despite these limitations, some research on the impacts of ISL are known, and I specifically explore the literature related to the impacts of personal awareness and development; civic awareness, citizenship, and social justice in service learning; and the optimal level of challenge for positive participant impact.
Personal awareness and development. In general, ISL participants set out with the intent to explore the unknown (Chang, Chen, Huang, & Yuan, 2012), and it is this stretch beyond participants’ existing understanding and worldview that has the potential to support transformation. Research into the impacts of domestic service learning on adolescents, has shown that participation can lead to an “increased sense of personal efficacy, self-esteem, confidence in social skills, and ability to build positive relationships” (Arenas, Bosworth, & Kwandayi, 2006, p.29). Through their reflective writing, Wilson (2011) found that college students enrolled in a service learning course demonstrated a higher capacity to consider other peoples’ perspectives when compared to their peers not enrolled; and this cognitive process is attributed to making emotional connections and empathy development (Galinsky, A., & Moskowitz, G., 2000). These findings beg the question of whether impacts observed in domestic service learning participants are transferable to their global service learning counterparts.

Eyler (2011) asks: “Do international experience challenge basic assumptions about self and other cultures? Does this dissonance lead to growth and to reduced stereotyping?” (p.233). In their study on ISL participants, Miller and Gonzalez (2009) noted that participants did indeed exhibit positive personal impact, including improved flexibility, stress/coping skills, and self-esteem/confidence. Pisano’s study (2007) of American university students taking part in a semester ISL program in Ecuador found students went through a process of transformation and adaptation, as described by Mezirow (2000). ISL participants also demonstrated increased self-confidence, language skills development, a shift in perspective around gratitude, an impact on career plans or future goals, and a “greater belief in themselves and ability to overcome challenges” (Pisano, 2007, p. 123). Kiely’s longitudinal study (2004) revealed changes in ISL
participants’ sense of social responsibility and citizenship; development of mutual respect with hosts; questioning of assumptions; cultural understanding; and understanding of self, including spirituality (Kiely, 2004). Although these changes have been documented in research, further understanding of these impacts are required, particularly in reference to how the impacts or changes come about (Kiely, 2005). How do these impacts occur and how do ISL program components, processes, and processes contribute to these changes? Furthermore, what do we know about this in the context of ISL programs with secondary school students?

Civic awareness, citizenship, and social justice orientation in service learning. Civic awareness and active citizenship are core aspects of global citizenship discussed above and have long been a goal of service learning in general; at the root of both concepts is an analysis of human relationships. ISL has the seed to aid in the development of active and responsible global citizenship (Annette, 2002; Kiely & Kiely, 2006; Plater, Jones, Bringle, & Clayton, 2009) and research in the field of ISL post-secondary education has indicated participants are transformed in an ongoing way, exhibiting an “emerging global consciousness” (Kiely, 2004, p. 10). Through her research, Larson (2014) demonstrated that long-term ISL university participants exhibited a shift towards becoming global citizens but interestingly “did not incorporate critically engaged forms of global citizenship, especially those related to social justice action” (p. 1). The dynamic nature of the development of characteristics embodying global citizenship, however, makes the process of shifting worldviews difficult to assess.

Previous studies recognized that a shift in the value and belief systems of ISL participants is often demonstrated (Kiely, 2004), but the processes and pathways by which these changes occur are not clear. Furthermore, there is a lack of research demonstrating these shifts amongst
secondary school students. Keith (2005), however, has some insight that the creation of new bonds with another may be a catalyst to perspective change:

Recognition of the other brings a deeper kind of learning. … Relationships are forged that help us understand our reality as connected to the reality of the other, that build communities to sustain the lifeworld, and create memories and traces that remind us of the needs of the world and call on us, through struggle, to work to make another world possible (p. 20).

In order to better understand what motivates participants to work to make another world possible, Tonkin (2011) asks, “[h]ow can research inform us about changes, as a result of ISL, in students’ knowledge, values, and behaviour that encompass a global perspective on civic concerns” (p. 207)? Furthermore, Eyler (2011) asks how determining the ultimate level of challenge in ISL programs for learning to take place can affect these transformations. And how does this research on post-secondary school students relate to adolescent students?

**Optimal level of challenge for positive participant impact.** In their research on internal challenges, coping processes, and competence development of ISL university participants in a 4-week project in Tanzania, Nickols, Rothenberg, Moshi, & Tetloff (2013) found that four distinct themes emerged: “personal apprehensions and challenges, intra-group relationships and process, emergence of reciprocity with the community participants, and development of self-confidence and competences” (p. 98). Kiely (2002)’s early ISL study indicated that high-level dissonance (including aspects such as environmental, physical, social, economic, cultural, political, linguistic) can result in a range of types of transformational learning, shifts in worldview, and adjustments on site; thus, an appropriate level of challenge is important.
Challenging experiences on ISL programs should not be seen as negative; on the contrary, few ISL educators would argue a certain level of challenge is necessary for personal growth. In their study of Taiwanese students participating in international service learning programs, Chang, et al., (2012) concluded that “culture shock often triggers learning that leads to the development of new viewpoints” (p. 232). The presence of physical, social, mental, and emotional challenges that affect how participants construct and translate their experience call for “ISL researchers to focus on factors and variables associated with both psychological and sociocultural adjustment” (Kiely, 2011, p.257); however the optimal level of challenge, is still debated in study abroad and ISL literature (Kiely, 2011; Nickols, et al, 2013). As educators, how can we offer the right amount of challenge, while also ensuring the safety of participants and members of the host community? Furthermore, how does this relate to secondary students participating in ISL programs? These questions segue directly into current critiques of ISL programs, which will be discussed below.

**Critique of ISL**

As the field of ISL has grown over the past twenty years, necessary critiques have questioned the ethics, sustainability, and impact of these programs on both participants and host communities (Grusky, 2000; Crabtree, 2013). In Crabtree’s (2013) analysis of the intended and unintended consequences of ISL, he points out the potential outcome of disruption of community relations and dynamics, and reinforces that “only longer term partnerships develop the features of trust, alignment of interests, and shared commitment that characterize sustainable partnerships” (Crabtree, 2013, p. 55). That statement makes a strong case for working with local NGOs who are best placed to facilitate real positive change and human capacity development in
the host community. And, it raises the humanitarian principles of *do no harm* and reciprocity; both these ideas will be discussed in the context of ISL below. Lastly, in the context of international programming, it is essential to visit the question of why we are going global. Therefore, a look at the current literature on the impact of domestic vs. global service learning will close this chapter.

**The responsibility of ISL: Do no harm.** Perhaps one of the greatest ironies of ISL is the potential to support unhealthy cross-cultural power dynamics by exacerbating misrepresentations of economic, political, and social inequalities between *haves* and *have-nots*. As Grusky (2000) attests:

> Without thoughtful preparation, orientation, program developments and the encouragement of study, as well as critical analysis and reflection, [ISL] programs can easily become small theaters that recreate historic cultural misunderstandings and simplistic stereotypes and replay, on a more intimate scale, the huge disparities in income and opportunity that characterize North-South relations today. (p. 858)

In addition, Tonkin & Quiroga (2004) warn that “service-learning programs designed simply to educate students, and not, at the same time, to maximize the effectiveness of service to the populations in questions, raise serious ethical questions” (p. 132). As ISL educators, we have a responsibility to do no harm, not only with our students but also in our host communities. *Do no harm* is a framework used to guide humanitarian assistance to assess the ways in which aid programs affect conflict and peacebuilding (Anderson, 1999), and in the context of ISL, this framework calls for intentional program design that supports local capacity development and
minimizes North-South divisions rooted in social, cultural, political, and economic contextual factors.

Research in ISL reveals an agreement that ISL projects should serve, at minimum, two groups: the participants and the host community with which they interact (Slimbach, 2013; Tonkin, 2011). ISL programs in theory have the potential to do no harm and contribute to positive and sustainable change in the host communities; however, the discrepancies in curricular design, program goals, and outcomes, necessitate further research and intentional planning. To help ensure ISL programs do no harm, Reisch (2011) calls for specific measures in ISL programs including: (inter)cultural competency training; economic, social and political understanding; host community involvement in project planning; selection of optimal group size; ensuring sustainable contributions; initiating participant reflections; and completing an extensive review of learning outcomes at the completion of the project. The need to assess ISL projects from the lens of do no harm is based on the goal that both participants and host communities will benefit, and reflects the principle of reciprocity, that Keith (2005) suggests emerged from a need to “address a recurring negative tendency in the server-served relationship” (p. 13). An overview of reciprocity in ISL follows.

Reciprocity? The concept of reciprocity, as applied in ISL programs requires “working towards ensuring that all parties involve in the ISL program receive equal benefit” (Dear, 2009, p. 30). Because service learning in a global context commonly expose students to stories from people of other backgrounds, ethnicities, and perspectives and providing diverse voices, multiple realities, and theoretical understandings of a variety of worldviews (Hartman, 2009). Inherent in this exposure are a plethora of challenges, including the navigation of power imbalances, the
danger of reinforcing stereotypes, the possibility of oversimplifying complex human security issues, and the potential challenge of being American centric (Grusky, 2000; Hartman & Kiely, 2014a). ISL programs have been criticized for their potential to reinforce North-South inequalities; imbalances can easily surface as relatively wealthy participants engage in ISL seeking a personally transformative experience of some kind, with varying levels of awareness and concern for the host community (Grusky, 2000). So, the question as to how those inequalities can be averted must be addressed. Recognizing that reciprocity falls short of the depth of the task, Keith (2005) promotes an interdependence of partners and calls for,

a different kind of interaction, one that emphasizes respectful listening of perspectives and histories [emphasis added], together with community building and possibly advocacy in an environment that acknowledges and address the difficult emotions and political choices that accompany these tension, on both sides. The important issue here…is how to help these would-be partners come to dialogue and social action. (p. 15)

In my experience, this critical aspect of ISL programs is not always present. Far too often, a group of well-meaning students and their teacher leaders head off to a developing country without meaningful dialogue with their hosts, nor with any mind to the long-term impact of their actions on the social and economic stability of those so graciously welcoming them. How can reciprocity be central to ISL programs in an effort to ensure more ethical, informed, and equitable engagement? Furthermore, is international travel required to reap the benefits of service learning programs?

**Passport required?** Not surprisingly, research into the impacts of service learning on participants began with domestic programs, and studies done in the 1990s demonstrated a link
between personal and intellectual development for participants of local service learning programs (Eyler & Giles, 1999). The advantages of ISL, compared to local service learning have been explored, and Grusky (2000) suggests that ISL programs have the potential to bridge abstract and theoretical concepts with “real live concepts and issues” (p. 859) at both a cross-cultural and international level in ways that local service learning programs cannot. Furthermore, Tonkin suggests that ISL experiences can be “more intense, more demanding, and ultimately perhaps more transformative than domestic experiences” (Tonkin, 2011, p. 194). According to Hartman and Kiely (2014b) there are five aspects that distinguish ISL, or GSL in this case, from domestic service learning:

(a) GSL is committed to student intercultural competence development; (b) GSL has a focus on structural analysis tied to consideration of power, privilege, and hegemonic assumptions; (c) GSL takes place within a global marketization of volunteerism; (d) GSL is typically immersive; and (e) GSL engages the critical civic and moral imagination (p. 56).

However, some educators argue that a global context may be unnecessary to achieve the desired outcome of civic engagement and cross-cultural understanding and that the vast diversity of ISL program design makes comparing programs difficult (Niehaus & Crain, 2013). For the purposes of this research, I explore ISL programs, and therefore this debate extends beyond the scope of study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter strives to lay the groundwork for the analysis of the short-term impacts on ISL participants in Cambodia through the following: definition of relevant terms, a summary of
the constructivist and transformative theoretical models of learning, an exploration of the current research into impacts of ISL programs on participants, a discussion on the optimal level of challenge required for personal transformation, and a look at critiques of ISL programming and research. Through this chapter we learn that ISL programs have the potential to support experiential transformation for participants, however there is minimal research about how this transformation occurs in ISL programs. Furthermore, we have learned that there is a limited amount of research exploring the impacts of ISL programs on adolescents. My research begins to explore these gaps and the methodological approach I took is outlined in the next chapter.
Chapter Three: Methodology

Chapter Overview

This chapter begins with an exploration of the goals of the research questions and methodological framework guiding the study. I provide a description of the CSP, including key players, itinerary, program goals, curricular activities, and research subject (CSP participant) details. An explanation of each data collection method is then followed by an analysis of validity and ethical considerations as they relate to the CSP. The chapter concludes with a discussion of rigour, authenticity, and trustworthiness, the study’s strengths and limitations, how the findings will be disseminated and shared, and possible impacts of the research in the field of ISL.

Research Goals and Questions

The study was designed to determine the specific short-term impacts of the CSP ISL experience on adolescent participants. Guided by previous ISL research, the aim was to observe any changes in perspectives, behaviour, relationships, attitudes, or actions over the course of the project, and to identify which curricular activities or events triggered the impact. Furthermore, the meaning participants translated from their experience was investigated. The purpose of the study was to lend to the research on the short-term impacts on ISL participants in order to inform the development of impactful and ethical ISL programs for adolescents.

The following questions guided my research:

Principle Question:

- What are the specific short-term impacts of the ISL experience on adolescent participants?

Sub-Questions:
What are the specific short-term impacts on participants in terms of their perspectives, behaviour, relationships, attitudes, or actions?

How do perspectives, behaviour, relationships, attitudes, and actions of participants change over the course of the project?

What are the triggers (events, emotions, etc…) for the impacts identified above?

What meaning do participants translate from their experiences in the short-term?

What recommendations can be made in an effort to inform the development of meaningful, impactful, and ethical ISL programs?

Methodological Framework

Descriptive case studies are designed “to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548) and provide a useful framework to explore relationships, communities, or programmes (Yin, 2003). According to Sutton (2011), “both the practice of ISL and research about ISL require close, thoughtful attention to local context and a clear understanding of the forces shaping that context” (Sutton, 2011, p. 126). Because studies have an “explicit focus on context and dynamic interactions” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 19), they are particularly useful to analyze or describe a specific event, activity, or program (Cresswell, 2014). “Service learning is a socially embedded practice” (Bringle, et al., 2012, p.5) and therefore provides unique experiences based on context. Taking all this into account, it is not surprising that case studies are also the most common methodology used in ISL research and have been selected by many researchers in the ISL field in order to gain a rich and diverse set of data (Kiely, 2004; Larsen, 2014; Hatcher, et al., 2004). Therefore, I have decided to employ a descriptive case study approach to the CSP study, as this methodology
allows for the incorporation of multiple data sources such as interviews, participant history, and
document analysis which can lead to an in depth exploration of the relationship between context,
program factors, and outcomes (Kiely & Hartman, 2011).

The Cambodia Service Project: Program Overview

In conducting a case study, the first step is to identify the unit of analysis, i.e., the
individual, program, process, or organization, and then to bind the approach to a specific context
(Baxter and Jack, 2008). For the purpose of this research the CSP was the unit of analysis. The CSP was a three-week project designed by RS in collaboration with an international NGO operated by local residents. The program ran from December 4-23, 2015, in Beng Mealea, Cambodia, a rural town 60 kilometres from Siem Reap. The RS team was comprised of one Australian male teacher leader and two female teacher leaders from Canada and India, respectively. Two teachers had extensive experience with global travel, had led multiple ISL programs, and were active educators in local and global service learning for adolescents through their home schools; the other leader was well-traveled and actively engaged in leading local service learning and reflection activities at their home school. The NGO team was comprised of one male coordinator, two primary male leaders of day-to-day logistics, two female cooks, and six other local Cambodians skilled in various aspects of construction work who supported the students on the build site and during cultural activities. The CSP was designed to provide students from around the world an opportunity to explore Cambodian culture, interact with a multi-national group, and create positive change through a service project in Beng Mealea.

Participant selection. Twelve female and six male adolescents aged 16-18 from Australia (five students), Canada (four students), China (one student), England (one student),
Germany (one student), India (five students), and Ireland (one student) were involved in the CSP. All students came from RS member schools, a global network of over 160 independent schools that is discussed below. Students applied directly to the RS project support manager and were selected to participate based on their application. The adolescents did not have previous experience participating in an international service learning project, though many of them had experience traveling internationally for family holidays or school tours. In contrast, approximately one third of participants had never left their native country. Some of the students knew a maximum of two other participants from their home school, and the rest met in Cambodia for the first time.

