

**PERSPECTIVE TRANSFORMATION:  
ANALYZING THE OUTCOMES OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION**

A Dissertation

by

KRISTA DIANE TACEY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2011

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

Perspective Transformation: Analyzing the Outcomes of International Education

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**ABSTRACT**

Perspective Transformation: Analyzing the Outcomes of International Education.

(August 2011)

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Co-Chairs of Advisory Committee: Dr. Lauren Cifuentes  
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The purpose of this dissertation was to analyze the impact of international experiential education on life choices, specifically those related to career and educational goals. This was accomplished through two main phases of research. In the first phase, a web-based survey was used to explore the question of whether international experiential education did, in fact, impact life choices. Responses from this initial phase were used to identify a purposive sample of eight respondents with whom telephone interviews were conducted in the second phase of the study. The goal of the interviews was to determine, for those who indicated that their life choices had been impacted by the abroad experience, when and why it had happened. The evaluation was done by applying Mezirow's transformative learning theory to the analysis.

The self-reported responses indicated that there was an impact on life choices related to educational and career goals in almost 80% of the 74 survey respondents. These data were used as the foundation for the second phase of the study, which examined the catalysts for, and the process of, transformation through the lens of

transformative learning theory. Almost all respondents indicated that the international experience had transformed their perspectives on their identity and purpose in life.

Seven out of eight respondents discussed how they had gained an understanding of the fact that where one is born defines his or her perspective. One's sociocultural environment defines who one is and how he or she sees the world. The international experience allows a person to see themselves through the eyes of others. While the timing and specifics of the catalysts varied, each of these seven had gone through the phases of transformation--disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, changed frame of reference--with some relation to the abroad experience.

## **DEDICATION**

To my incredible family who have supported me through all of the ups, downs and in-between on this journey. I love each of you and could not have done it without you.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation was to analyze the impact of international experiential education on life choices, specifically those related to career and educational goals. This was accomplished through two main phases of research. In the first phase, a web-based survey was used to explore the question of whether international experiential education did, in fact, impact life choices. Respondents were asked about demographic characteristics, experiences related to prior study abroad, field of study in the US, degrees received, and level of parental education. In addition, they were asked about life plans related to education and career goals that they had prior to the international education experience. Open-ended questions were asked regarding whether or not they felt that the abroad experience had impacted them in some way. Specifically, they were asked about whether or not their career and/or educational goals changed following the abroad experience. Responses from this initial phase were used to identify a purposive sample of eight respondents with whom telephone interviews were conducted in the second phase of the study. The goal of the interviews was to determine, for those who indicated that their life choices had been impacted by the abroad experience, when and why it had happened. The evaluation was done by applying Mezirow's (Cranton, 1997; Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 1978a, 1978b, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1997, 2000) transformative learning theory to the analysis.

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This dissertation follows the style of *Journal of Studies in International Education*.

The literature clearly indicates an interest in the assessment of the value of international experiential education (Cranton, 1997; Deardorff, 2006; Mezirow, 1997; Sideli, 2001; Stearns, 2009; Steinberg, 2006; Sutton, Miller, & Rubin, 2006); however, there is a lack of consensus as to how to do just that. It is the author's contention that it is necessary to evaluate the impact of the abroad experience after the reentry and re-acculturation is complete, and that a theoretical basis needs to be applied to analyzing outcomes of international experiential education.

The research questions for this dissertation focus on the application of transformative learning theory to the analysis of international experiential education and the implications thereof. More specifically, they are as follows:

1. Is there a transformative effect from international experiential education?
2. What are the catalysts for transformation?
3. How and why do people make life choices related to education and career goals as a result of transformation triggered by international experiential education?
4. How can international educators use transformative learning theory to inform their practice?

Given the research questions, this study employed Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). IPA is similar to grounded theory but is more explicit about the dynamic and interpretive process inherent within the data gathering (Smith, 2004). A phenomenological approach was appropriate here because the researcher was seeking to understand the meaning of an experience. Rather than testing an existing theory, the

researcher was attempting to describe how people make sense of their lives through the development of hypotheses and concepts. According to Creswell (1994), phenomenology seeks to understand an individual's lived experience in a particular situation or circumstance from their perspective. It is also characterized by extended interaction with a small number of participants. Themes are grouped or clustered together to identify patterns. In addition, the data must be analyzed without preconceived notions of how participants should make sense of or experience a phenomenon. Creswell further defines five assumptions of phenomenological analysis that underlie this study:

1. Ontological Assumption - The nature of reality is subjective and seen through the eyes of the participants in the study. Multiple perspectives may be seen.
2. Epistemological Assumption - The researcher has a close relationship with the information being studied.
3. Axiological Assumption - The researcher actively reports his/her values and biases as well as those of all subjects.
4. Rhetorical Assumption - The language of the study is informal and personal in nature and definitions develop through the study.
5. Methodology Assumption - Categories or patterns of information emerge from subjects throughout the study to help explain the phenomenon being researched rather than preconceived theories identified at the start of the study. (p. 5)

The educational significance of this study is twofold. First, the application of a theoretical framework to unstructured adult education in an international context has not been done to this extent previously. Evaluation of learning outcomes has been applied to structured study abroad, especially by practitioners seeking to improve institutionally-provided programs. These studies, while productive and (often) scientifically valid, do

not rest on a theoretical framework. Mainly, this is because they do not seek to answer the question as to why there is a correlation between a factor and an outcome. They are looking for a cause and effect relationship, not the theoretical underpinnings of why the relationship exists. At the same time, other studies have been conducted applying learning theory outside of the classroom. Historically, this is conceptualized as skills acquisition (on the job training) and linking out-of-classroom experience to the curriculum.

The second area of educational significance for this study is that it will provide a lens through which to view international educational experiences of those who study in the US and then return to their home countries. This theoretical and procedural lens for evaluation of international experiential education opens a new area of research for international educators that has been, largely, untouched. It allows us to understand the outcomes of long-term, immersive experiences. While few U.S. students choose to go abroad for the entirety of their studies, international students studying in the United States regularly arrive prepared to spend anywhere from two to ten years in the United States. The transformative impact of this type of experience has gone unmeasured. How has their transformation impacted their life choices?

The document is organized into five chapters (with Chapters II-IV intended to stand alone as manuscripts to be submitted for publication) and two appendices. This first chapter serves as an overall introduction to the content that follows. Chapter II is a systematic literature review of research on international education assessment,

international experiential education, and the applicability of transformative learning theory.

Chapter III presents and provides analysis of, the results of the web-based survey. Survey responses were solicited from returned Fulbright English Teaching Assistants from the 2004-2005 award year. These individuals had spent a year teaching English abroad after being selected through a rigorous process that involved human and capital resources at both their home institutions and in the host countries. The goal of Chapter III was to identify whether international experiential education is truly impactful, or whether reports of impact in life choices are purely anecdotal.

Chapter IV provides the analysis of interviews conducted with eight survey respondents. The chapter uses transformative learning theory to evaluate the catalysts for transformation and to determine when transformation takes place as a result of international experiential education.

Chapter V provides a general conclusion to the project as a whole, and is followed by appendices that include the instruments used for the study. Appendix A is the list of questions utilized in the web-based survey instrument, and Appendix B is the interview protocol.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THEORY, RESEARCH FINDINGS, AND METHODOLOGY FOR ASSESSING THE OUTCOMES OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION**

#### **Overview**

The purpose of this article is to review the use of adult learning theory to assess the outcomes of international experiential education. The review will summarize the literature relative to transformative learning theory and its applicability to international experiential education assessment. The review will also help identify effective methods for bridging the gaps in the current literature on international experiential education assessment.

The literature review is organized into five sections. Section one provides an overview of the literature on transformative learning theory. The second section gives an overview of international experiential education. Section three presents a review of international experiential learning programs, using the Fulbright US Student Program English Teaching Assistantship as a specific example. Section four focuses on the literature on sojourn and outcomes assessment of international experience. Section five discusses grounded theory, with specific attention paid to Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis as an effective method for analyzing data related to international education and transformative learning. Recommendations for future research to extend what is currently known about the outcomes of international experiential education are included in the final section.

This review is significant in three fundamental ways. First, this review will help learning theorists to better apply transformative learning theory as a framework for understanding the impact of international education on adult learners. Educators could use this framework as a basis for designing effective experiential education abroad – specifically for pre-service teachers.

Second, this review provides a summary and critique of the types of assessment done in the field of international education. With an ever-increasing demand for assessment and proven value in international education, the need for a theory-driven method for assessing outcomes is clear. Practitioners in the field of international education could use this information to develop meaningful assessment tools that can guide the design and development of international educational experiences.

Finally, this review identifies unanswered questions in the literature and proposes future research directions that may expand the understanding and appreciation of international experiential learning beyond the limited concept of a field trip abroad to a life-changing experience.

## **Method**

### **Searching and selection procedures**

The search for relevant literature was completed in three stages. First, the researcher examined books, journal articles and unpublished dissertations that could be found in computerized bibliographic databases using the following keywords:

- Experiential education and international
- Experiential education and identity

- International education and outcomes
- Transformative/transformational theory, transformative/transformational learning
- Teaching ESL and outcomes
- Study abroad and outcomes, study abroad and career choice
- Work abroad
- Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis
- Exchange Programs and outcomes
- Peace Corps, JET, Fulbright

The author also used the “snowball” method (Goodman, 1961) by searching for articles, books and theses/dissertations that were cited in some of the previously-read materials. Altogether, there were 156 sources. Of these 156 sources, 123 were included in this synthesis.

These sources were included because they gave a comprehensive overview of the wide range of literature in this area. Articles and sources that went far afield from the topic at hand, that is, the application of transformative learning theory in international educational assessment, were excluded. In addition, those sources that merely reinforced information found in previously analyzed sources and did not add substantially different content or perspectives were excluded.

### **Data analysis**

Each individual source (journal or web article, book chapter, report, book, or thesis/dissertation) formed the basic unit of analysis. The constant comparative method

first developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and later elaborated by Lincoln and Guba (1985) was used. Using the constant-comparative method, the coding scheme emerged inductively from the sources and was not predetermined. Specifically, the constant-comparative method involved comparing data from each article with data from others to find similarities and differences, determining what category or property of a category the information indicates, and conceptualizing the emerging concept. The author began by selecting the source most directly related to the question – “How can adult learning theory inform design of and assessment of the outcomes of international experiential education?” Each article was read and key concepts were noted to formulate tentative categories. Following on with sources that appeared to relate to the original question, the author continued to note the content to determine whether it was similar to the categories that came out of the first source or if the source produced new categories. It was often found that new categories led to new keyword searches – as the “snowball” effect was applied. For instance, while reading an article about study abroad assessment, it was noted that it made several references to intercultural competence as a possible measurable outcome. A search was then conducted on the keywords “intercultural competence.” Reading each source, it was compared it to the existing categories until new articles began to confirm the existing categories rather than creating new ones. Ultimately, five major topics or themes were chosen to define the review of the literature: transformative learning theory, international experiential education, international experiential learning programs, sojourn and international education assessment, and interpretive phenomenological analysis.

## **Transformative Learning Theory**

In exploring the literature of adult learning theory, it was quickly realized that transformative learning theory is the most applicable of the adult learning theories to the evaluation of international experiential education because of its focus on personal transformation that comes from a meaning-making experience. However, there appears to be no literature applying transformative learning theory to international experiential education. This section is an overview of the various schools of thought on transformative learning theory.

First introduced by Mezirow as a theory in the late 1970s, transformative learning theory suggests that learning forms and reforms our meaning perspectives. Among other things, transformative learning theory posits that learning is more than the acquisition of knowledge; it is about identity formation that comes about from some type of change within the individual. This change may be externally observable in a person's behavior, or it may be more internal changes in thoughts and beliefs – possibly unrealized by the learner. It occurs in the part of the unconscious mind that Jung (1954) refers to as the *personal unconscious*. This is the part of the mind where we keep our individual experiences. It is impacted, however, by the *collective unconscious*, the part of the mind that Jung describes as “that collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents” (p.43)

Reed (2007) observed that the field of transformation theory has four major contributors: Paulo Freire (1973), who used the term "conscientization," Laurent Daloz (1986), who addressed adult developmental processes in the context of learning, John Dirkx (Boyd & Dirkx, 1991; Dirkx, 1997, 2008; Dirkx & Prenger, 1997), who focused on the role of emotions and unconscious processes in transformative learning, and Jack Mezirow (1978a, 1978b, 1990, 1991b, 1997, 2000), who employed the term "perspective transformation." Reed does not mention, however, the work of Boyd and Meyers (1988), who differentiate between Mezirow's "perspective transformation," based on psychoanalytic theory, and "transformative education," based on analytical psychology. Boyd and Meyers (1988) propose that there is a distinct difference between transformative education, which is purposive, and Mezirow's transformative learning (which they refer to as "perspective transformation"). While Boyd and Meyers present a persuasive case for a definition of "transformative education," Mezirow's transformative learning theory is far more applicable to adult learning in general and the assessment of international experiential education, in particular, for four key reasons. First, Boyd and Meyers' purposive point of view assumes access to the learner in the first half of life – a situation rarely found in the adult education environment. Second, explicitly integrating the collective unconscious in an educational setting is not a viable option under most circumstances, and it is highly unlikely when learning takes place abroad and is not actively facilitated. Third, discernment while the learning occurs assumes established differentiations that Boyd and Meyers require in the purposive element. Finally, Boyd and Meyers argue that transformative education requires the learner to go through the

three stages of grief work: receptivity, reception and grieving. These preconditions limit the applicability of Boyd and Meyers' model. McGregor (2008) agrees that transformative education and transformative learning are related, but not quite the same thing. Transformative education, which is transformation during the formal learning process and generally takes place in a structured environment, needs to be planned for and facilitated. Transformative learning can occur during informal or unstructured events happening in a person's life (Hart, 2001).

### **Applicability of transformative learning theory**

Because of his more cognitive orientation, focused on thoughts and beliefs formed by experience, Mezirow's transformative learning theory finds more traction with adult learning theorists in general than does Boyd and Meyers's transformative education approach. Recently, Taylor (2007) conducted an extensive literature review on transformative learning. After evaluating 41 peer-reviewed journal studies, he found that most of these studies used Mezirow's conception of transformative learning as their framework:

However, there were five studies that were framed within related conceptions of transformative learning (Jarvis 1999, 2003, Pohland and Bova 2000, James 2002, Kovan and Dirkx 2003, Lange 2004). These studies included conceptions of transformative learning from the perspective of depth psychology (e.g. Boyd and Meyers 1988, Cranton 1992, Dirkx 2000), critical theory (Freire 1984) and identity development (Wenger 1998). (p. 89)

This review will focus on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, as it is most generally accepted and most broadly applicable to adult learning and the understanding of international experiential education.

According to Mezirow (1997), transformative learning (Cranton, 1992, 1994, 1996) is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference. This is most applicable in adults, who have already acquired associations, concepts, values, feelings, and conditioned responses. The frames of reference that define their life world are extant. For Mezirow, frames of reference are the structures of assumptions through which we understand our experiences. They shape and define perceptions, thoughts, expectations, and feelings. He goes on to explain,

They set our “line of action.” Once set, we automatically move from one specific activity (mental or behavioral) to another. We have a strong tendency to reject ideas that fail to fit our preconceptions, labeling those ideas as unworthy of consideration –aberrations, nonsense, irrelevant, weird, or mistaken. When circumstances permit, transformative learners move toward a frame of reference that is more inclusive, discriminating, self reflective, and integrative of experience. (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5)

A frame of reference includes cognitive, impulsive, and emotional components. It is composed of two dimensions: habits of mind and a point of view. Habits of mind are broad, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. They can also be abstract and orienting. They are influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes, which may be educational, economic, political, psychological or cultural. Habits of mind become expressed in a specific point of view – the collection of beliefs, value judgments, attitudes, and feelings - that shapes that particular interpretation (Mezirow, 1991b).

Transformations in frames of reference can take place through critical reflection and the resulting transformation of a habit of mind, or they may result from an accumulation of transformations in points of view.

