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Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program

in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates

By

Hassan Adan

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

through the Faculty of Education

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Master of Education

at the University of Windsor

Windsor, Ontario, Canada

2018

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Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program  
in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates.

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## **Declaration of Originality**

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this thesis and that no part of this thesis has been published or submitted for publication.

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## Abstract

International Service Learning (ISL) initiatives have been increasingly adopted by North American universities to better ensure that teacher candidates are instilled with the global mindedness required to ensure all students, regardless of ethnic or cultural backgrounds, have equal access and opportunity to excel in Western education systems, which have traditionally been homogenous. However, because ISL initiatives are relatively new, few studies have explored the benefits of such programs. To determine the effectiveness of ISL initiatives, it is important to evaluate the impact they have on teacher candidates. The current phenomenological study examines the lived experiences of a group of teacher candidates who participated in an international community service-learning program in Tanzania, East Africa. A series of pre-immersion, immersion, and post-immersion interviews were conducted to determine how participants interpret and attach meaning to their experience and its impact on them personally and professionally. The findings suggest that participating in ISL, such as the Tanzania program, encourages teacher candidates to engage in critical self-reflection and that the life changing experiences gained through an ISL program challenge teacher candidates' homogenous frame of reference and instil in them the global mindedness required to effectively teach in a multicultural setting. A longitudinal study should further examine the long-term benefits such programs have throughout a teacher candidate's careers.

**Keywords:** International Service Learning, teacher candidates, global mindedness, cultural barriers, transformational learning, cognitive dissonance, disorienting dilemmas

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

In the last two decades, there has been a proliferation of International Service Learning programs in various countries across the world. The growing need to internationalize higher education programs has led North American university professional degree programs to adopt an increasing number of International Service Learning (ISL) initiatives as a means of enhancing intellectual growth, personal development, and global-mindedness (or a sense of connection and responsibility to the world community) among their students (Hett 1991; Kiely, 2004; Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009). The internationalization of education programs for example, means that teachers must be increasingly prepared to teach classes that are comprised of students from a diverse number of cultural backgrounds. To facilitate this internationalization, the University of Windsor is one of the institutions that adopted an ISL program through their Tanzania alternative practicum placement in its Faculty of Education. However, there is no comprehensive research that explores the effectiveness of this particular ISL program, and it is therefore vital to address the gap to maximize the benefits of this program.

### **Research Problem**

The importance of international engagement has become increasingly more desired by professional university degree programs and it has led to the expansion of International Service Learning as a way of increasing global cultural competence and developing greater global awareness and critical social consciousness in their students (Cushner, 2007; Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mahon, 2007; Merryfield, 2000a; Pence & Macgillivray, 2008). By immersing pre-service teachers in unfamiliar cultural contexts, ISL facilitates personal and professional growth. In addition, Cushner (2007) states that “schools of education today are preparing professionals to teach in a world that is much flatter, interconnected, and more complex than in the past – and

these professionals will serve an increasingly diverse population of learners” (p. 4). Given Canada’s multicultural makeup, the need to prepare teachers for the reality of engaging with a diverse group of students is particularly relevant. Preparing teachers to teach in an increasingly interconnected world is a goal of many contemporary teacher education programs. “One way to prepare teachers to address the challenges associated with teaching children in a global age is through carefully structured, intercultural field experiences where candidates are immersed in another culture” (Cushner 2007, p. 5).

Yet, as previously mentioned, there is limited research that supports the transformation of students into greater global awareness and critical social consciousness through experiences such as an ISL and studying abroad (Lewin, 2009; Tarrant, 2010). Furthermore, making these programs sustainable can also be challenging. These outcomes are due in part to the difficulties around ensuring the program’s economic viability, the challenges associated to students earning course credits for their experience and finally the need to make the practicum short in duration (Edmonds, 2010; Sloand, Bower, & Groves, 2008). Therefore, it is important to explore the effectiveness of this ISL program, and it is at the same time vital to address these challenges to enrich the participants experience and allow for critical engagement.

Since 2008, teacher candidates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor have been traveling to Singida, Tanzania, for an ISL experience. Teacher candidates have worked in teams in the area of construction, education, nutrition, and health and wellness – supplying children with books, healthy meals, clothing, medical supplies, and hygiene products. Additionally, cultural exchanges and experiences have taken place within the classrooms, both in Canada and Tanzania. Anecdotal evidence from previous participants and media reports (local cable TV Cogeco) indicates profound effects on participants. Approximately 130 Teacher

Candidates have travelled to Singida, Tanzania since the program's inception. The general sentiments expressed, suggest that the experience was 'life changing' personally and professionally.

However, as stated above, there exists no proof or empirical evidence of the key elements or benefits of this international practicum placement or of the transformational aspects of this program. There is a lack of literature that explores the phenomenon of the transformation for students from the perspective of participating teacher candidates in this service learning program. Hence, research that determines the nature and the impact the personal and professional transformation has had on the personal and professional growth of those who have participated in this specific program would provide insight into the effectiveness and value of this ISL program. This phenomenological study is an attempt to understand how the ISL experience affects the teacher candidates personally and professionally.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In conducting a phenomenological study, I examined the experiences of teacher candidates in an international community service-learning program in Tanzania, East Africa. I also explored how those teacher candidates made meaning of their experiences. The impact on their personal and professional selves was carefully investigated. The profound and enduring experiences that shaped the students' understanding of their roles as teachers and members of an increasingly diverse society were interrogated by addressing the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of teacher candidates' learning experiences as international teachers in Tanzania?
2. How does the ISL experience impact teacher candidates' personal and professional roles as beginning teachers?

3. How did the teacher candidates describe their experience with and participation in the ISL program in Tanzania?
4. What are the implications for such international teacher education programs in Canadian faculties of education?

### **Delimitations**

The first delimitation is that as the researcher, I did not partake in the selection of the participants. The study is delimited to the 16 education students who were selected by the Faculty to participate in the Tanzania ISL project. This selection process is outlined further in the methodology section. The participants are delimited to only students from the Faculty of Education who were preparing to become teachers and who had completed their teaching practice placements. This delimitation was necessary because the study is aimed at determining how the international experience impacts teacher candidates personally and professionally, and data from participants who did not meet these criteria would therefore not be valuable to my study. All in all, there were 16 teacher candidates who took part in the optional ISL program and travelled to the Singida Region of Tanzania, East Africa in April 2015, and by default were included in this study. I further delimited the study to only students from the Faculty of Education who signed up for the Tanzania International Service Learning course, attended seminars and workshops preparing them for the trip, were involved in fundraising activities for the project and were selected to travel to Tanzania. These delimitation criteria were included because the study is aimed at determining how the international experience impacts teaching candidates personally and professionally, and data from participants who did not meet these criteria would therefore not be valuable to my study.

## **Locating Myself in the Study**

I am conducting this study as a way of developing a deeper understanding of the ways in which Canadian teacher candidates experience an international service-learning program in Tanzania, East Africa. Of specific interest to me are the transformative effects it has on their personal and professional selves. I am deeply invested in this research personally because of my multiple identities, educational background, and social and political interests. I am simultaneously an insider and outsider both to the Tanzanian students, to the teacher candidates, and to the Canadian education system. As a result, I am unique candidate who brings a rich perspective to this study. After all, I have both emic and etic insights in respect to each cultural perspective.

Firstly, I bring an emic perspective to this research because I was born in East Africa and spent much of my formative years there. Growing up in Somalia, I also learned to speak three African languages including my mother tongue, Somali. Since my migration to Canada, I have maintained contact and involvement with my family and friends in Somalia, East Africa. I therefore believe that I still understand much of the cultural dynamics of the region. Most of my childhood years were spent in Somalia, and it was there that I formed my core values not only as a Somali but also as a citizen of East Africa. The development of my own identity or my awareness of self is very complex as it was strongly influenced by various social, cultural and historical factors in my early years of schooling, as well as, both the local and international forces of colonization, civil war and oppression that continue to shape Somali culture and identity (see Wijeyesinghe & Jackson, 2012). Having been separated from my homeland for so many years, I feel a strong desire to immerse myself in the culture and spirit of my African Heritage.

However, I also bring an etic perspective. Being from Somalia, I am not entirely familiar with Tanzanian culture, though it shares many similarities with Somalia. Likewise, I left my home country Somalia at a young age. After many years of living under a military regime, my uncle and his family decided to move me to Canada. I realized then that I was unlikely to return to Somalia at any point soon. I therefore understood that Somalia was no longer my home and realized in that moment that I had no choice but to adopt Canada as my new home. For some time, I felt like I was in this in-between space longing to go back home to Somalia and at the same time, excited to be in my new home in Canada. As such, I have grown apart from my roots and embraced my new home in Canada, making me an outsider to East Africa.

With respect to the Ontario system and the teacher candidates who were the participants in this research, I have both an emic and etic perspective. I have an emic perspective because I came to Canada at 14 and attended Canadian educational institutions – and I can empathize with how the teacher candidates might have felt as though they were outsiders while we were in Tanzania. My young mind was shaped and influenced by the Ontario public education system since the age of 14. The City of Toronto has had a profound effect on my life, as all my teen and young adult years were spent in that city. My undergraduate degree in Sociology and Criminology has also prepared me through studies in social justice, race and gender relations.

I have an etic perspective with regards to my participant teacher candidates and the Ontario education system as well. As a Somali youth who entered the Ontario education system at the age of 14, I understand what it is like to be taught by a person who has very little understanding of my cultural and linguistic background. As such, I have a deeper understanding of the need for cultural inclusivity that goes beyond the intellectual recognition for this approach

that is rooted in my personal identity and lived experiences. I felt the frustration of these students; I can better empathize with them and understand the importance of their needs.

In the designing and writing of this study, I bring both the emic and etic perspective to the design and implementation of this research. I have the connection and sense of belonging to both groups. I am invested in the culture of the group that is traveling (teacher candidates) while also invested in the culture of the group we are traveling to (Tanzanian students/community).

Prior to coming to Canada, being Black was never a part of the way that I self-identified. Neither did I ever think of it as the norm. Once in Canada, my ethnicity and religion – both major components of my identity – were never as important as the colour of my skin. Here in Canada, I have learned that others see my skin as the core element of my identity, and as a social outlet to the outside world. Everything I had experienced in Africa became different to what I would experience in Canada. This is not to suggest that I did not know that my skin was ‘black’ before I came to Canada, but I did not appreciate the significance of this outside the sameness of my ancestral home. This meant that once in Canada, I inherited my host country’s culture and a new identity and everything that was associated with Black culture. Upon my arrival in Canada, I was suddenly trapped in what I call a *socially imposed racial categorization*, which I define as the socially constructed concepts that differentiate human beings based on skin color and other physical characteristics. This was something with which I was unfamiliar growing up in Somalia as a Muslim youth. This concept of racial multiplicity (being Black versus White) was alien to my culture and Islamic religion and I felt justified in declining to join the group or become socially trapped by the *socially imposed racial categorization*.

From my perspective, it seemed that in Canada the core and defining aspect of my

identity was race rather than ethnicity. By contrast, in Somalia, ethnicity was the core or defining aspect of my identity and for me, my ethnic identity on the African continent is far more important than racial identity (Kusow, 2007). One of the most important things that I have learned while in Canada is that, unlike the African experience, in Canada, being African is less significant than being Black. This meant that socially and particularly at school I became known as the *Black Guy*, but once home, or with my family or community, my identity returned to African/Somali.

To me there was a tremendous difference between identifying as Black and identifying as African. To me, being Black carried very little or no global heritage, no cultural history, and said nothing about who I was. However, to consider myself African, gave me the pride and honour that came with the historical knowledge of the African continent and a historical knowledge that included accounts of great civilizations and accounts of great Kings and Queens, historical accounts of the great civilizations in Egypt and Timbuktu and the great Library at Alexandria.

Once I became Black, I found myself in a situation of being alienated from myself, and became culturally estranged from the mainstream Black population. I was culturally different from native Black Canadians and Black Immigrant Canadians arriving from the Caribbean, English or French speaking countries. This was because I did not speak English or French and did not ascribe to the dominant religion of most Black Canadians – Christianity. However, after living in Canada for over 20 years, I could reconcile the difference between my understanding of my skin color and theirs, and take on the same issue by situating myself within the context of Canada. In this way, race, not ethnicity, became my primary social outlet.



Situating myself in the research is crucial because this will impact the study. Tanzania is a predominantly Black and Muslim country and most of the teacher candidates are Caucasian and Christian. Only one of the teacher candidate participants was born in Africa, and only one racialized teacher candidate had ever travelled to Africa. Therefore, some teacher candidates may be identified as outsiders based on their perceived race for the first time in their lives. Situating themselves in this the racial multiplicity of being *White* may create or make them feel a level of discomfort as they navigate this new identity upon their arrival, mirroring the feelings I experienced upon my arrival in Canada.

My emic and etic perspectives have proven to be useful although they have also presented some disadvantages. While in Tanzania, I identified closely with the children and the community that we were working in. I found myself becoming protective of them and their culture. At the same time, I could also identify with the participants. I empathized with them and could relate to feeling as an outsider as I was one in almost as many ways. Because I had identified these drawbacks early in the process, I was aware of these personal and institutional perceptions and biases. In spite of these drawbacks I do feel that my emic and etic perspective made me an ideal candidate for this research.

### **Philosophical Assumptions**

Over a half century ago, Winetrou (1964) wrote: "in our present-day world, it is not enough to be scholarly; one must be concerned and angry enough to shout. It is not enough to understand the world; one must seek to change it" (p. 1). As a critical educator, this quote resonates with my philosophical beliefs. I consider this research to be my cry for social change. Mills (1959) pushes us to be agents of social change and indicates that all individuals

“contribute, however minutely, to the shaping of [their] society and to the course of its history, even as [they are] made by society and by its historical push and shove” (p. 6).

In Smith’s (2012) work to decolonize research methodology, she argues that traditional research has a colonial legacy and was and still is about power and domination. In other words, “the production of knowledge, new knowledge and transformed old knowledge, ideas about the nature of knowledge and the validity of specific forms of knowledge, became as much commodities of the colonial exploitation as other natural resources” (p. 62). She argues that the foundations of imperialism and colonialism are actualized through among other things, research. Smith argues that traditional research has an agenda. Historically, that agenda served to help the expansion of empire and to justify the subjugation and oppression of racialized and indigenous people around the world. In this context, research exists to support those in power and further their agenda. Therefore, truly objective, neutral, or value-free research in social science is impossible (Creswell, 2007). Consequently, my research is also not neutral and it has an agenda. Since in a post-colonial world, research has traditionally served to further the colonial and imperial legacy, I want my research to reverse this legacy. We can only move toward value-free research when we disrupt and challenge the colonial legacy at play. This is what I intended to do in my research.

In view of that, my research is a phenomenological study to address what Smith (2012) referred to in the previous quotation. My research begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of inequity and operation. Again, I acknowledge that there is a colonial legacy in research and that there are social issues to be addressed in my study. Smith (2012) argues that to disrupt the colonial legacy, a study must be respectful and humble to the participants. I need to step back as a researcher, understand my power in the research process and be willing to listen to

participants' voices even when what they have to say might be painful and difficult for me as the researcher. Also, research has to produce localized or useful knowledge to the world of the participants. My research must not cause harm for the participants and must help to bring them to a better understanding of themselves rather than simply just satisfying my desire just to know more about them (Smith, 2012). With these considerations, I feel that I have a political imperative to work for change and that it is my moral obligation to contribute towards changing academia, expecting that my research will somehow bring about a change (Madison, 2005, p. 5).

Freire (1970) states that for man to set himself apart from animals (to be human), man must use words to name/define the world, work to change the world (the action process) and reflect to rename the world or transform it (p. 125). This consciousness raising process is not the privilege of only a few men or women but the right of every human; a right that many have been denied due to systemic shortcomings in the traditional education system (p. 128). In this respect, for Freire, education is supposed to promote *conscientization*, which involves "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1973, p. 35). This speaks to the dialogic nature of education and its role as a form of resistance.

My research agenda for this study is to be socially and morally responsive in the aim to bring about global social change (Lincoln, 1993). As such, it is my hope that my research will help to foster a richer self-awareness and self-determination among the participants' and help them to see the world through a lens that is firmly rooted in freedom, agency, and social justice (Smith, 2012; Freire 1973). For my ontological stance, I believe reality can be known through sincere openness, trust, and reciprocity between the participants and myself as a researcher. Over the course of my data collection, I was aware of and reminded myself that I was not an expert on

the lives of the participants. It was the participants who were agents and I was simply there to observe their behavior (Creswell, 2013). To better ensure accuracy in reflecting my observations, I facilitated a member checking process that gave participants more time & enriched opportunities to reflect. Further details on this process will be discussed in the Data Analysis section.

## **Overview of the Study**

In this section I explain the general structure of the thesis. In the introductory chapter, the phenomenon and context of this research study are introduced. I outline the proliferation of ISL programs across North American universities, their aims, and the research problem I attempt to address in the study. I explain the purpose of the study and discuss the research questions and outline the delimitation of my study. I conclude the chapter by locating myself in the study and outlining my philosophical assumptions.

In chapter two, I review the relevant academic literature and provide a literature review concept map and explain the foundational knowledge of Service Learning (SL) through key concepts and definitions. I examine the relationship between Experiential Learning (EL) and Service Learning, followed by a discussion of the impact and benefits of Service Learning that came out of Experiential Learning. Here I discuss Mezirow's *Transformative Learning Theory* within International Service Learning. I end with an in-depth review of ISL literature specific to perspective transformation with a view to providing an understanding of the relevant SL and ISL literature and the theoretical framework of transformational learning.

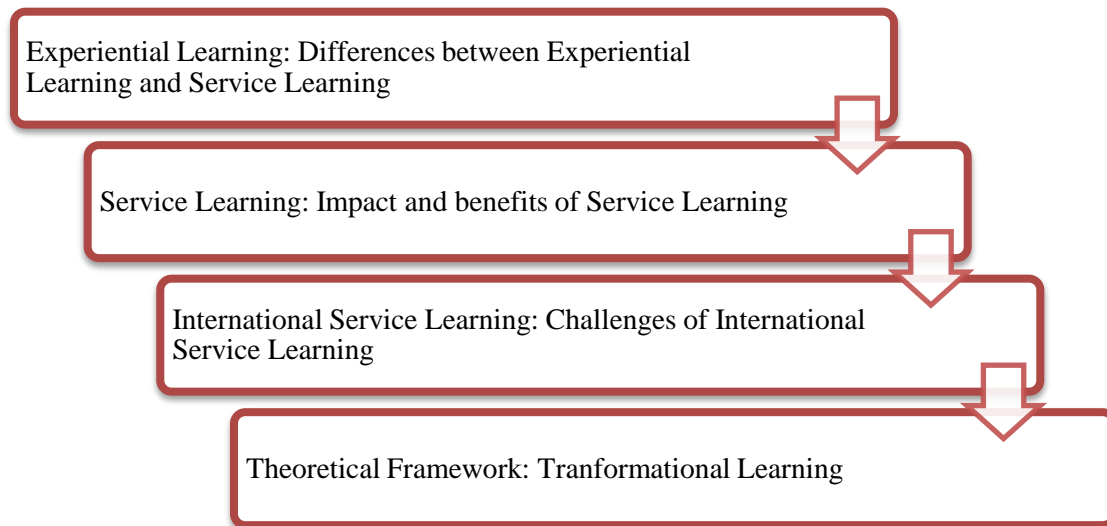
Chapter three describes the qualitative phenomenological design discussing the methods utilized at the different phases of the research: pre-immersion, immersion, and post-immersion.