The methods for data collection are described in greater detail below. At this point it is important to note that since the methods used for research were embedded in the CSP program, all students participated in the research activities; however, only the data from those who agreed to participate in the research were collected and used in the analysis. Fifteen (of the total 18) students from five countries gave informed consent, which also included explicit informed consent from parents or guardians. As outlined in the informed consent form (see Appendix A), choosing not to submit their work for analysis had no impact on the student’s role as participant in the CSP.

**Round Square.** As noted, all participants attended schools from the global network Round Square (RS). RS consists of over 160 independent school members around the world. RS and their member schools have made a commitment to harbour the IDEALS in their educational philosophy: Internationalism, Democracy, Environment, Adventure, Leadership, and Service. Specifically, RS is informed by the philosophy of educator Kurt Hahn who said, “I regard it as
the foremost task of education to ensure the survival of these qualities: an enterprising curiosity, an undefeatable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion” (Hahn, 2016, para. 1). The CSP strove to embody this philosophy by expanding participants’ understandings, perspectives, and boundaries through a range of activities and challenges at social, emotional, physical, cultural, economic, and political levels; these are described below.

I sought to work with RS because I felt they had capacity to design and implement impactful, sustainable, and ethical ISL projects. As the service learning coordinator at a school who is a member of RS, I had attended many RS Regional and International Conferences, and heard about the RS work in action. Similarly, through my positive reputation as a contributing teacher at RS conferences, and my role as an ISL educator at Collingwood School, RS gave me permission to conduct research on the CSP.

**Pre-trip student preparation.** The students came from a variety of familial backgrounds from seven nationalities and six different schools and thus exhibited a range of experiences in cultural exposure and personal growth. Therefore, the level of personal preparation in terms of both self-care when embarking on international travel, as well as cultural understanding of their host country varied greatly. An attempt to level the playing field was made by discussing personal wellness and offering language and history lessons on the first day, as well as varied cultural enhancement experiences throughout the project.

**Travel, accommodation, and food.** Students traveled individually by air to Cambodia and were met by the teacher leaders at the Siem Reap airport. All in-country travel was carried out by bus as a team. The group stayed at a hotel outside of the tourist centre of Siem Reap for
one night before traveling to the camp site in Beng Mealea, their new home for the duration of the project. During casual discussions, participants commented that the camp provided what they needed and nothing more and that “staying at the camp, it was peaceful” (Participant W). Students, teachers, and local leaders slept in open air thatched huts with mats and mosquito nets, cooked their own breakfast of eggs or toast, washed in open air showers with a group-designated time limit of five minutes, and used composting toilets. Camp lunches and dinners were cooked by the local staff and consisted of traditional Cambodian food with the occasional infusion of western influences, such as pasta, and fries (which appeared at the same meal, much to the delight of the participants)!

**Student leadership team.** The CSP program was split into two segments of ten days. For the first segment, eight students who had signed up to be on the leadership team (LT) took part in regular programming, as described below. On Day 8, the LT returned to Siem Reap from Beng Mealea and underwent one day of leadership training. The LT session was facilitated by the teachers and the students worked as a group to consider shared values and characteristics of good leaders. The goal was to provide opportunities for student participants to assess their own leadership style, put it into practice, and reflect upon it afterwards. Participants in the LT took the role of leader and deputy leader, respectively, for one day each, guiding the second student group of ten participants, team 2 (T2), who arrived on Day 11. From Day 12 onwards, the curriculum was essentially repeated. Though there was clearly a distinction between the LT and T2 in terms of their experience, it is worth noting that one of the primary goals of LT was to ensure equality and a sense of belonging for everyone. This was expressed as a success by members of both T2 and LT in their written and artistic reflections.
CSP itinerary and curricular activities. Upon arrival to the village of Beng Mealea, participants were introduced to the community via a welcome conversation with the NGO host, followed by a water blessing ceremony, and community walk. The ceremony was orchestrated by the local monk living on the grounds of the temple and involved a prayer followed by the students being blessed by the monk with water and a red string tied around the wrist. While activities varied each day (see Appendix B for a detailed schedule), on average, students would participate in 4-5 hours of labour per day in the community (community service) and a variety of cultural activities in the afternoon or evening. The community service aspect of the CSP was to provide structural improvements to the existing government school site, as well as building a new English classroom on a site donated by the Buddhist monk community of Beng Mealea. Participants provided labour in the form of cement mixing, brick laying, plastering, digging, bending rebar, planting trees, grouting, and sanding. Students were trained in these skills by the local NGO staff. Work was carried out under supervision of the teacher leaders and NGO site managers. Cultural activities led by local community members included language lessons, historical lessons, temple visits, community walk, basket weaving, and bracelet making. Students regularly interacted with local children (students of the school) and others in the community, and could also participate in daily unstructured activities including volleyball, free play, colouring, card games, and group games.

Informed consent. Prior to engaging young people in my research, informed consent was sought from parents or guardians and the adolescents themselves (see Appendix A). The informed consent form was designed to be accessible to young people and their parents or guardians. The informed consent form, along with an overview of the research, was sent out for
signature by email prior to the beginning of the project. Fifteen of the 18 students returned the signed form. Demographic information including name, gender, nationality, and/or age was recorded; however, this information is not included in the thesis to maintain anonymity of participants. In addition to signing the informed consent, students were reminded before each data collection activity that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

**Methods and Data Collection**

When conducting a descriptive case study, Creswell (2014) recommends that researchers collect “detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a short period of time” (p. 13). Similarly, previous case study research in the field of ISL used a variety of data collection methods including observation, reflection, interviews, journal analysis, and surveys of participants (Bringle, et al., 2011). Reflection is a key part of helping ISL participants analyze their experience and construct their understanding of it (Whitney & Clayton, 2011); there is a consensus amongst educators that reflective activities are an integral part of service learning because “reflection helps students make connections between theoretical perspectives, observations and plausible interpretations, and practice” (Nickols, et al., 2013, p. 104).

Therefore, to conduct this research exploring the short-term impacts of the CSP on participants, I included opening and closing reflections (see Appendix C and D), semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E), and arts based reflection (see Appendix F). Emphasis was placed on understanding the nature of the short-term impacts and their cause (i.e. the curricular aspect or activity triggering change), observing personal change, and identifying meanings students bring to their experience.
Reflection based data collection methods were used because they can have an impact on both the success of the programming and the participants’ ability to derive understanding and meaning from their ISL experience, as “reflection activities direct the student’s attention to new interpretations of events” (Hatcher, et al., 2004, p. 39). The methods used, including opening and closing reflections with guiding questions, arts based interpretations, and semi-structured interviews were intended to encourage a wide array of perspectives to emerge by taking into account different individual learning methods and reflective capacity of the participants. To engage in further reflection, which was not part of the research, students also took part in teacher-facilitated discussions, individual journal entries using guided questions (see Appendix G), and free-form journal entries, designed to spark students’ critical thinking and awareness around their own conceptions. The intention was to provide a completely private, and therefore non-judgmental, space for participants to question and understand their experience, allowing them a chance to process before engaging in the research process, as described below.

**Opening and closing questionnaire.** The opening and closing questionnaires (see Appendices C and D) were designed to facilitate a comparative review of student change, if present. Marshall and Rossman (2016) suggest questionnaires can be used to collect attitudes and opinions of the respondents. O’Leary (2014) suggests that good questions are “unambiguous, inoffensive and unbiased” (p. 211) and he warns of creating poorly worded, leading, or loaded questions. Therefore, the questions were created with attention to not direct or taint the responses by ensuring they were open-ended and did not include key words which might guide the response (for example, the term global citizenship was never used).
The opening questionnaire (see Appendix C) was aimed at creating an understanding of the participants’ worldview, their goals and motivations, perceived strengths, and anticipated challenges. It was developed with the dual goal of encouraging participants to contextualize themselves within the CSP experience and understanding what their initial perspectives were. The questionnaire created this groundwork by asking questions about goals, perceived strengths and challenges, and creating space for reflection. The opening questionnaire was given to students upon their arrival at the hotel in Siem Reap on their first day of the CSP, prior to meeting the host community and beginning the service or cultural aspects of the project.

The closing questionnaire (see Appendix D) was designed to identify motivational, inspirational, or transformative moments and any areas of change in perception, attitude, or behaviour that resulted. It did this by specifically asking what participants learned about themselves, others, and Cambodian culture, and encourages them to identify magic moments, areas of challenge, and key learning points they would share with others. It also asked participants to reflect back on the ideas they shared in the opening questionnaire and identify any personal changes. The closing questionnaire was completed on the final day of the project.

Although it would perhaps be ideal to allow for some more time for reflection prior to completing these surveys, there is relevance in hearing the participants’ perspectives before being re-immersed in their native culture. I was also concerned about the likelihood of participants returning questionnaires once they returned home.

**Interview.** I also chose to use semi-structured interviews to gather the participants’ perspectives on their experience (see Appendix E). Marshall and Rossman (2016) agree this is a useful tool to determine subjective points of view, and Creswell (2014) highlights that qualitative
interviews involve “unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are…intended to elicit views and opinions” (p. 190). As such, I designed my interview questions (see Appendix E) to promote the participants feeling relaxed sharing their views and have purposefully tailored them to be open-ended while still linking back to specific events the students experienced.

Because interviews are “intimate encounters that depend on trust” (Marshall & Rossman, 2015, p. 150), developing a friendly relationship with the students and creating as natural an environment as possible were central to my goals. When delivering an interview for the purpose of collecting perspectives, the central questions were just the start; listening carefully to the participant responses and asking appropriate probing, clarifying or elaborating questions offered further richness (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In addition, Lerum (2001) suggests the interviewer demonstrate some emotional vulnerability. I tried to do this by sharing my own experiences with participants, especially in the context of ISL and global cultural interactions, and by providing opportunities to discuss a variety of topics that sometimes highlighted my own challenges.

Taking those considerations into account, and allowing the students enough time to absorb and speak about their experience as participants, I chose to run the interviews after a minimum of five days on site (for LT this was on Day 9 and for T2 this was on Day 19) in a casual one-on-one chat style, out in the open in common spaces, but out of ear shot of other participants. It should be noted that this meant the interviews for LT students were conducted prior to T2 students arriving. Prior to conducting each interview, participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of participation in the research and informed consent was sought.
Arts based reflection. Arts based methods provide an engaging, though potentially challenging, venue for participants to interpret their experience through art (see Appendix F). As an example, “videos and photographs have the unique ability to capture visual phenomena in a seemingly objective manner – yet always from the perspective of the filmmaker” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 186). According to Gubrium, Hill, and Flicker (2014), artistic interpretations also empower growth and personal reflection and can provide a venue for deeper understanding of complex issues.

For the arts based methods reflection, CSP participants were invited to create a piece of artwork that represented their ISL experience, examples of which are included below. This was done on the afternoon of Day 15, after all students had experienced working on the service project, language lessons, history lessons, basket weaving, bracelet making, and the community walk, and therefore had a range of experiences to draw from. Students were given minimal instructions in order to encourage individual creativity, but suggestions of the possible types of art were given (e.g., poetry, photographs, videos, sculptures, drawings, and paintings). In all representations, participants were asked to not include identifiable people in their work; therefore, no photo release forms were used.

The mode and focus of the arts-based reflection was purposefully open-ended in order to allow for participant reflection and creativity in expressing their work. If participants needed slightly more direction, I asked them what they had learned, what was the most memorable experience, or what had stood out the most for them during the CSP. After completing their piece, they were asked to explain or interpret it in a short paragraph. This was done to ensure their experience was accurately represented in their own words; I did not re-interpret their work.
Data Analysis

Upon return from Cambodia, written, oral, and artistic reflections were gathered and stored, and interview transcripts were transcribed. Data was analyzed inductively, identifying emerging codes and higher-order themes, as outlined by Marshall and Rossman (2016). The themes that surfaced were used to develop discourse around the impact of the CSP ISL experience on student participants. Data was analyzed to identify impact triggers, meanings derived, and lessons learned. The goal was to understand what immediate changes occurred from a participant perspective and what events, emotions, or experiences created or triggered the change. Connections between impact and trigger were made and specific curricular activities causing positive change were identified; these elements were applied to recommendations for future ISL curricular development. Where applicable, data was also grounded in ISL literature.

Data analysis was completed manually, using colour coding, word tables, and diagrams; results were organized using a wall-to-wall blackboard and a sticky note system. I am a visual learner and chose this particular method after weighing the advantages and disadvantages of using a computer program, such as MAXDQA (Bleck, Entzminger, Mayer, & Thompson, 2015).

Data Storage

The opening and closing reflections and arts based methods data were hand-written, collected, and stored in a locked cabinet in the camp during the project, followed by a locked cabinet in my home office. The electronic data, including interview recordings, transcriptions, and some arts based products were stored in locked files on my computer and then locked in the cabinet. These protocols were clearly articulated in the informed consent; however, it was also
noted that confidentiality could not be assured during the arts based methods afternoon, as other students may have seen them creating their work.

**Validity and Ethical Considerations**

As previously noted, this research seeks to develop further understanding about ISL programs to inform ethical and pedagogically grounded ISL programming in the future. The Tri-Council Policy statement on the ethical conduct of research involving people calls for the following three core principles: respect for person, concerns for welfare, and justice (Government of Canada Interagency Panel on Research Ethics, 2016). These core principles are at the centre of this study. To ensure both an ethical approach, and an assessment of validity in the CSP study, below I explore the following factors: ethical program selection; maintaining neutrality; power imbalances; impact of the research on participants; impact of the research on communities; and rigour, trustworthiness, and authenticity.

**Ethical program selection.** I am a secondary school teacher who has designed and led multiple ISL projects and conferences across the globe for students aged 15–18 over the past decade. I have witnessed programs that affected participants and communities positively, and conversely I have observed and experienced the impacts of poorly designed programs. I have a distinct interest in designing impactful, sustainable, and ethical ISL projects. To align with these goals, the benefits of the project must outweigh the risks for the host community and participants in terms of sustainability, available resources, and psychological, intellectual, and spiritual challenges which may be faced (Wells, Warchal, Ruiz, & Chapdelaine, 2011). In selecting an ISL program to conduct my research I sought to work with an organization which demonstrated these values, and for which I had never led an overseas project.
According to Reisch (2011), ethical planning in the ISL field includes cultural, social, and political education for participants; host community involvement; thoughtful selection of group size; sustainable contributions in the community; and formative and summative reflection for participants—all of which were part of the CSP. Furthermore, the CSP did not have “an explicit interest in replicating statist identity and advancing national belonging at the expense of exploring universal human connection” (Hartman & Kiely, 2014a, p. 7). It is important to note that the CSP was designed by RS (an international organization) and had no affiliation to any government, and its participants represented seven countries, decreasing the likelihood of a western centric approach and offering a unique lens into the impact of ISL on students from a variety of ethnic, social, and historical backgrounds.

**Maintaining researcher neutrality and reflexivity.** As noted, I have facilitated many ISL programs in the past, and have my own understanding and interpretation of what successful ISL programs look like and how they are run. Furthermore, as a teacher with over a decade of experience working with adolescents, I carry with me a certain perspective and worldview which includes my understanding of how learners construct new meaning and carry the potential for transformation through new experiences. Morrison (2015) draws particular attention to role the ISL researcher’s worldview plays:

> as researchers we need to identify how we situate ourselves within a particular paradigm or theoretical framework, become aware of the assumptions inherent in a particular approach, and note the choices we make throughout the research process and their effects on the knowledge production process.” (p. 54)
Because I realized I carry a particular bias about quality ISL programs and adolescent learning, I needed to take specific measures to minimize how my bias and experience were injected in the CSP and my research. In an effort to acknowledge and curb my influence, several steps were taken: I was personally reflexive about how my own worldviews could affect this research; I did not have any part in the organization of logistics or initial itinerary; I had no prior contact with the host community of Beng Mealea, NGO, or participants; and I did not receive any financial compensation as part of the project. It is important to note however, that according to RS policies, as an adult on the trip, I was expected to play the role of Deputy Leader and was responsible for the overall safety of the student participants. In this capacity, in addition to conducting my research, I played a supervisory (safety, logistical, organizational), pastoral (emotional care, first aid), and philosophical role (guiding journal reflections, facilitating cultural interactions and discussions) for the students on the CSP. From time to time, I also offered adjustments to the itinerary in collaboration with the other teachers and NGO leaders.