Transformative learning applies primarily to adults because it requires a form of education very different from that commonly used with children. New information is merely a resource in the adult learning process. “To become meaningful, learning requires that new information be incorporated by the learner into an already well developed symbolic frame of reference, an active process involving thought, feelings, and disposition. The learner may also have to be helped to transform his or her frame of reference to fully understand the experience.” (Mezirow, 1997, p. 10) This transformation is facilitated through critical reflection. This is where the role of the educator comes in. Scott explains,

In adult education, we focus on the development of intellectual and rational capacities to promote increasing complexity of thought. However, the ego is subject to deletion and is situated both in conscious cognitive awareness and the personal unconscious. The personal unconscious is the house of the undeveloped potential, knowledge not ready for cognitive awareness, or unfulfilled dreams. It is just below a conscious awareness but known, although unacknowledged, to the self. (1997, p. 44)

What this tells us is that education provides intellectual and rational capacities, but true learning requires the internalization and analysis of information and experience.

Connecting the intellectual and rational to the self comes from critical reflection.

Christine van Halen-Faber (1997) describes critical reflection as the type of thinking that challenges the notions of prior learning. It occurs when patterns of person's goals, beliefs or expectations are tested through thoughtful questioning. She further states that exemplary teachers engage in critical reflection and lifelong learning in that their teaching experiences and learning experiences are often one and the same:

Mezirow's cognitive-rational focus is specifically in terms of personal development as a result of learning experiences. His position is that learning is

really an attempt on the part of the learner to find meaning in his ongoing experience of life. For Mezirow, knowing is more of a process of interpretive construction, rather than an accumulation of objective facts. The experience of a "disorienting dilemma" in which an individual becomes aware of an inconsistency between his or her current thinking and new information, may trigger a type of personal crisis. Through critical reflection, a resulting reassessment of assumptions and meaning schemes (values and assumptions) currently held, takes place. (Reed, 2007, p. 25)

For Mezirow (2000), critical reflection includes reflective discourse. Reflective discourse involves a critical assessment of assumptions. By comparing and contrasting experiences with others, one can arrive at a tentative best judgment. Ultimately, learning is a social process, and discourse is central to making meaning.

### **Applying transformative learning theory in cross-cultural contexts**

How does this apply to international experiential education? Mezirow (2000) says that frames of reference that are collectively held often represent cultural paradigms that are unintentionally assimilated from the culture. When they are particularly dominant or comprehensive, such as religion, they become "worldviews." We often embrace collectively held frames of reference that complement the ones we learned in childhood, whether they are sociological, philosophical, economic or psychological. Entering another culture can disrupt these collective frames of reference and force us to rely on adaptive behaviors to reconcile the disorientation. When one travels outside his or her own country – or even outside his or her hometown, he or she is confronted by the "other." From clothing, to language, to foods, to mannerisms – the "other" presents itself to the sojourner. If able to retreat to the safety of one's "known," the learner gains from the experience, but it is unlikely that he or she experiences the "deep structural shift" described by O'Sullivan, Morrell, and O'Connor (2002). This kind of shift results

in a permanent alteration of our way of being, our understanding of our place in the world relative to the social constructs of gender, class, race and other ways of living. To experience this shift, one must be immersed in the experience, unable to escape. One must live it, feel it, adapt to it. One must evaluate how the “other” compares to the known self. One has to go beyond simply reorganizing existing *meaning schemes*, specific attitudes, beliefs, feelings and value judgments, and experience a shift in *meaning perspectives*, broad, overarching philosophical worldviews (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007):

Life experience that causes a student to reorganize existing *schemes* in order to accommodate new information and negotiate new environments represents learning that leads to normative development. On the other hand, life experience that challenges students to reconsider the fundamental reasoning behind their most basic notions of the way the world works can precipitate an entire change in *perspective*. Learning of this nature is said to be transformative. (Hunter, 2008, pp. 94-95)

Despite the clear connection between transformative learning and intercultural experience, there is a distinct gap in the literature. Responding to a specific need for research related to women working overseas and their ability to adapt in the face of culture shock, Lyon (2001) conducted a study of 14 women educators working in developing countries. The results were focused on the time abroad and the period immediately preceding and following the sojourn. The results shed light on women’s adaptation in the face of cultural change; specifically, what tools and techniques women use to find their way in a new cultural context. Unfortunately, the results merely suggest the application of transformative learning theory in international education and go no further than indicate that the experience was transformative.

Six years later, Taylor (2007) found that the use of transformative learning theory in cross cultural contexts is still absent:

Most settings for these studies were situated in formal higher education inclusive of graduate students, faculty or workshop participants involved in professional and leadership development, with little exploration in nonformal educational settings. Despite the tendency for a higher education setting, the disciplines vary widely. They include, for example, medical education, environmental education, cooperative extension and a Bachelor of Arts completion program. (p. 189)

Transformative learning, as noted above, is a three-stage process: 1) a disorienting dilemma occurs, 2) critical reflection on the dilemma takes place, and 3) transformation happens. Hunter (2008) appears to be the first to take on the challenge of applying transformative learning theory to international education, suggesting that a transition to life in a foreign country (culture shock) or the return home (reverse culture shock) could serve as a *disorienting dilemma*. Disorienting dilemmas can present themselves before, during and after the sojourn, whether in daily interactions with the host community or as programmatic elements of the structured study abroad. While normal growth will happen naturally over the course of time, transformational growth necessitates an action – critical reflection on the experience – to happen.

### **International Experiential Education**

Wight (1970) defined "experiential learning" in terms of an instructional model that begins with the learner engaging in direct "experience" followed by reflection, discussion, analysis, and evaluation of the experience. While there are many definitions of experiential learning, he said, almost all agree that it is necessary to reflect on the experience in order for the experience to take on meaning. He goes on to say that the meaning of the experience "is then conceptualized, synthesized and integrated into the

individual's schema of cognitive constructs which he/she imposes on the world, through which he views, perceives, categorizes, evaluates and seeks additional experiences (p.22).

Wight's definition of experiential learning, at its essence, marries with Mezirow's theory of transformative learning – an experience (disorienting dilemma) upon which the learner reflects, analyzes and evaluates his or her perspective. Keeton and Tate (1978) note that experiential learning takes place when the learner is directly in touch with the reality that is being studied, rather than simply hearing, reading or talking about it. Taken a step further, when the reality that is being studied is another culture, we enter the domain of cross-cultural experiential learning. Whether the learning takes place within the context of the learner's home country or abroad, the learner is likely to be disoriented by the experience and forced to re-evaluate his or her meaning perspectives. The cultural differences between cities within a state may be as dramatic as between countries. Take, for example, a student from a rural town in Texas who has taken a teaching job at an inner-city school. That student will need to negotiate issues of identity (Who am I relative to my students, my peers, my neighbors?), issues of place (Where do I live? How do I get around?), and issues of context (What are others facing? How do their lives fit in the world as I understand it?).

The importance of international experiential learning was first laid out in 1979 by a special task force assembled by the Council on International Educational Exchange and Michigan State University. The general statement developed by this group reads as follows:

Cross-cultural experiential learning can be defined as the acquisition of skills, knowledge and competencies through a learner's contact with and reflection upon the direct realities of a host society... Cross-cultural experiential education is preeminently integrated in nature. The student connects with the host culture at all levels of his being. Such programs offer opportunities for the acquisition of factual knowledge, for synthesizing data, determining patterns of meaning, developing powers of independent observation, and for the application of knowledge and understanding to the immediate situations at hand. At the same time, the student is provided opportunities for greater self confidence, awareness, and understanding of his or her own culture and values; for the testing of the effective patterns in interacting with people and situations; and the corresponding potential for the development of personal maturity and capacities in the learning process itself. ("Statement of the Task Group on the Role of Experiential Learning in Cross Cultural Programs," 1979)

The Task Group points out that the very core of international experiential learning is the development of the student beyond the basic acquisition of knowledge and skill – it is the development of the individual as a member of society.

One type of experiential learning that develops the individual as a member of society is “service learning,” which has been defined by Bringle and Hatcher (1995) as a “credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in organized service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (p. 112). However, this definition is limited by the requirement that the learning is “credit-bearing,” as though one must receive academic credit in order to learn from an experience or interaction. Based upon this limiting definition, relief work in developing countries or in rural areas would not constitute service learning. Take, for example, construction science majors who traveled to Haiti following the earthquake in 2010 to use their skills to help rebuild schools. Are these students not further developing an “understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and enhanced

sense of civic responsibility” if they do not receive credit? A better definition of service learning is proposed by Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring & Kerrigan (2001) as a “form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development” (p. 20). Strait (2008) elaborates on this definition, stating that “by structuring experiential learning opportunities that promote student learning through engagement in the community, service learning fosters students’ critical thinking and interpersonal skills”(p. 46). Adding the challenges of negotiating a new culture and serving others with different life experiences, international service learning presents unique opportunities for fostering critical thinking and interpersonal skills.

Advocates of transformative learning, such as Reed (2007), believe that learning can serve more of a social purpose than merely acquisition of skills and knowledge. Learning should include an awareness of the importance of improving the human condition. The learning process should also include multiple ways of knowing, thinking and assimilating personal values. Concepts like success, happiness, and life purpose should be defined from a multicultural perspective. This perspective would be less focused on material values commonly found in U.S. society. In a study examining perspective transformations of students engaged in international service learning, Kiely (2004) reported that students with international service experiences had “profound” transformations in their outlooks in at least one of the six dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural. This is seen in other studies of service

learning – especially in the health professions, where it has been seen to improve patient-provider communications, increase cultural understanding, reduce stereotypes and increases one’s ability to solve complex problems in practical settings (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Rust, et al., 2006).

The American Association of Colleges and Universities National Leadership Council Report (*College learning for the new global century: A report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise*, 2007) pointed to key learning outcomes for every institution of higher education: problem solving, the harnessing of technologies, engagement of global questions and real world problems, immersion, cultural literacy, global knowledge, civic engagement, and project-based learning. International service learning is able to draw upon all of these educational outcomes to become a powerful pedagogy (Kahn, et al., 2008).

### **International Experiential Learning Programs**

In the world of international education professionals, there are two general groups – the senders (study abroad) and the receivers (international student services). When speaking of international experiential learning in the U.S., it is usually the study abroad professionals who will be the first to jump into the discussion - how do we create meaningful and rewarding study abroad experiences for our students? How do we make them affordable? How do we motivate faculty to take on these types of programs? Will the experience fit into the students’ degree plans? How do we manage the practicalities of making international learning experience happen? The answer to most of these questions lies in the structured, faculty-led programs wherein the institution manages the

details and assesses the outcomes. The student is merely a passenger on a sojourn led by another, who navigates the problems and difficulties encountered. For a true international service-learning experience, the student must step outside of the boundaries and limitations placed on his or her experience by institutionalization. Cranton (2000) stresses the fact that transformative learning, by developing the individual as separate from the collective, facilitates full participation in discourse, and he notes that: “Our democratic values of freedom, equality, and justice depend on the participation of individuals who are differentiated from the aggregate. Differentiation from the aggregate is grounded in the conscious development of psychological type” (p. 189).

### **The Fulbright Program**

One opportunity outside of the structured study abroad program is the prestigious Fulbright U.S. Student Program. The Fulbright Program was established in 1946 under legislation introduced by the late Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas. It is the flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The Fulbright Program has provided approximately 294,000 participants with the opportunity to study, teach and conduct research, exchange ideas and contribute to finding solutions to shared international concerns ("Fulbright Fact Sheet," 2009). Within the program, there are a number of categories, one of which is the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. This program is targeted toward giving U.S. students the opportunity to pursue the ideals put forth by Senator Fulbright: increasing mutual understanding between the people of the United

States and the people of other countries. These ideals are a bit obtuse for the standard study abroad administrator to arrange for or to assess. The U.S. Student Program is designed for independent research and study that the student may choose to apply later in life. The student does not necessarily return to his home institution, nor is he or she required to report back his or her findings. There is little or no accountability to the home institution. The process requires the student to be selected from his or her peers at his or her home institution and then put forth to the Fulbright Commission for selection. This process can be long and expensive for the home institution. Unless the student is conducting his or her thesis or dissertation research, the home institution will see little or no return on investment.

Within the U.S. Student Program is the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantships Program, which places U.S. students as English teaching assistants (ETAs) in schools or universities overseas. In addition to improving foreign students' English language abilities and knowledge of the United States, the ETA should develop his or her own language skills and knowledge of the host country. ETAs may also pursue individual study/research plans in addition to their teaching responsibilities. It is an especially unique program because the participants who are teaching are not necessarily teachers. They come from a multitude of backgrounds – all seeking the opportunities that the Fulbright Program offers. Again, the home institution may or may not ever see the student again. Other than a short line in the local paper announcing the student's selection, there will be little or no recognition for the institution's efforts. However, there is a fundamental return on investment. Based on the conceptualization

of international service learning, teaching, by its very nature, becomes service learning. It involves problem solving, engagement, use of technologies, and an enhanced consciousness of the impact of one's daily activities. The Fulbright ETA Program offers opportunities to learners, as well as to the host countries.

### **The Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme**

The Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme, is a Japanese government-funded program similar in its objectives to the Fulbright ETA program. Begun 23 years ago, the program "is aimed at promoting grass-roots international exchange between Japan and other nations" ("Welcome to the JET Programme," 2009). While the majority of participants teach English in elementary, junior or senior high schools, others can work in communities on international exchange activities; or in positions that promote international exchange through sports. The application process is direct, in that interested participants apply directly through the Japanese consulate. Since the goal of the program is to bring foreign participants from all over the world to Japan, the immediate benefits to the sponsoring agency (the government of Japan) are far more evident than those with the Fulbright ETA program.

### **Challenges of independent programs**

JET and Fulbright are the preeminent programs for teaching English abroad. Other, government-sponsored programs have recently come about in Korea, Spain, Czech Republic, Chile, France and China. The Fulbright ETA program is unique, however, in both its process and its purpose. The sponsoring agency (the U.S. government) and the home institutions have a vested interest in ensuring that the

returning participants a come away with something more than a few exotic photographs. While this program creates an incredible opportunity for its participants, it creates special challenges for administrators and those interested in assessing its outcomes.

### **Sojourn and International Education Assessment**

Once the sojourning students return from their programs, study abroad professionals are also tasked with assessing the outcomes. Did the program go successfully? Did the students learn the material that was described in the program objectives? Did they acquire inter-cultural competence? Are they better global citizens? Assessments are usually conducted on structured programs and focused on one or more of the following:

- Learning outcomes, such as language skills or a specific topic studied
- Cultural competence, or
- Culture shock

These evaluations are done primarily to justify the existence of a program or to recruit participants. They are not evaluative of the transformative nature of the experience or whether they are meeting the goals set forth in the mission/vision of the program.

Outcomes assessment in higher education is gaining increased attention both by researchers and practitioners in the field of study abroad. The challenge is determining the right way to measure outcomes. Steinberg (2006) points out that there are three kinds of outcomes assessment: individual, programmatic, and institutional. He asserts that these general assessment perspectives in higher education can be extrapolated to study abroad programs. In an attempt to apply rigor to the evaluation of study abroad

programs, Sutton, Miller & Rubin (2006) suggest certain questions implicit in assessing study abroad programs. How does one determine whether the cost of study abroad justifies its perceived benefits? If some benefits, such as changes in psychological traits and attitudes, cannot be construed as learning outcomes per se, how do we use them as variables? In response to these questions, they constructed an analysis of the assessment methodologies for key study abroad objectives. They looked at the extant research through a matrix of moderators to learning outcomes (including the impact of individual differences, program features, and host culture) on knowledge/skills, development, and life choices. They discovered that there is extensive research measuring study abroad academic learning outcomes in foreign language classes. In addition, much has been written on how program design features impact knowledge/skills acquisition. However very little has been written on the influence of host culture attributes.