The rest of the chapter is dedicated to a discussion of the ethical considerations and limitations of the research design. Chapter four outlines the data findings, which were collected pre-departure, immersion and post-immersion. In chapter five I discuss these findings and outline major themes while applying the *Transformative Learning Theory*. Finally in chapter 6, I outline recommendations and considerations for the Tanzania program.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide a literature review of the foundational knowledge of Service Learning (SL) and key concepts and definitions. The differences between Experiential Learning (EL) and Service Learning are examined, followed by a discussion of the impact and benefits of Service Learning that came out of Experiential Learning. Finally, an in-depth review of International Service-learning (ISL) literature specific to perspective transformation is presented. The aim of the literature review is to provide knowledge and understanding of the relevant SL and ISL literature relevant to this phenomenological study research.

**Figure 1 Literature Concept Map**



As the above Literature Review Concept Map in Figure 1 illustrates, I organized my review of the academic literature in a linear sequential progression of ideas to build my argument about the importance of ISL program to the personal, intellectual, social and professional development of teacher candidates. I first describe the differences between experiential learning and service learning. Then, I highlight the impacts and benefits of service learning and the certain challenges of International Service Learning. I close the chapter by summing up the

theoretical framework, or lens, I used to analyze and make sense of the data. I used Transformational Learning Experience (TLE) as a theoretical lens because it helped me best capture and explain the way teacher candidates were making sense of their experiences. I expanded the TLE in the end of the section.

### **Experiential and Service Learning**

Previous research on individuals who have completed learning in diverse environments or learning outside the classroom has been divided into two basic categories: *experiential learning* (EL) and *service learning* (SL). Experiential Learning is defined as a method of training that has several ‘real world’ or experience-based advantages over the traditional methods of training educational professionals. Traditional methods focused on rote memorization and teaching that involved little to no interaction or experience with various communities. The theoretical basis of EL is that most learning is achieved through experiences and subsequent critical reflection. One of the most comprehensive definitions of EL is by McGill and Weil (1990), who stated that EL is “the process whereby people engage in a direct encounter, then purposefully reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their different ways of knowing” (p.161). Educational Philosopher, John Dewey (1938) was one of the first proponents of EL, theorizing that experience and reflection were more valuable than the traditional teacher/student dichotomy. According to Dewey (1916):

A society which makes provisions from participating in its good of all members on equal terms and which secures flexible read judgment of its institutions thought interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such as a society must have a type of education which gives

individuals a personal interest in social relationship and control, and habits of mind which secure social changes without inducing disorder. (p. 99)

Dewey also believed that education should not just reflect society's values, but must shape or produce a democratic society (Dewey, 2016; 2038).

Dewey's position is supported by some of the prominent scholars in the field of Experiential Learning. For example, Kolb (1984) defines EL as a "holistic integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, cognition and behavior" (p. 21). He explains, "experiential learning is not a molecular educational concept but rather is a molar concept describing the central process of human adaptation to the social and physical environment" (p. 31). Learning, he further writes, is "a continuous process grounded in experience" (p. 41). Kolb's (1984) model of EL is based on four sequential stages of development that he considers to be essential steps through which all learners must progress, stage-by-stage. The first is *Concrete Experience* (CE), which he sees as the basis of all learning and where individuals' adaptability and open mindedness are critical to learning. The second stage is *Reflective Observation* (RO) where students develop interpretations of their experiences through critical reflection on these experiences. Kolb calls the third stage *Abstract Conceptualization* (AC) where students make connections between their observations and reflections and theory. Their understanding of situations and problems is dictated by logic as opposed to emotions. *Active Experimentation* (AE) is the final stage of Kolb's model. In this stage, students test theories as they form conclusions and act on them (Kolb 1984). What Kolb describes here is a very complex process of immersion, reflection, reframing and testing that is critical to EL. Apart from the practical experience gained from EL, students are engaged in metacognitive activities that build on and test their emerging ideas about their own learning.



Although many learners will progress through these various stages, not all will spend the same amount of time in each stage. Kolb (1984) states that learners will instead focus on two stages which vary depending on their learning style. Steinaker and Bell (1979) share this view stating that experiential learning occurs on progressively more intense levels until the individual becomes immersed in the experience. The relevance of EL theory to SL theory and praxis is underlined by Kiely (2005) who writes that:

Service-learning theorists and practitioners can readily adapt Kolb's learning cycle of concrete experience, cognitive reflection, abstract theorization, and experimentation to generate knowledge and facilitate learning in diverse contexts. Along with physically situating students in authentic environments, service-learning programs simplify the Kolb model further by encouraging some form of structured reflection to connect experience with concepts, ideas, and theories and generate new and applicable knowledge in concrete 'real-life' situations. (p. 6)

Supporting Kolb's points here, I agree that the learning through EL is enhanced further through the structured reflection on our experiences. Learners need to be given a chance to compare and contrast their thinking prior to and after the experience to consolidate their learning.

Service learning (SL) expands on the idea of EL by embedding these experiences in a context of reciprocal community service. There are several definitions of service learning. Flecky (1996) writes that "service-learning rests on a philosophy of service and learning that occurs in experience, reflection, and civic engagement within a collaborative relationship involving

community partners” (p. 1). Jacob (1996) defines service-learning more simply 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 development” (p. 5). Seifer (1998) expresses a similar perspective of SL defining it as a “structured learning experience that combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and reflection” (p.274). Reciprocity and dialogue must be incorporated into all teaching-learning experiences (Freire,1970), which is especially true of SL. Robert Sigmon (1979), who is widely considered to be the father of SL, stipulated that SL must entail an exchange of learning outcomes, with both the teacher and student benefitting from the experience. Ideally, SL allows for positive outcomes for both the provider and the recipient. Therefore, SL is different than conventional forms of educational experience, which often entail a greater benefit to the service provider, and volunteerism, and which typically benefits the recipient more (Furco, 1996). For example, with respect to internships and field education, the provider is usually monetarily compensated and gains the most from the experience. In contrast, volunteerism and community service focuses on creating a greater benefit for the recipient, though it can be beneficial to the provider. SL combines both to find a medium between these models that provides equal benefits to both the provider and recipient, though the current study focuses on the benefits for teacher candidates. EL learning is component of learning involves through experience activity that involves. SL is a community learning experience that promotes an exchange of learning outcomes with a professional/teacher, benefits should be felt by both the recipient and the participants. Experiential Learning as the name implies involves hands on, real world or practical experience of the curriculum and learning environment. Service learning, on the other hand, is a subset of experiential learning where the learning involves some form of

community-based experience that provides a service to the community. It is for this reason that Service Learning has become popular with professional degree programs that prepare students for service roles in society.

**Impacts and benefits of service learning.** One of the benefits of SL includes an increase in knowledge both politically and culturally (Billingmeier & Forman, 1975). The benefits of SL include, but are not limited to, greater academic success for the recipients (Astin et al., 2000), personal efficacy and identity (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001), cognition (Batchelder & Root, 1994), moral development (Cram, 1998), and leadership (Eyler et al., 2001; Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrum, 2014). Several attitudinal changes also occur after engaging in SL abroad; students who return from an SL experience are more likely to learn a new language, tend to study more in post-secondary institutions, and tend to have higher grades and achievements than their non-SL counterparts (Melchiori, 1987).

In addition, SL allows teacher candidates to gain a greater understanding of societal issues, such as social injustice and poverty (Hughes et al., 2012). To that effect, a more diverse campus that fosters positive dialogue over differences is more beneficial (Keen & Hall, 2009). In terms of understanding different cultures, SL has been shown to improve both cultural awareness and an understanding and appreciation of host cultures (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). Importantly, SL helps participants to recognize the complexities and variations within cultures themselves. According Mbugua, (2010), SL provides four unique opportunities to teacher candidates:

1. The opportunity to “participate in a service experience and civic engagement”;
2. The opportunity to engage in reflection and discussion;
3. The opportunity “to apply what they have learned in the classroom”; and

4. The opportunity “to learn outside the classroom” (Mbugua, 2010, p. 90).

Eyler and Giles (1999) advocate the role of SL in transformational learning as the educational process empowers students to question and challenge conventional orthodoxies. They further indicated that Service Learning as a transformational learning process is “not about accumulating more knowledge, but about seeing the world in a profoundly different way, one that calls for personal commitment and action” (p. 129). In this way, students developed knowledge and skills that surpassed the classroom seminars and curriculum and they gained new experiences that may serve to challenge their perceptions about the communities in which they served.

Boyle-Baise’s (1998) interpretive case study of community service learning, as a component of a multicultural education course, took 65 pre-service elementary and secondary school teachers and had them serve culturally diverse and low-income populations. In the study, many pre-service teachers felt more aware of the issues surrounding teaching in culturally diverse classrooms. In addition, pre-service teachers indicated that because of their service-learning experience, they felt more comfortable with the prospect of teaching the identified population groups. A similar study conducted by Boyle-Baise and Kilbane (2000) echoed those results, indicating that service-learning helps to prepare teachers to work in a culturally diverse context.

One of the skills and/or values that can be learned from teachers who teach in culturally diverse settings is what Wang et al. (2003) referred to as “intellectual empathy,” which is “the ability to understand a racially or ethnically different person’s thinking and/or feeling” (p. 222). This means that one would be able to feel and understand the emotions of another person from the point of view of their race or ethnicity. It is likely that an SL experience would provide the

environment in which teacher candidates could develop intellectual empathy, as they will be immersed in a culture that is different from their habit of mind and frame of reference.

### **International Service Learning**

*International Service Learning (ISL)* is *Service Learning (SL)* that takes place in an international context. In ISL a professional offers their service outside of their own country. While doing so there is a benefit to the professional, such as personal development, while the service they are providing benefits the recipient community. ISL has happened throughout history, as early as the Medieval era, when European universities were offered opportunities to study in the Muslim world and vice versa (Altbach & Teichler, 2001). Historical situations that precipitated barriers to ISL caused a loss of important knowledge and experience, for example, the Protestant reformation forbade translations of Greek and Arabic writings in many universities. In contemporary times, some negative attitudes towards ISL among faculty and others included doubts about the seriousness of ISL programs, distrust of the motives of colleagues who wish to pursue ISL, and beliefs that on-campus or at-home courses are superior to traveling abroad (Goodwin & Nacht, 1988).

However, scholarly studies reveal that there are many positive outcomes to the provider in offering ISL services. According to Cushner (2007), these changes occur twice: during their experience abroad, and again when they return to their home country. Kiely's (2004) seminal work divided such benefits into six different dimensions: political, moral, intellectual, personal, spiritual, and cultural. For example, teachers who provide their services to a community in an urban setting tend to feel more empathy for that community, and might consider themselves part of that community regardless of in-group or out-group status, thus enhancing their moral dimension (Kellogg, 1999).

On a political dimension, that same experience may help them understand the political structures by seeing them operate in that urban context. Changes on a cultural level include changing ideas or norms of one's perceived notions after their SL experience. For example, Larsen and Gough (2013) found that teachers who engaged in ISL realized that the roots of poverty are numerous, intertwined, and impossible to address in isolation. This insight came after seeing rich and poor people located within the same general area. Providers may reject previously held cultural norms, or adapt new norms learned from their experience. Spiritual changes are said to provide a deeper understanding of one's self through self-reflection. For example, a recent study showed that ISL providers reported a stronger belief in their faith, and a greater understanding of how faith and social justice are deeply intertwined in many societies (Sokol, Marle, Summers, & Burke, 2015).

ISL also provides the opportunity for providers to engage in or observe cultural or religious practices different from their own (Locklin, 2010). On a personal level, ISL providers reported a personal transformation<sup>1</sup> through re-evaluating their identity, privilege, lifestyle choices, daily habits, relationships, academic path and career choice (Nichols, Rothenberg, Moshi, & Tetloff, 2013). In addition, ISL providers have been shown to increase their ability to realize shortcomings and overcome life challenges (Larsen & Gough, 2013). Finally, different ISL experiences allow for intellectual transformation to occur in various ways. One such change suggested by Wang et al. (2003) is intellectual empathy, which is the ability to understand how someone from a different racial or ethnic background thinks and feels. Another important

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<sup>1</sup> "Personal transformation entails a process of reevaluating one's identity, lifestyle choices, daily habits, relationships, and career choice. Students also describe personal transformation as seeing their own vulnerable and/or weaker, less flattering sides" (Kiely, 2004, p. 13).

intellectual change that may occur through ISL opportunities would be learning the language of the host culture (Musselwhite, 2004).

ISL is increasing in popularity in many universities, citing great benefits in several domains. With a world that is becoming increasingly global, ISL can offer essential benefits to both parties. Benefits of value-added ISL include increased cross-cultural sensitivity, professional identity development (Gilin & Young, 2009), a greater willingness to take risks to promote change, recognition of societal ills, greater compassion, and acceptance of differences (Levine, 2009). Abedini, Gruppen, Kolars, and Kumagai (2012) note that even short-term ISL experiences have shown several explicit positive outcomes, such as improving language/technical skills specific to their field, though immersion should last at least 2.5 weeks. There were also implicit observations, such as being seen as *the other*, lax supervision, and the insignificance of change actually effected on their trip (Abedini et al., 2012). It is important to delve deeper into the concept of *othering*. Wilkinson (2016), defines othering as a “practice in which one social group defines another in an inferior way” (p. 34). Othering is a way of alienating a group of people who do not fit the norm based on socially different categorization such as racial, sexual, or cultural characteristics. The practice of othering implies hierarchy and as a result, oppression and marginalization. The notion of *othering* is important to this study because the research participants were placed in new and unfamiliar situations, and thus found themselves in a Black African country, where, who are the norm and who are the other is completely different from what they are used to in Canada.

Moreover, in instances where asymmetries in power and privilege are present, ISL can highlight a variety of ethical issues. For example, some medical students who were participating in an ISL program questioned whether their insufficient training disqualified them from assisting

in a medical emergency (Abedini, et al., 2012). ISL may present other challenges to service providers, both during and after their experience. During their experiences, they must learn to have “blind trust” in their circumstances and valuing others regardless of socio-cultural differences; after ISL, they are faced with fundamental life choices because of their experience, sometimes as far as 15 years after their training (Levine, 2009). ISL is prevalent in several colleges and universities in both Western and Non-Western countries, including the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and China (Thomas, 2006).

**Challenges of International Service Learning.** Despite the learning opportunities, several challenges exist in this dynamic. For example, Merryfield (2000b) found that “many of the lived experiences described by the teacher educators include disorientation, confusion, and discomfort when they have moved into a new situation” (p. 439). These discomforts were due to being seen as *the other* or a permanent outsider. These effects have also been shown to last over long periods of time, further increasing the validity of learning experiences changing one’s world view. Another challenge presented to service learners engaged in SL is presented to their self-perception and perception of others. The positive effects of SL is not only limited to learning about different cultures but to social inequalities as well. For example, a study on the SL experiences of nursing students in a homeless shelter showed that they had discovered new aspects of the nursing role, as well as challenging stereotypes and perceptions about the homeless (Hunt, 2007). Moreover, Zhai (2000) has shown that learning abroad offers challenges to previously held perceptions about one’s own country, which may be due to the idea that SL can change one’s frame of reference.

These studies support the validity and utility of both EL and SL in curricula involving the training of educators and other professionals. Astin et al. (2000) recommended that SL should



be a mandatory part of curricula for educational professionals. However, Butin (2006) found that there are several institutional barriers to making service learning an integral part of higher education. While the benefits of SL are often profound and comprehensive, some barriers to those benefits remain and should be considered when conducting SL/EL programs. For example, one barrier may include a poor fit between the objectives of the organization or community and the objectives of the program (Blouin & Perry, 2009). Other barriers include lack of communication between instructors and organizers, and problems with student conduct (Blouin & Perry, 2009). The effectiveness of SL can also be impacted by moderating variables—which are variables other than the dependent and independent variables that affect the relationship between the two (Cohen, Cohen, Aiken, and West, 2003). Yorio and Ye (2012) suggest that moderating variables include the type of research design, type of reflection, and type of measurement. They also suggest that there are moderating differences that depend on whether the SL experience is optional or required, with the former usually having a much greater effect than the latter.

### **Theoretical Framework: Transformational Learning**

The goal of assessing the data collected is to identify how the service learning program affected teacher candidates' development personally and professionally as teachers. In seeking a theoretical basis for understanding the developmental changes, I selected Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory within International Service Learning. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory provides theoretical bases for critiquing and explaining the entire service learning experience and personal transformation of the teacher candidates. Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory provides a solid basis for analysis because it explains the learning process that adults experience and provides a concise

explanation as to how adults learn new ways of thinking about the world in which they live.

Mezirow introduced the concept of transformation learning in 1978, and Taylor (2008) notes that Mezirow was influenced by the work of three concepts: Kuhn's paradigm theory (1962), Freire's (1970) conscientization, and Habermas' emancipatory learning (1971).