**Power imbalances (student-researcher relations).** As both a researcher and teacher, it is evident that power imbalances exist between research participants and me. In an attempt to overcome and/or mitigate these power imbalances I worked hard to develop a supportive relationship with the students. This began from the moment I picked them up at the airport through asking questions to learn about each participant, coming to understand their strengths and perspectives, and demonstrating my vulnerability through sharing some of my own history and life experience with them. Furthermore, trust was developed through the way I addressed each step of the data collection process. The informed consent (Appendix A) sought parental consent and was carefully explained by email before the CSP, and again to all participants before
they participated in each research method. I ensured participants were aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions for their role as participants on the CSP; I reiterated this before each data collection activity (see Appendices C–F). I also reinforced that as a researcher, and teacher interested in quality ISL programs, I was not assessing them and that I was extremely curious in how they frame and feel about their experience. As such, all research processes reinforced my desire to understand their unique views and perspectives, and on many occasions the students said how meaningful it was that I really wanted to learn from them. Lastly, all oral, written, and visual reflections used open-ended exploratory questions to support participants to share their unique experiences and perspectives.

**Impact of the research on participants.** With my experience with ISL programming, I knew that students participating in ISL project would likely experience a wide range of individual challenges as they adapt to the new environment around them (Nickols, et al., 2013). Although I did not anticipate that participation in this study would negatively impact participants and/or cause harm, I did recognize that participation could be personally challenging for the students (Crabtree, 2008; Kiely 2004), especially as many of them had not experienced the stresses of international travel in remote areas, the direct exposure to poverty, and the physical labour, not to mention the degree of homesickness and culture shock that can arise. I was also aware that sharing about such social, personal, and physical challenges could trigger strong emotions for participants. For that reason, it was extremely important for me to develop a trusting and supportive relationship with participants from the onset of the CSP and that they also understood my vulnerability. I did this by telling them about myself, asking about their interests, having a sense of humour, making them feel as welcome as possible in Cambodia,
establishing a culture of respect and friendly rapport amongst the group, and conveying a sense of interest and responsibility for their wellbeing. Throughout the project all three teacher leaders and the NGO leaders worked together to ensure pastoral (e.g., emotional, health) and structural (e.g., scheduling, organizational) support for the participants.

Impact of the research on community. As noted, some ISL programs do not provide adequate consideration of the types of interactions, particularly with host communities, that garner respect, empathy, and cultural understanding, and this element is essential to creating sustainable positive impact on the communities these programs are designed to serve. It is critical that the research do no harm (see Chapter 2 for an overview of this principle) to the host community. The hope is, of course, that ISL programs go beyond doing no harm and bring real positive change to those that need it most. In an effort to do no harm, the CSP sought to promote cultural respect and understanding and this was reflected in the data collection procedures. For example, activities such as the arts based reflection involved students wanting to take photographs of their surroundings (including homes) and the project site. Participants were debriefed on how to approach such a request with respect and empathy for a culture very different from their own. Students were asked not to take any photographs in which people are identifiable; therefore, no photo release forms were used. In addition, the data collection was never done in a way that impeded or detracted from the service project, or impacted interactions between participants and community members; the times for reflection were carefully selected so as not to impose on essential activities.

Rigour, trustworthiness, and authenticity. As learning and behaviour are impacted by a plethora of social and environmental factors, it is critical that service learning research be
framed within the context of the experience (Hecht, 2003); this is done through specifying the characteristics of the background, site, community, participants and program planning that make the project unique. In his discussion of strategies for supporting trustworthiness in qualitative research, Shenton (2004) outlines credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability of the research. Answering the call for a “true picture of the phenomenon under scrutiny” (Shenton, 2004, p. 63), an accurate description of the CSP has been outlined in detail at the beginning of this chapter. Transferability and some aspects of dependability have been addressed through the recommendations of common themes, goals, and curricular activities that may be included in future ISL projects. Due to the catalytic power of individual personalities, environmental context, and dynamic relationships, all of which cannot be exactly replicated, this research was not intended to be reproducible; rather, it was designed to provide insights into ISL for application in further research and programming.

In addition to trustworthiness, Lincoln, Lyndham, and Guba (2011) stress that in order to claim authenticity in qualitative research, one must ensure the approach to and results of analysis are “related to the way others construct their social worlds” (Lincoln, et al., 2011, p. 120). Therefore, from the initial steps of creating the research questions and refining the research purpose, to analyzing the data and finally writing this thesis, I have been acutely aware of allowing the findings to emerge directly from the data. A variety of data collection methods have been engaged to create triangulation, a method also endorsed by (Marshall & Rossman, 2016) to support trustworthiness.
Strengths and Limitations of Study

Through the use of diverse and creative engagement methods (written, oral, and arts-based reflections), this study highlights the unique insights and perspectives from young people about their lived experiences. It further contributes to the body of research exploring the short-term impacts of ISL programs on adolescent participants. The range of participant backgrounds, cultures, and nationalities, also offers a diversity of perspectives and a rich data set. Although the sample size is small, making it difficult to broadly generalize the research findings, this study prompts further qualitative and quantitative research to gather more information on the short-term impacts of ISL programs on adolescents more broadly. Furthermore, this study does not explore the medium and long-term impacts of ISL programs, suggesting another area for further investigation. Also, it is important to acknowledge that some critical questioning may be needed of young people’s perspectives and insights. Lastly, while this research only investigates one ISL program, the findings are broadly presented to inform a diverse range of ISL programs for adolescent participants.

Knowledge Mobilization

This study will be shared with a large network of service learning educators in Canada and the United States, and with the approximately 160 RS global member schools in 40 countries. To date, I have shared my research proposal and literature review at the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) International Conference in Portland, Oregon and the AEE Northwest Conference in Squamish, British Columbia. In February 2016, I also presented an eight-minute TED-style talk to over 2000 British Columbian educators and special guests at the 50-year anniversary conference for the Federation of Independent Schools. In addition to sharing
my research findings with educators, I also intend to apply the research findings directly to my role as secondary school educator and service learning practitioner; I am excited to engage further in local and global service learning project development and leadership.

Chapter Summary

This chapter was designed to provide a comprehensive look at all aspects of this study. It provides an overview of the case study methodology guiding this research; outlines the research questions and purpose; and provides a detailed explanation of the CSP program, from participant selection to itinerary details. The data collection methods are described, and data storage and analysis is discussed. Finally, an assessment of the ethical considerations guiding this research was explored.
Chapter Four: Findings

“We’re all on the same planet. We literally have each other and that’s it” (Participant Q).

Chapter Overview

As participants set out for Cambodia to participate in the CSP, all were embarking on a journey. While each arrived from a different background, with varying amounts of exposure to other cultures and ways of life, in Cambodia they were all presented with a climate and context quite different from their own, and held high hopes and expectations to experience personal growth in some way. Interviews, reflections, and artistic interpretations with participants explored the short-term impacts of the CSP on participants, and four main themes emerged through inductive analysis of adolescents’ lived experiences: relationship with self; relationship with others; relationship with culture, ways of living, and environment; and relationship with different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing. In addition to gaining understanding in certain areas, some of the participants’ reflections also demonstrated a further need for clarification and analysis of complex issues.

In this chapter, I present the findings as they relate to each theme, and use quotes and artistic interpretations from participants to highlight their unique insights and points of view. I close each theme with an investigation of how participants perceive these impacts are learned or achieved, linking perceived impacts to specific curricular components and processes to inform future ISL programming.

Relationship with Self

The reflective nature of the data collection encouraged research participants to analyze and understand their own personal experiences, insights, and interpretations. Through this
process, participants repeatedly expressed a change in their relationship with themselves. Specifically, the following subthemes emerged and are discussed below: self-awareness and self-confidence, skills development, future direction and goals, and learning through challenge.

**Self-awareness and self-confidence.** Reflecting on the ISL experience and how it affected one’s understanding of self, all participants noted an increased sense of self-awareness and confidence, including a greater sense of identity, self-esteem and independence; understanding one’s strengths, individual power and personal value; and self-love. When asked the most important thing they learned about themselves, one participant replied, “I am stronger, both mentally and physically, than I thought” (Participant H). They added, “You learn that you’re stronger than you think … because like you don’t do this type of thing in your every day” (Participant H). Participant M noted, “I have learnt that I can be determined but also care for others. … I can face any challenge”. Another participant shared being aware of feeling centred: “After being here you just get a really, it kind of centres you as a person as you see, as you do a project that helps others” (Participant O), and yet another developed confidence to share their personal story: “I should not hide who I am” (Participant V).

Participants also revealed a greater understanding of their own capacity. For example, Participant K spoke of increased flexibility, “I learned I can adjust in any new environment”, and Participant L spoke of an increased sense of self-esteem, “I think this improved my confidence which will definitely help me continue to grow as I meet new people”. Participant P, on the other hand, discovered an adventurous side: “I’m gonna head home and then I’ll plan my next trip. It’s really inspired the adventure side of me, it’s like I can go and do these things and I’ll always come back and if I go out I will have a positive experience”. Other participants gained personal
understanding and clarification of their perspectives, for example as one participant noted, “I am more introverted than extroverted” (Participant Q); whereas another stated, “I realize my actual position …where I stand” (Participant T). In short, participation in the CSP, combined with poignant reflection exercises, provided a path for participants to develop greater self-awareness.

**Skills development.** In addition to clarifying their understanding of self, participants also noted specific skills and capacities they developed through participation in the CSP. They spoke about learning leadership skills and clarifying their preferred leadership styles: “I am a capable leader that leads by example” (Participant H). They learned tangible skills such as plastering, digging, grouting, and weaving (see Figure 1) and non-verbal and verbal communication skills. For example, Participant N reflected on their ability to communicate non-verbally: “when you were playing [volleyball], you didn’t need to be able to talk to them and they didn’t need to be able to understand you, and you could use actions and show them other ways of communicating with each other, not just language”. It appears, therefore, that participating in a wide range of physical and social activities both reinforced previous learning, and provided opportunities for new learning to take place.

Participants connected an increased sense of skill and capacity with self-confidence. For example, Participant R shared: “I am capable of a lot more than I think, such as building skills on the worksite”. Participants also placed value on the process of learning: “I felt it was worth learning. Because when you’re really good at something, when you get good at something you just, you feel that is was worth your hard work” (Participant J). Lastly, participants reported being inspired to learn new skills: “I learned that I need to improve my speaking skills, my thinking skills; I have to read more books. Now, after seeing [other participants] reading so many
books, I’ll also start” (Participant T). Interestingly, throughout the trip many students voluntarily began reading historical fiction and non-fiction books related to Cambodia. In short, learning new physical, social, and thinking skills helped participants to understand their capabilities and potential contribution to the group, question previous understandings, and become inspired for future learning.

![Woven banana](image)

*Figure 1. Woven banana. Participant Interpretation: I decided to do this as throughout my time here I have spent so much time sitting down with the team creating something and learning new skills (Participant M).*

**Future direction and goals.** Engagement in the CSP sparked a desire for ongoing learning and reaffirmed participants’ core values, aspirations, and future goals. In particular, participants spoke of a desire to explore and learn more about other cultures and countries: “talking to all [the participants], I want to travel to all those places” (Participant O). In addition, many participants wishing to pursue future careers in an area which served others reported a renewed sense of focus in fields such as medicine, education, politics, leadership, and outdoor
adventure: “So, my goal is to be a doctor … I knew that I wanted to do something but not for myself … I think this trip really helped solidify it.” (Participant W). This sense of understanding oneself better, combined with the knowledge one can make a difference and increased confidence deriving from success through challenge, appeared to have helped the participants in clarifying their future direction and goals. The idea of challenge as a pathway to learning surfaced repeatedly and will be discussed below.

**Learning through challenge.** Reflecting on their experiences in the CSP, participants shared the physical, mental, and emotional challenges they faced. They did not, however, express adverse feelings to these challenges; rather, they suggested that being put outside one’s comfort zone was a fertile ground for their learning. As one participant reflected,

> When you’re kind of pushed, you experience things more truly, I find. So, like when you’re beyond your limits, not beyond your limit, but you’re at your limit, you just, you’re more willing almost [pause]. Well, I am. I know some people are kind of the opposite, but you’re more willing to experience other people’s ways of living and like when you are at your limit, it’s a better representation of the culture and a better representation of yourself, as well. So you can be more true to both of them. (Participant Q)

As participants reflected on the physical, mental, emotional, and social challenges they faced, they discussed the strategies used to overcome them. For example, some participants expressed concern that they wouldn’t be able to manage the manual labour such as plastering but reported that one-on-one or small group lessons on new building tasks were the best way to acquire and master a skill and that switching tasks regularly to manage physical fatigue was helpful. Others
noted that they found the heat challenging: “The heat makes everyone quite exhausted, so you just gotta stay positive to deal with the climate” (Participant Q). Hurdles related to jet lag, mild homesickness, the repetitive food, and the monotony of building tasks were also raised. In response, participants talked about the importance of remaining open and patient, and the positive benefits and lessons that resulted: “I really had to force myself to stay positive and keep being outgoing. I think this improved my confidence which will definitely help me continue to grow as I meet more new people” (Participant L). Through challenge, participants were able to learn new skills, develop a better understanding of their personal boundaries and limitations, recognize and employ coping mechanisms, and find new ways to strategize and problem solve.

**How participants are learning about relationship with self.** As participants engaged in the CSP and reflected on their opinions, feelings, challenges, and successes, they seem to have developed a stronger sense of self: “I learned so many skills, made friends for life and had the experience to make myself a better person. It is important to me because it shows that I can change, and have the ability to learn new skills” (Participant I). When asked about how these learnings or changes in their self-confidence, self-awareness, physical and social capacities, and future orientation occurred, participants referenced the importance of reflection exercises, living in the camp and working on the service project together as a group, and collective experiences more broadly. These experiences appear to have pushed their personal comfort zones and allowed the CSP participants to evaluate their sense of self in a completely new context. As they learned more about themselves and took part in new interactions, their relationship with others was also impacted; their perspectives will be discussed below.
Relationship with Others

CSP participants expressed better understanding of the importance of developing and navigating relationships, and learning with, and from, others. They spoke about building empathy and valuing individual contributions of others; developing interpersonal relationships with their peers and hosts; and the role of friendships and community, along with worrying about fitting in. Below, an overview of participants’ new understandings around their relationship with others is explored.

Developing empathy and understanding the value of others. Through participation in the CSP, students shared that they learned about the importance of being empathetic and understanding of the differences of others. For example as one participant noted:

Everyone has a story behind them. This story shapes them and dictates how they act and the things they do and once you understand that you can understand the person and empathize with them. (Participant M)

Another participant said: “The most important thing I learned about others was the importance of teamwork and diversity in our daily interactions. This team consisted of people from all around the world, with different religions and backgrounds yet our histories did not matter. I think all of us put our differences aside, or embraced them, and worked incredibly closely. (Participant V)

The philosophy that everyone has something positive to offer was raised repeatedly: “everyone has some way of contributing to the group, whether that may be physically or mentally in order to improve and help the group as a whole” (Participant N). In addition, Participant L acknowledged the value and importance of difference: “Everyone had such different approaches and attitudes but we all got along really well and learnt more because of it
[emphasis added], which highlighted in my opinion the importance of an open mind and listening to people with different opinions” (Participant L). Through empathy and open-mindedness, students were able to realize and appreciate the strengths, skills, and limitations of others. Furthermore, in a challenging context students learned to try to put themselves in each other’s shoes by recognizing and appreciating differing opinions, perspectives, and values.