Most notably, there is a definite lack of research on post-program life choices of study abroad participants. When assessing changes in overarching perspectives, such as worldview or attitudes toward education and career, it is acknowledged that longitudinal studies need to be conducted to determine if they persist over time, or if they dissipate as the memory of the experience recedes (Nash, 1976; Sell, 1983; Sutton, et al., 2006). Life choice research is especially difficult to conduct with study abroad alumni, but it is work that needs to be done (Sutton, et al., 2006). With the Department of Education-sponsored Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) project being the notable exception, the few studies that have been conducted with alumni (DeDee & Stewart, 2003; Orahod, Kruze, & Pearson, 2004; Sutton & Rubin, 2004) have focused on the

long-term impact of study abroad on students from the researcher's home institution. In contrast, the SAGE research project set out to examine the long-term personal, professional, and global engagement outcomes associated with study abroad experiences that occur during the college years by looking at alumni from 22 participating universities who studied abroad during a timeframe spanning 1950-2007 (Paige, Stallman, Jon, & LaBrack, 2009). The team defined global engagement as the contributions a person makes to the common good through civic engagement in domestic and international arenas; knowledge production of print, online and other digital media; philanthropy (volunteer time and monetary donations) social entrepreneurship (or involvement in organizations whose purpose and/or profits are to benefit the community); and the practice of voluntary simplicity in one's lifestyle. Given all of the above-listed factors that make assessing structured study abroad programs challenging, assessing outcomes is especially difficult with teaching abroad experiences like Fulbright ETA because the outcomes are not well-defined, not easily measurable, and the participants are not necessarily accessible. However, these programs are also worth assessing. From international educators who would like to encourage students to participate in the program, to those who fund the program, to those who want to explore the creation of similar programs, there are many who would benefit from a quality assessment of the Fulbright ETA program.

In exploring the possibility of assessment, the first question that arises is whether the Fulbright ETA program was intended to be service learning. It is most definitely service to the students in the host country classrooms. But how do we assess the

learning that takes place? Do we look at acquired knowledge and proficiency? If there are no educational objectives, acquired knowledge would be hard to assess. Intercultural proficiency or intercultural competence is another option and it is a popular measure in the assessment of international educational experiences (Ashwill, 2004; Boyle, 1999; Dantas, 2007; Deardorff, 2006; Hunter, 2008; Lin & Pedersen, 2007; Rust, et al., 2006; Savicki, 2008; Selby, 2008). However, without access to the participants, the interested parties may never have the opportunity to assess this, and most assessments rely on pre-departure assessment to compare with post-outcome assessment. Even when access to the participants is available, there is still a question of what to measure.

### **The impact of international education: What we know**

Some studies focus on the transition cycle – adaptation and repatriation (culture shock and reverse culture shock). For instance, Sussman (2002) points out weaknesses in the sojourner research that relies on the transition cycle phenomenon. If there is a relationship between the expatriate experience and the repatriate outcomes, the directionality of the relationship and the empirical findings are inconsistent (Stringham, 1993). Some studies point to better adaptability by people who have coped with differences overseas (Cui & Awa, 1992; Dwyer, 2004; Razzano, 1994). A more prevalent view suggests an inverse relationship between overseas adaptation and repatriation - that it is difficult to return to the home country when one has been successful in adapting to host country. Several studies report an inverse correlation between community and social involvement in the host country and life satisfaction upon returning home (Brein & David, 1971; Brislin, 1981; Brislin & VanBuren, 1974;

Constantinian, Guinyard, Hermosisima, Lehman, & Webb, 2008; Kim, 2001; Lester, 2000; Rohrllich & Martin, 1991; Takeuchi, 2008; Uehara, 1986).

The above findings lead us to ask, what outcomes of international experiential education can we explore in order to better understand whether the goals and objectives of the Fulbright program are being met? In the case of teachers, we may find an answer by examining the concept of identity formation as a result of their teaching experience. A number of studies have been conducted with professional teachers who have participated in international exchanges. These teachers are in-service teachers who, in most cases, had a number of years of experience. This type of research generally studies how teacher exchanges impact the way teachers teach. Wilson (1984) recorded the remarkable influence of international trips based on self-reports of teachers from Kentucky and Indiana. The teachers reported that, after short-term international programs, they taught more accurately, authoritatively, creatively, enthusiastically and with more understanding about places they had visited. They were committed to passing on their knowledge to students and the community and also opened themselves to people of different cultural backgrounds. (as cited in Rapoport, 2006, p.68)

Rapoport's (2006) earlier study of U.S.-Russian teacher exchanges found that the Russian participants gained much, career-wise, from their experience, but the Americans did not. Why? This study was looking to see if the experience changed the way teachers taught. On the whole, the US teachers went into the experience as the authority, looking to gain cultural insight and to provide professional expertise. On the other hand, the Russian

teachers were looking to improve their professional skills and went into the exchange open to learning new methods that they could bring home.

On the other end of the spectrum, Williams (2007) conducted a study among international teaching assistants (ITAs) at a U.S. university. These were students who, like Fulbright ETAs, may not have aspirations to be a teacher. Their motivations for teaching varied. The majority were teaching in the field in which they were studying, and merely doing so in order to pay their expenses. Among her findings, Williams notes that the future career goals influenced their perceptions of their present teaching activities. Those who planned to pursue non-teaching careers didn't worry about improving their teaching or spoken English skills. Some teaching assistants saw teaching as one of a variety of career opportunities, so they were more interested than the ones who already had other career plans in developing their teaching skills and identities.

Because teaching was not the objective of the students' sojourn, looking at questions of perspective transformation was quite difficult. However, the study sheds light on the kind of cultural and personal challenges faced by anyone trying to live and teach in another culture, such as adapting to the classroom culture in the host country, understanding the communication styles and expectations of the students and faculty, and understanding the unspoken "rules" of U.S. academia. None of these studies examined the impact of the exchange in a transformative light, rather, they focused on how the experience increased cultural competence and expanded professional skills as a teacher. How is the experience of teaching abroad transformative for the teacher?

Traditionally, we have had to look through the lens of study abroad outcomes, but most of these studies focus on the study abroad experience itself – how to survive, how to get credit. As noted previously, most are structured programs designed specifically to learn something in a cross-cultural context. The Fulbright program is designed to build bridges. An important question is whether or not sojourn is transformative for the participant.

McGregor (2008) notes that “transformative learning occurs when new concepts are assimilated such that a person undergoes shifts in his or her foundational frames of reference. Any action that is predicated on one’s redefinition of one’s perspective (one’s frame of reference) is the clearest indication of transformation” (p. 53). The learner can demonstrate that they have changed meaning structures or habits of mind through social action, dialogue or life changes. So, how do we assess this? Is a single approach possible? Is transformative change assessable?

Sussman (2002), an adherent of the quantitative approach, notes the need to use a qualitative methodology when dealing with cultural questions due to the inadequacy of measurement tools in evaluating theoretical constructs undergirding cultural identity. She states that a complete test of cultural identity requires the development of psychometrically sound scales, which measure and categorize sojourners into cultural identity types. Design of categorical measures to assess each identity type separately are “difficult due to the potentially ipsative nature of the scales. These and other psychometric problems are reflected in the continuous debate (Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) surrounding the measurement of the acculturation

types (Berry, 1997).” Sussman concludes that qualitative tools such as interviews, diaries, or autobiographical literature would greatly enhance the evaluation of the theoretical constructs. A recent retrospective study sponsored by the Department of Education examined the long term impact of study abroad on global engagement. The study employed a mixed methods approach in evaluating the ways in which study participants have become globally engaged during their lives since studying abroad, and the degree to which their contributions can be attributed to their having studied abroad (Fry & Jon, 2009). The qualitative section of the study was based on in-depth interviews with former study-abroad students selected from a pool of survey respondents.

### **Future Directions for Research: Examining the Transformative Impact of International Education**

While the literature on both transformative learning theory and international experiential education is plentiful, there is a lack of research on the application of transformative learning theory to international experiential education. In particular, there is virtually no use of the theory to assess the outcomes of international experiential education outside of structured study abroad programs. Among the questions that remain unanswered are the following: How do the participants benefit from their experience personally or professionally? How do others benefit from their experience (Bodycott & Walker, 2000; Razzano, 1994)? Recent studies (Allen, Dristas, & Mills, 2007; Edwards, Gallacher, & Whittaker, 2006; Gelmon, et al., 2001; Graban, 2007; Hill & Thomas, 2005; Lyon, 2001; Rapoport, 2006) have acknowledged the need to further

examine the transformative nature of international experiential education as an area for future research.

Hamza's (2010) study of the role of international experience in the transformative learning of female educators takes a step in this direction. The qualitative study, which examined the experiences of nine women who were working as faculty or staff in five of the six Arab countries in the Gulf region for at least one year, found that participants' professional attitudes, ability to work with multiple learning styles, and global perspectives were all improved as a result of their experience. The limitations of this study are that it: a) dealt only with women educators, b) was region-specific, and c) looked only at the professional development of those established in their careers. Much of the article focuses on adaptation while abroad, rather than the impact of that adaptation. In addition, of the three main themes that were identified, i.e., 1) changes in personal and professional attitudes; 2) students' learning styles and behavior; and 3) broadening global perspective, only two were transformative in nature. Identifying the differences in students' learning styles and behavior and utilizing this knowledge in their work is more an acquisition of a skill (normative development) than a shift in frames of reference or meaning perspectives (transformative learning).

Sussman (2002) does a better job of examining the transformation that occurs as a result of international educational experience. The study examines returned Japanese Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants in the context of the transition cycle. She explores the returning sojourner – and discusses the differences between simply looking at adjustment/adaptation abroad and what happens when they return

home. The study is grounded in cultural identity theory and not transformative learning theory; however, one could argue that a shift in a cultural identity would, necessarily, result in a shift in frames of reference.

### **Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis**

It is challenging to make sense of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives. The research reveals very individual responses to a change in perspective, with most transformation dealing with a subjective reframing (critical reflection of one's own assumptions) rather than an objective reframing (critical reflection of others' assumptions). Taylor (2000) asks, "how does a perspective transformation manifest itself such that participants act on their lives differently? How are people behaving differently in response to a change in a frame of reference? What does a perspective transformation look like behaviorally?" To answer questions such as these, it is best to utilize a grounded theory approach - specifically, interpretive phenomenological analysis.

The aim of grounded theory is to identify the social processes that produce the phenomenon being studied. Cases that have the same outcomes are examined to see which conditions they have in common, thereby revealing potential causes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Lyons & Coyle, 2007). Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is similar to grounded theory, but is more conscious and more explicit about the dynamic and interpretive process inherent within the data gathering (Smith & Eatough, 2007). This consciousness can be made explicit in this research through open coding, reflective

memos, debriefing, and continual awareness of the interpretive nature of the work (Unsworth, 2003).

### **Applications of interpretive phenomenological analysis**

Graban (2007) conducted a study examining students' perceptions of the effects of study abroad on their cognitive and affective learning. Using a mixed method design, the study first investigated, quantitatively, whether graduating seniors at a major private institution in the Midwest reported higher levels of cognitive and affective learning than graduating seniors who did not study abroad. Graban used a mixed method design due to the fact that the quantitative component of the study merely revealed differences that existed between the two groups on self-reported personal, intellectual and ethical growth, as well as appreciation for cultural diversity. The quantitative component did not answer the question of what accounted for reported growth among study abroad students. To assess this, the study also had a qualitative component in which five seniors who had a study abroad experience participated in face-to-face interviews to discuss their reported gains on these outcomes and provided insights regarding the causes of their growth in these areas.

Williams (2007) conducted a grounded analysis of 20 different participants representing 13 teaching fields and 15 different nationalities. She conducted interviews eliciting personal stories about educational experiences and philosophies. The interviews were open-ended. Two interviews were conducted. The first interview was standard across the sample. The second interview varied across participants, as it was an elaboration of things that were said in the first interview. Williams also observed in the

classroom. She approached the study from a social constructivist perspective. Within this framework, the researcher has several different roles in the process of research (Creswell, 2007). Social constructivists subscribe to the theory that meaning is constructed in the mind of the individual. Within the constructivist framework the researcher must interact with the interview subject in order to help the interview narrator to co-construct his identity through life stories. The researcher is a traveler who engages the narrator in dialogue to provide insight into the narrator's world without a preconceived agenda. From this stance, the researcher seeks to elicit stories from the narrator without looking for a truth or data to support a previous hypothesis. Therefore, the interviewer must be an active listener who looks for opportunities for elaboration in order to get a fuller picture of the identity that the narrator is trying to reveal without being disrespectful to the interview subject (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Williams' study demonstrates that exploring transformative learning outcomes of international experiential education is uniquely suited to this style of inquiry. Interpretive phenomenological analysis opens the door to the learner's critical reflection of his or her experience in a way that facilitates a need that may otherwise go unacknowledged. Her participants were foreign teaching assistants in U.S. schools, but the challenges they faced were no different than the challenges faced by U.S. teaching assistants abroad. As Neff (1981) points out, "the experiential learning a foreign individual has as an individual... may be only partially applicable to the role that he or she is to play upon return home. Unless there is support by a critical mass of colleagues

with similar experiences in broadened cultural registers, the individual may soon relegate a good portion of the new experience to latent or dormant status” (p. 15).

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is being used predominantly in healthcare situations, and its application outside this area has been limited. It is spreading into sport psychology and clinical psychology (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). At this time, few studies in educational psychology have used the method, but it appears to be gaining traction with international scholars in measuring educational technology outcomes. This is because Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis looks at outcomes of a phenomenon. It seeks to understand the meaning-making that occurs after the event. It seeks to understand how identity is affected.

### **Conclusion**

There is a need to specifically apply transformative learning theory to international experiential education, to determine whether and how sojourners experience shifts in their frames of reference and their meaning perspectives. This information can inform the design and development of both structured and unstructured education abroad programs. Assessment of outcomes is key to identifying return on investment, which is critical to the continued funding of international education initiatives. It is universally acknowledged in higher education that globalization of the campus is vital to preparing our students, staff, and faculty to compete in today’s society. Ongoing financial support for international education programs (including professional development) is dependent upon the ability of international educators to demonstrate the value of international educational experience. As a government-funded program that

needs the (essentially free) support of university administrators and faculty who may or may not ever see the students again, the Fulbright ETA program presents a unique opportunity for this research. In-depth Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis that facilitates critical reflection on the experience would yield insight into the types of structural shifts that participants experience. Added to that would be basic demographic data to inform the analysis of the qualitative data and identify any patterns among participants of similar demographics.

Some important questions that should be asked include the following: Is motivation to participate in Fulbright ETA the same as motivation to participate in “study abroad?” What type of person studies abroad? Is that the same for the type of person who teaches abroad? Are certain people predisposed to a transformation at a particular time in life? Are there transformative moments, in response to certain conditions, which, when available, have to be acted upon lest they pass the individual by?

This type of research would benefit not only institutions of higher education, but employers looking for employees with a global perspective, government and non-governmental organizations which fund international experiential education, and K-12 schools that are interested in professional development for their staff.

**CHAPTER III**  
**THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION:**  
**THE FULBRIGHT ENGLISH TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIP**

**Introduction**

In the world of international education professionals, there are two general groups – the senders (study abroad) and the receivers (international student services). When speaking of international experiential learning in the U.S., it is usually the study abroad professionals who will be the first to jump into the discussion - how do we create meaningful and rewarding study abroad experiences for our students? How do we make them affordable? How do we motivate faculty to take on these types of programs? Will the experience fit into the students' degree plans? How do we manage the practicalities of making the international learning experience happen? The answer to most of these questions lies in structured, faculty-led programs wherein the institution manages the details and assesses the outcomes. The student is merely a passenger on a sojourn led by another, who navigates the problems and difficulties encountered. However, there are other avenues for a true international service-learning experience—where the student must step outside of the boundaries and limitations placed on his or her experience by institutionalization.

One opportunity outside of the structured study abroad program is the prestigious Fulbright U.S. Student Program. The Fulbright Program was established in 1946 under legislation introduced by the late Senator J. William Fulbright of Arkansas. It is the

flagship international educational exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government and is designed to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries. The Fulbright Program has provided approximately 294,000 participants with the opportunity to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas, and contribute to finding solutions to shared international concerns ("Fulbright Fact Sheet," 2009). Within the program, there are a number of categories, one of which is the Fulbright U.S. Student Program. The U.S. Student Program is designed for independent research and study that the student may choose to apply later in life. Students develop research proposals that include some type of field work, often with cooperation from institutions in the host country,. Students seek the Fulbright opportunity any number of reasons. The outcome of the proposed projects can range from finalizing a dissertation, to finding a new method for re-purposing recycled materials, to working with underserved populations in order to explore a career path.