**Kuhn's paradigm theory.** Kuhn's (1962) conception of paradigms provided a basis for Mezirow's notion of transformative learning. The theory was used to explore a major disagreement between social scientists and natural scientists as to what constituted legitimate scientific inquiry. Kuhn theorized the importance of paradigms based on his findings, which he defines as "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners" (p. viii). Furthermore Kitchenham (2008) states that "the theory of transformative learning itself has become a paradigm as it has explained many of the unanswered questions about adult learning and created its own group of specialised practitioners" (p. 107). I argue here that experience is crucial to creating the conditions for transformation and TLE created new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. In this way Kuhn's paradigm closes some of the existing gaps in our understanding of learning and makes the critical connection to experience in learning. For these reasons, Kuhn's theory of paradigms in learning became a very significant component of Mezirow's frame of reference in thinking about transformative learning (Kitchenham, 2008)

**Conscientization.** Freire (1970) argues that the traditional education system is framed as an act of 'depositing' whereby teachers are the oppressors and students are the oppressed. In this context, the task of the teacher is to "fill the students with the content of his narration—content which is detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance" (p. 71). Freire (1970) argues that this type of education suffers "from

narration sickness” (p. 71), which acts as a kind of banking system. He believes that, only dialogue can facilitate the development of critical thinking. Freire argues that without dialogue there can be no true education. Freire (1973) stated that education is supposed to promote “conscientization,” which involves self-awareness and self-determination. Therefore, it is this conscientization or critical consciousness that Kitchenham (2008) argues influenced Mezirow’s notions of “disorienting dilemma, critical reflection, critical self-reflection on assumptions, and critical discourse” (p. 108). The key to TLE is that it has the potential for the realization of conscientization. These transformative experiences in an international context create cognitive dissonance and in trying to resolve that dissonance students come to a greater understanding of their own circumstances. In addition, the constant reflection or examining of one’s own perception of their worldview leads to self-awareness and self-determinism. In a research context like in this study, conscientization can lead to new understandings of the participants’ emerging thinking and the reframing of their thinking and open up insights into the subtle nuances of the effects of the ISL program.

**Emancipatory Learning.** Habermas (1971) also influenced Mezirow’s transformational learning theory. Habermas (1971) introduced three types of learning: technical, practical and emancipatory. Technical learning includes memorization specific to a task and is clearly governed by rules. Practical learning involves social norms and social interaction, whether in person or online. In contrast, emancipatory learning is self-reflective and experiences self-knowledge. Mezirow’s examination of these three learning types resulted in his description of perspective transformation as a process through which the student becomes critically aware of the psycho-cultural assumptions and structures that constrain how people see themselves and their relationships. The transformation process reconstitutes these assumptions and structures,

which not only allows students to develop a “more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience”, but also allows them to act upon their new conceptions (Mezirow, 1999, p. 6).

**Transformational Learning Experience.** Described by Mezirow (1991), Transformational Learning Experience (TLE) states that there are no fixed truths in the world, and we formulate our opinions through our experiences. Experiences in our lives constantly change our perception of the world, and it is necessary to reflect on those experiences and grow, to make socially responsible choices for the well-being of those around us and ourselves. Furthermore, TLE helps the individual develop sound judgments about the world. In Mezirow’s view, TLE takes place in ten distinct phases:

1. A disorienting dilemma,
2. A self-examination of guilt and shame,
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions,
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change,
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions,
6. Planning of a course of action,
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans,
8. Provisional trying of new roles,
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships,

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective.  
(Mezirow, 1978, p. 105).

Though an individual may go through each of the phases in any particular order, and though they may overlap, Mezirow (1991) states that transformation can take place in instances where as few as one of the phases has occurred. He suggests that the catalyst for transformational learning is the occurrence of a disorienting dilemma. The goals of fostering transformative learning as identified by Mezirow (1991) include helping:

learners move from a simple awareness of their experience to an awareness of the conditions their experiencing (how they are perceiving, thinking, judging, feeling, acting – a reflection on the process) and beyond this to an awareness of the reasons why they experience as they do and to action based on these insights (p. 197).

Kiely (2005a) argues the Mezirow model of TLE is more appropriate to service learning contexts because it “focuses on how people make meaning of their experiences and, in particular, how significant learning and behavioral change often result from the way people make sense of [problems]” (p. 6). Further to the Mezirow model, Kiely's (2005b) longitudinal research led to the development of a theoretical framework for explaining how students experience the process of transformational learning in service learning. According to this framework, there are five elements of transformative learning: “contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalization, processing and connecting, and emerging global consciousness” (p. 8).

Several studies of service workers in an international context have shown in many instances a complete transformational change of the individual, from rethinking their lifestyle (e.g., in terms of their career, relationships, and purpose of life), to resisting cultural norms, to

engaging in social justice activity (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014; Sutherland, 2011; Taylor, 2000). International Service Learning can help teachers gain a more global perspective of the world (Sutherland, 2011), and an appreciation of both different cultures and their own culture (Kearney, Perkins, & Maakrun, 2014). The ultimate goal of TLE is to become more socially responsible, self-directed, and less dependent on false assumptions (Mezirow, 1991).

While *Transformative Learning Theory* has several components; three are considered the most important: centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. Mezirow (1998) argues that “learning to think for oneself involves becoming critically reflective of assumptions and participating in discourse to validate beliefs, intentions, values and feelings” (p. 197). This perspective on transformative learning suggests that being critically reflective of assumptions involves objective and subjective reframing. According to Mezirow (1998), objective reframing can be characterized as a narrative or active critical reflection of assumptions. Narrative critical reflection is when one absorbs and critically analyses information that has been presented to them. In this state, one is exhibiting self-awareness, mindfulness and taking into account one’s own personal belief system and biases through problem solving processes (Kitchenham, 2008). Subjective reframing can be categorized into four forms of critical self-reflection on assumptions: (1) narrative; (2) systemic; (3) therapeutic and (4) epistemic (Mezirow, as cited in Kitchenham, 2008, p116).

Taylor (2000) defines critical reflection as “questioning the integrity and assumptions of beliefs based on your prior experience” (p. 4). According to Taylor (2000) this process of critical reflection usually occurs when a previously held belief is challenged, creating cognitive dissonance which must be reflected upon. The theory on which TLE is based focuses on both centrality of experience and critical reflection. Rational discourse can be defined as the medium

by which these two phenomena take place (Taylor, 2000). Once the individual has an opportunity to critically reflect on an experience, and then Taylor suggests that the next move is to act upon those changes by engaging in discourse. Therefore, it is through intentionally engaging in this discourse that students can revise and review previously held presumptions about different communities, cultures, or political beliefs with which they are unfamiliar. I argue here that new ways of thinking can emerge when students reflect upon their own previous ways of thinking in light of new information and their own continual newly emerging ideas.

Both Mezirow (2000) and Kiely (2004; 2005) focus on the processes through which the participants reflected upon and made sense of their experiences. This study expanded on the previous literature by looking at the experiences of teacher candidates who completed an ISL experience in Tanzania. The goals were to better understand how the lived experience impacted their personal development, as previous literature has shown how ISL teachers go through changes on a personal level. In addition, the study looked at their professional development in terms of ethical care and how the skills gained in the experience improved their skills as a teacher in Canada. Finally, I analyzed how these teacher candidates went through cultural changes having taught in a different cultural environment with limited resources. The overall themes focused on their intellectual growth, personal development, and global-mindedness. The analysis for this study was carried out by using a qualitative phenomenological design to analyze emerging themes of teacher candidates' daily experiences as recorded in their reflective journals, emails, and through participant observation and individual and focus group interviews. The method for conducting this study is outlined in the next chapter.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design**

This study aims to examine the individual experiences of a group of teacher candidates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor who participated in the Global Education and Research for Development Initiative (GERDI). This qualitative study employs a phenomenological research design that is to examine how teacher candidates experienced an international community service-learning program in Tanzania, East Africa. The phenomenological research design aims to examine the lived experience of individuals around a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

Phenomenological techniques are appropriate for this study because they give voice to the teacher candidates by exploring how they experienced the phenomenon and the meanings they make of their experiences. Phenomenological research is described as a “systematic, explicit, self-critical, and intersubjective study of its subject matter, of lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 11). Creswell (2013) explains that “the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence” (p. 76).

Van Manen (1990) further elaborates on this essence and speaks to “a grasp of the very nature of the” phenomenon (p.177). He states that phenomenological research has eight defining characteristics: a study of lived experience; explication of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness; the study of the essence of phenomena; a study of descriptions of the experiential meaning we live as we live them; human scientific study of phenomena; attentive practice of thoughtfulness; search of what it means to be human; and poetizing of activity. In short, phenomenological research is about studying an individual’s experience from their own



lens and how it impacts their life. During this type of research, the purpose is to find meaning in the everyday lived experience from the perspective of the person living it.

Given this approach, the phenomenological method was appropriate to examine this group of teacher candidates in the international practicum placement of Tanzania program. This approach better ensures a way of establishing a deep understanding about the lived experience of the teacher candidates while they were in Tanzania. I uncovered the essence of teacher candidates' experience of teaching/learning in the context of their international practicum placement in Tanzania. For this experience, I did "uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experiences" (van Manen, 1997, p. 10). In addition, I also used an ethnographic approach to data collection by becoming a participant-observer and immersing myself fully in the field with my research participants. As I traveled with teacher candidates and we immersed ourselves in Tanzanian culture, it allowed me to understand their lived experience from the perspective of who they were as humans and as teachers, not only what they said or did, but what they heard, smelled, tasted, and touched as they experienced it in that moment and the feelings and emotions that were evoked. Applying phenomenological procedures this research examines the meaning that lived experiences had in the teacher candidate participants' lives, making it an appropriate lens of analysis in this study.

### **Project Context**

Windsor's Faculty of Education first became involved with Tanzania in 2003, when Dr. Chris Clovis brought together faculty members of the African diaspora to discuss an international teacher education project in Africa. The decision was made to select the United Republic of Tanzania as a focus for their project. The very first effort was collaboration with the

Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor and the University of Dar es Salaam. The project sought funding from Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) to develop a research and development program focused on teacher education and the empowerment of women and girls. Unsuccessful attempts to secure CIDA funding stymied this ambitious initiative but the desire to do work in Tanzania remained and the team of faculty members continued the search for a suitable project. Small scale fundraising was launched in 2005 by Dr. Clovis and Dr. Clinton Beckford with the ultimate goal of building or renovating a school.

In 2007 Dr. Grace Puja, a former faculty member at the University of Dar es Salaam, introduced the University of Windsor team to a center for orphaned and vulnerable children in the vicinity of her ancestral home. After hearing about the history of the center and the experiences of the children there, the decision was made to unofficially adopt the Kititimo Center for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children Tanzania and the “Tanzania Project” was born. In 2008, it was felt that teacher candidates would benefit immensely from an international cultural experience. With Dr. Clovis no longer at the University of Windsor, Dr. Nombuso Dlamini secured a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) grant and under the project a team of 17 people including 8 teacher candidates visited the Kititimo Center in December 2008. When Dr. Dlamini left the University of Windsor in 2009 the program continued with Dr. Beckford who was instrumental in institutionalizing it through the development of the Global Education, Research and Development Initiative (GERDI) which in addition to providing an international service-learning opportunity for pre-service teachers also provides opportunities for graduate students to conduct their research through the project activities. The first such student Dr. Chrispina Lekule completed doctoral research in 2014 under the supervision of Dr. Beckford and Dr. Andrew Allen. Since 2012, Dr. Andrew Allen,

along with alumni, have been organizing and running the University of Windsor ISL program, the Global Education and Research for Development Initiative (GERDI).

Since 2008, teacher candidates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor, have been traveling to Singida, Tanzania, for an ISL experience. Teacher candidates have worked in teams in the area of construction, education, nutrition, and health and wellness – supplying children with books, healthy meals, clothing, medical supplies, and hygiene products. Additionally, cultural exchanges and experiences have taken place within the classrooms, both in Canada and Tanzania. Anecdotal evidence from previous participants and media reports (local cable TV Cogeco) indicates profound effects on participants. Approximately 130 Teacher Candidates have travelled to Singida, Tanzania since the program's inception. The general sentiments expressed, suggest that the experience was 'life changing' personally and professionally.

However, as stated above, there exists no proof or empirical evidence of the key elements or benefits of this international practicum placement or of the transformational aspects of this program. There is a lack of literature that explores this phenomenon from the perspective of participating teacher candidates in this service learning program. Hence, research that determines the nature and the impact this transformation has had on the personal and professional growth of those who have participated in this program would provide insight into the effectiveness and value of this ISL program. This phenomenological study is an attempt to understand how the ISL experience affects the teacher candidates personally and professionally.

### **Selection Criteria**

To attempt to understand how the ISL experience affected the teacher candidates personally and professionally I addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the nature of teacher candidates' learning experiences as international teachers in Tanzania?
2. How does the ISL experience impact teacher candidates' personal and professional roles as beginning teachers?
3. How did the teacher candidates describe their experience with and participation in the ISL program in Tanzania?
4. What are the implications for such international teacher education programs in Canadian faculties of education?

Addressing these questions would require the participation of teacher candidates participating in the Tanzania program. I have outlined below how this selection process took place.

### **Participant Selection Process for the GERDI**

In September 2014, at the beginning of the fall semester, an information session about the Tanzania program was held for new teacher candidates. There were over 80 teacher candidates who attended the information session and expressed interest in the program. We explained the recruitment processes and how they could become a part of the travel team of 2015 by submitting applications. We advised them that the program was a voluntary program and that it would be required to engage in a variety of activities including raising funds, collecting in-kind contributions and planning service learning projects which they would implement in Tanzania. The traveling team was to spend the money to buy and bring various items for the children at the Kititimo Center, including soccer shoes, towels, and school supplies. Any remaining monetary

donations collected were to be invested in the local economy for the purchase of food, water, and other essentials to improve the quality of life for the Tanzanian community.

Participation in the project was based on a two-stage selection process. First, prospective participants were invited to submit their resume and a short narrative explaining why they would like to participate in the international community service learning program in Tanzania, what they hoped to gain from the experience and what they could bring to the program and youth at the Kititimo Center. Second, after the review of the first stage some teacher candidates were selected and invited to take an interview. The interviews were conducted at the University of Windsor on November 10-12, 2014. The selection process was designed to recruit a diverse group of teacher candidates with a variety of skills and cultural experiences required to meet the objects of the program. The selection of the travel team was completed and the team members announced in early December 2014. Through this process, sixteen teacher candidates were chosen to take part in this optional international practicum placement in April/May 2015. In addition, there was one student from another faculty who was selected to travel as well.

### **Participant Selection Process for the Study**

The population for the study thus became the 17 individuals (myself included) who had been selected to participate in the Tanzania ISL project. However, only Education students from the Faculty of Education who were preparing to become teachers and who had completed their teaching practice placements were considered to participate in the study. These exclusionary criteria were included because the study is aimed at determining how the international experience impacts teaching candidates personally and professionally, and data from participants who did not meet these criteria would therefore not be valuable to my study. According to Hycner (1999), “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of

participants (p. 156).” Each of the 16 teacher candidates were invited to participate in the study. The recruitment process involved a thorough explanation of the study. I made a PowerPoint presentation to the group and explained the purpose of this study, describing the data collection procedures. All 16 teacher candidates accepted the invitation to participate in the study. This provided an ideal sample size as phenomenology method suggests that the participants must be 5 to 25 (Creswell, 2013).

### **Participants and Sample Size**

The participants in this study were teacher candidates in a consecutive education program in the Faculty of Education of the University of Windsor. Each candidate already had at least one degree and came from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and life experiences. The group was comprised of 16 research participants, ten females and six males, ranging in age from 22 to 40. Five of the participants identified as members of racialized groups, while the remainder identified as Caucasian. The group displayed religious diversity such as Muslim, Christian and Atheistic; and two identified as Africans.

### **Data Collection & Analysis**

**Data collection procedures.** According to Creswell (2013), qualitative method requires active collaboration between the researcher and the participants. Before I started collecting data, I immersed myself in and became part of the group by attending all their meetings and participating in the language instruction courses, fundraising and other pre-trip activities. The group met once per week up to the time of departure for Tanzania.

I employed three stages of data collection in this study to capture the lived experiences of teacher candidates throughout the phases of pre-immersion, immersion, and post-immersion.

Pre-immersion, one month prior to departure; immersion, the moment the group left Windsor to travel to Tanzania until their return to Pearson International Airport; and post-immersion, one month following the group's return to Canada. Data was collected through participant observation, individual interviews, journal writing, and focus groups. Teacher Candidates were asked to reflect on their lived experiences with respect to how they learned to teach throughout each of the data collection stages.

The goal of choosing the three phases was to first understand teacher candidates' attitudes and perceptions prior to departure. Data collection in the immersion phase was to understand how they reacted on their arrival in Tanzania as well as how the immersion challenged or changed teacher candidates' perceptions. The post-immersion phase was to examine their reflections and to identify the aspects of their experiences that they considered life changing. Data were collected through daily experiences as recorded in their reflective journals, emails, participant observation, and individual and focus group interviews. I triangulated the data by using multiple data sources to examine the nature and impact of this ISL experience in Tanzania for the 16 teacher candidates.

**Journal or 'lived experience description'**. For me to investigate the essence or the phenomena of the teacher candidates' lived experience, I employed van Manen's (1997) protocol of writing, which is a 'lived experience description' (LED) method and very much like journal writing. This method allowed for the participants to reflect on their experience at any time throughout the day and evening. The freedom that this process provides, leaves it up to the participant to detail, in the moment, LED's of significance. Van Manen's LED allows to capture the essence of phenomenological research design, which requires that participants capture their lived experience. According to van Manen (1997), "writing forces the person into a reflective

attitude-in contrast to face to-face conversation in which people are much more immediately involved” (p. 64). In this way, the participant decides what is significant to them, the participant controls the narrative of the LED. Finally, because of the reflective nature of this method, the participant can feel more open to explore any topic without fear or judgment. To achieve this, I provided notebooks to each teacher candidate one month prior to immersion. I directed them to write down their LED throughout the program beginning the moment they received the notebooks. I indicated to them that I would be collecting the notebooks two weeks after our arrival back to Canada.

During the preparation, the teacher candidates asked many questions because this was a new experience for them. I directed them to write their personal experiences as they lived through them (van Manen, 1997). Prior to immersion, I directed teacher candidates to write what they hoped to gain from this experience personally and professionally. I encouraged teacher candidates to write LEDs in the comfort of their own homes, hotels, school and at their own pace in their lived experience.

The LED protocols also require that the researcher conduct a personal description of a lived experience. As van Manen (1997) explains, “The phenomenologist knows that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others” (p. 54). I began to record my experience at the same time as the 16 teacher candidates. My own personal journal writing provided me with the tools to analyze the journal entries of the participants. As I previously explored, my emic perspective allowed me to see the experience from the perspective of the teacher candidates. This became abundantly clear in the journal entries, as we were often outlining similar LEDs. Because I had lived through the experiences with the participants I could better understand their perspective. My personal LED also provided me with an outlet to outline my personal



observations which then allowed me to be more objective while reviewing the experiences of others.