**Interpersonal interactions with peers and communities.** The development of new interpersonal or social skills to relate with others was one of the most predominantly discussed areas of learning for participants in the CSP. In general, participants described relationship building as fun; however some participants arrived anxious about interpersonal interactions and fitting in. These fears seem to have been alleviated once the CSP began: “I didn’t know how well I was going to get along with everyone and I was a bit anxious, and I was like, am I gonna like these people and are these people gonna like me? But ya, it turned out really, really well” (Participant O). Participants noted an increased capacity in their ability to engage with others, for example as one participant noted: “My social skills in general have increased greatly; I have discovered my inner confidence and learned how to interact with others in a unique way” (Participant I). Another participant said, “I’m really getting more comfortable, like more adventurous in approaching new people, and, I think that’s definitely something that’s changed I guess in this trip, like I’ve really opened up more than I would have ever expected” (Participant V). Others saw themselves as more charismatic, more outgoing and more open; in the words of one participant, “I lost my shyness” (Participant S).

In addition to having an increased ability to form relationships and collaborate with others, participants also spoke about how they learned to try and understand one’s views, to
respond instead of react, and to interact and be interested in others in order to build and maintain friendships. For example, as one participant noted: “I’ve realized that to make good friends, one has to be interactive and to be helpful, and should have a calm and friendly nature” (Participant T). Participants spoke of their improved ability to navigate group dynamics and perceive others’ emotions and needs, including the diverse needs of introverted and extroverted individuals, and those from an array of cultural backgrounds: “It’s made me more aware to watch other people, so like, you don’t want to push anyone too far here … I’m more aware of how other people feel in certain situations” (Participant Q). And they also discussed the motivating aspect of working towards a goal in a diverse group: “a change can be brought if we work together and are united even though we have differences” (Participant J). Another student reflected on the dynamics of a shared vision in a diverse group: “When people share a common goal, they all work really hard, despite challenges, nationality, gender, or religion, to achieve it. I think this is amazing” (Participant O). Clearly, the process of relating respectfully with others provided fertile ground for developing empathy, compassion, and open-mindedness.

As participants engaged in developing new relationships with their new community, they expressed that making an effort to learn and practice the language impacted how they interacted with their Cambodian hosts. Furthermore, they regularly spoke of basket weaving, bracelet making, and volleyball as a way to increase their non-verbal communication and bonding skills while interacting and connecting as a community. When asked about participating in the volleyball matches, Participant P reflected:

It was a great bonding experience, especially with the local Cambodians. And when they get involved, it’s just great fun and I suppose that applies to when we did the basket
weaving, just doing it with the locals there, help us out, that was really fun. It was building a relationship with them, you’re not saying anything to them, but you are building relationships with them.

Participants reported that new interpersonal bonds on the CSP, they saw others as being generally more patient, supportive, mature, understanding, and open-minded than they had previously thought. Navigating these new relationships helped participants reflect on the role of friendship and community in their life.

**Friendship and community.** Nearly all participants identified meeting new people from diverse backgrounds as one of the top two reasons they signed up to participate in the CSP and emphasized the value and importance of establishing friendships and being part of a community, and they revealed this in their individual reflections and their arts based interpretations (see Figure 2). Participants felt that friendships and community are not simply developed through a shared activity or conversation, and can sometimes occur from just simply being together: “you’re sitting in silence, but you’re still together, which is, I don’t know, it’s community” (Participant O). In many instances, participants referred to the group as their family away from home, and all participants spoke about their level of comfort with the group and the friendships formed. When asked about this dynamic of closeness and connection, Participant V noted: “I think it’s just, like everyone, it’s just a culture of openness, and there’s no judgment, really. Like, within this group. I could feel like I am free to say whatever I want to and there’s just like, no retaliation”.
Figure 2. Friendship. Participant interpretation: This image shows the importance of friendship, one of my personal values. This trip has allowed me to create bonds with people from all over the world. (Participant H)

Being part of a community comes with challenges and along with adjusting to a new culture and different physical environment, some participants mentioned feeling impatient with others due to close quarters. Others, however, indicated that the constant proximity motivated them to be empathetic and look for the best in each other; they spoke about the importance of having a network of friends to inspire, support, and create broader impact in the world. For example as one participant noted:

I know I want to make a difference in the world and people say it takes one person at a time, like even one person doing it, but I find that hard. You need a lot of people and this experience, knowing that I have a group of people around me that feel the same way, is just really nice. You just, they’re just really kind and really nice to have around. It’s hard to explain the friendships we made. (Participant W)
Embedded in the reflection above is the participant’s general belief that society equates individuality with the ability to make change; this lens itself could carry a cultural bias, demonstrating a possible need for further critical assessment of one’s beliefs, worldviews, and perspectives. Regardless, the sense of enthusiasm they gained from the group was clear. Several participants definitely recognized the power of the group and also spoke of the motivation they felt by being part of a community with a common goal: “I found myself being motivated really easily … it must be the group environment and also just being somewhere else and being in a completely different world, I’m like, I’ve gotta do it” (Participant P). They also repeatedly referred to the care, affection, and concern they developed for their peers and Cambodian hosts and reported that sharing goals and values helped to create bonds amongst the group. Interestingly, participants were pleasantly surprised with the level of ease in connecting with young Cambodian children and our NGO hosts.

**How participants are learning about relationships with others.** CSP participants revealed that building relationships with others was best established through casual interactions in the community, cultural and arts based activities, discussions with the group (especially around meal times), and informal games and sporting activities with their peers and community members. A student who enjoyed listening to others debate politics over the course of a meal said the lesson they learned was one of learning to disagree respectfully in conversation: “Here I learned like share your views, whatever they are. They may be the same to the person you’re talking to, they may not be the same – be like contradictory – but that’s okay. I’m going to share them” (Participant K). Participants also commented that learning about and sharing diverse opinions encouraged them to analyze their own perspectives, and in some cases change their
point of view. In short, participants learned to connect and form a community with their peers and local hosts, and informal interactions appear most effective to develop empathy and understanding, recognize the inherent value of others, and establish friendships and a sense of belonging in the context of community. As these relationships with others developed, they necessarily impacted the ways in which CSP participants interacted and learned from different cultures, ways of living, and the environment, and their experiences will be explored below.

**Relationship with Culture, Ways of Living, and Environment**

When asked to share their top reasons for being part of the CSP, exploring Cambodian culture was frequently identified as an important driver:

> You can’t just stay in one country and get bored of your own. You become so one-minded. And then you just think that your home country is the culture all the way around the world. But, although there are similarities the small differences make a major impact on how you view other cultures. (Participant I)

Undoubtedly, each student left Cambodia with some increased knowledge and understanding about the culture, different ways of life, and the environment that they lived and volunteered in for three weeks. Through this process they developed the ability to engage cross-culturally: “I sort of have a better understanding of what it’s like to go into a new place and learn more about it” (Participant N). However, these understandings varied according to the participants’ lived experiences to date.

Given that participants were from seven different countries, with more or less in common with Cambodia, each participant constructed their own cultural understandings within the context of their perspectives and life experiences. As such, learning went beyond simply Cambodia, their
host country; participants noted that interactions with their global peers helped them to learn about varied ethnic, political, and social contexts. Interestingly, all participants noted that learning about Cambodia, and the home countries of other participants directly from citizens of those countries was important to influence participants’ understanding of culture, ways of life, and environment, and these are discussed below.

**Cultural understanding of Cambodia.** Not surprisingly, all participants indicated that through their participation in the CSP they had a greater understanding of Cambodian culture, and noted the value of learning about Cambodia in context. In the arts based reflection, participants spoke about their increased understanding of religion, history, and language, as well as the economic, social, and political context of their hosts. For an example of one participant’s arts based reflection depicting some of these reflections, see Figure 3.

*Figure 3. My time in Cambodia. Participant interpretation: I chose to take a picture of the things that were most powerful for me on the trip. The focus in the picture is on the temple, because the biggest part of my experience was the cultural learning, this includes my understanding of the Buddhist religion. Also there is a woman in the picture who represents the lifelong friendships I*
have made. The next aspect is the Cambodian hut to the right which represents my connection with the local community. Next, the brick stack is symbolic of the building we have done and the things we have constructed. Finally, the plants in the picture are representative of my connection with nature during the trip, both literally and within myself. (Participant P)

**Religion, history, and language.** Learning about the role of religion in community was repeatedly noted in participant reflections as important. Participant V indicated that learning about the important role of religion in community “helped me to understand a lot more about the way people live their lives.” and another noted “Cambodia is very religious and I think people bond over that” (Participant R). For most, the water blessing on day one in Beng Mealea was the first direct exposure many participants had to religious traditions in Cambodia. Many noted that the water blessing ceremony allowed them to better understand and experience religion in context, or, as was the case of each of the Indian students specifically, the ceremony enabled them to connect Cambodian culture to their home culture.

Lessons on religion were often embedded in a historical context, offering opportunities for students to learn about the history of Cambodia. As an example, initially, nearly half the students were aware of the Khmer Rouge; yet by the end of the CSP, all participants indicated that they developed a better understanding of the scale and complexity of Cambodian history by participating in the CSP. One student spoke of better understanding the role historical influences have on the individual and society: “Your history shapes who you are, who you identify as a country and who you identify as yourself, ‘cause your history also influences your actions” (Participant V). By taking part in local customs and learning first-hand about the importance of religion in the community and the country’s history, participants said they developed greater
understanding for religious motivations, reasoning behind certain cultural norms, and greater empathy for other ways of life. As one participant wrote,

I think the temples have been really, really interesting to see and learning more about the religion I found has helped me understand a lot more about the way people live their lives here. The temples were amazing and people poured their hearts in to them, they’re just so intricate. I think that’s really got me, people were willing to spend years and years of their lives, sometimes their entire lives, building these temples for their king or for the gods. And I think they’re willing to embrace their religion into their everyday. Which, I’m not a religious person but I think that was really cool and interesting to understand.

(Participant V).

Reflecting on religion, participants also expressed a degree of surprise by what they interpreted to be a high level of cohesion between the two major religions: “I’ve never heard of a place where they mix two different main religions like this” (Participant I). In addition to engaging with religion, students also engaged in the Khmer language, both formally and informally.

There was a dominant overall feeling that learning the language created a sense of respect for their hosts; participants articulated being better guests and defined the idea of traveler versus tourist partly through a scale of willingness to learn the local language: “You’re not just a tourist if you really make the effort to speak their language. You’re showing a kind of respect for their culture and for them as people” (Participant V). Participants also recognized the role English had in the village and observed that locals were very keen to learn English. The children were also interested in careers in which English language skills were an asset such as guiding and driving.
When asked about the impact of trying to learn and apply the language, Participant I reflected:

I think they just like you a bit more. Like, they see, not a tourist, they see someone who’s got character. They just see, they don’t hear anything so there is no personality that they can pick up. But as you start saying charismatically *sok sabaay te* [hello in Khmer] and all that, they develop an opinion of you.

In addition to a perceived sense of personal connection emerging from the effort to communicate, some participants reported developing non-verbal communication skills and a sense of personal connection with one of the locals who spoke no English: “I’ve never spoken to him, but, you know every time I see him I smile at him and he smiles back and it’s like you got a relationship there, but you really don’t know each other. I find that really interesting” (Participant P). Therefore, although participants had varying levels of difficulty learning and applying the local language, they found ways to learn about and from their hosts.

**Economic, social, and political context.** The CSP presented a range of experience to encourage participants to question the conditions in rural Cambodia and therefore analyze their assumptions in an economic, social, and political context of the developing world. For some, it made an impact through sensory overload. Others described seeing the level of poverty in Beng Mealea as *eye opening* and several said it was the most challenging aspect of the CSP. Participants also learned about the economic practices of the locals by taking time to understand and ask questions about the livelihood of the people of Beng Mealea.

The market was a place of fascination for many of the participants: “Everything is so vibrantly coloured and the smells are quite strong, and while some of them aren’t nice smells, it
still, like adds to the experiment” (Participant Q). For others, along with the atmosphere, the market provided a learning ground for understanding local economics, global trade and the real and perceived value of money:

I think I’ve really come away from the market being like, how much is really everything worth? And, like, what does money even have to do with anything honestly. I feel they [some adolescents] feel money is power and they need to have more brand labels and more, they need something to say that they have a [pause] higher worth, if that makes sense. (Participant V)

The participants also remarked on the repeated stalls with the same wares, noting the economic drive of tourism.

Some students derived more of an awareness of the economic reality simply by observing the community in which we worked. For some participants the inequality was confronting: “the most challenging experience was seeing how the local lived compared to myself and how much I take for granted” (Participant R). One student who had previously visited Cambodia connected the tourism economy to social impacts she observed: “Doing the service project, I saw a lot more poverty than I did when I was here previously [as a tourist with family] and I think it really showed me how Cambodia is, rather than just what you see on t.v., and it’s so much different to people think it is” (Participant R). In addition to a greater understanding of the economic and social influences at play in Cambodia, CSP participants gained political awareness through the history lesson delivered by locals and by way of casual discussions within the group over meals.

Many expressed a greater understanding of the regional politics, including that of Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand, as well as a clearer idea interconnectedness of global politics.
As they became familiar with the ideology, and cultural norms in Cambodia, CSP participants compared this new understanding to their own context and worldview, and their experiences with different ways of living will be explored below.

**Relationship with different ways of living.** CSP participants interacted with other ways of living by reflecting on how they wanted to be in the world, the responsibility they felt to others, and how they wished to be perceived by others. And for the most part, through exposure to and participation in different ways of living, they demonstrated an increasingly socially aware and justice oriented persona. Transformations took a wide range of forms, including: breaking down stereotypes as they developed a greater understanding of cultural norms, ideology, and daily life; seeking common ground in a diverse group; finding ways to surpass language barriers through non-verbal communication; and gaining a sense of empathy for another. As they interacted with new ways of life, they demonstrated the ability and desire to question their role in the world and engaged in their belief of a collective responsibility to others. What follows is an overview of these aspects, all important characteristics of global citizenship, as addressed by the participants.

**Interacting with ways of life in the community.** For most participants, their first exposure to the daily life of rural Cambodia was during the village walk through the community of Beng Mealea: “The community tour was an interesting way of starting the trip because you got to understand how the people were living and what you were going into as well” (Participant W). The camp living environment proved to have a great impact on the participants, as they were situated at the heart of the small village of Beng Mealea, just 500 metres from the local Buddhist pagoda and temple. As noted by one participant, “Just seeing how locals interact with each other,
is quite [a] good tell-tale sign of the culture, I’ve found” (Participant Q). One participant
dedicated their arts based reflection to the importance she recognized being placed on bicycles in
the village, a seemingly mundane yet essential aspect of Cambodian culture (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Fading bicycle. Participant interpretation: The drawing represents both the Cambodian
culture and the travel which brought us here. The fading represents my unfinished trip in
Cambodia and the possibility of coming back.

Through the participants’ experiences and reflections, they developed learning not only
of another culture, but of their own. “This trip has really helped me grasp the difference between
my life and theirs, and also the similarities” (Participant V). One student described their desire to
connect more authentically with the place and people they were visiting: “I really love travelling
but find that I gain so much more if I don’t just go as a tourist and [I] also obviously wanted to
help people and make a difference” (Participant L). Another reiterated the type of explorer they
respected: “A traveler [vs. tourist] is more willing to immerse themselves in the culture and
actually try to understand” (Participant Q). This re-interpretation of how students understood and related to others had a direct relationship on their approach to different ways of living, and to the development of characteristics of global citizenship, such as appreciation of diversity, tolerance, and a social justice orientation.

As participants reflected on Cambodian way of life, they expressed observing a pervasive sense of happiness and resilience in their hosts: “They’re so enthusiastic. There’s just such a love of life, it’s nice to experience people who are so enthusiastic and are just so much fun. Even though we can’t speak to [the locals], we still interact with them and it’s just so much fun that they’re willing to try and interact with us even though we don’t speak the same language” (Participant Q). Participants regularly spoke about the positive attitude, kindness, and good humour displayed by the Beng Mealea community members. One student claimed, “My attitude has changed because of seeing how positive and happy everyone is here no matter their situation in life” (Participant N). According to the students, Cambodians seemed happier and more enthusiastic than the folks they knew at home. When asked why they thought that was, the students always pointed to a sense of perspective, community, and gratitude: “Cambodians are much happier because they live a natural life and they care about the community and neighbourhood” (Participant J) and “I think cause they work so hard for everything they’ve got, like the feeling of accomplishment when you work hard for something and you get it is pretty good, so that kind of encourages enthusiasm” (Participant Q). Whether participants’ perceived reasons behind Cambodians’ happiness was accurate or not, it certainly provided an opportunity for the participants to reflect on their own attitude towards daily life.
All participants reflected on the religious, national, or cultural practices common in their home culture when addressing and discussing their experiences in Cambodia. All spoke of more clearly understanding their own privilege and relative wealth. Participant P wrote,

I believe this project has made me more aware of the world around me. I am better able to connect with people and judge their emotions at a given time. I am also more aware of the life those in poverty live. But most importantly, I am more aware of how fortunate I really am. I hope I can develop this awareness into action and make a difference.