Within the U.S. Student Program is the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship Program, which places U.S. students as English teaching assistants (ETAs) in schools or universities overseas. In addition to the goal of improving foreign students' English language abilities and knowledge of the United States, the ETA should develop his or her own language skills and knowledge of the host country. ETAs may also pursue individual study/research plans in addition to their teaching responsibilities. It is an especially distinctive program because the participants who are teaching are not necessarily teachers. They come from a multitude of backgrounds and all seek the opportunities that the Fulbright Program offers. There is a fundamental return on

investment in that the Fulbright ETA Program offers opportunities to learners (a funded year abroad gaining experience and gaining cultural understanding), as well as to the host countries (English language classes taught by native speakers).

### **Sojourn and International Education Assessment**

Once the sojourning students return from University-supported programs, study abroad professionals are also tasked with assessing the outcomes. Did the program go successfully? Did the students learn the material that was described in the program objectives? Did they acquire inter-cultural competence? Are they better global citizens? Assessments are usually conducted on structured study abroad programs and focused on one or more of the following:

- Learning outcomes, such as language skills or a specific topic studied,
- Cultural competence, and/or
- Culture shock.

These evaluations are done primarily to justify the existence and funding of a program or to recruit future participants. They are not evaluative of the transformative nature of the experience or whether they are meeting the goals set forth in the mission/vision of the program. In fact, according to an electronic sampling of institutions on the subject of 'Outcomes Assessment and Study Abroad Programs,' 40% of assessments measured gains in language proficiency, fewer than a third assessed gains in personal development or academic achievement, 15% assessed intercultural proficiency, and less than 10% of institutions surveyed indicated assessing career-related outcomes (Sideli, 2001). A 2009 study conducted by The Forum on Education Abroad noted that a mere 41% of

institutions surveyed reported that they had clearly stated learning outcomes for each of their study abroad programs. This is problematic, because without an axiological foundation, how do international educators assess the success or failure of these programs? Without clearly stated outcomes, there is no way to plan evaluation of the experience. Assessing outcomes is especially difficult with teaching abroad experiences like Fulbright ETA, because the outcomes are neither well-defined nor easily measured, and the participants are not necessarily accessible once their programs are over.

However, these programs are worth assessing. From international educators who would like to encourage students to participate in the program, to those who fund the program, to those who want to explore the creation of similar programs, there are many who would benefit from a quality assessment of the Fulbright ETA program. From a pragmatic perspective, both the U.S. government and the sending institutions need to know whether the program objectives are being reached.

The U.S. Congress, through the Department of State has budgeted over \$239.4 million for the Fulbright Program for the award year 2010-2011. In addition, foreign governments contributed \$60 million in both in-kind and direct support ("How Does the Fulbright Program Work?," 2010). These numbers do not include the countless resources, both human and material, invested by individual universities to support the administration of the competition here in the United States. The Fulbright U.S. Student program makes individual awards to post-baccalaureate students to pursue projects, to teach English, and/or to conduct independent study abroad. The tangible benefits of the awards are not seen by the students' home universities, nor is there any service

requirement by the United States government as a repayment of the money granted. Senator J. William Fulbright stated that “*The Fulbright Program aims to bring a little more knowledge, a little more reason, and a little more compassion into world affairs, and thereby to increase the chance that nations will learn at last to live in peace and friendship*” (“Fulbright Program History,” 2010). But how does one determine whether this objective is being reached? Is increased “mutual understanding” a measurable outcome? What can international educators learn from the experiences these students have? What are the implications for educational theory? What is gained from the investment of time and money by all of the actors involved in this program?

The purpose of this study was to determine if international experiential education has an impact on life choices, especially as related to career and educational goals. Returned Fulbright English Teaching assistants were surveyed to determine if and how the Fulbright ETA experience affected the way they viewed themselves, the world, and their future direction. The survey was conducted in 2010, which was five years post-participation in the 2004-2005 Fulbright English Teaching Assistant Program for the survey respondents. The timing was chosen to allow for a variety of factors. These include allowing time for re-adaptation to the home culture (overcoming reverse culture shock), re-entry into the job market or academia, and reflection on the international experience.

### **Instrumentation**

A survey instrument (see Appendix A) was used to gather data regarding personal characteristics (age, gender, etc.), educational profile (college major, prior

study abroad experience, degree level, etc.), pre-departure expectations of both the program and subsequent life plans, and initial reflections on the impact of the experience. The Qualtrics online survey tool was utilized to design and implement the web-based survey. The tool employed individual links sent by email that were unique to the respondent. The individual link allowed a respondent to stop mid-survey and then resume the process later. It also employed skip logic – a process whereby a respondent's answer determines whether they need to answer the following question. The survey consisted of 41 questions, five of which were open-ended. These open-ended questions gave the respondents the opportunity to expand on prior teaching experience or training, discuss any pre-departure orientation they received, reflect on their expectations of the Fulbright ETA program, identify the role, if any, a mentor played in their experience, and reflect on the impact the Fulbright ETA has had on subsequent life choices.

### **Response Rates**

There were 202 participants in the 2004-2005 award year for Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship program. Through internet searches, Facebook contacts and referrals, email addresses of 124 ETA participants were identified. Of the invitations sent to the 124 identified email addresses, 39 were returned as undeliverable. Subsequently, 38 additional email addresses were identified, 20 of which were replacements for invalid email addresses. A total, therefore, of 123 invitations was sent to valid email addresses (61% of the overall program participants). Of the 123 invitations sent, two individuals opted out of participating in the study, 77 individuals started the survey, and 74 of those completed the survey. Overall survey response rate

of ETA program participants was 37%, and the survey response rate of those contacted was 60%. The results of this survey were analyzed qualitatively. Therefore, it was not the intention to use the results to predict or generalize across a greater population; rather, to provide a descriptive basis for the analysis of the participants' experiences. An acceptable response rate, in this instance, was one that gave a broad overall picture and avoided non-response bias – when the people who do not respond have characteristics that are different from those who do respond (Jarrett, 2007). With non-response bias eliminated, acceptable response rates vary, depending on how the survey is administered. For online surveys, a 30% response rate would be considered average. For email surveys, 40% is average, 50% is good, and 60% is very good (Instructional Assessment Resources, 2010). Since this survey was an online survey with an email-based invitation, the 60% response rate was very good.

The response rate by program location was relatively representative. In the 2004-2005 award year, Fulbright ETAs were placed in 12 countries: Andorra, Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Germany, Hungary, Indonesia, South Korea, Romania, Spain, Taiwan, and Turkey. There were respondents from 10 of the 12 countries. The two countries not represented were Spain and Turkey. Table 1 shows the response rate by location of program participation:

**Table 1.** Response Rate by Program Location

<b>Country of Placement</b>	<b># ETAs</b>	<b>% ETAs</b>	<b># Responses</b>	<b>% Total Respondents</b>	<b>Population Response Rate</b>
<b>Germany</b>	93	46%	39	53%	42%
<b>Korea</b>	66	33%	16	22%	24%
<b>Taiwan</b>	12	6%	7	9%	58%
<b>Argentina</b>	7	3%	3	4%	43%
<b>Chile</b>	6	3%	4	5%	67%
<b>Indonesia</b>	5	2%	1	1%	20%
<b>Romania</b>	3	1%	2	3%	67%
<b>Spain</b>	3	1%	0	0%	0%
<b>Andorra</b>	2	1%	1	1%	50%
<b>Belgium</b>	2	1%	1	1%	50%
<b>Hungary</b>	2	1%	1	1%	50%
<b>Turkey</b>	1	0%	0	0%	0%

### **Demographics**

Females outnumbered males in terms of overall response rate, with 53 females and 21 males responding. Nearly 90% of respondents self-reported as being white or Caucasian. There were nine Asians, one African-American, one Native American, one Middle-Eastern, and no Hispanic respondents to the survey. Respondents were, on average, 22.5 years old when they went on their Fulbright ETA program, with 65 respondents indicating that they were between 21 and 24 years of age at the time. Nine respondents indicated that they were 25 years or older, with the oldest respondent being 29 at the time of participation in the program. This parallels the fact that 69 respondents noted that the highest level of education completed was a bachelor's degree, while four had attained a master's and one had earned a doctorate. The overwhelming majority of

respondents had obtained their degrees in the humanities. The second most common major area of study was social sciences, with business and education tied for third. Only one individual had majored in a natural science, and that individual has gone on to become a physician.

On the whole, respondents came from relatively well-educated families. Just over a quarter of respondents indicated that their father had less than a bachelor's degree; a third had earned a bachelor's degree, and 40% indicated that their father had earned a graduate degree. Mothers were also quite well-educated. While 33% of respondents' mothers had less than a bachelor's degree, 26% had earned a bachelor's, and 40% had a graduate degree. A substantial number of fathers (33, or 45%) and mothers (23, or 31%) had lived or worked abroad. Given that 11 respondents lived abroad as children, at least half of the parents who spent their time outside their home country did so without the respondent.

For survey respondents, prior abroad experience is the norm. Eleven respondents (15%) had lived abroad as children, three of whom lived in the country where they did their Fulbright ETA. Four respondents were born abroad. Three of these four did their ETAs in the country where they were born. More than half of all respondents (61%) had, at least, visited the country where they did their Fulbright ETA. The main reasons for prior visits to the host country were tourism, study abroad, and/or language instruction. Other reasons included emigration from abroad, volunteering, internship, working abroad, and visiting family/friends.

### **Prior Study Abroad**

Seventy six percent (57) of respondents had studied abroad prior to their Fulbright ETA experience. Nearly half of this group (27) previously studied in the country where they did their Fulbright ETA. This is notable because, per the Fulbright program guidelines, preference is given to those who have not spent more than six months in the country to which they are applying. In most cases, these individuals commented that they went on the Fulbright ETA specifically because of their study abroad experience. For those who were returning to the location where they had studied abroad, the desire to return was a motivator in itself. For example, this respondent was hoping to relive his student experience: “I wanted to live in Germany again like I had as a student. This was the main goal, and I got to do it.” Generally speaking, however, prior language education abroad was more of an indicator of choosing to participate in the Fulbright ETA program than anything else. All of the respondents who went to Latin America had studied abroad in Spanish-speaking countries prior to the Fulbright ETA. Thirty two of the 38 respondents from the German program had studied in a German-speaking country prior to the Fulbright experience, and all but two of them had gone specifically to study German. This is contrasted with the Korean program, where only one of the 16 respondents had studied abroad in Korea.

For education abroad professionals, this is encouraging information. It clearly demonstrates that study abroad experiences during the undergraduate years affects choices that students make once they graduate. At a minimum, the study abroad experience teaches students that they have the personal fortitude to leave behind the

support structures of family and community. From the data (above) on language study prior to the ETA program, it also appears that students are acquiring what they perceive as a sufficient level of language ability during the prior study abroad that they feel capable of going and living in the host country without the institutional support they had on a structured study abroad.

### **The Fulbright ETA Experience**

Selection of Fulbright ETAs is a rigorous process that requires a commitment of significant time and effort. The aspiring ETA puts together an application packet that includes a Statement of Grant Purpose and a Personal Statement, in addition to the application and transcripts. For university enrolled/affiliated students, this packet is then reviewed (in most cases) by an on-campus selection committee. The successful applicants' packets are forwarded to The Institute for International Education (IIE), which forwards the applications to the Fulbright Commissions in the host countries. A limited number of awards are available to each country, so the competition is rigorous. Prior teaching experience or training is not required; however, applicants are required to discuss specific qualifications, training, and/or experiences that they have had related to the overseas assignment. In addition, applicants are now asked to indicate how they expect to benefit from the assignment, and what use they will make of the experience upon return to the United States. The 2004-2005 awardees were not asked this question.

### **Prior teacher training and experience**

In light of the fact that prior teaching experience or training was not required, respondents were asked if they had any teacher training or experience before their

Fulbright ETA. Of the 47 respondents (63%) who indicated they had teacher training or experience, only two stated that the Fulbright program had provided any type of training. Nineteen indicated that they had professional teaching experience not affiliated with a degree in education. Types of experience included tutoring (paid), teaching assistantships, and music education. Interestingly, only three of these respondents indicated that they were provided teacher training to prepare them for the work they performed. Sixteen respondents indicated that they did voluntary teaching, including tutoring (unpaid), Jumpstart and AmeriCorps programs, and assisting in local K-12 classrooms. Notably, only 10 respondents indicated that they had been in a formal teacher preparation program or majored in education before they went on their Fulbright ETA. Given that this Fulbright program was a teaching experience, one might have expected that there would be a greater number of aspiring teachers in the mix.

### **Expectations**

Expectations of the Fulbright ETA experience were as varied as the respondents' backgrounds. More than half of the respondents said that they either did not have any expectations or did not know what to expect. For some, this was a conscious decision. One respondent from the Korean program said, "I intentionally had very few expectations and was simply interested in learning a bit about a previously unfamiliar place. I felt that with well-defined expectations I would be setting myself up for a difficult year if things did not go according to those expectations." A German program participant echoed this sentiment, saying "I tried to arrive with an open mind, because I

knew that my experiences would never reflect whatever preconceived notions I had before arriving.”

A number of respondents (12) saw the Fulbright ETA experience as an opportunity to try out teaching as a career. For some, like this respondent from the German program, they ended up doing less teaching than they had hoped:

I really was not sure what to expect. I thought I'd have a lot more responsibility—more like a real teacher—than I did in reality. I hoped to be integrated into the English department and to learn a lot about teaching. For me it was a combination of returning to Germany for a longer period of time and the chance to find out if I would like to continue my education to become a teacher or rather choose another career path.

Another ETA in Germany had the opposite experience:

I truly did not know what to expect, but to some extent, this is what I liked about the program. It really left room for each person to design their own experience. I don't think I could have foreseen the amount of teaching I would ultimately do. Certain teachers I worked with almost took my being there as a break, and I was not prepared for that, given the title was Teaching Assistant. I expected to be a part of their lecture, but for the most part I was expected to structure my own lessons and deliver them without assistance. This was a bit of a surprise, but I grew through the process.

What was interesting about these two respondents was that the first respondent, who was disappointed with the lack of responsibility in the classroom, had only a single seminar on teaching prior to departure. The second respondent, on the other hand, had completed a full semester of graduate coursework in education.

Other respondents hoped to use the opportunity to conduct research in their fields. Some, like this respondent who did the Fulbright ETA in Hungary, used the opportunity to do education-related research: “I expected to teach a few courses of conversational English, as well as possibly teaching a course or two about English-

language literature. I also hoped to conduct research regarding the teaching of Roma students (teacher bias).” Others had research interests not directly linked to education, such as this respondent from the Chilean program:

(A)nother expectation I had was how we were to balance the teaching component with the research. Part of the reason I selected the southern city of Osorno (which is where I was placed) was because I was interested in doing research on the indigenous population.

Improving language abilities, learning about the host country culture, traveling in the region, and just being able to find a way to live in the host country were also cited as expectations for the ETA program.

### **Orientation and preparation**

Orientation and preparation for life in the host country varied by location. The ETAs in Taiwan received a month-long orientation. The Korean program sent several information packets and had a website with materials. In addition, there was a brief in-country orientation that received generally positive reviews. The German program provided a week-long orientation in-country that received mixed reviews.

### **Accommodations**

Accommodation types were relatively varied among respondents. The most common accommodation was in an individually-organized apartment, either with or without a roommate. Approximately a quarter of participants (18) were housed in Fulbright-arranged homestays, and all but two of the homestays were in Korea. Fulbright arranged for apartments or dorms for participants in Taiwan, Indonesia, and Romania. Participants in Germany, Chile, and Argentina generally made their own

housing arrangements. In total, the majority of respondents were in immersive environments, such as homestays (32%) or apartments in the local community (55%).

### **The Role of Mentors**

A greater percentage of women versus men (81% vs. 61%) indicated that they had a mentor or other person who played a significant role in their Fulbright ETA experience. Only a third of the women (33%), however, compared to nearly half (46%) of the men, indicated that these mentors had some importance in subsequent life choices related to career and education. Mentoring came from a broad variety of sources. The Latin American and European programs assigned mentors in advance of the participants' arrival. The ETAs in Asia received settling-in help from their co-teachers, but found mentors in fellow Fulbrighters, members of the local community, and colleagues. This appears to have impacted the way that respondents answered the question regarding the role of mentors in their Fulbright ETA experience. Almost all of the German program participants indicated that they had an assigned mentor. These mentors appeared to have a list of tasks with which they were to assist. The descriptions of the relationship focused on the practical, possibly because the concept of a "mentor" was formally established as someone who helped with local arrangements. Even in the case of informal mentors, respondents discussed the fulfillment of prescribed mentoring roles, such as finding housing, learning the norms at the campuses where they taught, and assisting with lesson planning. One German program respondent said,

I was assigned a mentor. He was one of two English teachers at the small school I was assigned to. He told me what to expect from the students in terms of their abilities, handled classroom discipline (I was at a vocational school so there were a lot of problem students), gave me "assignments" for what to prepare for

lessons, and helped me deal with German bureaucracy. He was a decent guy but I never felt particularly personally connected to him.