**Individual interviews.** Individual or one-on-one interviews are one of the most commonly used methods of data gathering in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2013). According to Creswell (2013), there are two types of qualitative interviews: one-on-one interviews, and focus group interviews. For this study, I utilized both types of interviews because it leads to a deeper understanding of the essence of teacher candidates' lived experience with the ISL activities. According to van Manen (1997, p.66), phenomenological interviews serve two purposes. First, they are “a means of exploring and gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a source for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon”. Moreover, they “may be used as a vehicle to develop a conversation relation with a partner (interviewee) about the meaning of an experience” (p. 66). This method further allowed me to explore with the participants their LED and further discuss its impact on their personal and professional lives. Because we know that the Tanzania experience had been described as life-changing, the interviews provided an opportunity for the researcher to unpack these experiences and drill down on how it affected the participant.

I utilized all open-ended questions in the face-to-face interviews (see Appendix A). Open-ended questions are not guided and allow the participants to answer using their own knowledge and experience. They are the opposite of close-ended questions, which are often characterized by yes or no responses. Open-ended questions were the most effective way to let the teacher candidates “voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspective of the researcher” (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). Because I was not guiding their response and was providing the space to elaborate, this style of questioning offered full control to the participant to

decide what their answer would focus on. Like the LEDs that the participants had been journaling, these questions further allowed the participants to focus on the lived experiences of significance to them. All of which are important in a phenomenological research design.

To capture the lived experience of the teacher candidates, I conducted a set of interviews prior to immersion, and after immersion. Both individual interviews were carried out in the Faculty of Education building at the University of Windsor. The length of individual interviews was approximately 30 to 45 minutes. I explained the interview protocol prior to each individual interview. The individual interviews created the space to reflect on deeper meanings and to capture authenticity, richness, and in-depth responses.

**Focus group interviews.** Morgan (1996) defines focus group as “group discussion on a particular topic organized for research purpose” (p. 130). Morgan explains the three central components of focus group:

1. Focus groups are a research and data collection method.
2. Focus groups rely on group interaction as the source of their data.
3. It acknowledges the researchers’ active role in creating the group discussion for data collection purposes. (Morgan, 1996, p. 130)

For the focus groups, I could not grantee confidentiality, therefore at the beginning of each focus group I reminded the group to treat the conversation as confidential. I also requested the teacher candidates to see me individually after each session. I utilized focus group interviews at three different times during the study: prior to immersion, during immersion, and after immersion. The pre-immersion focus group interview took place at the University of Windsor approximately one week prior to departure for Tanzania. I divided the teacher candidates into two groups of five individuals, and one group of six individuals (Creswell, 2013). Focus group

meetings were scheduled at the convenience of the participants to minimize potential stress and anxiety. I moderated all the focus groups. For the same reasons as outlined above, I also only used open-ended general questions to explore the central phenomenon of my study (Creswell, 2013). The questions are open-ended in that they are exploratory and meant to be inductive in nature. My questions are meant to stimulate discussion in the group and have the participants themselves generate the tone and direction of the conversation. Each focus group interview was approximately one hour in length. I explained the interview protocol or guidelines prior to each focus group. I also reviewed the consent process with teacher candidates. An information/consent package is attached to the informed-consent form/letter (Appendix B). This document, which each participant signed, highlights the nature of the study and of their participation in it. Participants also signed a consent form (see Appendix C) indicating that they agreed to being recorded during interviews/focus groups strictly for the purposes of transcription. I reminded the participants that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. In addition to informing participants in the letter, I also verbally stated, prior to each initial focus group interview, that their information would be kept confidential and that no value judgments would be placed on their responses. As Creswell (2013) and van Manen (1997) suggest, the interviews should be recorded on an audio recorder and securely saved until transcription is complete. This procedure was followed, at which time the audio file was permanently deleted. The pre-immersion focus group atmosphere was characterized by excitement and anticipation to venture into the unknown.

The immersion focus group took place approximately halfway through the trip. The group interviews were conducted in an atmosphere where teacher candidates felt safe to openly express their thoughts and feelings. The focus group interviews took place at the Kittitimo

Centre in Singida, Tanzania, the site where participants had their most profound experiences. The purpose of the immersion group interviews was to capture and understand teacher candidates' day to day activities and their lived experience as they were living it. According to van Manen, (1997), it is essential that the researcher stays close to the experience as lived by participants and "ask what an experience is like, it may be helpful to be very concrete. Ask the person to think of a specific instance, situation, person or event" (p. 67). Because of my knowledge of the lived experiences I could adapt and change questions as needed based on the participants' experiences and conversations. Further, because I was living the experience with them, I could also add probing questions to further engage the participants in their lived experience to delve deeper.

Facilitating the immersion focus group interviews was very challenging compared to the pre-immersion stage. Participants were now on the ground and immersed in experiences that were creating disruption and dissonance. The focus group allowed me to understand their lived experience from their perspective as humans and as teachers. Overall, the focus groups allowed the teacher candidates to develop deeper connections with their experiences, which made it possible for them to enter conversational relations (van Manen, 1997).

The final focus group took place approximately one week after the group returned to Canada. The purpose of these sessions was to do a follow-up of the trip and provide the opportunity for participants to take a meaningful look back and reflect on their lived experiences after having some time to think about them. Specifically, the participants were asked to describe their experiences of the ISL phenomenon- ideas/thoughts/feelings that were conjured up after leaving Tanzania upon returning to Canada. The process used mirrored the one used during the

initial focus group. However, this time I collected data on the teacher candidates' feelings and perceptions after their immersion experience had concluded.

In total, there were six focus group interviews. These yielded six hours of audio recording and eighty pages of transcribed, single space text. It should be noted that out of the 16 Teacher Candidates, only 10 participated in the post-immersion focus groups. This means that the discussion of the post-immersion data does not include the whole group. However, while this was not ideal, the validity of the findings is not deleteriously affected.

**Data analysis.** Phenomenological data analysis techniques were used to analyze the data. All data was derived from pre-immersion, immersion, and post-immersion reflective journals, in-depth interviews and participant observation and focus group. I triangulated multiple data sources to examine the nature and impact of this ISL experience in Tanzania for 16 teacher candidates.

According to van Manen (1997), phenomenology is employed “in order to come to grips with the structure of meaning of text” and is “helpful to think of phenomena... as approachable in terms of meaning units, structure of meaning, or themes. Reflecting on the lived experience” is akin to “reflectively analyzing the structure or thematic aspects of that experience” (p.78). He further explains that “grasping and formulating a thematic understanding is not a rule-bound process, but a free act of ‘seeing’ meaning”. He concludes that themes give “control and order to our research and writing” (p.79). To analyze the data, van Manen suggests that it is imperative to utilize a thematic approach in order to understand the phenomena at hand or mirroring the lived experience of each teacher candidate. Data analysis is a process of looking for patterns and trends and allowing themes and meanings to naturally emerge from the data. Data was coded using a process utilized for phenomenological research. Specifically, I employed three

approaches suggested by van Manen (1990): focusing on the holistic or sententious approach, the selective or highlighting approach and the detailed or line-by-line approach. The approaches help to uncover or isolate thematic aspects of a phenomenon in the same text.

I transcribed and recorded all the individual and focus-group interviews. Firstly, I read the entire text freely and spent a lot of time with the transcribed data. This approach of holistic reading broadly suspends any preconceived notion or assumption or biases that I had and prevented me from jumping ahead. Furthermore, I was more focused on looking for the sententious phrase (van Manen, 1990) that might capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole. Secondly, I read and re-read the texts several times to capture "significant statements" and thoroughly process the material. I then highlighted and circled sentences, or quotes that revealed aspects of the teacher candidates' lived ISL experience in Tanzania (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997). Agar (1980), suggests that researchers must "read the transcripts in their entirety several times. Immerse [themselves] in the details" and try "to get a sense of the interview as a whole before breaking it into parts" (p. 103).

Finally, in the detailed reading approach, I did a line-by-line reading to see emerging ideas. Reading line by line limits the possibility of me projecting a preconceived result onto the research. As I was reading from transcripts of the teacher candidates' lived experience, I identified several patterns. Then, through a system of colour coding, I developed 'clusters of meaning' from these significant statements, and categorized them into themes, allowing for emergence of themes common to each of the participants (Moustakas, 1994; van Manen, 1997). In addition to analyzing for congruence in their lived experience, I also looked for incongruences in participants' responses. I was open to all responses and to the full range in which participants

might respond. The emerging themes through the data analysis were used to understand the teacher candidates' lived experience in the ISL program in Tanzania. I triangulated these multiple data sources to examine the nature and impact of this ISL experience in Tanzania for the 16 teacher candidate participants. Data collected from pre-immersion, immersion, and post-immersion phases of the ISL were analyzed. Through member checking, I met the participants to validate the representation of their data by the researcher and share the emerging themes to refine them. I also allowed the participants to expand their thoughts and ideas. If new relevant data emerged, they were included in the final description (Creswell 2013). All the findings were authenticated by the participants.

### **Limitations**

Though the current study provides numerous insights into International Service Learning it does have several limitations. The methodological limitations include the homogenous nature of the sample group, the fact that all participants travelled to the same geographical region, the duration of the study, and the researcher's sense of belonging to both groups. The first limitation has to do with the homogenous nature of the sample group. Though 5 participants were from racialized groups, most were Caucasian, and all but one were born in Canada. Though the racial composition of the group was relatively diverse, their nationality was not; therefore, their cultural make-up was not diverse. It would have been beneficial to secure participants from different national and cultural backgrounds to gauge that variety of potential responses and develop more expansive patterns with respect to their responses to ISL. It would have also been beneficial to collect data on how ISL differed for people from different racial categories. For example, evaluating whether the culture shock a Western person experiences in Tanzania differs based on race could provide important insights. Likewise, because 12 of the participants

identified as female, the study cannot be generalized across genders. Understanding how gender can impact such experiences could provide valuable insights. Thus, the somewhat homogenous composition of the participants did limit the study in some respects.

The study also only observed participants travelling to Tanzania. As there are numerous ISL programs developing across the world, it is important to understand how these experiences differ, not only based on the origins of the teachers who are travelling, but also based on the regions they are travelling to. Had the study also followed a group of international service teachers travelling to China, Jamaica, and/or Costa Rica, the study could have gotten insights on culture shock related to these regions. A comparative study of such data might not only help to identify more universal patterns, but also highlight the differences that programs should consider when preparing pre-service teachers for specific ISL experiences.

Likewise, the duration of the study is also limited. While the data collection is effective at gathering the immediate responses of pre-service teachers, it is not able to collect data on the long-term outcomes of such programs. For example, while teachers may initially implement certain lessons learned during the ISL program, they may also face resistance when trying to implement such learning strategies into their pedagogical approaches at a school where the rest of the staff embraces more conventional teaching methods. Longitudinal data on the challenges these teachers face when implementing could provide insights that ISL programs could use to enable pre-service teachers to more effectively transfer what they learn into the classroom setting.

Lastly, the researcher had a sense of belonging to both groups: the culture of the group that is traveling (teacher candidates) and the culture of the group we traveled to (Tanzanian



students/community). Creswell (2012) maintains that the positionality of the researcher, as well as their values and judgments may negatively impact the study. However, possessing insights into both groups also allows the researcher to understand the context of both cultures, which can facilitate more effective data analysis. To address this limitation, the researcher made a concerted effort to remain self-aware of these potential drawbacks, be critical of the data analysis, and question any potential biases. I don't believe that impartiality was possible or realistic in this study. However, in realizing possible biases and bringing them to the forefront I am attempting to provide full disclosure on my position in this study.

### **Ethical Considerations**

The University of Windsor Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects were followed and all the required forms were sent to University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB) on February 8, 2015. The University of Windsor Research Ethics Board (REB) granted approval for the research on March 17, 2015. Creswell (2012) suggests to researchers:

Ethical issues are central to conducting action research that involves participants in a substantial way. An action researcher needs to conduct the inquiry in a way that respects the care of the participants, involves them collaboratively in all phases of the research and is sensitive to obtaining consent and advancing the purpose of the study when all of the phases may not be initially known. It is also important for participants to have the option to withdraw from the study (Creswell, 2012, p. 592).

Pseudonyms were used throughout the study to maintain anonymity of all participants. In addition, their ages are not mentioned, nor are any other details that would make it possible for other participants to determine who the study is referring to. Even the names of the towns or

cities the individuals are from are changed. Participants were informed in the letter of consent that the information collected was to be used for research purposes only. After transcription of the journals, the interviews, and the focus group, all personal identifiers were deleted. This includes deleting all personal identifiers for persons that the researcher might refer to, such as names, places, and agencies. The participants were also informed that information that could identify them would not be used in any publication or presentation of the study results.

All data was stored in a safe place. All data was secure and accessible only to me. A personal computer with a password known to the researcher alone was also used for storing transcribed and coded information and will be destroyed five years after the results have been published.

## Chapter 4: Research Findings

This chapter provides an analysis of the data using a qualitative phenomenological research design that explores how teacher candidates experienced an international community service-learning program in Tanzania, East Africa. As the previous chapter indicated, the participant pool included 16 Teacher Candidates from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. Four major themes emerged in the analysis of the data:

1. The teacher candidate's expectation and fear prior to departure shaped their experiences,
2. Adjustment to the physical environment and discomfort,
3. Cross cultural teaching in a limited resource environment and being immersed in a different language and culture,
4. Reflecting on their personal and professional growth.

### **Theme One: The Teacher Candidate's Expectation and Fear Prior to Departure Shaped their Experiences**

**Expectation and hope.** The pre-departure data collection phase took place at the home institution of the program in Canada and consisted of focus group interviews with the travel team, and journal entries from the participants. The results of the pre-departure data indicate that prior to departing for Tanzania, the participants had different expectations and perceptions related to participating in the ISL in Tanzania. For example, some participants hoped to gain an experience that would enhance their personal and professional growth and help them develop diverse educational strategies that would provide a positive learning experience within the classroom and beyond.

Most of the participants indicated that they were looking to challenge and change their worldview. They wanted to transform the way they viewed the world and wanted to change the way they responded to and behaved in the world in relation to becoming a better professional, that is, to be a more inclusive teacher within the classroom. Some participants also reported that they were seeking a personal and professional transformation in terms of their responses to different cultures, and ultimately wanted to transform their narrow world view into a more expansive, all-inclusive one. The participants believed that teaching vulnerable children within a foreign teaching system would improve their teaching skills in Canada's multicultural environment, making them more culturally sensitive and helping them grow personally and professionally.

In one of his first journal entries, Andy, who grew up in a socially and culturally homogeneous environment, a small town in Quebec, and identified as a New Quebecker, while considering himself as an "extremely open-minded person", noted that "due to geography, [he had] not been exposed to different cultures" as everybody in his hometown basically came from the same ethnic background and held similar outlooks on life. Andy stated that he was "passionate about languages and culture," and that because of his limited exposure to different cultures, one of his primary reasons for taking the trip was to learn about different cultures. Likewise, "As a non-religious person, [he was] excited to learn about the culture and beliefs of the people of Singida." Like others, Andy also saw this as an opportunity "to learn on a personal level."

Another participant, Mona, also described her worldview as being limited by where she grew up and that she did not understand the world outside of her own local environment. Consequently, she expressed a desire to broaden her knowledge of different people and cultures.

In relating her reasons for going to Tanzania in her journal, Mona wrote that she wanted to travel to Tanzania to expand her worldview, understand other people's perspective, and build relationships, which was an especially important component of her experience. Mona stated that her primary motivation for making the trip was the opportunity she would have to compare her culture and her personal background with the social norms and values of people in another part of the world and, when necessary, make transformations of norms, values and her worldview that would enable her to be a better teacher in the future:

A large motivator for me in going to Tanzania is the ability to continue my own learning while helping further the learning of others. As a future professional, I hope to expand my worldview and understand the perspectives of others in another cultural context. I hope to learn about the students' lives, hardships, strengths, and futures. Personally, I hope to build positive relationships with the students, the community in Tanzania, and my fellow team members of Teachers for Tanzania. I want to learn about the differences and similarities experienced by humans from all over the world, and the Tanzania Project seems to be a positive way to make a difference for others while making a change within one's self.

Several other respondents expressed similar sentiments. For example, Jane and Karmen stated they were embarking upon the trip expecting to have a reciprocal experience that would give them the opportunity to give to others, receive and experience positive changes in their lives. Jane stated that while growing up, she always wanted to do volunteer work but never had the chance because her family restricted her opportunities. Jane indicated that she has "selfish tendencies" and was eager to learn selflessness through her participation in this program:

I hope to gain invaluable experience and knowledge while working with these children. I certainly have selfish tendencies because I know these children will teach me more than I could ever hope to teach them and I know that my life will be forever changed because of this experience. I have wanted to volunteer in a situation like this for years, but my mother would not allow it when I was in high school. She now gives me her blessing, knowing that it was not just a phase.

Alternately, Karmen indicated that not only did she anticipate gaining professional experience; she also anticipated experiencing life changing events that would result in a growth of knowledge and a complete cultural transformation. Karmen stated that she did not see the world from the cultural background of her parents or the perspective of Canadian teachers and felt that going to Tanzania would allow her to formulate her own perspective/worldview, which would in turn allow her to become more open minded and more understanding with respect to people who do not speak English:

Personally, I hope to gain a life changing experience that allows me to see the world in a different perspective: a perspective that relates to the beautiful way that these children view life regardless of how impoverished they are. I wish to make a difference in each of the children's lives and I am also looking forward to the impact that they will have on me. I would love to gain the professional experience regarding education in teaching students where English is not their native tongue. I have many family members who have come to Canada from countries across the world and I've seen firsthand the difficulties in learning a new language.

Sonya, another participant, who also stated that she hoped to enhance her professional and personal growth, likewise highlighted how the experience would equip her for Canada's multicultural environment:

I know this opportunity would really aid me in my professional growth... and will be another great way to gain some invaluable teaching experience. Having the opportunity to teach in another country, so different from my own, would really help increase my knowledge and awareness of being culturally sensitive in the classroom. I think this is something I will be able to share with my future students and incorporate in my teaching philosophy.

Sonya stated that she was convinced that she would gain professional growth from her experience in Tanzania and looked forward to the trip to enhance her ability to teach minority students of various backgrounds in Canada.

Ken, who was born outside of Canada, had a different perception in terms of desires and expectations. He indicated that by making the trip, he hoped to gain experience that would help him develop a similar project in his country of birth, which has issues similar to those in Tanzania. Ken expressed a desire to give back to his country of birth out of a sense of patriotic duty and to further his understanding of vulnerable children:

Selflessness is a key part of my life. Without the sacrifice of others, I would not be in the position I'm in today. This volunteer experience is something I'm thinking of starting in a country on the [Gulf of Guinea]. Gulf of Guinea has similar issues like Tanzania and this experience would be a great way for me to gain hands on knowledge which can be applied to help orphan kids in my country to become better citizens in society.