Through being exposed to other ways of living, many contemplated the application of difficult topics like stereotypes, gender roles, and environmental responsibility in a way they previously hadn’t. One student spoke of their experience having the men leaders of the NGO lead the group in reed collecting and basket weaving, as well as bracelet making: “For me, I’ve always grown up learning that basket, like not in my house, but like in general history-wise, basket weaving or stuff, seed-sorting, it’s just a woman’s job and I thought it was cool that men take the patience to actually learn it” (Participant Q). Participants also talked about the importance of learning about the education system, food, and livelihood of the people they were coming to know, and felt the market, community, and work site were important opportunities to learn about local customs and ways of engagement. Engaging with locals in and amongst the community also helped participants challenge their ideas of homogeneity, question stereotypes, and grow to appreciate the unique characteristics, ways of life, and values systems of the Cambodians they met.

*Appreciation of diverse ways of living and value systems.* Through their journal reflections, students were asked to identify their own values and the activity was used to discuss the range of values in a multi-cultural group dynamic. The diversity of the group seemed to
provide fertile ground for expanding intercultural understanding and appreciation of others’
value systems: “I’ve learned more how the interactions between people shape reactions in a way,
like I feel like interacting in our group has shaped how we’ve become really close and
interacting with the locals shaped how we react to the culture [emphasis added] and I feel like
that’s something that I’ve learned and I’ll take home with me”.

Participant V used their arts based interpretation to reflect on “the service, my values, and
the perspectives through which individuals see the world” and over the course of the project,
clarified the four most important values to them: “respect, teamwork, equity, and courage”, the
first three of which demonstrate a clear appreciation of the diverse nature of the team and host
community (See Figure 5). Overall, the participants demonstrated an increased understanding of
the importance of context and culture on value development. “Coming here, it’s really opened
my eyes to how many different way of living there are in the world” (Participant N). They began
to break down stereotypes around other cultures and around those living in poverty, and they
spoke of a greater sense of appreciation for the diversity of the group.
Figure 5. Internationalism. Participant interpretation: People’s arms around a tree, to represent culture, friendship, and nature. To me a large part of the trip to Cambodia (aside from helping the local community) was meeting new people from all over the world and making new friendships. …One of my favourite parts of the trip was going and experiencing the water blessing. … I have also really enjoyed experiencing the nature here, especially seeing lots of dogs and cows and other animals, as well as experiencing new types of foods/fruits. (Participant N)

The students identified and defined values and qualities they admired that emerged by the very nature of working in a multicultural group, as well as those exhibited by their hosts. At risk of minimizing the importance of each of the characteristics brought forward by the students, they are listed here: open-mindedness; courage; flexibility; kindness and friendliness; acceptance and appreciation of others; knowing and helping your community; recognizing your personal worth; taking an interest in others; working from your heart; having a sense of humour; recognition of beauty; working hard; taking advantage of opportunities; being respectful of nature and the environment; and having the ability to find common ground.
As participants learned and developed respect for other ways of life, they also had to grapple with the reality of how to exist in an entirely new way of life for them. From negotiating mosquito nets to navigating bustling markets, what follows is an overview of the relationship participants had with the fresh environment they were presented with during the CSP.

**Relationship with environment.** Participants addressed the role the environment had on them mentally and the way in which it helped them understand and interact with Cambodian culture more thoroughly. Specifically, they spoke about feeling at peace living at the camp and said being there enabled more authentic encounters with locals. One student reflected,

> You’re outside, you’re with nature. I find that really, it’s not a massive thing, but it is quite powerful, when you’re just sort of detached, you know you’re never closed off, you’re always open. And then, you’re open to other people as well. I don’t think it would be at all the same if we weren’t staying at the camp, if we weren’t eating the local food, that sort of thing”. (Participant P)

Another spoke about the clarity they felt at camp: “Staying at the camp, it was peaceful and I think it is the happiest I’ve been. You know, like you’re usually happy when you buy things or when you’re going places and stuff but for once I wasn’t worried about school, I wasn’t worried about things happening around me. I was just there and I was there to do something and that was to help other people and to get to know the people around me” (Participant W). One participant used their artistic reflection to consider environmental norms at in their native country; they compared the clean environment of Beng Mealea to the polluted region they called home (see Figure 6).
Figure 6. Polluted City. Participant interpretation: I have drawn a polluted city… it is the city where I come from. In my piece of art I have represented the air pollution … the water pollution … and I have also tried to describe how noise pollution is created by different sources. The pollution ha[s] created lots and lots of problems. So after coming to Cambodia I feel so fresh and pollution free as there is no pollution and we have fresh air all around us. I think that I am full with freshness. (Participant T).

The camp, the rural village of Beng Mealea, the temples, and the bustling streets and markets of the tourist town of Siem Reap featured regularly in the data. They celebrated taking part in a community that exhibited environmental responsibility. The camp adhered to permaculture practices, including rain water showers and compost toilets and several of the students commented on how the use of resources made them reflect on their practices at home. They said they enjoyed immersing themselves in another way of living, and reported how good it felt to be part of a sustainable environment, in which you had no more, no less than you needed.
By far the majority of these impacts were reported by the students as being positive; several participants described a sense of peace and ability to interact authentically at camp; however occasionally they were negative or confrontational. One student described feeling crowded and rushed at the tourist-filled Angkor Wat and another described feeling sad, helpless, and angry seeing young school-aged girls begging for money at the temples:

The little girls at Angkor Wat were quite hard. Because like, I’m like, ‘I want to help you but you should be in school’. It’s just so hard because you just want to help everyone and you really, really can’t, cause there just so much to do, so that’s been quite hard.

(Participant Q)

The fact that participants regularly mentioned the impact of their environment supports the idea that context is essential in understanding how participants construct their own meaning. Participants were able to shed light on that process, by highlighting the aspects of the CSP which allowed them to clarify their learning process as they changed their relationship to culture, environment, and ways of living.

How participants are learning about relationships with culture, environment, and ways of living. What became apparent throughout the research is that participants gained appreciation and understanding for other cultures and ideas through authentic interaction with their multi-national peers and Cambodian locals within a global context. Being involved in respectful yet uncensored conversations in which they critically assessed diverse approaches to culture and ways of life, as well as taking part in language and history lessons with the locals, resulted in students changing their relationship towards other cultures and their new
environment. This also highlights that global travel has a distinct role in the process by which participants are learning:

Without travelling internationally, I wouldn’t be able to feel that I know how people work, or how to approach different people and different traditions. I guess it makes me open-minded, too. … Just being able to go to different countries and see how they react to our culture and what their culture is, it’s interesting for me. (Participant W).

Participants said they learned best about Cambodian culture through casual chats on the build site, at the dinner table, and the wash station; cultural activities such as basket weaving and bracelet making; and by way of guided visits to Beng Mealea and Angkor Wat temples. “It was a really cool lesson to learn. Especially because we were here learning it… knowing or having people teach you that know people that had experienced it” (Participant J). Participants also said that the temple visits and corresponding lessons led by locals, along with casual discussions on religion around the dinner table, were the two most influential activities for developing understanding of the role of Buddhism and Hinduism in Cambodian society.

Participants described their preferred ways of learning from the locals, which included language acquisition through repetitive use on the work site (they commented, however, that the formal lesson was useful scaffolding). They also learned by observation (particularly cultural norms and way of life); discussion (political and social awareness); and games, particularly volleyball (social skills including non-verbal communication). They reflected on religion and developed new cultural understandings through their guided visit to the temples, formal and informal lessons with the locals, and by first-hand experiences like participating in the water blessing ceremony.
Underlying it all, participants developed empathy while learning about the socio-economic context and different ways of life of their hosts. By observing extreme poverty in Beng Mealea, and through their time living at the camp, they reflected upon resource use during the basket weaving activity and developed understanding of different resource-use methods through lessons on permaculture gardens, water usage, and compost toilets. These activities which incorporated “respectful listening of perspectives and histories” (Keith, 2005, p. 15) provided a platform for affecting participants’ relationship with culture, diverse ways of living, and environment, and ultimately resulted in an increased desire for equity, social justice orientation, and a sense of responsibility for their global community. At the root of this shift was a change in participants’ understanding: they reported transformations in their perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing. These impacts will be discussed in the following section.

**Relationship with Different Perspectives, Attitudes, and Ways of Knowing**

Without a doubt, students reported a shift in their perspective of the world around them, their attitude to others, and the ways in which they understood and contextualized their experiences. As one participant shared:

> This experience was different from any experience I had in my whole life. This experience made me learn, made me more positive. It brought about some changes of which, to me, they’re really positive. I started thinking more about the society. I started wondering how could I help society more in my own ways, and then it just made me more positive towards the people who are less privileged. (Participant J)

This section is dedicated to investigating changes in participants’ perspective, attitude, and ways of knowing and understanding as a result of taking part in the CSP.
Changes in perspective, attitude, and ways of knowing. The ways in which CSP participants expressed transformation in their perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing varied according to their lived experiences. However, a fascinating area of growth that most displayed was the awareness that one can change and become a better version of oneself. This idea of being able to change, learn, and grow surfaced repeatedly: “The experience changed my perspective on how to see things. It also changed my ways to see myself and face the world …because I experienced new things, made new friends, who are totally different from each other, so this made me learn new things and bring changes in myself” (Participant K). It appears as though direct exposure to people of cultures quite different from one’s own had an impact on the perspectives and attitude of the CSP participants. By creating bonds within the CSP, several participants reported a more positive outlook on the world, a more tolerant view of others, and an increased sense of global responsibility than they had at the beginning of the project.

The world is a good world. The people are not harsh. They are not [pause]. Before coming here I felt people outside are rude, cruel, harsh, it is a bad world to live in, but no, it is a good world. Everyone is so friendly here, I’m sure they are elsewhere, too. And I feel it is my responsibility to make everyone a part of it. And I just want to explore the world now (Participant S).

Though exploration of a world quite different from their own provided plenty of room for learning, there were several instances when students described realizations that came to them during seemingly mundane or regular moments. Often a sunset, a meal time, a pause while brushing their teeth led to a comparison to those activities at home and a sort of wow moment. Participant V recalled a moment about half way through the project:
I just kind of walked out of my room and was faced with this glorious sunset and I was actually freaking out. It just [pause] I’ll never forget it. It was unlike anything I’d ever seen and I don’t know if everyone saw it, too, which kind of made me be like, I just found myself seeing a lot more things. I thought it was really representative of how I’ve come to open my eyes a little more.

Furthermore, participants expressed a shifting perspective on their approach to their way of living: “You’re going to live happy with what you have or you’re going to be sad about what you don’t have” (Participant J). This desire to take an optimistic view of life seems to have resulted from reflecting on and admiring the positivity expressed by the Cambodian people.

Participants defined what it meant to them to have authentic connections, to value oneself and others, and what they believed were admirable personal characteristics. During daily interactions, they analyzed how they felt throughout the project, they watched their peers from around the globe, and they learned from their Cambodian hosts. One participant chose sculpture to highlight aspects of the CSP experience that were impactful to them. Participants spoke of feeling well on the trip and related that to community, the environment, and being present and grateful: “The trip was the most peaceful until the present moment of my life and it really has changed me a lot in a positive way. Being close to nature and so many friends who are caring made this change take place” (Participant J). This idea of balance and contentedness surfaced often.

Participants repeatedly commented on the positivity that came from filtering out the noise of the world around. CSP participants had no access to technology and for the most past, they felt this was beneficial to diving in to the CSP experience; it seemed to remove the background
noise that is so much a part of adolescent life in the developing world: “I found just being away from technology and being away from people who don’t understand the experience was really important” (Participant W). Another participant said that isolation made them connect more consistently and authentically with the group: “I learnt that living with people without any information about the present happening around the globe brings you more close to them” (Participant J). They explained that it reduced their background fears of major global issues in the world; essentially they said it made them feel more present and less worried.

*Figure 7. A stack of bricks. Participant interpretation: My sculpture shows that although we are all just broken pieces alone, together we fit and make something bigger. The rope around the middle shows that everyone has something that ties them together to everyone else … a sunset/sunrise to remember the beautiful things in nature we’ve seen … Volleyball because you have to remember to share good times with others. Between them is a shovel and bucket because without hard work/times it’s harder to appreciate beauty. On top are happy people holding hands because of the sense of community and happiness experienced here. … The pieces of sunglasses*
lens show that what you see depends on all the experiences in your life that colour the way you look at things. The wire on top is balanced ... to symbolize that you have to find balance between work and relaxing or pleasure. (Participant L)

The group spoke of having respect for those who demonstrated certain attributes: a positive attitude and mindset; a willingness to try; a sense of discovery; gratitude, seeing each day as a gift and not taking things for granted; being present and valuing the moment; and demonstrating enthusiasm for learning. The students talked about using these qualities to create connections in their group and with the locals and they demonstrated that understanding the perspectives and attitudes of the other members of the group helped to shift their own ways thinking, learning, and knowing.

I think that my thinking skills are quite changed. There’s quite a shift in my thinking skills. I think I’ll now do something good, productive after going back to my city. Like, earlier I used to think about, only about me. Like, I was quite selfish. But, now, after coming here, I thought that we should help local people, other people, we should think about other people before doing something. (Participant T)

Though the process of learning about others’ ways of life participants seemed more open to exploration and adventure and this appears to have enhanced their capacity to think critically.

Not surprisingly, many of the students used comparison and reflection to critically analyze their new surroundings; they developed a greater understanding of how complex factors interplay to create disparities between and within nations through observing the economic, social, political, and environmental climate in rural Cambodia. One student remarked, “Learning new things is always good and it’s beneficial for you, so I had no problems and I was really
excited to learn” (Participant K). Another spoke about how learning and teaching others key phrases on the work site helped them to feel valuable to the group. And a third expressed that learning about the Khmer Rouge helped them to develop a curiosity in understanding others and a desire for further travel. Participants clearly agreed that learning about the people and environment that surround them increased their curiosity, open-mindedness, and positivity.

Whether it be acquiring language or a new building skill, there was undoubtedly a connection between the students’ sense of self and their ability and desire to think critically and learn. They even spoke about becoming more aware of each other’s learning and thus demonstrated patience and the ability to find common ground. There may be fundamental aspects of the learning processes that occur during ISL programs that help to construct cross-cultural empathy, increase a sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others, and encourage a social justice orientation. Relevant findings will be discussed in the following section.

**Social justice orientation and the motivation to help others.** After teaching English in the open air classroom to a group of 25 students of different ages and abilities, many students expressed a better understanding of the challenges facing education in developing countries: “It was just very hard to figure out what to do” (Participant H) and “I understood how hard it is for teachers to teach” (Participant S). Another reflected, “It made me feel a lot better knowing we were helping make the classroom for those kids as well, for them to eventually learn in … it’ll be easier for them to concentrate” (Participant R). And yet another realized, “we do live very sheltered. And we should step out of our comfort zones and sheltered little areas and see the world as it is, and maybe we need to do more to help it” (Participant Q). This confirmation that the work they were doing was going to make a tangible and beneficial effect on the community
was central to participants’ motivation: “I think it is important to do social work because it helps the people who are in need and as we can fulfill all our needs, so we should help other people to make their … like they don’t have a good classroom, so I thought it was very necessary for them to have a good classroom” (Participant T). This sense of responsibility was new for some: “I am a citizen of the, I am a person of the world. It’s my world. It’s my Earth. It’s my responsibility to care of everyone. I take it on me. It’s my responsibility” (Participant S). When asked how they motivated themselves through those times of physical and emotional challenge, many of them pointed to the fact that they were serving others: “It was so good because we are working for the community, not for ourselves” (Participant J). Students were using their altruism as motivation.