Several had mentors other than their assigned “mentor teacher:”

The person who played a significant role in my experience was not my mentor teacher. There were actually several other staff members at my host school, who were of great help to me. One woman helped me find housing on my first day, introduced me to teachers at the school, made sure I had pots & pans, sheets, etc. and that I knew where in town to go to purchase what I would need. She helped me navigate the school and host community, invited me to local events and made sure I felt comfortable and welcome.

Another respondent expanded on the combined practical and personal mentoring provided by the assigned mentors:

Upon arrival at my host school I was assigned two mentor teachers - the school's two full-time English instructors. Actually, they had contacted me by mail before leaving the US, explaining their role and even offering me the opportunity to live with their families should I so wish. By chance I was traveling in Germany when this correspondence arrived, so I was able to contact them and visit the town and school and work on finding an apartment for the year while on location. During the year they were my main 'go to' people for everything. As far as teaching, I had lesson planning sessions with each of them 1 day per week. These were at their homes, where we would also have meals and family time. The one-on-one attention and integration was impressive. In the classroom we team taught at times. They even took me to continuing education workshops for teachers in the region. Outside the classroom I accompanied them on family outings. Today I consider one of these mentors and her husband "my German parents" and also still have extensive contact with the other mentor as well.

These types of observations were echoed by an alumnus of the program in Argentina:

Fulbright put the two of us in email contact before I arrived. She was a professor at the university in the program where I was an ETA. She traveled with me from Buenos Aires to my town, found me my apartment, oriented me to the town and the university, arranged my class schedule at the university, and included me in several social gatherings.

Based upon response patterns, it appears that participants in programs that had assigned mentors had a preconceived idea of a mentor as a facilitator and coach related to

logistics. When asked their thoughts on the role these mentors played, they generally focused on the practical.

On the other hand, those who had found their own mentors, especially the Asian program participants, tended to discuss a deeper, more personal role that these individuals played. One ETA in Korea had this to say about mentoring that she received from individuals outside the Fulbright program:

I was able to meet several persons who assisted me during the Fulbright Experience. One of the individuals that assisted me was a former ETA with the program in 2003-2004. He was an African American male and he spoke Korean fluently! I am so blessed to have met him during the experience. The role that he played was to really "introduce" me to the culture from an African American perspective that had appreciation for another culture and I could really relate to the experience and get through the hard days when I felt "alone." I could better respect the culture because he was able to translate and help me understand some experiences that I had in which I probably would have gotten a different experience.

Another participant in the Korean program found a mentor in a fellow Fulbright ETA:

I had a close friend who was part of the program who had lived in Thailand for about a year while she was in college. She would talk about what she had learned through that program in terms of dealing with culture shock and homesickness. We'd get together with other ETAs to travel to different places, and she helped us all see our situations in different perspectives. For example, when an ETA talked about being middle class, I remember her reminding this ETA that middle class in America is quite wealthy compared to other places in the world.

That is not to say that ETAs in Europe and Latin America did not develop more personal mentoring relationships with both their "assigned" mentors and additional self-discovered mentors. One respondent from the German program had this to say:

I was very fortunate in that I had many people who were very helpful to me. There were four groups in particular that helped tremendously: (1) teachers at the school where I was assigned, (2) a group of adults who met weekly to play volleyball, (3) a community theater group who brought me on to play a bit role in

their production that year, and (4) my host family, who included me in several family events, including Christmas. There was some overlap between these groups, but all played a very significant role for me during my Fulbright year.

Another participant's response indicated the ultimate personal mentoring relationship: "I met my husband while on my Fulbright grant year!"

### **Impact of the Fulbright ETA on Educational Choices**

Almost 80% of respondents have enrolled in one or more advanced degree programs since completing their Fulbright ETA. Of these, four have entered medical degree programs, seven have pursued law degrees, 17 began doctorates, and 45 have earned (or are earning) master's degrees. When asked "to what degree did your Fulbright ETA experience influence your decision to continue studying for an advanced degree," 67% indicated that the Fulbright ETA experience influenced their decision. Only 10% said it did not influence their decision at all. A third of respondents pursued higher degrees in the social sciences. The remaining two-thirds were divided amongst humanities (28%), education (19%), law (12%), business (9%) and medicine (7%). Almost 60% indicated that their advanced degrees were internationally-oriented. Two respondents were particularly motivated to continue working with the Fulbright program as a part of their ongoing educational experiences. The first did so in Germany:

During my Fulbright ETA I decided to apply to graduate programs in German rather than in Linguistics, as I had originally planned. I stayed a second year in Germany through the Pedagogical Exchange Service (the partner agency Fulbright works with in Germany) and then pursued an MA in Germanic Linguistics.

The second does Fulbright-connected work here in the U.S.:

The Fulbright ETA program introduced me to the Fulbright community. This has been the most rewarding part of the program for me - getting to know other

Fulbrighters. I've served on the board of my local Fulbright chapter and ultimately, that experience led me to change career fields and enter graduate school for International Education.

These comments are consistent with other text responses, such as the following, which often indicated that there was an impact on both educational goals and career path:

My ETA experience solidified my interest in how educational standards are developed and pursued internationally. This directly influenced my student teaching upon my return to the U.S. and my choice in Master's degrees. I now work for the Federal government helping to build educational capacity domestically and abroad.

This respondent is just one example of how Fulbright ETAs use all of the various aspects of the experience – teaching, understanding other educational systems, fostering an international perspective – in their ongoing life choices.

### **Impact of the Fulbright ETA on Career Choices**

Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated that the Fulbright ETA program had an impact on their career choice. Only five percent said that there was no impact at all. Education is a priority for returned Fulbright ETAs, since 37% of respondents indicated that they work in the education field; and 32% are currently students. Law, international economics, and civil/social/foreign service round out the remaining third. Almost 75% of respondents said that their career path was at least “somewhat” a result of their Fulbright ETA experience. That leaves 25% who indicated little or no impact of the international experience on their career. However, that numerical statistic is misleading. Only five individuals said their career path was “not at all” a result of their Fulbright ETA experience. Each of these five had different reasons for stating a lack of

influence on their career by the Fulbright ETA. One of them is a stay-at-home parent, and had this to say about the role of the Fulbright ETA:

I think the Fulbright ETA opened my eyes to and gave me experience in other cultures, languages, and ways of doing things. Although I definitely want to stay home with my kids, the chance to live abroad, and specifically the Fulbright emphasis on contributing to bridge-building, has made me want to do more, and I have written, but not yet published, several children's books, one of which emphasizes how people that seem different can be more like you than you realize. I also want to write at least one children's book in the language of my teaching assistantships, German. We live abroad now... and although I love it, I think getting to know other places and cultures makes you analyze your own, and you can see the good and the bad.

This respondent's choice of career path was not changed by the experience, but goals related to her career have, certainly, been affected.

Despite the fact that their survey responses indicated that the Fulbright ETA had no effect at all, one could argue that the Fulbright ETA experience impacted the following two respondents, in that it showed them that they did not want to be teachers. One respondent said,

My TA work has certainly broadened my appreciation of other cultures and strengthened my love of travel. My experiences teaching abroad also helped me conclude that I did not want to teach as a career path. However, I enjoy interacting with people and work in a qualitative research field that allows me use my strengths with classroom management, adaptability, and building interpersonal communication.

The second respondent said "My ETA showed me how challenging teaching can be; though it was extremely rewarding, I think it helped me realize that teaching is not my career path." Among the 15 respondents who said that the Fulbright ETA experience had very little to do with their career path, five echoed these thoughts – that the Fulbright ETA showed them that teaching was not the career for them.

Two respondents shared the following sentiment as to why the Fulbright ETA did not affect their career path: “I would not say that my professional goals were influenced by my time as an ETA, but rather, that I chose to apply and serve as an ETA because of the professional ambitions and personal goals I already had in mind.” This also applied to 4 of the 15 respondents who said that the Fulbright ETA had “very little” effect on their career path. Essentially, the Fulbright ETA experience was a part of their plans to meet their career goals.

The bottom line is that almost all respondents indicated that the Fulbright ETA experience greatly affected their life choices in some way. Either it taught them something about themselves, or reinforced current paths, or redirected them to new paths, or opened up new opportunities professionally and personally.

### **Conclusions and Areas for Future Research**

It is clear from this study that international experiential education has an impact on life choices related to educational and career goals. While the questions were asked separately, the degree of impact on educational and career goals were consistent (67% of educational decisions, 77% of career decisions). When respondents were asked to elaborate on the impact of the Fulbright ETA on their life choices, these two elements were often intertwined. Based upon the choices made by alumni, the Fulbright ETA program is achieving its objectives of bringing about knowledge, compassion and mutual understanding. These alumni are working in areas that promote education, social justice and development. At a minimum, their international experiences helped them identify who they are as individuals. On the individual level, the questions that remain

to be answered are how, when and why does international experiential education impact life choices?

### **Institutional outcomes**

While the individual impact of international experiential education is underscored by this study, several institutional questions remain. How does this knowledge help international education professionals? How does it help institutions? One thing that is clear from the outcomes of this research is that longitudinal assessment needs to be done. As noted above, most assessments of programs are done almost immediately following the participants' return to the home institution. In the case of the Fulbright ETA, the student does not return to his or her home institution, nor is he or she required to report back his or her findings. There is little or no accountability to the home institution at all. The challenge of assessing outcomes in the Fulbright program is similar to conducting a longitudinal assessment of a study abroad done during the student's undergraduate years. Once they are gone, they are gone. However, institutions would be well-served to set in place a means by which they can assess the impact of their programs 3 -7 years post-program. Educators are increasingly under pressure to demonstrate results, to show a return on what amounts to a sizeable investment of time and resources. Institutions are asked to demonstrate what their graduates do with the education they receive. How many graduates find jobs in their fields? What kind of salaries are they making? How many go on to advanced degrees? In addition, international education professionals are also challenged to demonstrate that education abroad programs have inherent, measurable value. Implementing a survey such as the

one used in this study, international educators can provide these types of answers. They can say, “73% of our program’s alumni said the abroad experience impacted life choices and the opportunities available to them, and this is how.” Looking at assessment in this manner opens up other avenues for cross-campus collaboration. Study abroad offices can partner with career centers to identify successful ways of marketing the abroad experience. Study abroad alumni networks can be formed and utilized for placement of students in internationally-oriented careers. These types of networks can then facilitate contact with alumni for the purpose of administering the assessment. Study abroad offices can work synergistically with administration, career centers and alumni organizations to provide the opportunities for alumni and assessments for the institution.

**CHAPTER IV**  
**TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES:**  
**HOW INTERNATIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES IMPACT LIFE**  
**CHOICES**

**Overview**

If you ask people who have lived abroad for any period of time, they will tell you that the experience of living in another culture changed their lives. As a conversation topic, it is hard for them to pinpoint exactly how – but they know that they are different for having lived abroad. Anecdotally, practitioners in international education have heard it over and over from returning sojourners: living abroad was the single-most life-changing experience they ever had. If we accept the premise that international experience changes lives, is it possible to understand how and when the change occurs? This article will apply transformative learning theory as a theoretical lens through which international educators, and those with an interest in evaluating international educational experience, can analyze the role of international education in transforming lives.

**Background to the Study**

During the academic year 2008-2009, more than 260,000 Americans studied abroad for credit. Programs varied from one week field trips, to full-year exchanges, to internships, to full enrollment in degree-granting programs (*Open Doors 2010: Report on International Educational Exchange*, 2010). Much attention has been paid to the efficacy of these programs in transmitting knowledge, skills, and intercultural

competence. Numerous studies have been conducted to examine the degree of culture shock when students go abroad (Alvarez, McMahon, Watson, Malik, & Garcia, 2008; Cui & Awa, 1992; Dwyer, 2004; Miller, 1993; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Scully, 2001; Sobre-Denton & Hart, 2008; Weiss, 1998). And, less frequently, similar assessments have been done to examine the characteristics and duration of reverse culture shock (Al-Mehawes, 1984; Constantinian, et al., 2008; Lester, 2000; Martin, 1986; Pritchard, 2011). With increased recognition of the globalization of education, and of society in general, the question of re-acculturation has gained renewed attention by researchers in the US and abroad. In her article "Re-entry Trauma: Asian Re-Integration After Study in the West," Rosalind Pritchard (2011) points out that, in the analysis of students who have been abroad, "attention is less frequently given to what happens to them when they return to their own countries; this process is important because they need to be in a position to maximize their potential contribution to their home environment and to realize returns on their own or their country's investment of time/money" (p. 93). Further, Pritchard notes that it is important for the returning student to serve as an 'ambassador' for the host country, thereby encouraging others who are considering studying abroad.

This study goes beyond the question of re-acculturation immediately upon the sojourner's return, and examines the long-term effect of the international educational experience. In order to accomplish this, the researcher utilized the framework of transformative learning theory.

### **Transformative learning theory**

Transformative learning theory is an adult learning theory first proposed by Jack Mezirow in 1978. It is focused on transformation, in that it integrates adult development and adult learning theories. It is based upon Habermas' contemporary critical theory, and, at its essence, is a means by which one can understand the process of transformation in adulthood. Meaning perspectives, according to Mezirow (1991a), are "sets of learned assumptions which function as codes regulating perception and cognition" (p.188). We derive our meaning perspectives from the social context in which we live. They are shaped by three fundamental types of factors: sociolinguistic (norms, ideologies, and linguistic codes), epistemic (learning styles and preferences, developmental stages), and psychological. As adults, a shift in meaning perspectives comes about as a result of the interaction between the internal dynamic of adult learning and the cultural context in which it takes place. Mezirow (1978a, 1978b, 1990, 1991a, 1991b, 1997, 2000) argues that transformative learning takes place in three stages. The first is a "disorienting dilemma," an instance, or experience that occurs over time, which results in the individual becoming aware of a discrepancy between his or her current thinking and new information. The second is a period of critical reflection, during which the individual evaluates the disorienting dilemma in the context of his or her understanding of the world. The third stage is a permanent alteration of his or her way of being, his or her understanding who he or she is relative to the social constructs of gender, class, race and other ways of living. Often, this shift in meaning perspectives is evidenced through action taken by the individual. In the survey phase of the current study, as reported in

the preceding chapter, survey respondents overwhelmingly indicated that they had taken action based upon shifts in meaning perspectives caused by their international educational experience.

The next logical question is: "Why is there a transformative effect of international education, and when does it happen?" In order to answer that question, it was important to take a longitudinal approach, and explore the paths taken by participants in an international educational experience.

### **Methodological Approach**

In the winter of 2010, the researcher conducted a survey of alumni of the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship (ETA) program from the 2004-2005 award year. There were 202 participants in the program that year, and email addresses were identified for 123 of them. An invitation to participate in the survey, including a personalized link, was sent to those email addresses. Only two individuals requested to be removed from the distribution. Of the remaining 121 contacts, 78 individuals started the survey and 74 completed it. The purpose of the survey was to 1) determine if there is a transformative effect of international experiential education, and 2) to identify whether people make life choices related to career or educational goals as a result of international educational experiences. Survey questions were designed to identify characteristics of the individuals, and of the experience itself, that may have influenced the transformation and subsequent life choices. The results of that survey indicated a definite transformative effect, as reflected in life choices related to career and educational goals. While the questions were asked separately, the degree of impact on educational and

career goals were consistent (67% of educational decisions, 77% of career decisions). When respondents were asked to elaborate on the impact of the Fulbright ETA on their life choices, these two elements were often intertwined. Based upon the choices made by alumni, the experience brought about knowledge, compassion and mutual understanding, as evidenced by their work in areas that promote education, social justice and development. At a minimum, their international experiences helped them identify who they are as individuals. At the end of the survey, the questions that remained to be answered were how, when and why does international experiential education impact life choices? This study was designed to address these questions.