The general sentiment among the participants was that the experience in Tanzania would engender a better understanding of other societies and vulnerable and marginalized students of different cultures, races, ethnicities and religions, which would enable them to better deal with students in Canada. Based on participants' statements, it was clear that the participants felt that participating in the ISL in Tanzania would allow them to likely experience a transformation of their worldviews and their cultural sensitivity, two changes that, in the future, would allow them to more easily make adjustments in the classroom and better deal with students of different backgrounds.

Karmen, Jane and Andy felt that teaching the vulnerable children within a school system different from Canada's would improve their teaching skills and prepare them for teaching in Canada's multicultural school setting. Andy acknowledged that he had never been exposed to a culture different from his own and was looking forward to learning about another country and its culture. Most participants recognized that learning different cultures and values was necessary for them to be better teachers in Canada. Some of the participants had visited other Westernized countries, but only one had any experience in a developing country generally and in an African country more specifically.

Nearly all the participating teacher candidates reported having limited worldviews or limited knowledge of cultures other than their own, and all reported a desire to expand their worldview. Except for one teacher candidate, none of the candidates had ever been to an African country and were looking forward to gaining firsthand experience to contextualize what they had learned through the mass media and textbooks. Additionally, participants felt it was vital to have direct contact with students in a foreign country with an educational environment often



characterized by a high level of economic vulnerability and where the relationship between children's school lives and their out of school lives can be quite stark.

**Familial fear.** Almost all participants admitted that they either grew up in a homogenous community or that they came from “sheltered” families. It is not surprising, then, that each of the participants noted that one of the key motivations for participating in the ISL program was the desire to enhance their worldview and broaden their cultural horizons. This notion of having come from a sheltered and homogenous society was evident in the initial responses that they received from their family members upon sharing that they would be participating in the ISL program. Most participants expressed that their families had many concerns about them travelling to Tanzania, largely due to the “deficit thinking” that appears in Western society with respect to the continent of Africa. These concerns can be aligned with the historical stereotypes and prejudices and how the African continent is portrayed by Western media. Deficit thinking and stereotypes are a symptom of the West's framing of Africa as ‘The Dark Continent’ and arose as a significant trend in data. The participants reported that they felt overwhelmingly frustrated by the preconceived notions and prejudices that their family held against the continent, reinforcing their desire to enhance their worldview and their cultural horizons.

Throughout the data-collection process prior to departure, several key themes appeared in relation to family biases and fear, each of which was encapsulated in Sue's case. During the focus group, Sue noted that her family expressed concerns, including Ebola, rape, prostitution, and human trafficking. She said these concerns were exacerbated by the media reports about global terrorism threats in neighboring Kenya at the time. She shared the following comments about a letter which was left on the family refrigerator for her one day by a family member:

[The letter] was [formatted] like a government website... [or] travel advisory... I thought it was so sassy. No one said anything; it was just on the fridge with a magnet, and it was like “bad things are happening in Tanzania”. Essentially, it was like “this woman got harassed at the ATM and got all her money taken out” “These women basically took a taxi that... wasn’t a registered taxi service. Or, there was a religious protest shooting here [and] basically people got pickpocketed... I was furious, so I took a pen and took it down and started circling things circled the religious thing: “this happened in Ottawa, the parliament shooting in Ottawa”. [I] Circled the pickpocketing thing: “this happens in Italy, this happens in a large tourist town”. [I] Circled the taxi driver: “these people are... idiots for going into a stranger’s car” ... [I]t’s just frustrating because you know I think that, and again being from Windsor my family has literally lived blocks away from each other, and have just never been anywhere, so one of the hardest things was my dad... I was telling him “you’ve never been to Tanzania, you’ve never been to Africa, you have no right to say these things.” He’s like “Well, you’ve never been either”, and I said “Well, when I get back, I’ll tell you about it”, and he said: “*If* you come back”, and he just says it so lightly, like “oh *if* you come back”.

Though Sue was surprised by how her family reacted to her plan to travel to Tanzania, their response was consistent with most of the other families and highlighted two key themes that appeared in most families: fear for the participant’s safety, and a fear of diseases.

Fifteen of the sixteen participants reported that their families expressed fear for the participant’s safety and of diseases, a fear that was often ground in media reports. For example, Alisha found that the media impacted her family’s reaction to the program: “My family

are CNN-ised and safety is their greatest concern. I think the biggest question my family [had] is why we [were going] to Africa not... other part[s] of the world.” Ed, likewise shared his familial biases in the focus group after he had advised his parents that he was participating in the ISL program and he was travelling to Tanzania: “Well initially, my mom was the one to be like ‘are you sure this is a good idea?’ She’s like ‘are you sure this is going to be a good idea?’ I’m like ‘Mom, I’m fine; I went to Honduras’. She’s like ‘fine’! Moreover, two weeks prior to departure, Ed’s father expressed his concern, stating that he did not want Ed to go, but Ed was resolute in his position: “I’m like, ‘sorry, but I paid for the ticket.’ So the ticket is all paid up and everything, so I’m going.” Another participant, Karmen, expressed how her mother was uncomfortable with her traveling to Tanzania:

My mom was very worried, I’m the only child and she’s a worried person in general...but I always wanted to do something like this... even before I went to teacher’s college. When I first went to the meeting for Tanzania, I knew that for sure, so I even told her from the first meeting, I said “you know, it’s in April but I’m gonna go. And she’s like “oh no, you’re not.” she kept saying “I don’t want you to go, I don’t want you to go”.

Michele, another participant, was also very upset with her family:

It’s because of the media. It’s interesting, though, because my family especially... know[s] nothing about the continent; they know nothing about Tanzania, and they’re trying to tell me that “it’s unsafe”, “you can’t go there”, that “there’s this disease”, “there’s this terrorist group”, this... that... this”.

Unlike the other participants, Michele noted that this media portrayal could even supersede both education and experience:

My family... they're all older, some of them have been to university. They're world travelers. Like, my aunt and uncle have lived in Saudi Arabia for 15 years, and they're still saying: 'you know, you shouldn't be going' and it's just because it's Africa. So... that's why I'm excited to go, so I can go there and come back and tell everyone what it's actually like."

Michele's frustration was apparent when she concluded her response, unable to find words to express herself.

These fears were exacerbated one month prior to our departure when there was a terrorist attack in Kenya, which is located in East Africa and shares a border with Tanzania. The violence in Kenya received significant global attention in the media. It is noteworthy that, historically, Tanzania has been one of the safest countries in east Africa, and the University of Windsor Faculty of Education professors had been visiting with teacher candidates since 2008 without incident. Though misguided in some respects, it was very evident that these families were simply concerned with the safety of their loved one. Toni offered a summary of her family's concerns:

My grandmother was freaking out when she saw the shooting at the University in Kenya. She doesn't want us to go to the orphanage, thinking that they'll do something to us there. I told her this is like the sixth time [University of Windsor teacher candidates are] going to Tanzania: it's ok. They're well aware of who we are. They know the students from the

University of Windsor and what they're here to do. I think it's more watching the news than believing what's going on in Africa. Or they believe that if it happens in certain parts, it's going to happen in all parts of Africa. So, yeah, they're a little afraid of that.

Most of the 16 participants expressed that their families expressed a fear of Ebola and/or other diseases themselves. It was clear that the Ebola crisis—even though it was happening in West Africa, far from Tanzania—was a concern for the participants' families. This certain concern was highlighted by Toni, who suggested that her family watched too much news and noted that her brother said she would catch Ebola while in Africa.

The pattern of experiences detailed by Sue, Alisha, Ed, Karmen, Michele, and Toni were consistent with the other nine participants, each of whom believed that their families' fears were influenced by the media. The data statements that they provided all highlighted the ways in which the families conflated Tanzania with all of Africa and were not able to distinguish between the different regions. Even when the media reported that something had happened in Kenya, the families saw this as something that had happened in Africa as a whole and by extension could happen in Tanzania. For example, even when the media reported about the Ebola virus outbreak that was happening in West Africa, to the families West Africa was no different than East or South Africa. This conflating was present among those who were educated and world travelers; these familial biases superseded their education and experience.

The conflating of Tanzania with Africa as a whole was one of the most interesting things to happen prior to our departure. There were some reported Ebola cases in the United States specifically in Dallas, Texas. However, at no time did anyone ever conflate this case in Dallas, with the entire United States. Even though Africa is bigger than Canada, the United States and

even Europe, this conflating did not happen under other circumstances outside Africa. This misperception of Africa as the *Dark Continent* or *the other* can be aligned with the historical stereotypes and prejudices and how the African continent was portrayed by certain western writers and scholars and is portrayed today by Western media. Historical deficit thinking and biases towards the continent of Africa was evident through the data.

Surprisingly, even participants whose families were from Africa had adopted North American deficit thinking views of the continent. For example, Viki, whose extended family lives in Tanzania and whose mother is from East Africa, noted that her family feared for her safety:

My mom is just so “uh, why are you going to Africa? That place is terrible; they have so many problems back there. They’re going to sell your body parts if you ever go under anesthesia there.” She’s happy that I’m getting to travel, but she’s got that bit of “this airplane ride is long, you sure you wanna go?” She has the worst aspect of Africa, [even though] she has[n’t] been there in 50 years.

Thus, even participants whose families are from the region demonstrated unreasoned biases and fears with respect to Tanzania.

There was, however, one exception to this pattern. Ken, who is from a country on the Gulf of Guinea, was the only participant whose family did not express fear with respect to his participation in the program:

I don’t have that issue. I’m from [a country on the Gulf of Guinea], so... they’re asking “why aren’t you going [home]?” So I have absolutely no family fear issue, especially

when I only have one parent here. My whole family is from [a country on the Gulf of Guinea], so I think I have absolutely the opposite of everyone in this group. So for me it's like "Why are you in Tanzania? If you're going to go to Tanzania, you might as well go [home]." I think it's good for the group because it's going to bring awareness. That's the biggest thing. People will just be amazed because, for me, where I'm from, it's so totally different. It's literally like Toronto to Windsor.

All in all, only one of the participants' parents were supportive of the trip to Tanzania, while the other 15 and almost all of the participants indicated that their families expressed some sort of fear for them traveling to the Tanzania, either due to global terrorist attacks or potential outbreak diseases that they might contract, or due to concerns that the participants would be physically harmed or captured by a terrorist organization.

**Personal fear.** Though the participants themselves did not express a fear for their safety or of diseases, they did have their own concerns with respect to cultural and communication issues. In the pre-departure focus group, thirteen of the sixteen participants worried about communication because they did not speak Kiswahili, the main language used in the region of Tanzania that the group was travelling to. The participants were concerned that not being able to communicate effectively with the students might affect how they would teach and address student needs. Some even went further to say a lack of communication might also affect how they provide services to the children at the Kititimo Centre. For example, Ann stated that

I have a fear of not being able to communicate. I've never had that issue before because most people speak English, even if they are from another country, Their English is still pretty good and they can communicate with us, even with an accent. And knowing

French and Spanish, I've never had an issue communicating with people here, and I'm worried that I'm going to have trouble communicating... if their English is not very good, and obviously my Swahili is not very good at all, so I think my main fear is— not being able to communicate.

Cameron shared similar concerns:

My fear would be not being able to communicate properly, or not being able to have them understand me... standing in front of the class and having 80 students in front of you, and you're trying to get a message across, but nobody understands it because you weren't able to communicate properly.

Another participant, Alisha even went further; she indicated that her biggest fear was not knowing the cultural norms and social queues for the Tanzanian students or people. Not being aware of the cultural norms of Tanzania or not being culturally competent might put her in a situation where she uses body language or *gestures* to communicate with the students and these body languages might cause her great danger or might offend students or people. *For example, Alisha had this to say:*

My fear besides the plane ride... my fear is that ... since I don't know the culture that well I don't want to offend anybody. I don't know what gestures or what I say or do, or what I wear that might offend the people in Tanzania so I don't really want to go there.

One of the participants Monica indicated that her greatest fear is for not coming back to Canada. The lived experience might cause her to stay in Tanzania. Monica's fear was that the



immersion might affect her and how she sees the world. This might influence her to move to Tanzania and cause her to lose her family. Monica expressed the strong desire to serve vulnerable children.

One of the participants indicated concerns that were somewhat different from that reported by other respondents and reflected the complexities of feelings that often exist among ISL participants. She shared the following sentiments:

I had mentioned that I want to gain, and I want to be a teacher of the world, not just in a small little school somewhere in Essex County. But my fear is also that I'm going to want to stay, and that I am going to have to separate from them. I think I might want this more than a lot of other things that I have planned in my life, I've been really attached to the things that I've been doing for the past ten years, my family is extremely important to me, but I think I can do a lot and I'm capable of a lot, and I'm good with listening and understanding, I'm scared that I'm going to want this really bad, and then I'm going to want to leave this area. I'm scared to tell my family that one day. But besides that, I'm scared that I might break while I'm there, I do get emotional and I get tied to people, even if it's not directly affecting me it's like I can feel a sense of someone else's pain, I want to stay professional, I do, but I want to be able to comfort other people, and not have them need to comfort me, I was told that if you cry before they do they'll just help you, they'll help you, and I want to be there for them, and I want to be there for them, this is something where I don't want to be have to be taken care of.

Some of their families were self-reflective enough to acknowledge this bias and in turn encourage their children's exploration. Erin, for example, indicated, that her parents were "very

excited for [her] to have this kind of experience, because they did not do a lot of traveling for themselves”. However, only three of the participants’ parents were supportive of the trip to Tanzania, while 15 of the participants indicated that their families expressed some sort of fear and anxiety about their travel to Tanzania.

## **Theme Two: Adjustment to the Physical Environment and Discomfort**

**Discomfort.** During the immersion, the teacher candidates were engaged in a cultural milieu with which they had no familiarity. This immersion of ISL lived experience seemed to have created a significant series of disorienting events that engaged all five of the teacher candidates’ senses. Thus, everything they saw, smelled, heard, tasted and felt became a new experience while they adjusted to their surroundings. All the participants reported that they felt overwhelming discomfort and confusion where norms were not consistent with their preconceptions of reality. During the lived experience, the immersed teacher candidates lost their culture, language, types of food, and were displaced geographically, and they did not “fit comfortably into [their] existing frames of reference” (Mezirow 1997, p. 7). Within the first twenty-four hours of the immersion, Sue was eager to share her thoughts: “my first night was horrible. I felt trapped inside the mosquito net and I was jet lagged, so I was wide awake and all I kept thinking about was how we have 16 more nights of this.” There were all ranges of issues that triggered discomfort for the participants while participating in the International Service-learning program. Six participants expressed discomfort when they visited the market and saw meat lying out, including Monica, who expressed her discomfort during a focus group:

When we went into the market I felt decently comfortable and accepted by those around me. I did get spoken to quite often but I never felt unsafe. My discomfort lay in the meat

market. I have never seen animals in such a way. I had a tough enough stomach and was able to see past the hanging meats; however, the flies I had a hard time look past. [sic]

Monica's views were consistent with those of Ed, who likewise expressed his discomfort:

Stopping at the markets was an interesting experience. The feel of the market was one thing: it certainly has a unique character due to the smell and the crowds. I'd never seen meat laying out in the open in what could only be insanely unsanitary conditions.

The participants discussed the notion of health and sanitation in the focus groups and their written reflections, specifically when they saw the way the meat was lying, hanging, and dripping blood in market, which seemed dramatic to them. Because the participants had never seen meat that was open to the public and to the elements in that way, including flies, they questioned whether the meat was sanitary. It is important to note that the only time participants ever saw meat in Canada was when it is cooked or in the supermarket covered in plastic. Despite this being a short-term, ISL full immersion, they were severely unfamiliar with the way meat is handled in the area, which caused participants to feel discomfort.

Meat was not the only element of their new environment that caused them discomfort: the washrooms did as well. Toni expressed her thoughts on the state of accommodations:

During my trip to Tanzania, I experienced discomfort while using the washrooms in general. I found that the washrooms in the hotel would either not have warm water running, or the toilet wouldn't flush. I was forced to use cold water when we arrived in Singida and stayed at the hotel for two weeks. If I wasn't at the hotel to use the washroom, I would have to use the washrooms that had a hole available instead of a toilet. I didn't like using them because I was afraid of what would come out of the hole.

Andy explained his discomfort as some of the teacher candidates were not following the direction of the professor:

I felt uncomfortable by association with some of my peers who did not follow the rules about engaging in conversation with locals that tried to sell us goods while we were on the bus. So it did not bother me as I did not engage in conversation with them as we were instructed. I know that some of my colleagues got into a loop where they could not break the conversation and they began to feel uncomfortable.

The first time they visited at the Kititimo Centre, the teacher candidates expressed frustration due to its condition. For example, Andy stated that he was most uncomfortable when he “got to know some of the children on a one-on-one basis, knowing how great they were, and yet how many barriers they had against them”. This, Andy said, “was the most challenging aspect” of the experience. Ted added that when he went to homes of some of the boys “who lived away from the centre, [he] was a bit uncomfortable because they were showing [him] how they lived and it certainly wasn't much. [Andy] wanted to be supportive, but all [he] could do was just keep quiet and thank them for the opportunity to see where they lived.”

Monica wrote in her journal,

I found discomfort when I first met the children at the center. It was really hard for me to admit that. I thought I'd be bubbly and open to everything; however, I found myself tongue tied and feeling anxiety towards speaking with them. Their smiles were overwhelming and all I could do was smile back. I wanted to cry when I first met the oldest boys. I have been told so much of their situation and of their difficulties and I was

now meeting them face to face. I had limited language in Kiswahili [and could not] carry any conversation and I was uncomfortable with the fact that as a team leader I couldn't get past my social awkwardness when meeting new people. These weren't just new people, but individuals that I knew their names and faces but they didn't know me. It was an odd feeling. I wish I could do it over again and tell myself to calm down, that they aren't judging me, that they are happy to meet me. I remember confiding in others that night and I am still in disbelief that I had that wall enabling me to interact with them comfortably on that first day.

Jane was the only participant who did not express discomfort and detailed her coping methods: "To be completely honest, I never felt discomfort at all. I was lucky to be able to switch my mind into 'camping' mode, which I suppose means being able to use a hole in the ground and not having all the luxuries of home." Even though Jane did not experience the same discomfort, this is the only noticeable difference that set her apart from the other participants.