Participants reported learning about global issues, and the ability to critically assess that knowledge. Participant I reflected on the cultural, social, and economic context of the CSP:

If you’re building an English classroom that means you’re imposing western culture on South-East Asian area. They may want it. But maybe they get the school but they also get an income from us paying to come round and get the service project done. So, if they actually want the school, which is likely, then I’m fine with it. But, if it turned out that they wanted their kids to learn from home, or to do work, then I think it would change my opinion.

As students gained understanding about basic social structures in Cambodia through simple observation, formal lessons, and asking complex questions about health care, education, gender roles, indigenous cultures, history, civic identity, and group versus individual impact, they also demonstrated the ability to critically analyze the impact the CSP had on the host community.
Notably, the effect of having a better understanding of the underlying factors affecting global economics and political influence appeared to be a desire for more equality. There was a frustration evident among the participants; they began feeling attached to their Cambodian community and as the barriers of *other* broke down, so did the ability to turn a blind eye to the glaring truth that these Cambodians had not chosen poverty, it had chosen them. “The experience has inspired me to help the poorer community in different countries. It has also changed my perspective on the way [my nation’s] government spends its money” (Participant R). Along with a better understanding of the economics of the region, the entire group learned about the national and international politics that led to one of the worst genocides of the century during the rule of Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge and participants developed a noticeable sense of reverence for the capacity, resilience, and good nature of the Cambodian people.

As mentioned, several participants took an interest in global politics through the historical lessons and group discussions of the CSP. Several described a better understanding of the role of organizations like the United Nations, as well as the political power of the global north. Most students used their new understanding to reflect on their role at home, and one spoke of the importance of voting in their own country: “If you’re going to be a contributing member of society then you’ve gotta know what you’re contributing. You can’t just act blindly. So, I think a certain level of understanding of politics and the way the world runs is really important” (Participant P). Interestingly, many were able to apply their new learning to current conflicts.

Participants used their new understanding to reflect on religious turmoil in other parts of the world, specifically drawing new understandings of conflicts between India and Pakistan, and Israel and Palestine. One participant reflected,
I now think Pakistan may have the same culture because they are our neighbouring country and I just thought they are Muslims, they have different mindset, they do different things. But no, I guess not. They have the same thing, the same traditional thing.

(Participant S)

It seems that some of the participants were able to transpose their learning of economic, social, and political situations in Cambodia into current global issues that impacted them, or that they were curious about.

Others took a more general approach. One student was looking for the words to describe her vision:

Global citizenship\(^1\), that’s the word. We really are, and like you can be like this nations’ progressing really, really well and they’re doing really, really well, but it doesn’t matter, like if one person is doing amazingly and the other person’s struggling, or one country’s doing really well and the other’s struggling, like you need to help them so that everyone’s equal. … We’re all on the same planet. We literally have each other and that’s it.

(Participant Q)

As participants developed awareness of inequality and the social, political, and historical structures that reinforce it, the idea of a bigger family, or all being on the same planet, was also reflected by many. “We got the idea like how different people think about different things, so now I think that we should think globally, not only in the local boundaries” (Participant T). In addition to developing a sense of responsibility globally, others drew a close connection to home.

\(^{1}\) It should be noted that I did not use the term *global citizenship* in any of the data collection method questions used. This term was derived from the student’s own vocabulary.
For one student, working on the build site triggered a strong sense of empathy for those dealing with poverty in their home nation:

I’m kind of feeling that, what our country is suffering from. Because India has the same conditions as Cambodia. And I just started feeling of what our country is suffering from. And lack of technology. Lack of communication, socialization. It made me emotional. It made me feel bad for our country. And I just wanted to make a difference for the world, make a difference for our country. (Participant S)

As students came to know their new international friends, they demonstrated their capacity to be empathetic by putting themselves in the shoes of their peers and local hosts and asking thoughtful questions. They also expressed a desire to see others do well, and sought new ways to find common ground and to explore an entirely new environment with people from different background. But more than just an exploration, participants were adamant that the process of participating in the CSP increased their sense of responsibility to others and their desire to pursue humanitarian action or social justice oriented projects in the future.

How participants are learning about different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing. Participants learned to critically analyze their worldview by being exposed to different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing and reflecting on their experience. Exposure to a multi-national group, thoughtful discussion surrounding complex humanitarian issues, and careful personal reflection all played a key role in transforming participants’ understanding. They processed and expressed their experience in diverse ways; they were guided through oral, written, and artistic interpretations and each articulated an ability to connect with at least one of
the modes of reflection. The arts based reflection provided an eye-opening venue for some, as articulated in an interview:

It was nice to just draw out how you felt. Being able to show what you mean in a different form, rather than talking…or writing it…and just being able to look back at it and be like this is what I meant. But, even what you drew can change over time. If you look back at it and you’re like no, that’s what I thought then, but his is what I think now. And I think that was a great reflection period for me and it was in the middle of our service and I think that was a good time to do it because we had a few days of experience already in building and got to know the people around us a bit, as well, and I think that was a good way of letting out how you’re feeling. (Participant W)

Participants took part in carefully designed reflection intended to shed light on changes to their ways of thinking and understanding over the course of the CSP. Therefore, by actively making meaning from the ways in which they were interacting with various opinions and points of view participants were able integrate their new knowledge and develop new understandings.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter unveils the CSP participants’ experiences to provide a comprehensive overview of the impact of short-term ISL programs on participants. Through direct quotes and excerpts from arts based reflections emerging in their reflections, every attempt has been made to hear each individual’s unique perspective. As these new understandings emerged, they were categorized into the following areas: relationship with self; relationship with others; relationship with culture, ways of living, and environment; relationship with perspectives, attitudes, and ways
of knowing. Chapter 5 provides a discussion of these findings and provides specific recommendations for the ethical and impactful development of ISL programs for adolescents.
Chapter Five: Discussion and Recommendations

Chapter Overview

Through participation in the CSP, an ISL program for international secondary school students, participants experienced many changes or short-term impacts within themselves; with others; in relation to culture, ways of living, and environment; and in their capacity to understand and adapt to different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing. Participants also revealed some of the specific events, curricular components, and processes that contributed to these changes. This final chapter situates the research findings from this study within current ISL research (see Chapter 2), and offers recommendations about how ISL programs, curricula, and processes, could be strengthened or enhanced. Finally, I close this chapter by offering suggestions for further research in the ISL field.

It is important to note that while my research focused on secondary school students, most of the ISL research focuses on post-secondary ISL programs. Therefore, in this chapter I particularly reference how this research with adolescents confirms and/or contrasts with research conducted with post-secondary students, how this research could strengthen secondary school ISL programs, and how further research is needed to better understand the adolescent ISL experience.

Exploring the Short-Term Impacts of ISL on Adolescent Participants

Relationship with self. An important precursor to understanding the CSP participants’ relationship to themselves was their ability to reflect on and interpret their experiences and choice to share that information. The level of participants’ self-awareness and desire to share their personal reflections at the beginning of the CSP is unclear and varied; however, based on
participant responses, many of them felt they gained an increased level in self-awareness through the CSP experience. With the development of their sense of self, participants were better able to understanding their personal qualities and capacities, including strengths and limitations, and this supported participants to recognize their unique contributions to the group, and to develop individual coping mechanisms to navigate challenging situations. An ability to self-reflect in a context where they were exposed to a variety of perspectives and ways of life appeared to help participants define and affirm future direction, goals, and pursuits.

CSP participants’ also expressed an increased sense of independence and willingness to try new things (e.g., building, learning a new language, reflecting on their experiences). As noted in Chapter 2, this is aligned with the work of Miller and Gonzalez (2006), who found that participants reported being more flexible and having an enhanced ability to adjust, change, and learn through their participation in an ISL program. CSP participants also highlighted an increased ability to adapt, be tolerant, and be open-minded; and as a result shared they were able to learn, discuss, navigate, and understand other’s opinions, perspectives, values and views more respectfully. Interestingly, all participants involved in the CSP spoke about how their relationship with self was improved or strengthened over the CSP; this is consistent with both the quantitative and qualitative research in short- and long-term studies on the impact of service learning (Arenas, et al., 2006). Through this study we learned that participation in the CSP resulted in various short-term impacts affecting the adolescent participants’ relationship with self, and this aligns with what we know about ISL participant impact at the post-secondary level.

**Relationship with others.** As CSP participants began to better understand themselves in a new context, participation in the CSP inevitably impacted the ways participants related to
others, and this prompted further learning and capacity development. As referenced in Chapter 2, according to Keith (2005):

> Recognition of the other brings a deeper kind of learning. … Relationships are forged that help us understand our reality as connected to the reality of the other, that build communities to sustain the lifeworld, and create memories and traces that remind us of the needs of the world and call on us, through struggle, to work to make another world possible (p. 20).

Through engagement with each other and the Cambodian community, students were able to develop strong relational bonds and expressed an increased capacity to understand and empathize with other ways of knowing and living. This is consistent with Kiely’s (2004) study, which found that ISL post-secondary participants developed a deeper sense of mutual respect with participants and hosts; and also confirms previous research suggesting that participants engaged in service learning develop an “increased sense of personal efficacy, self-esteem, confidence in social skills and ability to build positive relationships with other students and adults” (Arenas, et al., 2006, p. 29). In the case of the CSP, it seems the multi-national nature of participants offered particularly fertile ground to build rich and diverse interpersonal interactions within and across cultures and also developed a strong sense of “family” and “community. Amidst the rich diversity of the cohort, participants in the CSP were particularly curious about others; they wanted to learn more about each other’s’ experiences in their home countries and how they approached ideology and values, and expressed a strong desire for future global exploration. Therefore, this research supports that global experiences trigger further curiosity for exploration. However, from my perspective, it would be interesting to explore further how the diversity of
participants within ISL programs affects relationship building, establishing, as Participant V described, a “culture of openness”, and how it impacts one’s curiosity to understand diversity, varying perspectives, and other world views: and how this could inform future ISL programs.

**Relationship with culture, ways of living, and environment.** Furthering the notion of building or enhancing global citizenship through ISL, participants spoke about how the CSP experience affected their relationship to other cultures, ways of living, and the environment or natural world, and how this engagement helped to further expand their own personal worldviews. As they interacted with locals and each other, CSP participants developed cultural competency by asking, and being asked, poignant and analytical questions about the interplay of social, economic, and political issues interwoven in the service work they were doing. They gained new conceptualizations and understandings of culture through direct interactions with hosts and other participants, taking part in the historical and language lessons; and by way of the cultural activities which exposed them to different ways of living and a new environment. They were able to critically analyze social, political, and environmental impacts and also assessed their own contributions; they moved towards a social justice orientation, wanting to ensure the service project was good for all those involved, and was community driven. This sense of increasing responsibility for the other reflects Larsen’s (2014) study findings of ISL university students, one of whom explained the ISL experience increased their understanding that “my actions affect everyone else’s actions on a local scale up to a global scale” (Larsen, 2014, p. 15). This was reinforced by Participant I who expressed concern about pushing western ideologies of education through service work, as discussed in Chapter 2. This concern demonstrates an empathetic and culturally sensitive view, and also demonstrates areas for further understanding; but without
knowing it by name these participants were reflecting upon and supporting the respected humanitarian principle of *do no harm*. This tendency towards social justice oriented citizenship of ISL participants is congruent with previous post-secondary ISL research, as noted in Chapter 2 (Kiely, 2004; Pisano, 2007; Larsen, 2014).

Direct interaction between participants and their hosts provided the opportunity for learning language, understanding non-verbal communication, developing cultural understanding, appreciating diversity, and gaining knowledge of local customs and historical context. Participants re-created their view contextually; and the environment played a role in their development and transformation. As participants constructed their understanding through reflection and discussion, fully immersing themselves in village life while observing and reflecting on their impact on their environment, and vice versa, it became apparent that the immersive nature of living a Cambodian rural lifestyle within the community without access to technology helped the students to clarify their understandings. Therefore, even though it presented the expected issues of minor homesickness, it appears the challenge of being isolated allowed the students to truly focus on their experience.

**Relationship with different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing.** A common goal of ISL programs is to expose participants to diverse backgrounds, stories, perspectives, and realities of others (Hartman, 2009), and as a result, it is not surprising that, with thoughtful reflection, CSP participants expressed shifts in their own ways of knowing and understanding. This transformational learning is possible in ISL when participants unveil, analyze, and re-construct the sets of assumptions that create their meaning perspectives. (Kiely, 2004). Drawing on the work of Kiely (2011) and Kiely and Hartman (2011), as quoted in Chapter 2, Eyler (2011)
asks: “Do international experience challenge basic assumptions about self and other cultures? Does this dissonance lead to growth and to reduced stereotyping?” (p. 233). According to the CSP participants, the answers appear to be resounding yeses. However, as Eyler (2011) notes, a critical question remains about how: what are the processes that support participants to critically explore global issues, citizenship and worldviews? This question will be explored below.

When CSP participants were engaged in active reflection, there was repeated evidence that they integrated new understandings and changed the way they were thinking, as per the findings of Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) and Wilson (2011). Specifically, these transformations were exhibited in the following way: increased positivity and empathy towards those less privileged; critically thinking about their role in society and how to help others; recognizing beauty in every day routines; realizing and defining qualities they respected in others; changing the values and attitude they held as important to a good life; reducing background fears of the troubles of the world; and recognizing the importance of humour and working from the heart. These findings situate comfortably within Mezirow’s depiction of transformational learning which supports that “dramatic personal and social changes become possible when we become aware of the way that both our psychological and our cultural assumptions have created or contributed to our dependence on outside forces that we have regarded as unchangeable” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 88). As noted earlier, Kiely (2004) found that perspective transformation was at the heart of ISL learning; thus, this research offers evidence that exposure to, and reflection on, different cultures, ways of life, and environments resulted in positive transformational changes in the CSP participants.
The degree of transformation is difficult to assess, as CSP participants were more or less aware of their own cultural assumptions, bias, and distortions at the beginning of the project. Through reflection on their new cultural context, however, the CSP findings support Pisano’s (2007) observation shared in Chapter 2 that the ISL learner is able to understand and challenge their worldview and clarify why they now see things differently. The CSP participants’ personal transformations evolved directly from exposure to diverse ways of living and knowing, and several are at the core of why ISL may have a distinct role to play in global citizenship education. Thus, a discussion of the CSP findings with reference to the literature on global citizenship education follows.

**Global Citizenship: The Case for ISL Impact on Global Citizenship**

Research on ISL suggests that ISL programs have the ability to support the development of characteristics of responsible and active global citizenship (Annette, 2002; Kiely & Kiely, 2006; Plater, et al., 2009). As service learning students develop relationships with those being served, social categories begin to dissolve and students are more likely to move past stereotypical assumptions, attributing community and personal challenges to systemic issues, rather than individual blame (Wilson, 2011). Furthermore, transformational learning in the context of service learning, and I would argue global citizenship, is “not about accumulating more knowledge, but about seeing the world in a profoundly different way, one that calls for personal commitment and actions” (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 129). As ISL educators, we must ask ourselves how we can use service learning to teach global citizenship, and more specifically how can we use international experiences to achieve this goal?
As noted in Chapter 2, one of the primary goals of civic service in general is to provide real-life experiences which will promote respectful relationships between the servers and the served while also developing participant understanding of the economic, political, and social context of the host community. This understanding provides the foundation for the development of characteristics of global citizenship which, according to Oxfam (2016), include: the ability to confront stereotypes, ignorance, and intolerance; an awareness of the social systems which perpetuate inequality; and an ability to respectfully learn from others while recognizing our responsibility to one another. Reflecting on this research, there is no question that the CSP experience helped to develop or strengthen these characteristics for students. Participants developed a sense of social responsibility and citizenship, and cultural understanding; these findings are consistent with Kiely’s (2004) study noted in Chapter 2, whereby students exhibited a desire to promote social justice through what he called an “emerging global consciousness (p. 9). He further describes this emergence as the “ongoing and overall pattern of students’ perspective transformation” (p. 9).