The sample for this study was a purposive sample (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009) of eight of these respondents. The purpose of the sample was to include participants who were likely to have been immersed in the host environment, and were representative of the Fulbright ETA population as a whole. They represented a cross-section of background (gender, age, ethnicity, prior study abroad) and location of the program (location, type of accommodation). All members of the sample lived in either a homestay, or in an apartment in the community. Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents.

**Table 2.** Demographic Profile of Purposive Sample

Name	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Prior Study Abroad	Location	Current Occupation
<b>Tom</b>	Male	29	White	No	Germany	Teacher educator at private university in the Midwest
<b>Michael</b>	Male	22	White	Yes	Germany	Law School Student
<b>Alicia</b>	Female	27	African-American	No	Korea	Community Development/Social Work
<b>Susan</b>	Female	22	White	No	Korea	Copyeditor, Volunteer in Native American Education
<b>Laura</b>	Female	22	White	No	Korea	Academic Librarian/ Teacher
<b>Emma</b>	Female	24	White	No	Hungary	At-home parent, independent researcher in education issues
<b>Andrea</b>	Female	24	White	No	Indonesia	Lawyer, volunteer educator on law, democracy and human rights
<b>Jane</b>	Female	22	White	Yes	Germany	Veterinary Technician

**Note:** The names used here are pseudonyms

The research was conducted by means of interviews with the returned Fulbright ETAs. Each individual had gone his or her own way to pursue careers and/or further education. At the time of the interview, all eight respondents were residing in the United States. Present occupations were varied, including copywriter, lawyer, stay-at-home mom, student, academic librarian, veterinary technician, and teacher. The researcher employed a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2007; Smith & Eatough, 2007; Smith, et al., 2009) in the administration of the interviews. The goal of the interview was to examine each participant's experience and to examine any commonalities in the

lived experience of the Fulbright ETA. Each interview was conducted over the telephone and recorded to be later transcribed. The foundation of the interview consisted of six fundamental questions. The respondents were encouraged to expand on their thoughts well beyond the basic answers to the questions. The interviews ranged in duration from 25 minutes to 50 minutes. Interviewees were not sent the questions in advance, as the researcher intended for them to explore the questions during the interview. Member checking (Charmaz, 2003; Creswell, 1994, 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Hawker & Kerr, 2007; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lyons & Coyle, 2007) was conducted by sending transcripts to the respondents for their review. The main focus of this article is to interpret these cases as exemplars of the transformative nature of international experiential education, rather than to generalize across, or predict the behavior of, a population. The study examined the perceptions of the participants, and proposes a theoretical framework for contextualization.

The interview protocol (Attachment B) was utilized to ensure that the researcher covered the major areas of inquiry. Six questions were used to guide the participant through an exploration of their career and educational goals before and after Fulbright ETA, any experiences that stood out to them as significant or challenging, any reflection that they may have made on these experiences, and the ultimate impact they felt the Fulbright ETA experience had on their life choices. The questions were open-ended. The participants were encouraged to verbalize any thoughts they had, whether directly applicable to the prompt question or not. The interviewer asked follow-on questions, as appropriate, when the participant opened new lines of thought.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was utilized to analyze the eight case studies. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) note that “when people are engaged with an experience of something major in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening” (p. 3). The interview is an attempt to engage with these reflections, looking in detail at how the respondent makes sense of his or her international experience. This process is informed by hermeneutics, is dependent on what the participant reveals in the interview, and needs to be interpreted by the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007; Hawker & Kerr, 2007; Smith & Osborn, 2003). It is important to keep in mind that the results of IPA are, for the most part, confined to the group studied. However, the results can be theoretically generalized when the results are applied in a similar context, and with the inclusion extant knowledge (Mezirow, 1978a; Smith, et al., 2009). In this study, we will answer the question of how and when the international experiences of the respondents transformed their meaning perspectives—and their lives.

### **Presentation of the Results**

In order to understand where the participants were as they began their journey into the Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship, they were asked to describe their career and educational goals at that time. Most of the respondents indicated that they were investigating their options. Several wanted to pursue graduate degrees, but none were convinced that they wanted to do that right away. One participant, Tom, had already earned a Master’s degree in German, along with a teaching certificate, prior to his ETA experience. For the most part, participants indicated that they were open to

possibilities. The following response from Michael, a participant in the German program, typified the group as a whole:

It was the year after I graduated from college, so I think at that time I was planning on going to graduate school, after I came back, to pursue a PhD. I don't quite remember. I think I had also considered moving to Europe full-time and sort of look for work. I considered a few things. But I think I was planning on pursuing a PhD in German literature following that...Leading up to the ETA, I was pretty sure I was going to pursue a PhD.

Most of the participants had a general idea of what they wanted to do, in terms of career and education; none were fully committed to a path.

When participants were asked about how they saw the Fulbright ETA fitting into their career and educational objectives, they were similarly nonspecific. Those who had studied abroad before indicated that they saw this as an opportunity to get back to the country they had visited. Those who had never studied abroad saw the Fulbright as a way to experience another culture, another country. Those who had even thought about how the Fulbright ETA would fit into their career and educational objectives noted that it was an opportunity to “try out teaching” or explore the possibilities abroad. Laura explained,

I thought it would be neat to get some teaching experience, as far as my career objectives go. It would also be nice to have some international experience, because I had only briefly been abroad to Europe before. I thought it would be good to have an international perspective, and also to have some teaching practice. Part of the reason I went wasn't necessarily to further my career. I wanted to have an experience abroad. I really wanted to spend a year living in another country, and Asia always really interested me.

Andrea noted the opportunities outside the classroom presented a compelling option:

I guess the primary reason that I applied for that program, and how I thought it would further my goals (I didn't really know anything about the Fulbright program, initially, as far as prestige) I knew it would get me abroad for a year. I

know I was nervous about going for two to three years, which some of the other grant programs would have us do. At that point in time, they also asked you for a project component, something else he would like to do other than teach while you were there. So, I thought it was really interesting that it would allow me to not only teach, but get out into the community and do something.

Several respondents indicated that the Fulbright ETA ended up being an opportunity for them to take time to examine their goals without the intrusion of the social and cultural context in which they had been living their entire lives. Ultimately, they were able to make choices that were informed by new experiences and a changed worldview.

Participants indicated a variety of examples of how and why their international sojourn was a transformative experience. These fell into two broad categories: identity and purpose.

### **Identity**

The nature of transformation is, inherently, exploration of the self (Mezirow, 1978b). Throughout our lives we ask ourselves "who am I?" For participants in this study, questions of identity are bounded by questions of what it means to be American, what it means to be a Westerner, and what it means to speak English. Relative to the United States, the host countries for these English Teaching Assistants are culturally homogenous. Growing up in the United States, people often do not realize the diversity around them. Diversity manifests itself in many ways: religious, ethnic, physical, linguistic, and behavioral. Several respondents indicated that they had eye-opening experiences when observing host country nationals interact with people who appeared different.

In Germany, Korea, and Hungary, physical differences readily set a person apart. Whether it was the color of your skin, the shape of your eyes or your physical build, physical differences were the exception, rather than the norm. Added to that, there was a degree of homogeneity within the English teaching community. As Alicia pointed out, “There are not a lot of English teachers that are of another culture... There were only two African-Americans, and both of us were women, an Indian, a Latino, and maybe another culture.” Participants were surprised that discrimination towards people who are physically different was acceptable. All three respondents who participated in the Korean program noted that Koreans struggled with accepting, or even understanding, the perspectives of people unlike themselves. Laura was disappointed to discover discriminatory attitudes:

When I arrived, someone in the program expressed to me that there has been a lot of discrimination against people in Korea that are physically different. That is pretty socially acceptable. That was kind of news to me, because, I think that in the US people don't think that you are stupid because you are physically different. But, I guess, in Korea, it is pretty common to assume that you are dumb if you have some sort of physical difference.

Interestingly, Koreans were very interested in gaining acceptance of their culture and their norms. Alicia, one of the few African-Americans to participate in the ETA program in Korea, said “it is of the Korean mindset that ‘we want you to accept our culture.’ Even my homestay host would say, ‘You need to speak Korean to us. You need to learn it.’ They really wanted acceptance of their culture.”

Going into the program, Andrea knew that there would be an opportunity to work in the community, and she was excited to be involved in a State Department outreach program to the Muslim community in Indonesia:

I got the opportunity to do these Islamic outreach programs and go to universities. People would talk to you as if you had some sort of profound knowledge because you went to college in the United States, which isn't true. But, it is different. That was something I had to learn, because I didn't really have that perspective when I went there... Sometimes, it was groups of women who wanted to talk about domestic violence and how to cope with that within the Islamic community. And sometimes, it was how to incorporate working women into the family, because more women there have to work than ever before. Things that, as a 24-year-old, you really have to think about the place you come from because you have to be able to talk to them from some sort of informed position. You haven't really thought these things through at 24. You know they're out there, and you've gone to University, and you've had theoretical discussions, but they really make you think about the place you come from and your experience with those types of topics.

Her realizations regarding her identity had nothing to do with religion, but rather, they were evaluative of who she was as a person. She realized that the fact she was sent there by the US State Department gave her a certain degree of credibility that she wasn't sure she deserved. The experience shone a light on the perspectives that others have of Americans.

Another common observation revolved around the language and identity.

Several participants noted that until their experience abroad, they had not realized how intertwined language and identity can be. Susan shared the following observation:

I remember at one point realizing how much I wanted to express, but was getting lost in my not-so-great attempts at Korean, and in the structure of language, the fact that you needed to use a different system. There is a different system for being polite and honoring elders. So, who I was as a person suddenly became very muddled. If I wasn't using the correct form of the verb, then I wasn't as polite as I feel that I am in the American context. I realized too, that suddenly, how I use my body became a lot more important because, if I couldn't use language, then I had better smile and make sure I bowed and do the things that, at least, wouldn't be lost. Those things became exaggerated. At the same time, I got really interested in Korean art, because that was another way that I could express myself in a way that wasn't linguistic. So I guess I am still trying to work out what it means to be able to express yourself in all of these other avenues that aren't linguistic, but still have so much of your identity bound to

language. That's why I really wanted to go back to graduate school, because if the core of who you are, to some degree, is what you say and what you tell yourself. Those most intimate thoughts are sometimes related to language, so how you are as a religious person changes depending on how you express yourself.

Given the strong influence of Europe on US cultural and linguistic history, one might imagine that the contrast would be greater between an Asian culture and the US culture, in comparison to a European culture versus the US culture. However, respondents from both Korea and Germany noted the profound differences that are reflected in the way that we speak. Michael made very similar observations:

For example, language, the language that we use is really ingrained. We have a particular way of expressing ourselves and saying things. And then, when you're learning a new language, there can be this one way you have always expressed yourself in English, and there isn't any equivalent way of saying it in German, for example. And you have to come up with new ways of saying it. It's like German, there things that you can say in that language that you can say in English. I remember struggling with these things and trying to say something, and very slowly learning an entirely new way of expressing myself. I found it very profound at the time.

It is not unexpected that sojourners would examine the question of identity as a result of their experience, especially at this stage in their lives. The difference here is that the exploration of identity resulted in transformative development, rather than normative development. Recalling Hunter's (2008) explanation:

Life experience that causes a student to reorganize existing schemes in order to accommodate new information and negotiate new environments represents learning that leads to normative development. On the other hand, life experience that challenges students to reconsider the fundamental reasoning behind their most basic notions of the way the world works can precipitate an entire change in perspective. Learning of this nature is said to be transformative. (pp. 94-95)

The result of exploring one's identity can result in an individual seeking his or her place in the world. By answering the question "Who am I?" the next logical question is "Why am I here?"

### **Purpose**

For some participants, the Fulbright ETA experience reinforced the decision to follow a path down which they had already started, but with a different perspective. For Emma, the transformation in worldview resulted in a focus on issues far from home. Emma was interested in educational disparity in her home state of Ohio before starting the Fulbright ETA:

Disparities in education have been an interest of mine for a while. Ohio has been ruled unconstitutional in funding at least five times...I know how important educational attainment can be within one family, and over three generations, my own father's family has come a long way. To me, it's something very, very important. Originally, it was just finding a way to go back to Ohio, or at least get into educational policy to highlight these things.

Once she had seen how the same types of disparity played out in Hungary, with the Roma minority, she realized that the issue had greater scope than she had imagined:

(T)he ultimate goal was to work in policy, to look at the disparities in educational resources and funding in Ohio...That had been my goal for a decent period of time, maybe for a year or so. And then, my friend brought back some information about the Fulbright session, and that got me started thinking...I am still very interested in educational policy, but it is quite a change from where I was before that information session. I thought, if I was really interested in policy, I needed to look beyond the Midwest, to challenge myself more to learn about other places. So, I looked at the country offerings. I had done research on Hungary before - my mother's family is Hungarian. I started looking at that path, and I realized that they had never had their own version of *Brown v. Board (of Education)*, and their educational funding methods are extraordinary...They have never had anyone question why a special education school has 90% Roma children, when, typically, in the general population, it's about 13% Roma. Something's wrong, something's really wrong.

In her case, the international educational experience brought her beyond the confines of the social context in which she grew up, and forced her to critically reflect on the broader implications of the policies that she was already questioning.

For others, the experience caused them to question their overall life purpose. While none of the interviewees indicated that they were interested in going into international public service or international policymaking before the Fulbright ETA, several have noted that they are interested in working for the State Department or USAID, now that they have seen the impact that they can make in the world. Three interviewees have taken the Foreign Service Exam. Several of the interviewees have done extensive volunteer work trying to affect change in the US and abroad. While she has yet to be able to find a fit for her newfound passion in her career, Andrea is effectively combining her skills as a lawyer with her new meaning perspective:

I could carry that on and go into poor school districts here in Atlanta and teach kids about juvenile justice, and what to do if they are arrested, and things like that. I have since taken that and I will be going to India next fall to teach lawyers in India, that prosecute human trafficking cases, how to negotiate. I just wrote a program in Guatemala, for an anti-human trafficking organization that is trying to create a prevention program. So, I created a prevention program.

She is not alone in her efforts. Alicia has pursued a career in community development in the Baltimore area, which is very multi-ethnic. She sees there an opportunity to share the importance of cultural awareness with her colleagues. She did a project with the Forum for Black Public Administrators which “opened their minds, I hope, to understanding their own neighborhood and all the different cultures that are in their neighborhood, and the possibility of studying abroad.” The Fulbright ETA led Susan to expand her graduate studies in religion to include exploring the role of the Korean

writing system in the growth of Buddhism. Nowadays, she is active in the cultural development in the US. She said,

For me, Korean is a personal interest, and it is not incredibly important that it is connected to a job. But I do like the idea of having a career that is related to languages and broadening people's perspectives. Where I am teaching a foreign language, or helping them experience another culture. Like, right now I am helping to revitalize the Cheyenne language here in Oklahoma.

For almost all interviewees, the importance of promoting cross-cultural understanding became a driving factor in their subsequent activities. Tom echoed the sentiment of many international education professionals:

I would, in my perfect world, send teachers abroad for at least a semester, preferably a full academic year, to teach in another country. Which other country is doesn't really matter to me. I really do strongly feel that there is something that you learn being somewhere else. And that is an important perspective to bring into the classroom, no matter where you are teaching, the students all come from different places. You can't count on them all having the exact same experience and the exact same worldview that you do. So, at least if you have spent some time, living somewhere, where you were the outsider, where you were the one who was different, where you stuck out like a sore thumb, it will help you appreciate any students that you might have who might not necessarily fit in quite so well with everybody else.