**Becoming aware of their own culture and the culture of others.** On the second day of the trip, the teacher candidates and the two faculty members were invited to attend a parental meeting/welcome ceremony at the O'Brien school for the Maasai. The data highlights how the teacher candidates' experienced immersion impacted how they engaged with this cultural event and the Maasai community. The O'Brien school is one of the schools that the teacher candidates taught in while in Tanzania. Upon arrival, teacher candidates were greeted with a ceremonial dance by the parents of the students they were to teach. The ceremony was designed to introduce the visitors to the host culture. The Maasai parents were engaged in throat singing, which the teacher candidates had never heard or witnessed before. All teacher candidates and the two faculty members joined in and mirrored their moves. The aim of the traditional/special dance is to create comfortable space where the parents and teacher candidates can work together.

All teacher candidates described the emotions they were feeling in the first focus group. Sue was the first to offer her perceptive: "It almost made me cry because of their unconditional welcoming." Ted highlighted that he initially felt apprehension, but noted how welcomed he came to feel: "At first it was strange to be included, but they all made us feel welcome and encouraged us to let everyone break out of their shell and not feel awkward about jumping and dancing in front of them and the group." It was surprising to teacher candidates to see how inviting, compassionate, and caring the Maasai communities were. In the Maasai culture, every visitor is welcomed and loved unconditionally, especially teachers.

Nevertheless, the ISL immersion experience became more challenging to the teacher candidates when the Maasai community provided a traditional cloth to all teacher candidates and asked them to wear it. Firstly, the immersion lived experience gave teacher candidates an opportunity to mingle and communicate with the Maasai families, who assisted the teacher

candidates with the traditional Maasai dress. While eagerly adjusting their guests' new garments, it was clear that many of the teacher candidates were uncomfortable with the touching involved in the process. Within the context of the Maasai culture such touching was a casual occurrence. The process of putting on the Maasai dress created discomfort and confusion as the teacher candidates saw their concept of personal space challenged. Teacher candidates grew up in a culture where everyone tended to stay within their personal space and were disinclined to touch others for fear of encroaching on somebody else's personal space. However, in Maasai culture, no matter where teacher candidates turned, somebody was in their personal space. In the Canadian context, people appreciate and feel most comfortable when others provide a reasonable distance, even when in close contact. In Maasai culture, touching, hand holding and general closeness is common place. After bonding and dancing, everyone went for a long walk to a local river to see how the Maasai people live. This profound immersion challenged the teacher candidates' Canadian perspectives.

***Handholding.*** During this walk, the phenomenon of handholding emerged. Holding hands, within the Maasai culture, is a physical contact accruing spontaneously or deliberately and is a means of communicating a desire to build comradery and trust with another person. However, social norms in Canada dictate that teachers avoid physical contact with students under any circumstances, and most especially with respect to gestures like handholding, which are often associated with romantic intimacy. Teachers in Tanzania, though, are not only permitted to engage in such physical contact, they encourage doing so. At first, each of the teacher candidates struggled to let go of their own social perspectives of handholding. At the beginning, some of the teacher candidates were hesitant to hold hands with the Maasai parents and their children. While observing the body language of the teacher candidates, their

awkwardness was evident, as was their discomfort/confusion. For example, in one of the focus groups, Andy described his experience: “the very first moment that I held hands with someone here was at the Massai School, and when he grabbed my hand, I initially like felt uncomfortable, for like split second, and even so, when I was holding his hand, I was kind of half handing it. I did not want to hold too tight or whatever, but then he... interlocked them so that [they] become even closer.” This is when he said he realized this behavior was socially acceptable. Kim added that it was a “playful and inclusive holding hands,” while Shona noted that "Handholding is another way to connect with someone on top of speaking". Though the handholding proved to be a bit of a cultural shock for the teacher candidates, they each soon recognized its cultural implications and acculturated to this new experience.

ISL lived experiences challenged the teacher candidates' frames of reference and views on gender, age, and handholding. For example, Karmen noted that “The age and gender similarities and differences had no effect on holding hands in Tanzania, and this simple and sweet form to connect with one another was open to all.” Ted likewise indicated that "Holding hands with other males continued at the Centre and has always resonated with” him and made him wish Canadian society “didn't sexualize this expression of friendship.” He concluded that “This was a comforting act in Tanzania and was great to experience.”

Holding hands was such an integral part of the experience in Tanzania because it created a connection between the members and the children that could not be affected by the obtrusive language barrier. Holding hands in Tanzania is a way to communicate friendship, love, and compassion without having to say a word. This simple act created ease within the group and the children and produced the realization that North America is missing something important. Erin offered her thoughts on this cultural difference:



There are things missing from Western culture that existed in the culture in Tanzania. For example, holding hands with others was never awkward or uncomfortable with anyone in Tanzania... The easygoing way in which people held hands was one of the best parts of the culture I got to take in. In North America, holding hands is reserved to couples who are romantically involved, but in Tanzania, it was the innocent and natural act to express care and familiarity.

The simple act of handholding allowed all the teacher candidates to immerse fully and at the same time challenge their habit of mind and frame of reference. The ISL immersion let the teacher candidates experience a vigorous shift in the way they think and communicate with people. All the members experienced holding hands with the children or the Massai community members.

Data shows that during the immersion, the teacher candidates were engaged in a cultural exchange with the Tanzanian community. This immersion of ISL lived experience seemed to have created a significant series of disorienting events that engaged all five of the teacher candidates' senses. Thus, while they adjusted to their surroundings, everything they saw, smelled, heard, tasted, and felt became a new experience.

### **Theme Three: Cross Cultural Teaching in a Limited Resource Environment and Being Immersed in a Different Language and Culture**

**Learning to teach in an ISL program.** The participants spoke extensively in their journals and focus group discussions about how the Tanzania ISL impacts their teaching practice and views about teaching and learning. The key issues raised in this regard are discussed next.

**Classroom size.** Classroom size in Tanzania was a lot different than North America. Classrooms in North America have approximately 25 students at the maximum, while in Tanzania teachers are required to manage over 60-100 students. As one can imagine, the teacher candidates from Ontario found the first two days of teaching challenging and difficult. Although there were more students to manage in each class in Tanzania, these students were disciplined and showed a great sense of respect towards the teacher. As the days went on, the teacher candidates became more comfortable with the number of students in each classroom and learned new skills and lessons that support a larger audience. Ken was impressed with the students and teachers: “The students were well behaved and the teachers displayed great classroom management.” The teacher candidates began to realize that all the things they learned throughout the education program would be put to the test in Tanzania, and their pedagogical philosophies were challenged.

Such a paradigm shift in pedagogical philosophies was perhaps most evident with Mike, who wrote about the way the experience changed his views on education in his journal:

My philosophy of education has changed tremendously since I have traveled to Tanzania. Before the trip, I had an approach to teaching that was focused more on ensuring that the children had an enjoyable time while learning. After travelling to Tanzania, where the education system is completely different from the Canadian education system, it was to

my surprise that everything I had spent a year learning in teachers' college would be tested more here than anywhere I will ever teach in my life. I am entering a classroom of 60-100 children, not all of them have desks, not all of them have pens, and very few of them can speak a word of English. Using several different approaches, I tried to relate to the kinesthetic learners by having them perform movements or physical activities to get a message across. I enabled the visual learners by using drawings to send a message instead of words. This is a great example of multiple intelligences.

Erin states that Teachers for teaching in Tanzania transcends just learning to teach. "My experience in Tanzania was the strongest form of learning; however, unlike many of my placements in Windsor, it encompassed much more than just learning about teaching."

**Teaching in the context of limited resources.** Limited resources were one of the biggest challenges for the student teachers coming from North America. In Tanzania, the teacher candidates were surprised at how bare the walls and the classrooms were. In the primary schools, there was a chalkboard and some benches that only some students got a chance to sit on; many of the students sat on the floor. The teacher candidates found out there were no bookshelves, educational posters, or general school supplies. Although this environment was incredibly different than what the teacher candidates were used to in Ontario, the experience was priceless.

The teacher candidates learned new skills to teach students not just using language, but using their bodies as well through kinesthetic learning. Since most of communication is in body language, this taught the teacher candidates how to be more aware of their own body language and use it through communication, especially concerning the language barrier. The language

barrier was one of the most challenging aspects of teaching in Tanzania, but it became easier once the students gained the skill to communicate in ways other than verbal language.

Mike highlighted how the experience encouraged him to broaden his approach to teaching: “All students learn in different ways, and it isn't until you are put into a situation where every student must learn in a way that you have never taught before that your skills will truly be tested. The most difficult part was by far the language barrier.” Teacher candidates began to use kinesthetic learning in nearly every lesson. This allowed students to become more involved in the lesson and allowed the teacher candidates to communicate using their bodies. The teacher candidates needed to know a few Swahili words to get the lesson going and, in turn, taught the students English words. The best method of translation and learning is when the teacher can point at something and tell the students “Kingareza” (English) and say the word that represents the item they are pointing at and then ask the students, “Kiswahili?” This method allows the teacher to learn Swahili and enhances the learning process for the students as they match the English and Swahili word. Erin said the participants learned a lot “while visiting the schools and having to teach in a new way” and that they “really had to be resourceful [with their] ideas and methods for teaching.”

The teacher candidates enjoyed their teaching experience and felt more involved in the lessons. They learned to connect with the students more instead of relying on materials to support their lessons. In Ontario, classroom resources are immensely important and although resources can facilitate the learning process, they can also take away from teacher and student interaction. Students are required and expected to have general school supplies within Ontario, but most students in Tanzania did not have a paper or pen to use within the lessons and this encouraged the teacher candidates to deliver lessons that students would remember. To do this,

the teachers had to improvise. For example, the teacher candidates sometimes used natural materials such as twigs, rocks, and leaves in the lessons. Ken shared his experience with the lack of resources:

I feel truly honored to have visited Tanzania and witness the appreciation of the students towards the school environment. Not having access to teaching resources is what I missed most. Not having full access to resources such as the overhead projector, the photocopier, electric lights and teaching manipulatives such as geometric solids and pattern blocks encouraged me to rethink some of my teaching strategies.

This experience has shaped teacher candidates, teaching them what to do when they do not have adequate resources. The teacher candidates realized that if they think through their lesson plan well enough, they will realize that the lack of resources does not hinder their lesson at all.

Mike found the ISL program was the most valuable teaching experience he had and suggested that teaching in Tanzania should be mandatory for all teacher candidates. He observed that being immersed in a classroom with upwards to 100 students, in which English is not the primary language, where one is expected to create and execute an engaging lesson with few resources requires teacher candidates to maximize concepts like “diversification, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and multiple intelligences”. Since the Faculty of Education places a significant emphasis on these concepts, Mike argued that the ISL program, or a similar initiative, should be mandatory for all prospective teacher candidates.

Ted’s experience demonstrates that teaching in Tanzania facilitates creativity and instills teacher candidates with the ability to overcome numerous obstacles that may occur in a multicultural classroom. He noted that the ISL program allowed him to teach classes from pre-

school through to grade 12, as well as subjects ranging from physics to English. This challenged him to teach in different ways and employ diversification, differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and multiple intelligences. Each of these was reinforced by the fact that he communicated without being able to use his native language, and therefore had to incorporate “many different modes of instruction to implement lessons and activities,” which compelled him to think creatively.

Both Ted and Cameron noted that the ISL program also gave them the confidence required to address unique needs in the classroom. Ted, for instance, noted that this experience made him confident enough to believe that he could teach in any classroom. Likewise, having overcome difficult language barriers, working with excessively large classes, and being given few resources made Cameron realize that there are few obstacles that cannot be overcome. Cameron stated that “taking on subject matter completely foreign to [him], and successfully teaching and communicating to students, was a level of success and happiness I’m not sure I would have ever experienced in a classroom in Ontario.” Both Ted and Cameron observed how the experiences provided them with confidence they would not have been able to develop without this unique experience, underscoring the ISL program’s importance to the development of teacher candidates.

**Teacher centered modes of teaching.** The authoritarian style of teaching is considered an outdated and traditional way of teaching in North America. In Tanzania, however, the authoritarian style of teaching is commonly practiced throughout the country. It is the norm for students to listen to the teacher’s command and copy off the board without using critical thinking. Teaching in Ontario has progressively transitioned to inquiry based thinking and questions are asked frequently by both the teachers and students. The teacher candidates in

Tanzania found that the students seemed uncomfortable with asking questions and were not used to giving an opinion on a lesson or topic. Ken found the style of teaching in Tanzania frustrating:

Teaching students to become critical thinkers was the most challenging aspect of the teaching experience. Since the teaching style in Tanzania followed the rote approach... I found it difficult to get students to answer questions that did not follow this particular methodology.

This encouraged the teacher candidates to introduce the concept of critical thinking within the schools and incorporate engaging lessons that did not lean on the authoritarian style of teaching. Ken expressed how rewarding it was to witness the students' transformation:

Having the students learn in a way that they have never learned before, through inquiry, was a great challenge and so rewarding. You would ask the students a question and none of them would answer because they are so used to simply copying words from a chalkboard. By engaging these students in a way that they have never been engaged before was the most rewarding experience for me, because that is when you could see a true appreciation for learning from the students. They came out of their shells, were less timid, participated, brought their personality to the classroom, and that is something that is so humbling and rewarding for a teacher to see.

**Discipline and respect for the teacher.** While the teacher candidates disagreed with the authoritarian teaching style, they were adamantly opposed to the discipline employed in Tanzania and deemed it unacceptable or abusive. Although the teacher candidates witnessed some physical discipline (corporal punishment) by the teachers in Tanzania, there was no involvement in that type of discipline by the teacher candidates. Many members were shocked

and surprised at the form of discipline used in Tanzania and found it difficult to understand. At the same time, because the teacher candidates did not use this form of discipline, the students opened up to the teacher candidates and were able to become courageously involved in the lessons. Discipline in Ontario does not require or allow any physical harm and involves detentions, taking privileges away, or contacting the guardian of the student involved.

**Students' Attitudes to Learning.** The students in Tanzania walked miles to go to school and had a passion for learning. They seem to appreciate learning and understood that it would enhance their lives in the future. Most of the students within the classrooms loved to participate and partake in the lessons. Ken said that "Teaching math in Tanzania was one of [his] biggest joys because [he] enjoyed the way the students' faces would light up." The biggest difference with the students in Tanzania compared to the students in Ontario is that they are not used to inquiry based teaching; therefore, they are afraid of answering questions. Nevertheless, the students in Tanzania seemed to appreciate school, while students in Ontario take it for granted. This has a lot to do with the accessibility of school and the effort one has to put in to get a chance to go to school. Karmen felt that all students in Ontario should be aware of Tanzanian students:

I feel that the students in Ontario should know how hard it is for the students in Tanzania to go to school. I want to tell them about their long walks to school, their excitement in the classrooms, and their passion for learning. Students in Ontario don't realize how easy they have it. I believe that teaching the students about the students here in Tanzania will give them a different perspective on education.

Ken expressed similar sentiments:



It was fascinating to see how eager the children were to learn. This differed from my experience in Canada. Students in Canada often have the privilege to go to school every day without the financial worry about if they will be able to afford school and at times this privilege is taken for granted... As an educator, it was difficult for me to leave Tanzania knowing there was so much more work to be done. The people truly crave education. They want to improve their lives, and they know that education is key. I was moved by the way that families conducted their lives with optimism, grace and thankfulness for what they did have. I've never felt so privileged.

Karmen, expresses the value that was felt as a teacher in Tanzania.

The students in Tanzania, have a deep and sincere appreciate for us Canadian teachers, and the value you feel while teaching these children just inspired me to continue to develop my skill as an educator, and open the eyes of those around me to beauty of the city of Singida, the country of Tanzania and the continent of Africa.

The teacher candidates were deeply affected by how much effort the students in Tanzania needed to exert to have the opportunity to get an education. As the teacher, candidates were able to witness the students' joy for learning, and by reflecting on the students' attitude to learning in Ontario, they were able to experience a deeper perspective on the appreciation of education. At times, it is not only the students in Ontario that take education for granted; sometimes the teachers play a role in that type of attitude. For this reason, the Tanzania ISL initiative opened the eyes of the teacher candidates and allows them to share their experiences in their future classrooms.

## **Theme Four: Critical Self-Reflection, Personal and Professional Identity,**

### **Race and Privilege**

Within the context of the current study, there are three essential components to transformative learning theory: centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse. Mezirow (1998) suggests learning how to think autonomously requires being critically reflective of cultural assumption and engaging in an open dialogue to verify “beliefs, intentions, values and feelings” (p. 197). One of the most significant discourses occurred when the teacher candidates expressed some discomfort in recognizing the privilege they enjoyed because of their own skin color. In addition, some of the teacher candidates did not feel comfortable talking about race within the group. At the beginning of the trip, there were some tensions among them, particularly between Caucasian teacher candidates and visible minority teacher candidates. It should be noted that these tensions were largely healthy. The more teacher candidates discussed and reflected about race, the closer the team became: the experience was remarkable.

As outlined in the review of the literature the teacher candidates did experience the practice of *othering*. The teacher candidates and their reaction to the Kiswahili term *Mzungu* which was used to describe them was thought provoking. *Mzungu* basically means foreigner. Because most foreigners in Africa were Europeans it may also be translated as European. Most Europeans were white so the word has in common parlance been used to identify a white person. This word is not intended to be offensive, but nevertheless, it is a term that identifies someone who is *different*. Black skinned people in the group who were not Tanzanians or Africans were also referred to as *Mzungu*. As mentioned before, the team was a diverse group from Canada and there were individuals in the group who have always felt as if they were a minority. Erin recognized and highlighted in her journal the privilege she has because of her skin color, even

though she was in Tanzania.

I was called *Mzungu* by one of the kids at the school. He said "*Mzungu*, you look like [a] boy," which I sort of did with my physical features like my short hair (perhaps most white women he has seen have long hair). I mostly just thought it was funny and a teachable moment that there's a lot of variation in how people present themselves in North America. After a few times of being identified as *Mzungu* or just talked to because I'm white, I recognized that it's a very different thing to be outed as "white" in a black community than for a person of colour to be outed in Canada. Along with white skin comes the privilege of growing up in the society I did. When I was called *Mzungu* there, it was uncomfortable not because I was being called something sort of offensive in that culture, but because I knew the recognition of my skin also meant the recognition of my wealth and privilege over the people who were identifying me.

Erin expressed being uncomfortable with losing the power and the privilege that defined her identity in Canada because being "outed" as a white person, or not being part of the dominant culture placed her in a state of discomfort for the first time of her life. However, even though she felt different, she recognized her skin color still carried a privilege and power over those who were identifying her.

The concept of othering as discussed before is used within a Western context to describe people of racialized and indigenous backgrounds and their otherness to the norms in North America and Europe. It is interesting here to see how teacher candidates make sense of the notion of what is the norm and who can be considered the other in Tanzania. But the concept of othering cannot simply be transplanted to Tanzania because othering and being able to other

people suggests that one must have the power and be able to oppress others to do so. The awareness and discussion around race and culture and differential power relations became a key point of learning and reflection for students.