There were a variety of aspects which influenced CSP participants path to developing characteristics of global citizenship, not the least of which was the group dynamic of working with adolescents from a variety of nationalities. Thus, in the context of a multi-national participant group, the goals and outcomes of intercultural competence have an added dimension of inter-participant dynamics between global peers. , and are thus not limited to “functionality in other places” (Hartman, 2014, p.7), as was described in Hartman’s analysis of global civic engagement of ISL participants of one nationality. This finding provides support for the idea that participants learned cultural competence and understanding not only by living and adapting to
their Cambodian context, but also demonstrated increased learning around, and a curiosity about, the various cultures represented by the participant group. This led to heightened levels of feeling globally connected, a more positive view of others in the world, and, as Participant S put it, a sense of being a "citizen of the world”, and having a responsibility for the wellbeing of others.

The participants’ demonstrated their ability to shift perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing through critically analyzing complex issues. They spoke about an increased ability to show tolerance, open-mindedness and empathy – all necessary components of global citizenship. They reported this shift happening as a result of engaging in lessons, discussions, activities, and reflections which targeted social, political, and historical context. Consistent with Kiely’s (2004) findings of transformational process on the post-secondary participants of an ISL program in Nicaragua, CSP participants developed “a better understanding of the larger structural forces underlying social problems” (Kiely, 2004, p. 5). This enabled them to contrast and compare structure and consequences of social and political systems of their home country to that of others, and evaluate the relationship of global and national structures and policies to poverty and inequality. Participants demonstrated through their questions and comments around gender roles, indigenous cultures, civic identity, cultural conflict, and the ways in which national and global structures can reinforce inequality. These findings support research defending ISL as useful in developing skills which allow service learning students to become active local and global citizens (Bamber & Hankin, 2011; Hartman, 2009; Kiely, 2005; Longo & Saltmarsh, 2011; Larsen, 2014), and add substance to the impacts of ISL as being a potent pathway to the development of global citizenship in adolescents, specifically. In the following section, CSP
participant impacts will be paired with ethical considerations and the literature on global citizenship to offer ISL curricular recommendations for adolescent programs.

**ISL Curricular Recommendations**

Though the research findings of the short-impact of the CSP on *adolescent* participants run many parallels to the findings from ISL research with post-secondary students, this study aims to contribute to the dearth of literature on ISL *secondary school* programs, specifically. As Eyler noted (2011):

> Understanding the process by which ISL experiences shape participants’ developing views of other cultures, their own citizenship roles, and perhaps their increased abilities to think critically about international issues would strengthen a very limited body of qualitative work in the field. (p. 233)

Furthermore, in response to Crabtree's (2008) call to ground ISL research in practice, this research explores specific curricular components to strengthen ISL programs to best impact participants *and* communities. Therefore, what follows is a synthesis of the discussion into curricular recommendations for ethical and impactful ISL programs for adolescent participants.

The central task of an ISL educator is to ensure the safety, wellbeing, and positive growth of participants while doing no harm in community and hopefully offering sustainable, ethical assistance. Therefore, for successful programming which meet specified goals, it is critical to effectively balance host, itinerary, and project needs with the ideal level of challenge for optimal positive participant impact (Eyler, 2011; Nickols, et al., 2013). “Establish[ing] a relationship of equality among the various parties, lead[s] to a more authentic understanding of the community, and ultimately create[s] the foundation for adopting the most effective strategies for providing
help” (Arenas, et al., 2006, p. 35). Furthermore, as discussed by Nickols, et al. (2013), ISL participants will each face individual challenges before, during, after their global experience, and the authors encourage ISL practitioners to plan in accordance for the likelihood of such roadblocks. Inevitably, as is true of all of the experiences of the CSP, students had a wide range of life experiences and a worldview that helped to prepare them more or less for the challenges to be overcome in Cambodia. Below are a series of recommendations for ISL curricular design which emerge directly from the CSP participants’ perceived impacts, challenges, and experiences, and also address general concerns and critiques of ISL programs (as outlined in Chapter 2).

1. Prepare for and manage challenges. To manage challenges and encourage optimal impact and resiliency in ISL participants, it is important to prepare for “personal and intra-group challenges” (Nickols, et al., 2013). This is particularly important in the context of adolescent programs, as many will be facing unfamiliar challenges (e.g., physical, social, and emotional and mental) that occur outside of their usual support network.

2. Safety and personal care. Programs should be designed to ensure participants have a strong sense of safety and self-care; are given choices as to how to contribute physically and socially during service and cultural work; are supported emotionally through pastoral care of the project leaders so that they feel safe discussing the variety of issues that may arise; and are given regular opportunities to reflect and process their new experience.

3. Embed reflection. Reflection is at the heart of service learning, as it allows students the opportunity to analyze and re-construct their understandings. To allow for different styles of learning and varying experience with and capacity for reflection, regular opportunities for
targeted and varied reflection should be provided, including varying the mode (written, oral, artistic), topic (personal, social, political, etc.), and environment (private reflection, group space, etc.) in which the reflexive activities take place.

4. Encourage diversity. Participants in this research regularly benefitted from the diversity of a multi-national team. One student explained, “I feel like it was a lot better than working with people from just one school, because you really got to know how they lived, as well, at home, cause you talk about what it’s like in everyone’s country and stuff and I thought it was really interesting” (Participant R). Recognizing that diversity across schools and nationalities is not always a possibility, efforts could be made to diversify activities so that students who don’t know each other as closely (different grades or social groups) can interact.

5. Build community. All students in this research highlighted the importance of having a sense of family and community with participants and the community at large. Participants were more motivated to learn when they were connecting with others and creating community, and they especially enjoyed working with the Cambodian children: “Interaction with the kids, it was superb. It boosted me up” (Participant T). They enjoyed unplanned casual or social time with peers and the community, where they learned about each other’s cultures and home practices through ongoing conversation. Furthermore, building on individual and collective strengths is essential; CSP participants reported increased self-confidence through learning new skills, contributing, and knowing their efforts made a difference to the collective. Celebrating and reframing group dynamics in light of personal strengths that emerge can allow this to happen.

It is recommended to create space in which the participant group can bond casually with each other and with community members through games and sports activities, as well as to allow
free time for authentic interactions to transpire. Finally, community can flourish when everyone feels safe; safe to share their opinions, confident their basic needs will be met, and comfortable growing and showing vulnerability to a new group of people. One participant vocalized how important they felt the teamwork was for group dynamics, community building, and identifying individual contributions:

In terms of bonding as a team, I feel like the service portion of it and like working together to do things and finish things within a certain amount of time was really good for getting us to work together better. And just sort of figure out how we all contribute to our work as a team. (Participant N)

Thus, fostering time for students to reflect privately, and together as a group provides a fertile ground for building community.

6. Meaningful service. It appears that including a meaningful service component with ample opportunities for reflection impacts participants not only in the way they relate to each other in terms of group dynamics, but also in the way they relate to the culture, ways of living, and environmental context of the service project itself. But what makes meaningful service, from a participants’ point of view? As the ability to critically analyze complex issues is an important aspect of developing global citizenship, participants should be provided an opportunity to learn about the background information behind the project, including community characteristics, historical context, and current social, political, and economic considerations. In addition, participants reported finding the tangible results of the service project and the idea they could make a difference motivating. This speaks to the importance of project selection and design; as the outcomes of many development projects are much less tangible, it is recommended to take
this into consideration when selecting the most impactful project for both participants and host community. If the participants can see the results of their work, it appears to have a more positive impact.

Recognizing that service can be physically challenging for participants, it is important that students have mentors, and take regular breaks. This obviously will need to be tailored to the group, environment, and project logistics, but the ideal day in terms of motivation and self-care from the CSP was as follows: breakfast, work 4–5 hours (with good food, rest and water breaks) in the morning, eat lunch, a cultural activity in the afternoon, free time before dinner for sport or games, followed by an evening reflection or discussion and a social activity.

7. Nurture cultural understanding. All participants in the CSP noted the value of learning with local community members. In particular, they talked about the importance of informal conversations and the plethora of historical facts and locals’ interpretation of the Cambodian context they gained. They also spoke about the importance of history and language lessons led by Cambodians. Students also expressed a desire to learn more about Cambodian culture, and a list of individual or group readings and/or activity sessions could be an ideal addition to ISL programs, offering students opportunities to integrate and further their learning.

Providing various cultural activities for the students to understand, experience, and derive meaning from proves to be a critical way to get them to engage with and understand the host culture. Furthermore, “ISL research should also study the processes through which students develop an appreciation of and respect for indigenous ways of knowing in an international setting” (Tonkin, 2011, p. 212). Because students learn in a variety of ways and because a key aspect of global citizenship is an informed point of view, providing a range of historical,
As discussed, participants took part in diverse activities including the temple visits, athletics, social games, language and history lesson, and arts based reflections. The students indicated that quiet or smaller cultural experiences, including historical sites less visited by tourists (i.e., Beng Mealea over Angkor Wat), seemed to enhance the ability to connect the history they were being taught and appreciate the intricate beauty of the construction.

As discussed in the literature review, Keith (2005) calls for ISL to involve a respectful “listening of perspectives and histories” (p. 15). The students derived an incredible amount of satisfaction, broadened their perspective, and developed empathetic connections when dealing one-on-one with Cambodians. Therefore, to promote this type of interaction, cultural activities will directly involve local hosts, including opportunities to formally and informally engage in the culture and learn from their local hosts, and every attempt should be made to ensure formal guides are well-informed and open to discussion.

Though formal cultural activities are critical, it also became apparent that some of the most authentic moments of positive student impact came from unplanned interactions on the volleyball court and around mealtimes. Therefore, providing enough free time for sport, casual conversations, or social games to spontaneously occur is ideal, as some may learn better without the restrictions of a formal activity.²

8. Carefully consider environment and accommodation. The environment plays an integral role in the participant’s experience, and participants often spoke about the open and environmentally friendly nature of the camp, and felt they developed a stronger connection with

² Students said they were more likely to ask questions when chatting away at the dinner table, while learning a new skill on the work site, or in the down time around a game of cards or cup of tea, rather than during formal question and answer periods at the end of a tour guide or lesson.
the community due to their proximity living at the camp. They also highlighted that the close proximity of living together helped to generate a sense of community and impacted group dynamics and increased sense of care for one another. Community can also be built through collective activities such as mealtimes, stories, and free time. Thus, careful consideration of the environment and how it will impact the participants in terms of group dynamics, personal care, cultural understanding, and opportunity for reflection is essential.

9. Intentional engagement with the outside world. In general, participants appreciated having technology removed from the experience, though they found it challenging at times (mostly at the beginning or when they weren’t feeling well and wanted to connect with home). “I found just being away from technology and being away from other people who don’t understand the experience was really important” (Participant W). Participants reported feeling more present, calmer, and more connected to those they were sharing this experience with due to their lack of connection with the outside world. Thus, it is encouraged to provide at least some time for participants to be away from their usual influences, to unplug in order to provide a better chance to plug in with the environment and people around them. Furthermore, ISL students can suffer from reverse culture shock when returning home. Thus, it is encouraged to facilitate ongoing peer support (e.g., online forum) and to provide students an active opportunity to reflect and prepare for the re-integration process.

10. Foster interdependence and do no harm. To nurture ethical community engagement, it is important that ISL programs work in collaboration with host communities to target identified needs (Grusky, 2000; Mitchell, 2008). As discussed earlier, humanitarian development projects should involve a full assessment of the social, political, environmental, and
economic aspects of the project from the lens of *do no harm* (Anderson, 1999). Thus, designing quality ISL programs demands thoughtful communication, preparation, and continuous assessment of the project goals and outcomes between all stakeholders, and requires “recognizing the knowledge of (and in) the community by insuring community input is reflected in the curriculum” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 58). Furthermore, ISL programs at secondary schools often suffer from the drives of marketing; I have repeatedly observed schools choosing to change service project locations annually. From a humanitarian perspective, this is not ideal. To promote sustainable, respectful interactions, ISL should be embedded in long-term endeavours (Crabtree, 2013), as opposed to a one-stop project. This approach nurtures a sense of interdependence which “suggests a paradigm of continued support, long-term presence, an understanding that both parties are empowered to learn from each other, and, finally, the idea that the world’s problems, although they occur in different geographical locations, are ultimately shared by all” (Dear, 2012, p. 120). Thus, as we make long-term commitments in ISL, we solidify our promise to engage thoughtfully and responsibly with vulnerable communities, promoting relationship and trust building between all stakeholders while supporting tangible and sustainable change.

11. **Ground ISL programs in research.** ISL educators and researchers continue to refine the conceptual and theoretical frameworks relevant to ISL and better understand the transformative effects of these programs on both host community and participants (Hartman & Kiely, 2014b). In order to support the creation and delivery of more ethical and impactful ISL programs, every step of the program development process – from participant selection to project collaboration – must be grounded within the context of current research in the field.
12. **Assess goals and impact of ISL programs.** No educational program can continuously define and meet determined goals without regular assessment. This is especially true for ISL programs; and when you are dealing with educating young people on how to interact with others and be in the world in a quickly changing global context, the dangers of reinforcing stereotypes and North-South divisions in ISL programming are too great (Grusky, 2000). Thus, I echo the call of Pickeral, Lennon, & Piscatelli (2008) for vision and leadership, curriculum and assessment, community-school partnerships, professional development, and continuous improvement of service learning programs. Quality partnerships, curriculum development, assessment, and leadership (including professional development) are all essential aspects in guiding ethical ISL programming.

13. **Continue research in ISL.** As noted previously, there is considerable research needed in the field of ISL, and for adolescent participants more broadly. How do ISL programs differ for secondary and post-secondary school participants in terms of program needs, challenges, and impacts; and how can ISL programs best support adolescent participants to be global citizens? Does the composition and diversity of a group impact or affect the learning, and if so how? Additionally, how could more longitudinal studies be conducted to assess the long-term impact, influence, or transformation of ISL on adolescent participants? How can educators be best prepared to guide adolescent ISL experiences? These are only some questions to explore, and as ISL programs targeted at adolescent participants continue to grow, likely many more warrant further consideration and discussion to strengthen ISL programs in practice.
Conclusion

Service learning in a global context provides broad opportunities for personal and collective transformation, and thus demands a profound obligation to thoughtful practice. Those dedicated to carefully considered programming have voiced a collaborative effort to provide spaces for ISL participants to interact respectfully, humanely, and authentically with diverse and distinct peoples, while also contributing to positive sustainable change designed to increase human capacity in vulnerable communities. Speaking about service learning in the face of globalization, Keith suggests “there is no need to start out with shared goals and bonds. The bonds are created, rather, by sharing one’s own gifts and telling and listening to the stories that do connect us” (2005, p. 18). Seeking understanding of those stories that connect us, this study set out to hear the personal experiences, reflections, and short-term impacts of a group of adolescents taking part in a short-term ISL project in Cambodia.

Through open and closing questionnaires (see Appendix C and D), semi-structured interviews (see Appendix E), and arts based methods (see Appendix F) grounded in a descriptive case study approach, participants were invited to share their perception of short-term changes they experienced. Through inductive analysis, I aimed to determine what changed, what triggered the change, and by what processes the change occurred.

The impacts on participants emerged in the following areas: relationship with self; relationship with others; relationships with culture, ways of living, and the environment; and relationship with different perspectives, attitudes, and ways of knowing. As a researcher and educator, I was inspired to witness the participants’ reactions to their experience observe their growth as they challenged themselves individually and as part of a new community. Through
sharing each other’s perspectives and histories, the CSP participants spoke of learning how to discuss and disagree with others in a multi-national context, choosing connection and inclusiveness over self-centredness, and developing a sense of responsibility to the success of the group. In being part of this experience, and listening to others, they understood “[t]here is no ultimate truth; there are context-bound constructions that are all part of the larger universe of stories” (Crabtree & Miller, 1999, p. 10). They revealed having a better understanding of the diversity of other ways of living, the respect and admiration they felt for people of a wider variety of ethnic backgrounds, the sense of universality they enjoyed amongst a diverse group, the importance of a shared mindset, and the ability to learn from others who hold a different perspective from one’s own.