Ultimately, for some interviewees, the question of purpose was related to whether or not they were meant to be teachers. Regardless of whether or not they had considered teaching as a career, the Fulbright ETA helped every interviewee make a decision about whether teaching, or an aspect of it, would be a purpose in life. The outcomes were evenly divided. Four interviewees (Tom, Andrea, Emma, and Laura) indicated that teaching would be an important element in their career – even if it wasn't directly related to their employment. Tom has worked as a German teacher and continues to work in the field of international education. Andrea combines her newfound love of teaching with

her experience in human rights law to develop educational programs in the US and abroad. Emma is looking to conduct research about the impact of educational disparities on the Roma in Hungary. Laura, who now works as an academic librarian, found that teaching was the easiest part of her experience in Korea. It has led her to seek out instructional roles with international students on her university campus. The four others (Michael, Alicia, Jane, and Susan) determined that being a teacher was not for them. For Jane, the Fulbright ETA served as the clarifying experience that showed her that her purpose in life was not to be a teacher:

Teaching was one of the things I was thinking about doing after college, because it seemed like something that one could do with music and German as a major. Going over there, I didn't have any teaching experience...So that was kind of difficult for me to just jump in there like that. I kind of got into the swing of it. I did some lesson plans, and did some tutoring, and stuff. It was all a great experience, but I don't think I was very good at it. And I didn't really enjoy it. That's why it made me decide not to be a teacher.

Jane is currently working as a veterinary technician, and hopes to become a veterinarian. Michael, like Jane, discovered that he did not enjoy teaching. He, too, had thought he would choose teaching as a profession and came to the realization that he would not be happy in that career. For the others, the choice not to become teachers does not mean that they have no interest in education, or incorporating elements of their teaching experience into their lives. Susan, for example, works with the Head Start program in the Cheyenne Nation:

I develop materials. I haven't even had a chance to go to their classroom. I would really like to see how they teach those classes, but I can't say I have an interest in actually teaching. I think part of that is really related to the whole "outsider" thing. I'm not sure that I would be completely welcome teaching the Cheyenne language. But I also feel like, I think I am better creating materials and given the tools to teachers to explain. I'm using my background in

linguistics to clarify things that maybe seem like strange patterns on the surface. I've done better at that than classroom management. I think, in that regard, my experience in Korea really helped me clarify what aspect of teaching was challenging, and what was more rewarding.

As noted previously, Alicia works in community development, and has done work to educate others about cultural differences. She is interested in helping more non-traditional students and minorities study and work abroad and/or be Fulbrighters themselves.

### **Application of transformative learning theory**

Recall that transformative learning theory posits that there is a disorienting dilemma, then a period of critical reflection, which initiates a shift in the frame of reference (Cranton, 1997; Kegan, 2000; Mezirow, 2000). Transformative learning theory is centered on the process of "perspective transformation." This transformation, according to the theory, could manifest as changes in lifestyle, revised understanding of the self within the social context, and changes in culturally-assimilated assumptions (Mezirow, 1991a). As explained in the preceding section, almost all participants reported defined shifts in their frames of reference—in their worldviews. If we want to apply transformative learning theory as a framework for understanding this shift, then we must identify the disorienting dilemma and the subsequent critical reflection. Some respondents in this study were easily able to identify that disorienting dilemma, others had to re-examine the experience, verbally, to find it.

Going into the study, the researcher hypothesized that the abroad experience itself would be the disorienting dilemma for most participants. This was based on the plethora of studies that examine culture shock and its effects (Al-Mehawes, 1984;

Alvarez, et al., 2008; Miller, 1993; Neault, 2005; Ryan & Twibell, 2000; Scully, 2001; Sobre-Denton & Hart, 2008; Weiss, 1998). However, based upon the interviews, the disorienting dilemma happened, variously, before, during, or after the international experience. While in some cases, it was related to the stages of culture shock, in others it was a moment or incident completely unrelated to adjusting to the abroad experience.

For example, Michael, a male respondent who participated in the German program discussed how a conversation with a relative at a party right before his departure impacted both his abroad experience and his subsequent career path:

I planned to get a PhD in Germany after my fourth year of college, and just before I left for the Fulbright ETA, I went to a family reunion. And I remember these old relatives of mine, who I hadn't seen in a long time were asking me, because I'm always confused with my brother... "are you the one who's getting married?" No, that's my brother. "Oh, you're the one is in the military." No, that's my brother. "Oh, you're the one who's going to be a doctor." No, that's my brother. "So, what are you doing?" I started to say "I'm going to get a PhD in German literature." And they kind of looked at me with his vacant look, as if to say "really?" It was at that point that I realized that I wanted to do something that would allow me to create a profession, that would involve me my community, and to do things more than just an intellectual exercise. I saw law as combining those things in a lot of different ways. I guess I had thought about it before, but I hadn't given it enough thought. I suddenly realize, "gosh, I'm done with college, I have a useless major, I'm out of my own, I've got to think of something to do." That was part of it too.

Michael explained that he was able to reflect on this moment while he was on the Fulbright ETA. He made the decision to attend law school and, perhaps pursue another degree, like an LLM (Master of Laws), so that he would be eligible to practice or work at a firm or internationally. He said, "I want to be able to continue to use language experience, international travel, intercultural sensitivity, in my profession. I guess it was

that experience at the family reunion that really hit home for me that I wanted to do something a little bit different than being an academic.”

For Andrea, the disorienting dilemma came about during her Fulbright ETA experience, but not as a result of the program. Instead, right as she was getting over the culture shock, she found herself dealing with the aftermath of the tsunami in Indonesia:

It was the first time I had really been alone in the sense that you don't really immediately relate to other people. But, right when I was getting through that, it was kind of three months in when it really hit me, the novelty kind of wears off a little bit. You're kind of entrenched in, and really wanting to see something familiar. Then the tsunami happened. We were on the other side of the island from where the tsunami occurred, but all the refugees came down into Medan. All in all, it was really meeting people whose lives, I think, were affected in a different way than we can really imagine here. Even when disasters happen here, it doesn't seem that the response is the same, and the way that people were able to cope, or the resources that people had were the same. I remember that, very specifically, right after the tsunami happened, we could feel the aftershocks Medan. My training, in the United States, was to put my mattress over my head and get under a door frame. I lived in this Chinese longhouse, and people would come to my door and yell at me to come out of the house, and I couldn't figure out why. They would say, "if you don't come out of the house, and the house falls on you, no one is going to get you out. You have to come in the middle of the street." It's those things that made you really think about your life in the context of the place that you live. I think that really had a profound impact on me.

Prior to her Fulbright experience, Andrea had wanted to work in economic development. Her belief was that it was important to work at the policy level in order to effect change. However, her experience on the ground in Indonesia helped her realize that one can impact the world one person at a time.

Most of the interviewees came from similar demographics. Alicia, however, experienced a disorienting dilemma from just being within the Fulbright group:

Pretty much everyone in our class had gone on study abroad. I was probably the only one who'd never been out of the country...It was good that I was a little

older, so I wasn't intimidated. I think the dynamic of being with these people, and being a different culture, and there only being one other black person, that was very overwhelming. Everyone was going to go on to more school, law school or grad school. They were taking the GMAT, the GRE, whatever, they were taking it in Korea. Everyone was saying, 'okay, Alicia, what are you doing?' That caused me to be greater than just being in Korea and chilling out...But that forced me to be better...That caused me to want to do more. So, I was going to get a graduate degree in something.

Alicia was affected by more than just the abroad experience itself. Her disorienting dilemma came when she examined what others were doing with their lives. The experience in Korea took her out of her usual context, away from the norms with which she had lived for most of her life, and gave her the opportunity to explore another career, another life. The refuge to which the other Americans turned for comfort while living in Korea—each other—wasn't as culturally safe and comforting for her. Rather, it served as another catalyst for transformation.

The next question to examine in our evaluation of transformation was that of critical reflection – when and how had it taken place? Was it immediate, or was the interview the closest thing to critical reflection that the participant had? The respondents all indicated that they had reflected on the disorienting dilemma well in advance of the interview. Some indicated that the reflection had happened all at once; some indicated that it had taken place in pieces – as other facets of their lives added to their overall understanding. Some indicated that it was immediately in the wake of the disorienting dilemma, while others noted that it was something that happened much later. All of the respondents said that their reflection began while they were on their Fulbright ETA. For Susan, the reflection was both immediate and ongoing. She had been struggling with the

dilemma of trying to fit in, trying to speak the language, trying to be a part of her host family:

I was...in my room while the family was having a dinner party. I was working on my own private artwork. It was an 'Aha!' moment, I guess, because I realized it was okay to be a foreigner and an outsider in that sense. It was okay that I wasn't at the dinner party. That was their time to be with their friends. I was allowed to have my own time to work through all of the experiences that I had had that day. I remember that night pretty clearly. I remember thinking 'It's okay that I'm kind of an outsider here. And that's okay.' At that moment, it was conscious. And in my work with the Cheyenne tribe, it is conscious, too. I have made those connections.

Susan explained that, even though she works with the Cheyenne tribe in revitalizing their language, she doesn't feel the need to become one of them in order to be effective. She understands, as a result of her experience in Korea, who she is in the context of the world around her.

Because his disorienting dilemma came about before he left for his Fulbright ETA, Michael's abroad experience itself became a period of critical reflection. He was able to view his potential through a new lens. Rather than experiencing his time abroad as training for the career he thought he was going to pursue – that of an academic specializing in German literature – he explored the issues of identity and language. Not only did he realize that our language defines us, but he also reflected on the fact that how we interact with others often defines us, it shows us what is important in our context:

I remember being very pleased that I was in a place where people were also interested in talking about things like politics in the world, and philosophy, and human existence, and whatever else. And not just about the latest invention. The example that a friend of mine pointed out to me, that I think is really true is that in the US, if you go into a bar or someplace to try and meet people, the first question that they always ask is 'what do you do?' In Europe, I remember that you could have a conversation that could go on for 45 minutes or more without having any idea what the other person did for a living because it's not important.

You would be talking about things that were, obviously, coming from their experience, but it was about life in the world and whatever else. This person could be a garbage truck driver; this person could be a professor, or whatever else. It doesn't matter because I thought the subject. Whereas, in the US, your job is so incredibly central to what you do and what you are.

For Michael, his disorienting dilemma was focused on the issue of who he was, what his place was in the context of the socio-cultural norms in the society in which he found himself. His reflection took place as a result of re-contextualizing himself and resulted in a shift in his meaning perspective.

Emma found herself reflecting on the experience while she was in Hungary, after visiting the Roma communities. She shared a story of travelling to Pecs to visit with a Roma leader in the company of a young Hungarian teacher. On the way there, Emma asked the teacher about a Hebrew letter on her necklace. The teacher was surprised and uncomfortable about the fact that Emma knew she was Jewish, since many Hungarians are anti-Semitic. To Emma, having grown up in the US, it was not an issue to avoid discussing. On the way back from Pecs, the teacher said to Emma, "Emma, this is not that much different from me. This man is facing prejudice...trying to hide it and get around it, and so am I." This was a very powerful moment for Emma, who was able to reflect on who she was and where she comes from – in comparison to the life experiences of the teacher and the Roma in Hungary. That reflection has continued. She said, "I think of things that I saw while I was there, and I have all these questions. I have all these years now. And, I'm a mother and a wife, so, I have a different perspective now. I want to know more. I think about it quite a bit, actually."

## **Discussion**

Ultimately, the goal of this study was to answer the following questions: Why is there a transformative effect from international experiential education? What are the catalysts for transformation? How and why do people make life choices related to education and career goals as a result of transformation triggered by international experiential education? How can international educators use transformative learning theory to inform their practice? The discussion that follows will summarize the insight that this study has provided on each of these questions.

### **Catalysts for transformation**

International experiential education takes the participant out of the cultural context that has provided the societal norms that formed the basis of identity development. Over the course of the participant's life, he or she has created meaning by developing beliefs, desires, emotions, purposes, and mental representations through interactions with the sociocultural environment in which he or she has lived (Shweder, 1991). The act of leaving this context can create a disorienting dilemma. For some, the change in sociocultural context itself is the disorienting dilemma. They find themselves surrounded by an unfamiliar environment, with an unfamiliar language and unfamiliar cultural norms. They experience a sense of loss, and perhaps, grief. For others, an event that occurs while they are abroad is impactful, specifically because it is an event that situates them in the context of the new environment, in contrast with the old. They are able to ask themselves: "Would this have happened in the US? Would we have responded the same way? Would I have been able to cope?" For still others, the

separation from the influences of the former sociocultural environment gives them an opportunity to view themselves anew. Without the constructs of school, family, and American expectations, they are able to re-examine who they are. By realizing how others see them as Americans and the US as a nation, they can, in effect, step outside themselves and critically analyze who they want to be.

### **Life choices**

Having faced a disorienting dilemma, participants in this study engaged in critical reflection on their assumptions and beliefs. In most cases, they consciously analyzed who they were and what their purpose was in life. As a result, they made changes and took actions that evidenced their new ways of defining their worlds. One could even argue that Jane, the single participant who ultimately chose a path completely unrelated to the abroad experience, set herself on that path as a result of the disorienting dilemma of realizing that teaching was not the career for her. Some participants, such as Laura, Michael, Susan and Tom, were able to directly affect their career and educational paths. These individuals implemented changes as a result of a transformed worldview by enrolling in advanced degree programs and/or finding career opportunities that dovetailed with their newfound direction. Others have sought to incorporate their new goals into their careers and educational pursuits, but have met with obstacles. For Emma, Alicia, and Andrea, it was a matter of timing. Financial and family obligations caused them to delay full-time pursuit of career or educational goals, but they were able to keep an eye on their long-term objectives. These individuals continue to find their

opportunities through volunteer and professional development activities that complement their current occupation and may, ultimately, prove to be their life's work.

### **Future use of transformative learning theory**

As international educators seek to create robust programs abroad and/or evaluate existing programs, they would benefit from the use of transformative learning theory as a theoretical framework for this process. Study abroad programs with clear, measurable, learning outcomes based upon content that is designed into the abroad experience will continue to thrive because of the clarity and ease of implementation of outcomes assessment. However, independent and long-term education abroad experiences must be evaluated differently. The impact that they make on the participants is not always readily evident upon the participants' return, nor is it something that one can point to and say, "That was a direct benefit of study abroad." Instead, international educators, and institutions of higher education, need to apply an evaluative process that is set upon a framework of understanding learning in adulthood. This is why transformative learning theory provides a best fit in seeking to understand the outcomes of international experiential education. By asking participants to reflect on their experience and identify the moments of challenge, reflection, action, and outcomes, international educators can identify, in a meaningful way, the impact that international educational experience has. With this knowledge, administrators in higher education can explain the value that international education brings to the overall experience of postsecondary education. In today's economic and political environment, it is essential that institutions of higher education are able to articulate the benefits of each and every program that is any way

funded or supported by entities outside the institution. Not only must we demonstrate that graduates who have had an international education experience have broader opportunities and are better equipped to pursue their academic and career goals, but we need to explain why that is so. As a logical progression, use of this framework would allow research into reentry and re-acculturation to go to deeper levels. Not only would the research be able to analyze the impact that the abroad experience had on the individual, but also the contribution that the individual made to his or her home country as a result of his or her experience.

### **Future directions for research**

While this study focused on US students, studies on international students who study in the US could prove valuable in demonstrating the value of hosting international students at US institutions of higher education. An evaluation of their experiences here through the lens of transformative learning theory may demonstrate whether and why education in the US builds bridges of understanding between the US and the rest of the world. This is an assumption that underlies many of the exchange programs funded and supported by government and not-for-profit institutions. As with this study, anecdotally, we understand that these programs serve to promote a positive image of the US abroad, as well as serve as one arm of the US diplomatic mission. However, no systematic research has been done to evaluate the actual long-term impact of these programs. Finally, the schools themselves would benefit from knowing the long-term impact that the students' experiences had. Recruitment of new students, especially those of a higher caliber, is often dependent on the reputation that schools have with alumni. The process

of conducting analysis of the impact of the experience in the US would help to inform school officials of the long-term effect of on life choices of these international alumni.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the impact of international experiential education on life choices, specifically as related to educational and career goals. Analysis of this type allows international educators to articulate the benefits of an unstructured international experience. In addition, international educators can use the results to prepare future participants for international experiences that have long-lasting impact. The first phase of the study utilized a web-based survey instrument to gather responses from returned Fulbright English Teaching Assistants from the 2004-2005 award year. This group was chosen because the program in which they participated was immersive and relatively unstructured, lasted at least one year, and participants were similarly tasked (teaching English in the host country). The award year was chosen so that participants would have re-acclimated and overcome any reverse culture shock. In addition, the participants would have had several years to take action on life choices. Finally, outcomes analyzed would not be the result of temporary enthusiasm as a result of just returning home and additions to existing meaning schemes. Rather, actions analyzed would represent true perspective transformation, or absence of thereof.