In one of his interviews, Ted suggests that the term *Mzungu* did seem like a pejorative term, but rather one that invoked a feeling of guilt related to his perceived privilege. He stated that he felt like a pariah when walking through the market place, particularly because he was not used to standing out as a minority in a social setting. However, Ted notes that the term pariah does not quite fit as in this case, he is not looked upon with scorn, but rather viewed as somebody with privilege in terms of economic position. *Mzungu* as Ted points out, means money, and so, he was not offended by the word, but rather felt a sense of guilt for being in a position of relative wealth associated with being a Westerner. Thus, his only issue was that he stood out in the crowd and did not take issue with the term *Mzungu*.

Monica likewise expressed dissatisfaction with being so conspicuous because of her skin colour in social settings:

When I went to the market with [the] nutrition team.... I heard ‘white people’... so many times. It’s really ok they don’t know any other way, but we were... picked out. It’s like putting an apple inside a bag of oranges. It’s like, why is there a red thing in there. We stick out like sore thumbs and even people who are driving pick out our bus in two seconds.

Monica did not like the fact that the Tanzania people identified based on her skin color. There were several instances of ‘*Mzungu* dialogue’ (discussions about the use of the term) during the ISL trip. One of the most noteworthy occurred one morning while we were riding the bus to

teach in the local schools. One of the Caucasian teacher candidates was upset about ‘sticking out’ or being called *Mzungu*. Toni, one of the teacher candidates in the group, who is a minority, was unsympathetic to Monica’s plight pointedly stating that, that was her daily reality and that of numerous other Canadians. She remarked to Monica, “Welcome to my world, I’m twenty-five years old. I was born in Toronto general hospital. After my birth, they stamped the color of my skin on my birth certificate... and I have been identified as Black since.”

Though Toni’s exchange with Monica seemed abrasive and lacked empathy, the journal entry Toni made later that day offered a critical reflection of the event. She highlighted how she had, as a visible minority, been the victim of cultural assumptions and labelling all her life and viewed Monica’s ISL experience as a means for Monica to confront her own identity and understand both her privilege and the plight of visible minorities in Canada. Toni noted that she “experienced discomfort when” Monica “expressed discomfort about being” racialized. Based on her lived experience as a Black person, she felt that “Black people in general are seen as the minority and not the majority in Canada” while white people like Monica enjoy “privilege and power over all races... in North America”. Toni outlined that unlike people of colour, white people in North America never experienced “inappropriate name calling” or had others make assumptions about what they did with their lives based on the colour of their skin. Therefore, they never had to “examine the decisions they” or be punished differently “based on the color of their skin.” In Tanzania, however, Monica and the other Caucasian participants had to confront their identities as those around them were singling them out and labelling them based on their skin colour.

Though Toni expressed having no interest in coddling or easing Monica’s ISL experience, it was not out of vindictiveness; rather, she felt this was a critical, teachable moment

that could instil Monica with empathy upon her arrival back in Canada. Toni wrote that she did not mind Monica's discomfort with being 'outed' as different and a minority because it provided Monica with insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of minorities in Canada. The experience, Toni suggested, also underscored the fact that "not all Black people are the same," and that people of colour in the West do not necessarily share the same values and cultural beliefs as people of colour from other parts of the world. Toni hoped that Monica and the other teacher candidates would be able to bring this view back to Canada and could foster change by challenging stereotypes about Black people. Toni concludes that being "Powerless mean[s] that [one is] outnumbered [and is] seen as the other, and in another continent [white people] are seen as the minority." Toni believed Monica's realization may foster change through empathy.

Cushner (2007) outlines how international experiences, like those Monica and the other teacher candidates faced, challenge ethnocentric views. He suggests that people who live in a culture that is foreign to them for an extended period develop an understanding of what it feels like to be seen as *the other*. Merrifield (2000) also argues that "the interaction of one's identity and contexts of power with" intercultural experiences challenges their homogenous world view and instills them with "multiple perspectives and a process of meaning making that can be generalized to other circumstances" (p. 440). These generalizations will ideally be applied to the classroom.

Cushner (2007) concludes that for teachers, such an experience can be applied to the classroom, where teachers will hopefully abandon their ethnocentric view for one that is more ethnorelative. Thus, though the experience of labelling might be uncomfortable for Monica and the other teacher candidates, it has the potential to transform them into empathetic and understanding teachers who can more effectively relate to and communicate with students who

have different cultural experiences, values, and beliefs. This in turn will allow them to create an inclusive learning environment that is free of cultural judgement.

However, there are some limits to the potential lessons learned through this instance of racialization. The first issue is that although being racialized, the group was not being identified as inferior or having to overcome their racial identity, but rather were treated with deference. Therefore, even though they were a racial minority they still experienced privilege precisely because they were white or more generally because they were *Mzungu* (as in foreigner or visitor). This was recognized by some of the Caucasians in the group as well. For example, Erin in her reflective journal mentioned that in Tanzania, “being white was associated with the privileges of wealth”, and that “the recognition of [her] skin also meant the recognition of [her] wealth and privilege over the people who were identifying” her. Therefore, this form of categorization is not one that teaches them about marginalization, but rather might reinforce racist notions of white supremacy.

These potential concerns were highlighted by the behaviour of Ken, one of the Caucasian males within the group. He proved to be shockingly comfortable with the term ‘*Mzungu*’ and even yelled it out of the window of a bus when he saw another Caucasian male walking on the street. His experience with being a racialized minority in a foreign country did not seem to affect him negatively.

However, there were others in the group who expressed that they felt offended, outcast, and hurt when they were called *Mzungu*, suggesting that the benefits of intercultural experiences outlined by Cushner and Merrifield may become manifest in some of the participants. Multiple perspectives began to emerge as the participants observed cultural and racial constructions. This

allowed some members of the group to experience and understand first-hand how the minorities in North America may feel. As for the Caucasian males and females on the team, they were able to authentically understand and realize that white supremacy and white privilege are a result of social constructs and are not innate or natural. This exchange of the multiple realities between the teacher candidates of the ISL experience was one of the deepest and most powerful experiences. Karman encapsulated some of these sentiments:

It was also interesting to learn about what my race means to me and others; it became very apparent in Tanzania that being white was associated with the privileges of wealth and being from a Western country.....It is also interesting to think about what my friends who have immigrated to Canada as children might have went through in coming [to Canada]. This trip has given me greater perspective on that, which may help me understand my future students who might also immigrate here from developing countries. I can't imagine the culture shock of moving, for example, from a life in Tanzania to one in Canada. There would be good changes but also heartbreaking ones. Since firsthand experience of what it is like to be part of a minority allows for full understanding, empathy begins to develop at a stronger level. [Karman concludes], Personally and professionally, I experienced things that will provide me with understanding and empathy for others in a much more real sense than I might have had before, which are things I find essential to continue to develop as a teacher and as a person.

Karman demonstrates an understanding of the limitations to this experience, but also encapsulates the degree of understanding even a short intercultural experience can create, and her references to empathy and its applications in a professional setting suggest that the program has



the potential to lead to transformation and instill participants with a more entorelative perspective.

In turn, the members within the group who are not Caucasian/European may have felt more integrated in terms of religious aspects or color, but did not feel total integration. Alisha, for instance, explained, that although she is pan-African, she still felt like a minority in Tanzania as she is from the Caribbean and was easily identified and characterized as being a foreigner to the country. Alisha stated that though she had the same skin color as people native to Tanzania, the language barrier, differing cultural backgrounds, and even the way she did her hair identified her as being different or ‘other’. In her journal, Alisha also talked about her racialized economic privilege as a factor:

Riding the bus put me in a different class level, and again made me a minority with those I was travelling with. These were things I didn’t consider prior to leaving for this trip, but was something I quickly picked up on. Being on this bus was no different than being the only Black kid in a classroom. You were identified and easily picked out in a crowd because we didn’t fit the norm of the culture. I think if we were to show up to places on a motorbike, a tuktuk, or a taxi, the stares and the waves would be reduced, because we are mixing ourselves a little bit more with citizens, rather than jumping on our fairly large bus.

Alisha suggested that travelling in this bus with a group of white people (among other things) marked her as different and a *Mzungu* despite her skin colour. So, on the one hand she is Black in a predominantly Black country, but at the same time she is a privileged *Mzungu*. Existing in those two worlds presented some challenges to her identity in that space and context. These

multiple realities of ISL experience provided insights into complexity of identity that causes someone to look or feel “out of place” even if they are the same skin color.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion**

This study aims to provide a better understanding of the experiences of teacher candidates who spent two and a half weeks in ISL program in Tanzania, the factors that shape the transformative experience in an international context and how it can be fostered, developed, or improved in practice. It offers insights into the lessons learned from the voices of teacher candidates and their reflections on their lived experiences in Tanzania. The relational aspect of transformative learning in International Service Learning and the role of critical reflection on beginning teachers' personal and professional development are central to the findings of this study.

### **Transformation Learning Theory**

Mezirow's (1991) theory suggests that the catalyst of transformation occurs during immersion and includes a disorienting dilemma, a self-examination that involves guilt and shame, and a critical self-assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions. However, in the current study, these elements appear not only during immersion, but in pre-immersion as well. Tylor, Cranton and Associates (2012) state that

At the center of transformative learning theory is the notion that we uncritically assimilate our values, beliefs, and assumptions from our family, community, and culture. In other words, we adopt the dominant ideology as the normal and natural way to think and act. When we are able to recognize that these beliefs are oppressive and not in our best interests, we can enter into a transformative learning process (p. 7)

When teacher candidates entered an experience that challenges their previously held presumptions about different communities, cultures, or political beliefs or way of life, the experience then pushes them to think critically and challenge their world view.

### **Pre-Immersion**

Consistent with Mezirow's (1991) theory, the participants in this study faced several disorienting dilemmas that compelled them to examine and assess themselves prior to immersion. However, their process of going through the TLE experience did not follow a linear format and was dependent on teacher candidates' individual personality traits, socioeconomic status, and cultural/familial background. These results are consistent with findings outlined by Kitchenham (2008), who states that there is not a set order to these stages and that people may not experience all stages.

**Families' fears: Safety and prejudice.** Part of the participants' TLE experiences was triggered by their family's responses to learning that they were going to Tanzania. For example, Sue critically examined her family's preconceived assumptions about Africa by analyzing other incidents in Western nations including Canada, while Alisha critically analyzed her family's 'CNN-ized' assumptions. Likewise, Toni and Michele challenged their families' idea of a homogenous Africa. This study highlights the importance of teacher candidates confronting and engaging the reality of their parents' beliefs and biases, specifically, the distorted assumption about the continent of Africa. They were surprised by how their parents' assumptions were engrained deeply in their habit of mind and frame of reference.

Even though many of the teacher candidates blamed the media sometimes for their families' fears and distorted notions about Africa, the majority of the teacher candidates reported

that they felt discomfort when their parents were conflating Tanzania with Africa. The notion of conflating was present among even those who had an education and world-traveled parents. This conflicting notion of the “Dark Continent” or the ‘other’ can be aligned with the historical stereotypes and prejudices and how Western media portrays the African continent. Historical deficit thinking and biases towards the continent of Africa were evident through the data. Some of the teacher candidates were ashamed about some of their family prejudice, attitude, behaviour and beliefs about the Africa.

**Personal fears: Language and culture competency.** In addition, pre-immersion data showed that participants recognized their shared discontent about the situation that required change, namely the difficulties faced by the students in Tanzania. They recognized that the previous alumni negotiated changes through previous involvement and were helping them prepare for the ISL experience. Participants also wanted to acquire new knowledge and skills, explore new roles as teachers with intercultural experience, and plan a course of action for working in an ethnically diverse environment in Canada. In terms of personal fears, teacher candidates expressed fears about lack of cultural competency with respect to language and cultural norms because they had each spent their lives in a homogenous society. Gaining cultural competency required a real-life experience, such as ISL, that would be profound and life changing and that they could not learn in a classroom in Canada. The data clearly demonstrates that their disorienting dilemmas began pre-departure. All the teacher candidates expressed concerns, anxiety, familial fear, and confusion during pre-departure. Even though teacher candidates participated in intensive training with the alumni about the ISL program in Tanzania, and they had accesses to faculty members and extensive research tools, these resources were not enough. Moreover, self-examination and resulting guilt and/or shame proved difficult. For

example, after speaking with friends and relatives about travelling to Tanzania, the teacher candidates discovered that many responses were steeped in prejudice. Some parents, for instance, endorsed stereotypes of Africa/Tanzania by alluding to diseases like Ebola, to terrorism, and to human trafficking. Teacher candidates brought a lot of these fears and concerns with them when they travelled to Tanzania. However, once they were confronted with new information in Tanzania that challenged and even conflicted with those initial perceptions, teacher candidates were forced to reconsider their beliefs, their own ignorance and the factors that influence their own thinking. Most of these initial experiences of being influenced by their parents and society's biases were consistent with the early stages of Mezirow's TLE. It would seem that contrast between their initial biased perceptions and their new experiences and focused reflections moved teacher candidates through the further stages of Mezirow's TLE model.

### **Immersion**

During immersion, teacher candidates faced several disorienting dilemmas. Teacher candidates were completely immersed in a cultural milieu with no sense of familiarity. The ISL experience did not "fit comfortably into (their) existing frames of reference" (Mezirow 1997, p. 7). This is what Taylor (1994) referred to as *cultural disequilibrium*. Teacher candidates also exhibited transformative forms that were consistent with several levels outlined in Kiely (2004). Teacher candidates experience at least one of the following dimensions of reference: including cultural, personal, spiritual, and intellectual levels.

**Cultural.** Culturally, teacher candidates' ISL experience was completely different from their life in Canada, and each new experience gave them insight into a different culture. Overall, the high level of absolute poverty the candidates saw, juxtaposed with feelings of

happiness and joy among the children, was the cultural inverse of their experience in Canada. For instance, coming from a culture where holding hands has romantic implications and where teachers are discouraged from engaging in such behaviour with students, all participants found that holding hands was a new cultural norm that was completely alien to them. They also saw parents and teachers, and students and teacher community members, and teachers and teenagers holding hands, which is not a cultural norm in Canada. Teacher candidates were fully immersed in the culture, whether it was participating in the *Mzungu* welcome ceremony, or holding hands with their students. In regards to the culture of the marketplace, teacher candidates noted the open display of meat at the market, a concept that was unfamiliar to them. Kiely (2004) states that changes in cultural competency occur primarily because one recognizes one's own privileged lifestyle, rather than merely the desire to become culturally competent. This practice results in a questioning of the individualistic, materialistic culture of Western nations and a desire to resist those norms and perform actions that are more community oriented. For example, the candidates adapted to Tanzanian eating habits by conserving water and skipping lunch, and one candidate even noted that toilets in North America waste clean water. In addition, candidates challenged the Western idea that holding hands universally carries a sexual connotation. Holding hands now served a new means of communication between people: a way to communicate beyond speech. Near the end of the trip, candidates completely transformed these habits, ideals, and values by questioning their own frame of reference.

**Personal.** Being in a situation where some of the teacher candidates experienced privilege because of their race and class compelled most of the teacher candidates to confront their own identity by naming it. Kiely (2004), states that “personal transformation entails a process of reevaluating one's identity, lifestyle choices, daily habits, relationships, and career

choice[s]” (p. 13). For example, when white teacher candidates were ‘outed’ as being different or were called *Mzungu* or foreigner, they experienced discomfort because race was mentioned, and whiteness was named. In these instances, race became a source of discomfort as it conflicted with the values and habit of mind and sensibilities of white visiting Canadians who tended not to talk about race. Teacher candidates were often uncomfortable with talking about race while in the confines of the faculty of education in Windsor; however, the ISL experience made the topic unavoidable.

The ISL experience forced white teacher candidates not to only engage in critical self-reflection of their previously held assumptions, which in turn led to cognitive dissonance, but also to negotiate with other teacher candidates who are visible minorities. As Brookfield (2000) and Mezirow (2000) note, the critical reflection of teacher candidates in the ISL experience is integral to transformative learning. One of the shortcomings for white teacher candidates was not being raised as racialized or privileged persons. McIntosh (1990), suggests that among white people, racism is often framed as something that creates a disadvantaged class, but many whites are not taught that it likewise creates privilege for others, particularly white people; thus, white people are not taught to recognize the privilege associated with their whiteness.

For white teacher candidates who were taught about race through the kind of context that McIntosh describes, the ISL experience is valuable as it forces them to engage parts of their psyche that they have never had to before. As a result, several candidates engaged in rational discourse with themselves and others, and the tension between teachers that involved confronting identity resulted in what Merryfield (2001) calls discomfort and confusion. These teacher candidates now recognized and understood identity in an international context. These contexts



may hold a power dynamic that contrasts that of their native country and a teacher candidate who identified as white would no longer have the same currency as someone who has African racial identity in Tanzania. Thus, the ISL experience facilitated the critical reflection that is integral to transformative learning and challenging one's identity.

**Spiritual.** On a spiritual level, the trip gave the candidates real-lived experience with Muslims and their prayer at the local mosque. Most of the participants, male and female, went to Jumma, the congregational Friday prayer, and some even prayed with the congregation. Several participant found the experience at the mosque "peaceful" and "community oriented." This lived experience was transformative to teacher candidates because it created contrasting experiences that they would never have had in Canada. The experience challenges their previously held presumptions about the Muslim community/mosques and culture. Overall, the trip gave them a different perspective, providing them direct contact with an Islamic environment.

**Intellectual.** Teacher candidates questioned the value and the effectiveness of the ISL program. The majority of teacher candidates questioned their prior held assumption of helping vulnerable children. One of the teacher candidates, Sue, explains her intellectual transformation in the following statement:

I felt the work we did on the ground was borderline useless. Why did we have to fix the chicken coop AGAIN? every year they do it. We should have been explaining to the children WHY we were running around catching chickens and putting them into the coop. We should have been explaining to the children WHY we were making certain

meals and choosing the ingredients that we did. Nothing we accomplished this year contributed to the overall goal of self-sustainability for the children.

The teacher candidates also expressed the idea that the ISL program, while beneficial to teacher candidates, did not address the root cause of the poverty experienced by the students, and were reciprocal, which is consistent with the findings offered by Kiely (2004). Sue described how the ISL program creates abandonment for the children of the center and how ISL program was not sustainable. Sue expressed, “I feel as if these children meet us and connect with us for a fleeting moment and then we leave and the kids wait an entire year to meet 15-20 new people to make connections with. Each year when the team leaves, the kids write letters saying: “don't forget us” because of their abandonment issues, and year, a new team comes to help make their lives better, we also contribute to those abandonment issues.