By stretching their comfort zones, CSP participants declared an increase of tolerance, patience, and empathy towards others. Participants talked about being able to clarify their own values, create connections between ideas, and determine the relative importance of information. They demonstrated awareness of their process of learning, and applied their metacognitive abilities to better understand their environment, themselves, and the people around them. They repeatedly reflected on how well they felt during their time in Cambodia, the perspectives they gained, and how much they had learned about the community they now felt proud to be a part of. Perhaps most surprisingly, they had a great deal to say about their realizations around happiness and their opinions about what constitutes a high quality of life and what wellness means to them.

The CSP was a distinct ISL program within a specific context, yet it runs parallel to many ISL programs being offered at secondary schools across the globe, in both vision and scope, and could be a useful model in the future development of ethical, impactful, and sustainable ISL
projects for adolescents. The study of CSP participant impacts also lends itself to research exploring how ISL programs support humanitarian development with global citizenship education. “ISL is about producing global awareness among all participants, providing opportunities to develop mutual understanding, and creating shared aspirations for social justice and the skills to produce it” (Crabtree, 2008, p. 30). ISL can have an incredibly powerful impact on participants and host communities and I believe it is our responsibility as educators and researchers to ensure the associated impacts are inherently positive, sustainable, and ethical for all involved.
Participant List

Participant H
Participant I
Participant J
Participant K
Participant L
Participant M
Participant N
Participant O
Participant P
Participant Q
Participant R
Participant S
Participant T
Participant V
Participant W
References


Appendix A

Informed Consent for Cambodia Service Project Participants

Dear Participant and Parent/Guardian of Participant,

My name is Meg Chamberlin and I am so excited to meet you all in Cambodia in December for the Round Square International Service (RSIS) project! I am a secondary school teacher and director of the service learning program at Collingwood School, Canada and am also a graduate student of Human Security and Peacebuilding at Royal Roads University. As a student at Royal Roads, I am undertaking research in the field of service learning. My research project is designed to understand the impacts of international service learning (ISL) on adolescent participants who are taking part in the RSIS Cambodia Service Project. As you are a student participating in the project in December 2015, I am inviting you to participate in this research.

What Does the Research Involve?

The research would take place during the RSIS Cambodia Service Project. Participating in the research would involve sharing your opinions and feeling about your experience of the Cambodia Service Project through an opening and closing questionnaire, written and artistic reflections. These activities will be part of your reflection time in Cambodia whether or not you choose to share your reflections as part of the research. In addition, participants will take part in a 30-45 minute individual interview which will be audio-recorded and then transcribed. The interview will ask questions about your experience with various aspects of the activities on the Cambodia Service Project.
Your honesty in sharing your stories, opinions and views is highly valued and your contribution will help to improve the design of future international service learning projects. Participation in this study is completely voluntary and has no impact on your ongoing role and participation in the Cambodia Service Project. You may withdraw from the research project at any time by letting me know. The research is not an assessment of participants, leadership or program design. All design of research activities and ethics approval have been under the supervision of Royal Roads University. Round Square is in full support of the research process but is not involved in the development, research or analysis process.

Why is this research being done?

This research is designed to enhance leadership in curriculum development of international service learning programs. In addition to sharing results with Royal Roads University as part of my Master’s degree, the final report will be shared with the network of Round Square schools and by presentation to various global service learning educators. Your voice will be helping to make future service projects more impactful and meaningful for all involved.

Personal Wellbeing, Benefits and Limitations

There has been little research into which specific elements of international service learning (ISL) projects have the greatest impact on adolescent participants. The experiences and opinions I would be collecting during the research will help to provide some understanding in the area. The hope is that this research will improve curriculum design in ISL in order to ensure impactful, sustainable and ethical programs connecting our youth globally. Active reflection helps students to process and gain deeper understandings from their experiences, and the
interviews, reflections and activities that make up the research are designed to enrich every participant’s experience. The process of reflection can also be challenging, as the nature of the Cambodia Service Project means that we will delve into difficult topics like poverty, equality and social structure, amongst other topics as they arise. Should students need support, they are encouraged to seek it from any one of the Cambodia Service Project leaders, including me, who are there to ensure participant wellbeing.

Right to Withdraw

Participants have the right to withdraw from the project at any time by letting me (Meg Chamberlin) know. Their data (e.g., interviews, art work) can be removed from the research collection up until two weeks following receipt of the closing questionnaire (the final data collection). After that point, data will be compiled and anonymized meaning it will be inseparable from the rest of the collection. If a student chooses to withdraw, there is no penalty or impact on their role in the Cambodia Service Project.

Data, Confidentiality and Anonymity

All hard copy raw data (reflections, audio-recordings) are kept in a locked cabinet, secure and confidential. Electronic files with data and analysis are password protected. Confidentiality can be guaranteed for the interview, questionnaires and journal reflections or you can choose to be identified by a pseudonym (select on the form below). I cannot guarantee confidentiality in any public situation or if information is shared by participants in a group, nor can I guarantee anonymity of the art produced, as photographs or visual art may be seen by others during the creation process. The choice of whether or not to share your visual art in the research paper and presentation is given to you on the form below.
Thank you very much for considering participating in this research. As you have received this informed consent by email, please keep a copy for your files. This research project has received clearance from the Royal Roads University Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the ethics office. Royal Roads University. This project is under the direct supervision of Dr. Cheryl Heykoop. Should you need any additional support or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

If you agree to participate in this study, please complete, sign and scan the form below (pages 5-7) and return to me by email before you arrive in Cambodia.

Sincerely,

Meg Chamberlin

Please read and complete the informed consent below.

My name is _____________________________________ (print name) and I have read the research project description provided by Meg Chamberlin and understand the following:

(please check the box to the left of each statement)

| I will be participating in individual opening and closing reflections, interviews and arts based methods led by Meg Chamberlin as part of the study on the Impact of International Service Learning on Adolescent Participants. Meg Chamberlin is a teacher at Collingwood School and also a graduate student in the Human Security and Peacebuilding MA program at Royal Roads University. |
| I will be asked about my experiences of the service and cultural activities that make up the Cambodia Service Project. I will be invited to write, speak and create art and/or |
photography to represent my experience. My contributions, opinions and honesty are highly valued.

I will be encouraged to be open and honest in my responses, reflections and creations. I understand that there is no right or wrong answer to any of the questions I am asked and that participation in this research will have no impact on my participation in the Cambodia Service Project.

I understand that this research is NOT an assessment of me or my participation and has no impact on my role as a participant of this project.

I understand that this research is NOT an assessment of the project leadership, other participants, or of Round Square or any other organization. The research is designed to understand my experience of the cultural and service components of the project.

The research will take place during the Cambodia Service Project in Beng Melea and Siem Reap, (Team 1: 4-23 December 2015; Team 2: 13-23 December 2015).

Along with completing an opening and closing reflection, I will take part in one 45 minute individual conversation with Meg Chamberlin while in Cambodia. She will ask about my experience of various aspects of the Cambodia Service Project. It will be audio-recorded and transcribed. In the final research, I can choose to be completely anonymous or to be identified a pseudonym, my gender, age, nationality, some or none of the above (see below).

The choice to participate in this project is mine. I can decide not to participate at any time. At a certain point, after names are removed from data, my contributions cannot be eliminated from the research.
I will be given the choice as to whether I want art, photography or videos I produce to be published with the study (see below).

If information is shared in a group, Meg Chamberlin cannot guarantee confidentiality. All information shared during individual surveys, reflections and interviews is confidential and can be kept anonymous upon request.

If I share information that indicates my personal safety is in danger, Meg Chamberlin is obliged to tell the necessary authority. She will speak to me before doing so and will involve me in the process.

There are no monetary incentives or gifts for participating in this study.

I give permission for (please check the box):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Permission</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My <em>photograph</em> to be used in research publications</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Quotes</em> from interview or journal excerpts to be used in research publications</td>
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<tr>
<td>My <em>audio recordings</em> to be used in research publications</td>
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<tr>
<td>Any art, <em>photography or videos</em> I create to be used in research publications</td>
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</table>
By signing this letter, you acknowledge that you have read the research project description attached and give free and informed consent to participate in this research project.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<td>Nationality</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participant Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Signature</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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</table>

In order to participate in the research, your parent/guardian must sign below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Parent/Guardian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Signature of Parent/Guardian</td>
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<td>Date</td>
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## Cambodia Service Project Itinerary (December 4-23, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Cambodia Service Project Itinerary</th>
<th>Accommodation</th>
<th>Team</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 1</td>
<td>Arrival to Siem Reap City and pick up to hotel for LT</td>
<td>Hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
<td>LT</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lunch at restaurant in Siem Reap City</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rest and relaxation afternoon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome dinner for LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>LT Complete opening questionnaires</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dinner at restaurant in Siem Reap City</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 2</td>
<td>Bus Transfer to Beng Mealea Camp</td>
<td>Beng Mealea Camp</td>
<td>LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brief and orientation in camp led by NGO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lunch in camp</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Khmer language study led by NGO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community tour led by NGO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dinner in camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 3-6</td>
<td>Community project days</td>
<td>Beng Mealea Camp</td>
<td>LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All meals in camp</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cambodian history lesson led by NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural activities (basket weaving,</td>
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</table>
## Short-Term Impacts of International Service Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day 7</td>
<td>Community project work</td>
<td>Hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
<td>LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lunch in camp</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bus transfer to hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City tour of Siem Reap by NGO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dinner at restaurant in Siem Reap City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 8</td>
<td>Sunrise at Angkor Wat</td>
<td>Hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
<td>LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit Angkor Wat temple</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lunch at restaurant near Angkor Wat</td>
<td>Hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visit Angkor Thom, Bayon Temple</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Visit Ta Prohm temple</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dinner at hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 9</td>
<td>LT briefing and preparation for T2 arrival facilitated by teacher leaders</td>
<td>Hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
<td>LT</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Breakfast and lunch at hotel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dinner at restaurant in Siem Reap City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>LT complete semi-structured interviews</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 10</td>
<td>Arrival to Siem Reap City and pick up to hotel for T2</td>
<td>Hotel in Siem Reap City</td>
<td>LT and T2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lunch at restaurant in Siem Reap City</td>
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*bracelet making, volleyball, group games*
### Short-Term Impacts of International Service Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rest and relaxation afternoon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cambodia briefing by NGO and teacher leaders</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>T2 complete opening questionnaires</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome dinner for T2 at restaurant in Siem Reap City</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Night in Siem Reap City</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 11</td>
<td>Bus transfer to Beng Mealea Camp</td>
<td>Beng Mealea Camp</td>
<td>LT and T2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brief and orientation in camp by NGO</td>
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<td>Lunch in camp</td>
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<td>Local language study by NGO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Community tour by NGO</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dinner in camp</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 12-17</td>
<td>Community Project Days</td>
<td>Beng Mealea Camp</td>
<td>LT and T2</td>
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<td>All meals in camp</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Cambodian history lesson led by NGO</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural activities (basket weaving, bracelet making, volleyball, group games)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Day 15 – Arts based methods afternoon activity for LT and T2</em></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 18</td>
<td>Transfer to Siem Reap City after</td>
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</table>
## Short-term Impacts of International Service Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 19</th>
<th>Sunrise at Angkor Wat</th>
<th>Visit Angkor Wat temple</th>
<th>Lunch/ near Angkor Wat temple</th>
<th>Visit Angkor Thom, Bayon</th>
<th>Visit Ta Prohm temple</th>
<th>Hotel in Siem Reap City</th>
<th>LT and T2</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*semi-structured interviews for T2*</td>
<td>*LT and T2 complete closing*</td>
<td>*questionnaires*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Day 20</td>
<td>Departure day</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>All</td>
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Appendix C

Opening Questionnaire

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Nationality</td>
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Thank you for sharing your ideas and perspectives around your time here in Cambodia as a participant of the international service project. I am really excited to hear about your experiences through your opening reflection. I know that you may think of me in the role of a teacher, but please know that I am not assessing you or your participation in this project in any way. Please be honest – there are no right or wrong answers and your responses will be anonymous. Your personal experience and opinions are really valuable and will help to make future international service learning programs better.

Your work will remain confidential. Your participation in this opening reflection is completely voluntary and you can chose to not participate at any time. Participating/not participating has no effect on your role in the Cambodia Service Project.

1. What were your top two reasons for signing up for the Cambodia Service Project?

2. What do you personally hope to learn or gain from the experience of being a participant on this project?

3. What are your three wishes for this experience? (This can be related to you or it could be a wish for other participants, the community of Beng Mealea, etc…)
4. What do you think are your biggest strengths coming to the project?

5. What do you think might be your biggest challenges on the project?

6. Any other comments or reflections that you would like to share as you begin this project?
Appendix D

Closing Questionnaire

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<th>Name</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<td>Nationality</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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Thank you for sharing your ideas and perspectives around your time here in Cambodia as a participant of the international service project. I am really excited to hear about your experiences through your closing reflection. As you know, I am not assessing you or your participation in this service project in any way. Your personal experience and opinions are really valuable and I appreciate your honesty.

1. Looking back at your top two reasons for signing up for Cambodia, do you feel they were satisfied? Why or why not?

2. Please describe your “magic moment” or favourite experience about this project. Be sure to include what happened and why it was meaningful for you.

3. What was the most important thing you learned about:
   Yourself? Others? Cambodian culture?

4. What was the most challenging experience for you on this project and why?

5. How has the experience changed you (this could be perspective, emotion, attitude, ideas)? Can you identify experiences that caused those changes?
6. Create a 30 second ‘elevator’ pitch about your experience here in Cambodia. When you return home you are going to be asked many times ‘how was your trip’? What would you say? Why do you think it is important to share what you chose to share?
Thank you for sharing your ideas and perspectives around your time here in Cambodia as a participant of the international service project. I am really excited to hear about your experiences. Please know that I am not assessing you or your participation in this service project in any way. Your personal experience and opinions are really valuable so please be honest – there are no right or wrong answers. Your honest thoughts, perspectives, and opinions will contribute to better ISL projects in the future.

I would like to record the interviews so that I can capture everything that you have to say. Yet, you do not have to be recorded if you would prefer. In that case, I will write notes on our interview as we talk. Your original voice recording will not be used in the final paper or presentation, but written quotes may be used. Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you can choose to not participate at any time. Participating/not participating has no effect on your role in the Cambodia Service Project.

Interview Questions

1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and your home/school/family?
2. How did you find out about the Cambodia Service Project?
3. What were your top one or two reasons for coming on this ISL project?
4. What do you think are your biggest strengths coming into this project? Have you been able to apply those strengths?
5. How has the project been for you so far? What is your most favourite/least favourite thing about the project so far? Why?
6. What experiences stand out for you to date? Can you tell me a little about them and how they made you feel?

7. What is the thing that has surprised you the most about the experience?

8. What was the most important thing you learned about:

   Yourself? Others? Cambodian culture?

9. What has challenged you the most on this trip so far? Did you learn anything from that challenge? How did you deal with it?

10. Do you think you will apply what you have learned at home or globally? If so, how?

11. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about experiences that stand out for one reason or another? Do you have any questions?

   Thank you so much for participating in this interview. If you have any thoughts or questions that come up afterwards, please feel free to let me know.
Appendix F

Arts Based Reflection

Reflect on your experience as a participant in the Cambodia Service Project.

Using photography, video or any another form of visual art, represent the most powerful/meaningful/memorable experience for you. In order to respect privacy, please do not include any identifiable people in your work. You can create more than one piece of art if you like. If it is a digital file, please name your file firstname_art1.

Describe your interpretation of the artwork you have created below. What does the image you have created mean to you? Why did you choose to create it? How would you describe your image to a friend? If you wish, you can create a story, a dialogue or put captions on your work.

Title of art:

Student interpretation:
Appendix G

Written Journal Question Bank

1. What stood out for you the most today?

2. If you could change one thing about today, what would it be and why?

3. What do you think are the most important qualities or values in a person?

4. What do you do personally to try get the most out of each day?

5. How did you feel throughout the day today?

6. What surprised you today?

7. Compare Cambodian culture to your own. What similarities/differences have you noticed?

8. What was the best part of the day for you?

9. What was the most challenging part of the day for you? Did you learn anything from the experience? If so, what?

10. Today was the “Day in the Life of” Activity. What did you learn and what activity helped you learn it?

11. If you could ask anyone in the village any question, what would it be and why?

12. Reflect back on your opening journal. What were your motivations and goals for the project? Do you feel like those goals are being met?