The self-reported responses indicated that there was an impact on life choices related to educational and career goals in almost 80% of the 74 survey respondents. These data were used as the foundation for the second phase of the study, which examined the catalysts for, and the process of, transformation through the lens of

transformative learning theory. Almost all respondents indicated that the international experience had transformed their perspectives on their identity and purpose in life. Seven out of eight respondents discussed how they had gained an understanding of the fact that where one is born defines his or her perspective. One's sociocultural environment defines who one is and how he or she sees the world. The international experience allows a person to see themselves through the eyes of others. While the timing and specifics of the catalysts varied, each of these seven had gone through the phases of transformation--disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, changed frame of reference--with some relation to the abroad experience. In the case of the one respondent who did not experience perspective change, she did use the opportunity to examine her goals and life direction. She learned that she was not on the right career path for her, but it was not the result of the transformational process as defined by Mezirow's theory.

While the researcher was able to contact 123 of the 202 Fulbright ETAs from that year, and achieved a 60% response rate of those contacted, the limitation still exists that these individuals were self-selecting. In the course of the interviews, respondents commented that they knew of several ETAs who did not complete the program. Since none of the survey respondents indicated that they did not complete the program, it can be assumed that all of them did. Did ETAs who did not complete the program choose not to respond to the survey, and therefore, leave a significant gap in our understanding of the impact of the experience? It is hard to say. It is possible that they did not complete the ETA program due to personal or environmental circumstances unrelated to

the ETA experience itself. It is also possible that the international experience was so impactful, that they did make life choices as a result – beginning with the choice to leave the program. Although this group presents a limitation, the researcher believes that, within the group of non-completers, one would find perspective change represented similarly to those who did complete the program. .

### **Future Areas for Research**

Several questions arise as a result of the limitations in this study. One of them is: “What happened with the participants who left the program?” Future research should be done to explore the reasons and potential patterns associated with program non-completion in international experiential education. In the course of this study, the researcher was engaged by the lived experiences of the respondents. In some ways their experiences were very similar. In others, they were extraordinarily different. Our understanding would be greatly enhanced by a series of case studies of program participants. In addition, this study was conducted with U.S. students who traveled to countries with social norms and economic environments that, in comparison to the U.S., were more restrictive. Ultimately, each of these participants knew that they were free to return to “their world,” one that offers a wide variety of freedoms and economic advantages. Future research in the should be conducted to apply this process to analyzing the outcomes of the international experience of students coming from more socially restrictive societies to less socially restrictive societies to see how their life choices are impacted by perspective transformation. Do they choose to remain abroad?

Do they successfully reintegrate in their home societies with transformed perspectives?

How does the new perspective manifest itself?

As qualitative findings cannot be generalized to other populations, one cannot predict how, when or why international experiential education will impact life choices based upon this study. However, this study opens the doors to exciting and important research by proposing a three-part framework (methodological, chronological, and theoretical) for analyzing international educational experiences. The methodological element is a qualitative study incorporating a survey with in-depth interviews seeking to understand life goals before and after the international experience. In particular, questions are designed around identifiable actions taken by the respondents as a result of their experience abroad. The chronological element proposes conducting the study 4-8 years post-program. This allows for re-acculturation and overcoming potential reentry trauma, as well as gives the participant time to begin new paths and attempt to implement changes. The theoretical element of the framework is the use of Mezirow's transformative learning theory to understand the phases of perspective transformation. The application of this theoretical model addresses the transformational nature of the abroad experience, as opposed to the developmental nature of growth over time.

As noted in the previous chapters, there is applicability of this type of analysis to outcomes assessment at both the individual and institutional level. For international educators, knowing the long-term outcomes of programs that are not designed around the instruction of specific content will assist in the development of more enriching abroad experiences. The ability to articulate the value of an experience makes it that

much more marketable to incoming students (and to those who support them financially). In today's economy, international educators must be able to demonstrate that there is value in the abroad experience. Finally, as evidenced by several of the respondents, returning sojourners enhance the learning experience of those who remain the campus, and community as a whole, by bringing their newfound international perspectives back with them.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

An online survey was developed using Qualtrics survey software. The questions are reproduced here, but may be formatted slightly differently from the online version due to the capability of the tool to parse the question. Text boxes were utilized for open-ended questions, and the researcher used a variety of methods to proposed multiple-choice answers in order to keep the respondents' attention. Another item to note is that the online instrument allowed for "skip logic:" a process by which the tool skips over follow-up questions when they are unnecessary. For instance, in the case where a respondent answers "No" to the question, "Had you studied abroad prior to your Fulbright ETA?" the tool knows to skip the subsequent questions about the details of the prior study abroad experience.

**International Experiential Education Survey  
for  
Fulbright English Teaching Assistants  
Class of 2004-2005**

Welcome to the survey and thank you for participating in it. The purpose of this research project is to discover how international experiential education impacts life choices. I will be asking you about your Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship and the events leading up to it. I would also like to know about your subsequent life experiences related to career choice and education.

Most studies to date have examined the personal benefits and the short term impact of study abroad. Few, if any, have explored long-term impacts of international experiential education – especially that which takes place outside of academe. The participants in this study include the 202 Fulbright English Teaching Assistants from academic year 2004-2005.

This project will contribute to a doctoral dissertation to be submitted to the Department of Educational Psychology at Texas A&M University. The survey was derived from the Study Abroad for Global Engagement (SAGE) survey developed by research staff at The University of Minnesota.

## **INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Assessing the Impact of International Experiential Education**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this form is to provide you (as a prospective research study participant) information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research.

You have been asked to participate in a research study examining the impact of international experiential education on life choices. The purpose of this study is to apply Mezirow's transformational learning framework to assess the outcomes of international experiential education by evaluating the impact of the international educational experience on life choices. Returned Fulbright English Teaching Assistants will be surveyed and interviewed about their life plans before, and life choices following, their international experience to determine what, if any, impact their experience has had. You were selected to be a possible participant because you were a grantee of the Fulbright U.S. Student English Teaching Assistant Program in the 2004-2005 award year.

#### **What will I be asked to do?**

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online survey that will ask for information about your background and life experiences before your Fulbright ETA experience, and your life choices following your Fulbright ETA experience. If you indicate your willingness to participate in a follow-on interview, you may be contacted to schedule an appointment to be interviewed by telephone. The interview would be audio recorded, in order to allow for accurate transcription and verification of the information provided. The survey should take between 10 and 20 minutes to complete. If you participate in the interview phase, the interview would take between 60 and 90 minutes.

#### **What are the risks involved in this study?**

The risks associated with this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

#### **What are the possible benefits of this study?**

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, your participation will help practitioners in the field of international education better understand how to assess international experiential education, as well as provide supporters of international education (such as the Fulbright Commission) evidence of the benefits that are gained from their financial support.

#### **Do I have to participate?**

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University, IIE, or the U.S. Department of State being affected.

**Who will know about my participation in this research study?**

This study is confidential, and the records of this study will be kept private. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Krista D. Tacey, the Principal Investigator, will have access to the records.

If you choose to participate in this study, you may choose to be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Krista D. Tacey, the Principal Investigator, will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be kept for two years and then erased.

**Whom do I contact with questions about the research?**

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Krista D. Tacey, (210) 568-7518, [ktacey@tamu.edu](mailto:ktacey@tamu.edu) or Lauren Cifuentes, (979) 845-7806, [laurenc@tamu.edu](mailto:laurenc@tamu.edu)

**Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?**

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact these offices at (979) 458-4067 or [irb@tamu.edu](mailto:irb@tamu.edu).

**Participation**

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction.

## **I. International Experiential Education and Prior Study Abroad**

- 1) Did you study abroad as an enrolled student prior to your Fulbright ETA experience?  Yes  No
- 2) How many times did you study abroad as an undergraduate?  
\_\_\_\_\_time(s)
- 3) How many times did you study abroad as a graduate student?  
\_\_\_\_\_time(s)
- 4) How many total months did you spend studying abroad (all programs) as an enrolled student prior to your Fulbright ETA experience?  
\_\_\_month(s) undergraduate, \_\_\_month(s) graduate
- 5) What was the predominant nature of your study abroad program? Please select from the list below. Indicate whether Grad or Undergrad with a checkmark.
  - Regular courses alongside host country students  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad
  - Classes designed for study abroad students  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad
  - Field study: research and/or internship \_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad
  - Campus of a U.S. institution in another country  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad
  - Travel seminar or shipboard education program  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad
  - A mixture of two or more of the above program types  
\_\_\_\_\_ Grad \_\_\_\_\_ Undergrad

**6) How would you describe your study abroad program? Please select all that apply.**

- Language instruction (non-English)
- Area studies (for example, Japanese studies or Latin American studies)
- Theme-based (for example, a focus on the arts or international development)
- Research
- Internship
- Work abroad
- Service-learning (classroom instruction combined with, for example, volunteering in an AIDS orphanage or engagement in reforestation)

**7) In what country or countries did you study abroad? You may indicate more than one if that applies.**

---

**II. Childhood Abroad**

**8) Where were you born?  United States  Other (please specify)**  
**If you selected other, please specify**

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**9) Did you live outside of your home country as a child?**

- Yes  No

**10) How long did you live abroad as a child? Even if you left and returned to your home country more than one time, please provide the total amount of years abroad from birth to age 18. If less than one year, type 0 (zero) in box below. \_\_\_years**

**11) In what country or countries did you live? Please write the name(s) in the box below.**

---

### III. Your Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship

12) In which country did you do your Fulbright ETA experience? \_\_\_\_\_

13) Had you ever traveled to this country before?  Yes  No

14) If you answered Yes, what was the purpose of your prior travel to this country? Select all that apply.

- Language instruction (non-English)
- Study Abroad program
- Tourism
- Research
- Internship
- Work abroad
- Missionary work
- Volunteering
- Visiting family
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

15) Had you any teacher training or experience prior to your Fulbright ETA experience?  Yes  No  
Please describe \_\_\_\_\_

16) Did you receive pre-departure orientation?  Yes  No

17) What was the nature of your accommodations?

- Fulbright-organized homestay
- Fulbright-organized dorm/hostel/teaching community
- Fulbright-organized apartment with roommate
- Fulbright-organized apartment without roommate
- Individually-organized homestay
- Individually-organized dorm/hostel/teaching community
- Individually-organized apartment with roommate
- Individually-organized apartment without roommate
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**18) In your own words, please describe the expectations you had of your Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship prior to your arrival in your host country.**

#### **IV. Demographic Questions**

**19) What is your gender?  Male  Female**

**20) How old were you when you were abroad on your Fulbright ETA? \_\_\_\_\_**

**21) What was your highest degree level completed prior to your Fulbright ETA experience?**

- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- Associate or technical degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional or Doctorate degree

**22) What was your major field of study prior to your Fulbright ETA experience?**

- Social Sciences (e.g. political science, psychology, sociology)
- Humanities (e.g. arts, languages, literature)
- Natural Sciences (e.g. biology, physics, environmental science)
- Business
- Education
- Law
- Medicine
- Other, please specify \_\_\_\_\_

**23) In addition to your mother tongue, how many languages do you speak fluently? \_\_\_\_ language(s)**

**24) If other than your first language, to what extent do you currently use the language used in the host country of your Fulbright ETA?**

- To a large degree (i.e., daily)
- To some degree (i.e., monthly)
- Very little (i.e., a few times per year)
- Not at all

**25) What is your ethnicity (based on census categories)? If you are biethnic or multiethnic, please select all that apply.**

- African American or Black
- Asian
- Caucasian or White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native American or Native Alaskan
- Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander
- Other (please specify)

**If you selected other, please specify**

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## **V. Your Parents**

**26) What is your father's highest level of education?**

- 8th grade or less
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- Associate or technical degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional or Doctorate degree

**27) What is your mother's highest level of education?**

- 8th grade or less
- Some high school
- High school graduate
- Some college, no degree
- Associate or technical degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Professional or Doctorate degree

**28) Had either of your parents either lived or worked abroad prior to your Fulbright ETA? Father:  Yes  No Mother:  Yes  No****VI. Education after the Fulbright ETA****29) Have you enrolled in one or more advanced degree programs since completing your Fulbright ETA experience?  Yes  No****30) What degree(s) have you pursued since your Fulbright ETA experience? Please select all that apply.**

- Master's (M.A., M.S., Ed.M., MBA, MPA, LL.M., etc.)
- J.D.
- M.D. or other medical doctorate
- Ph.D., Ed.D., Psy.D., etc.

**31) Did your Fulbright ETA experience influence your decision to continue for an advanced degree(s)?**

- Yes, to a large degree
- Yes, to some degree
- Very little
- No, not at all

**32) In what field(s) did you earn your advanced degree(s)? Check all that apply.**

- Humanities (e.g. arts, languages, literature)
- Natural Sciences (e.g. biology, physics, environmental science)
- Professional School (e.g. business, education, law, medicine)
- Social Sciences (e.g. political science, psychology, sociology)

**33) Were any of your advanced degrees internationally oriented?**

- Yes  No

## **VII. Career**

**34) What is your current occupation? If your occupation is not listed below, please check "Other" and type the name of your occupation.**

- Architecture, Arts, and Design
- Civil Service
- Community and Social Services
- Computer, Mathematical, and Information Sciences
- Construction
- Economics and Finance
- Education, Higher
- Education, pre-K to 12
- Engineering
- Entertainment, Sports, and Media
- Farming, Fishing, and Forestry
- Food Services and Preparation
- Foreign Service and Diplomacy
- Healthcare
- Legal
- Life, Physical, and Social Sciences
- Management and Human Resources
- Marketing and Public Relations
- Military
- Office and Administrative Support
- Personal Care and Service
- Sales
- Stay-at-home Parent
- Student

- Telecommunications
- Transportation

**35) To what degree did your Fulbright ETA experience influence your career choice?**

- To a great degree
- Somewhat
- Very little
- Not at all

**36) To what degree has your Fulbright ETA experience helped your career?**

- To a great degree
- Somewhat
- Very little
- Not at all

**37) Is your career internationally oriented?  Yes  No**

**38) Is your current employment in a field related to your studies prior to your Fulbright ETA?  Yes  No**

**39) Are you where you want to be in terms of your career path?  
 Yes  No**

**40) To what degree is your career path a result of your Fulbright ETA?**

- To a great degree
- Somewhat
- Very little
- Not at all

### **Overall Impact of your Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship**

**41) In your own words, please describe the impact that your Fulbright English Teaching Assistantship has had on your life choices, including, specifically, your educational and career goals.**

### **Follow-up Interviews**

**I will contact selected respondents for follow-up interviews. Are you interested in participating in such an interview? It will last approximately one hour and will be by telephone. I will contact you by email to make the interview appointment. Please provide your contact information below if you are interested in participating in a follow-up interview.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you again for participating in this study. If you are interested in receiving an electronic copy of the final dissertation, please include your information below:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX B**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

**Evaluating the Impact of International Experiential Education**

Note that the themes will arise out of responses to the survey instrument – both individual comments made by the interviewee, as well as overall questions that arise as a result of responses across all participants. This interview protocol is a guideline to ensure that the researcher stays on track.

Thank you again for agreeing to speak with me today about your Fulbright ETA and subsequent life choices. (Here I will review the Informed Consent worksheet again, reminding the participant that their participation is purely voluntary and that I will be recording the interview)

If you are ready, we can begin.

1. Thinking back to the period before you went on your Fulbright ETA, can you describe your career and educational goals at that time?
2. How did you see the Fulbright ETA program fitting into your career and educational objectives?
3. Was there any one experience that you had that you would say was the most challenging?
4. Have you had an opportunity to reflect on that experience?

5. Can you please describe any significant experiences (either as part of your Fulbright ETA or otherwise) that may have affected your career or educational goals?
6. How would you describe the effect that your Fulbright ETA experience has had on your life choices, specifically as relates to your career and educational goals?

Additional questions may arise based upon the responses provided.

## VITA

Krista Diane (Lyons) Tacey received her Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Texas A&M University in 1992, graduating as a University Undergraduate Fellow with University Honors and Foundation Honors. She was a Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellow in the Department of Government at The University of Texas at Austin, and received her Master of Arts degree in 1995. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy in educational psychology in 2011. Her research interests include cultural psychology and international education, with an emphasis on learning in adulthood.

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