Both the current study and Kiely (2004) question the potential reciprocal benefits of the ISL program, highlighting how difficult it was for the children to be abandoned by their temporary teachers each year. While the teacher candidates report their ISL experience as “life-changing,” the experience is not at the same for the children, whose regular education setting is interrupted by the program. Kiely (2004) found that teachers had pre-conceived ideas that the program would be a ‘means to an end’, only later to discover that the ISL program itself cannot fix the root cause of the poverty. Therefore, future research should focus on how the study impacts the students involved in the ISL program.

Furthermore, the findings of this study break new ground of intellectual transformation. On an intellectual level, teacher candidates learned how to teach, communicate, and create lesson plans using far fewer resources. They also learned ISL experience required a great deal of

interpersonal relationship between the teachers. Their teaching experiences resulted in profound transformations in the intellectual dimension. The teacher candidates learned how to use different teaching techniques and communicate with limited resources, severe language barriers, and larger classroom sizes. The teacher candidates also gained what Wang et al. (2003) refer to as “intellectual empathy,” which is defined as “an ability to understand a racially or ethnically different person’s thinking and/or feeling” (p. 222). Many of teacher candidates felt that they now had the confidence and pedagogical skills to teach in any international context, either abroad or in the diverse classrooms of Canada. Ted mention how

Teaching in the schools has given me confidence beyond [what] I could ever imagine. Before I left, I was very confident in front of the classroom, but now that I have taught in both elementary and secondary schools from pre-school to grade 12 and from English to Physics, I feel I can adapt in any classroom in any country in the world. This may seem like a very lofty claim, but when you cannot communicate in your native tongue and you have to use many different modes of instruction to implement lessons and activities you gain a strong sense of confidence in anything you teach.

Mike explains his intellectual transformation in the following statement:

My philosophy of education has changed tremendously since I have traveled to Tanzania. Before the trip, I had an approach to teaching that was focused more on ensuring that the children had an enjoyable time while learning. After travelling to Tanzania, where the education system is completely different from the Canadian education system, it was to my surprise that everything I had spent a year learning in teachers’ college would be tested more here than anywhere I will ever teach in my life. I am entering a classroom of

60-100 children, not all of them have desks, not all of them have pens, and very few of them can speak a word of English. Using several different approaches, I tried to relate to the kinesthetic learners by having them perform movements or physical activities to get a message across. I enabled the visual learners by using drawings to send a message instead of words. This is a great example of multiple intelligences.

### **Post-Immersion**

Post-immersion teacher candidates' data was consistent with Kiely's (2004) findings regarding the "Chameleon Complex" (p.14). Kiely describes the chameleon complex as the struggle teacher candidates experience to translate their emerging global consciousness into action in their lives. Teacher candidates found that it was difficult to explain the ISL experience in Tanzania to their family, friends, and coworkers. This sentiment was expressed by several students, including Ted: "I could not talk to my friend or family about the trip because they do not understand me." Erin shared a similar experience:

Whenever I try to talk with family members or friends about going to Tanzania, unless they have had experience volunteering in another developing country, they don't really truly understand what this experience might mean to me. They can see videos of refugees and not react with as strong emotion as I do when they experience privileges we take for granted every day. I really believe that the empathy and understanding of others' resilience we learn on this trip changes our outlook on others and make us better people and better teachers.

These feelings make the post-immersion experience somewhat isolating for the teacher candidates. They had just returned from an experience that had a profound impact on their lives and the only people that understood it were the other teacher candidates, this made getting back to everyday life challenging. Perhaps, one measure of assessing the Tanzania ILS program's effectiveness is the teacher candidates' own admission of the change in their own thinking and how that thinking is now different from previous thinking.

## **Chapter 6: Implication and Conclusion**

### **Implications**

The current study demonstrates that ISL experiences in Tanzania have a positive impact on beginning teacher candidates' personal growth and professional development. This finding suggests that the ISL program is a profound, life-changing experience for teacher candidates and the teacher education experiences of University of Windsor's Faculty of Education would improve by providing more ISL programs to their new teacher candidates. This is important for two reasons. Pragmatically, the University of Windsor's Faculty of Education must enhance this element of its curriculum in order to remain competitive with other education programs as the number of international programs in North American education faculties has grown rapidly in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. More importantly, though, with the globalization of education in general terms, teachers at all levels must be able to teach and accommodate ethnically and culturally diverse student bodies. To prepare teachers for this, education faculties need to include ISL programs in order to enhance their teacher candidates' cultural intelligence, personal development, and global-mindedness

Though teacher candidates in this particular program visit Tanzania, it is not a particular location that provides the core value: it is the richness of the ISL program and how the ISL program is designed, planned, and executed. Whether students are going to Tanzania, Chongqing China, Jamaica, or any number of locations that are offered to teacher candidates, what is essential is the overall experiences that teacher candidates go through during the eight-month preparation pre-departure with alumni and their immersion into a culture that is foreign to them. It is the experiences that challenge them and make them uncomfortable, whether they be

acclimating to the school where they teach, the markets visit, or interacting with children while teaching or guiding during after-school activities. It is critical that these experiences disrupt their personal and professional habits of mind and frame of reference. The post-immersion experience is also vital as it can be challenging to reintegrate into their own community and communicate with their family and friends after this life-changing experience. It is the overall ISL experience that forces teacher candidates to engage parts of their psyche that they have never had to before that makes this experience so valuable.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Faculty of Education needs to be more cognizant of teacher candidates' fears and misinformation in general. This can be achieved by talking directly about fears and misinformation with teacher candidates prior to international travel. Moreover, because the teacher candidates' families were particularly anxious due to misinformation, the school should consider running workshops for the families, or at least providing pamphlets to the families to alleviate their concerns.
2. Teacher candidates should be exposed to a local Tanzania community or any other similar community in Windsor before they travel to Tanzania as they can learn a lot by working with and learning from local members of those target communities.
3. Because a lack of resources were a part of teacher candidates' professional growth and transformation while working in Tanzania, it is also imperative that they are given opportunities to teach with limited resources prior to departure. They should attend workshops and hands-on seminars to prepare them to be ready to teach and learn upon their arrival in Tanzania.
4. The faculty needs also to be more cognizant about race and talk more openly and directly about race in all education courses. In particular, teacher candidates need time and space in the

program to talk more openly about and become more cognizant of race before going to Tanzania.

5. In order to encourage critical self-reflection among teacher candidates, the school must establish a network that facilitates open discussion about uncomfortable issues regarding racial and social differences. For example, when students discussed their experiences in front of the faculty members, I noticed that they were far less open than they were when reflecting on their experiences with me as a researcher. When protected by anonymity, they felt free to discuss sensitive topics, which facilitated their critical self-reflection. Without this, they may not have been given an opportunity to explore and process these ideas, and the experience may have, in turn, not allowed them to learn as much.
6. More time needs to be set aside for reflections after students come back from Tanzania and for them to develop program and find ways to make use of their new found perspectives.

The next two recommendations are from my own reflection as participant observer and from my own assessment of the program. I found two key aspects of the Tanzania program that were essential for creating contrasting and life changing experiences for the participants.

### **Alumni Involvement and Support**

Alumni involvement has been central to the creation and maintaining of the Tanzanian ISL program. Alumni involvement played an integral part in preparing the travel team for their voyage to Tanzania, and a group of alumni members worked closely with the team during the eight months leading to their departure in order to prepare them for the challenges they would face in Tanzania. This team of dedicated teachers and professionals led workshops on a semi-regular basis to expose the teacher candidates to many of the differences between Canadian and Tanzanian cultures, both in and outside of the classroom. These workshops in language, cultural



and racial diversity, education, religion, and other cultural elements, exposed the teacher candidates to situations that were bound to arise in Tanzania and that may have caught them off guard, in part because such topics are not often discussed in Canadian education settings.

In all, the assistance of the alumni was crucial to the success of the teacher candidates and their voyage to Tanzania. The support and aid the alumni provided during the eight-month preparation was invaluable to those travelling to Singida. The language lessons, cultural and religious engagement seminars, HIV awareness talks, and lesson plan preparation workshops aided the team and helped them adapt to their new surroundings in Tanzania. Without the cooperation, support, and guidance of the alumni, the team would have had more difficulties communicating and adapting to life in Moshi and Singida.

### **Working at a Centre for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children**

In addition to the support offered by alumni, the program's success relied heavily on the assistance of Kititimo Centre, which allows the teacher candidates to experience what it is like to work with vulnerable children. This was crucial to the success of the teacher candidates lived experience. Their immersion allowed them to develop relationships with vulnerable children by providing relief for these children at a center for orphaned children and conducting fundraising efforts to secure supplies for these children. Teacher candidates were also part of a project team that worked closely with children to ensure the children's basic needs were met. This included securing food, shelter, clothing, water, and education.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to contribute to the existing literature on ISL and perspective transformation. The initiatives were a means of enhancing intellectual growth, personal development, and global-mindedness in teacher candidates (Hett 1991; Kiely, 2004; Walters, Garii, & Walters, 2009). The study examined teacher candidate development using four research questions:

1. What is the nature of teacher candidates' learning experiences as international teachers in Tanzania?
2. How does the ISL experience impact teacher candidates' personal and professional roles as beginning teachers?
3. How did the teacher candidates describe their experience with and participation in the ISL program in Tanzania?
4. What are the implications for such international teacher education programs in Canadian faculties of education?

The phenomenological study found that teacher candidates who participated in the three stages of Pre-Immersion, Immersion and Post-immersion ISL program experienced a shift in their worldview. All teacher candidates confirmed either one of Mezirow's (1997) ten phases of transformation or one of Kiely's (2004) six dimensions of transformative forms. Although teacher candidates confirmed or reported these transformative forms, it is important to note that this does not grantee that transformation learning will occur for all teacher candidates. This is supported by Kiely (2005), who notes that transformative learning does not always affect the participants of ISL program.

### **Pre-departure**

Though the teacher candidates participated in intensive training with the alumni regarding the ISL program's expectation in Tanzania and had access to faculty members and extensive research tools, the teacher candidates still required support with respect to anxiety, familial fear, and confusion. At the outset, the teacher candidates had what Mezirow (2000) frames as a critical assumption, one of his first three phases of transformation. Their assumption was that the experience would help to challenge, expand, and change their worldview. However, they also dealt with two other phases of transformation outlined by Mezirow (2000): disorienting dilemmas, and self-examination accompanied by guilt and/or shame. With respect to disorienting dilemmas, most of the teacher candidates had reasonable concerns about language, cultural barriers, and a general apprehension concerning the unfamiliarity of the situation they were about to enter. The alumni and faculty were helpful with respect to easing this part of the teacher candidates' concerns; however, teacher candidates' self-examination and resulting guilt and/or shame proved more difficult. For example, after speaking with friends and relatives about travelling to Tanzania, the teacher candidates discovered that many responses were steeped in prejudice. Some parents, for instance, endorsed stereotypes of African/Tanzania by alluding to diseases like Ebola, to terrorism, and to human trafficking. This resulted in feelings of guilt and shame among the teacher candidates and many felt uncomfortable sharing these conversations during focus groups and ultimately struggled with these issues on their own. The study, thus, validates Mezirow's arguments and furthers them by demonstrating how the transformative learning he spoke of with relation to adult learning (Mezirow, 2000) can be applied to contexts in which different cultures interact.

## **Immersion**

The immersion period also validated elements of both Merzirow's theory, and concepts put forward by Kiely. With respect to Mezirow, the study demonstrates how one's discontent facilitates empathy for people who have experienced similar transformations, and also illustrates how exploring new roles and relationships and building competence through the roles and relationships experienced during immersion led to transformations (Mezirow, 2000). These transformations led to what Kiely (2004) would frame as intellectual, personal, and cultural growth.

The discontent teacher candidates experienced when being referred to as *Mzungu* led to a personal and cultural transformation. This experience encouraged them to be empathetic toward people who were categorized by similar terms, be they based on nationality, perceived race, ethnicity, religion, or some other cultural category. This not only made them empathetic to others, fulfilling one component of Mezirow's transformation, but also encouraged them to re-evaluate their personal identity and how they are defined in a cultural context, demonstrating transformative learning as it is defined by Kiely.

In addition, the new roles and relationships they adopted also served as transformative tools. One of the core concepts that teacher candidates saw challenged was their preconception of what a teacher is. The role of the teacher, and the teacher/student relationship in the West are finite: teachers teach, and intimate personal relationships between teachers and students are discouraged. In Tanzania, though, teacher candidates were immediately introduced to the casual practice of handholding between teachers and students. This is uncommon in the West, but is integral to teaching in Tanzania, where teachers were expected to not only teach, but to be a mentor, role model, friend, and parental figure. These new roles and relationships transformed how the teacher candidates saw themselves in relation to their students. This not only gave them

a stronger intellectual understanding of how cultures vary, but challenged how they personally defined the role of a teacher. Because of this intellectual, cultural, and personal growth, these new roles and relationships facilitated transformative learning that not only conformed to Mezirow (2000), but Keily (2004) as well.

The relationship between teacher and parents was also different and served to imbue the teacher candidates with confidence. In the West, it is not uncommon for parents to question and challenge teachers with respect to what their children are learning and how they are being evaluated. This causes teachers to question themselves. However, in Tanzania, parents place unconditional trust in their children's teachers and treat them as if they were members of the family. This trust instilled the teacher candidates with the confidence required to teach effectively. Likewise, the challenges the teacher candidates faced with respect to the language barriers in the classroom, and the limited teaching tools compelled them to find a variety of ways to teach. This made them confident in the ability to teach in any classroom, regardless of the limitations or challenges they might face. These transformations led to intellectual and personal growth and challenged the teacher candidates' concept of culture, which again aligns this experience with both the concepts put forward by Mezirow (2000) and Keily (2004).

Teacher candidates were often uncomfortable in the Tanzanian environment. The new environment required them to constantly confront or negotiate their own identity between cultural spaces. The ISL experience forced teacher candidates to not only engage in critical self-reflection of their previously held assumptions, which in turn led to cognitive dissonance (Kiely, 2005), but also to negotiate their identities in relation to Tanzanian identities. As Mezirow (2000) notes, the critical reflection of teacher candidates in the ISL experience is integral to transformative learning.

## **Reintegration**

Upon interviewing teacher candidates after their return, it became clear that their experiences validated the final step of transformative learning as outlined by Mezirow (2000). Mezirow (2000) notes that one's reintegration is dictated by their new perspectives. This was consistent with the teacher candidates' experience. For example, they came back to Canada with dual lenses and consequently found it difficult to speak openly with those who held a more singular world view. They had developed a new habit of mind and frame of reference and felt they could not speak to their family, friends, or co-workers. They could, however, speak freely with others who had engaged in similar experiences. Even common experiences like going to a grocery store were transformed as the teacher candidates would be reminded of disparity of wealth between the two worlds. In this way, the teacher candidates saw a world that was once familiar to them transformed into something alien as it was redefined by the new perspectives they formed during ISL.

Throughout this study, I have learned the mystical perception and reality of a so-called "life changing" experience that happens when teacher candidates travel across the world and attend to the needs of a community that is uniquely different from their own economically, culturally, and pedagogically. What does life-changing mean? A life changing experience modifies and/or alters one's way of thinking and directly affects one's emotions, actions and decisions.

According to Cushner (2007), "In addition to being exposed to new pedagogical approaches and educational philosophies, overseas student teachers gain a significant amount of self-knowledge and develop personal confidence, professional competence, and a greater understanding of both global and domestic diversity" (p. 62). This study has shown the effects of

an international student teaching program on its participants. Through their participation, teacher candidates have challenged stereotypes, and have seen transformations in their personal values, cultural responsiveness, and professional competence. In addition to these factors, one of the teacher candidates, Erin, outlined her personal and provisional growth: “I learned about working with others, resilience, vulnerability and happiness, excess and poverty, race and privilege, reusing and repairing rather than materialism, the importance of family and strong relationships, selflessness, appreciation, and thankfulness.” This echoes Cushner (2007), who states that “Middle-class white teacher educators who are effective at teaching for diversity had their most profound and impactful experiences while living outside their own country” (p. 35), a lesson that applies to all the study’s participants. This ISL lived experience can generate ways to enhance and eradicate the cultural deficit between privileged teachers and marginalized students. A well designed ISL program can start cultural transformation. According Freire (1973), education is supposed to promote “Conscientization,” which involves "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 35). This speaks to the dialogic nature of education and its role as a form of resistance. If our relationships were based on acceptance and love, there would be dialogue. As Friere (1970) argues, to have dialogue, we must have love and respect for one another. The absence of love and respect results in what Friere criticized as a banking system style of education. It translates to society at large. It is the dominant group simply perceiving themselves to be so superior that they create a society where they force-feed their ideas and beliefs to marginalized people. They deposit into the oppressed group, demand that they swallow the information without questioning, and then expect the oppressed to regurgitate the deposit in exchange for pseudo-acceptance in the white public sphere. The unique experiences that ISL

programs offer their participants can reduce the cultural gap that exists between teachers and students. ISL can generate an empathetic and compassionate cultural conversion and may not only lead to the personal transformation of teacher candidates, but many of their future students as well. When teachers understand their students, they address a deficiency that inhibits student outcomes and ultimately help to promote higher levels of student achievement among all students, regardless of their race, culture, religion, or place of origin.



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Appendix A  
Focus Group and Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Pre-travel to Tanzania**

Focus Group

1. In one word describe what you expect from this experience?
2. What are your expectations for this trip?
3. What do you hope to gain from this experience?

Interview

1. What do you know about Tanzania?
2. What are your expectations for this trip?
3. What do you hope to gain from this experience?
4. Do you have previous experience doing this type of work? If so, explain.
5. What did you do to prepare for this experience?
6. What specific skill or contribution do you hope to bring to the group?
7. What kinds of meaningful experiences and activities (educational, social, recreational or other) will you plan for the children in the schools and at the center?

**During the experience in Tanzania**

Focus Group

1. In one word describe your first impressions upon arrival.
2. Did your first impressions differ from your expectations? How?
3. Were your worldviews challenged?
4. What are some positive and negative experiences you have had teaching in the classroom to date?

Interview

1. Given what you knew about Tanzania what were your first impressions upon arrival?
2. Have your expectations changed? Or remained the same?
3. What would you say is the most challenging aspect of teaching here?
4. Have you experienced other challenges outside of the classroom? If so tell me about them.
5. How have your teaching plans gone so far? Have the children been receptive to the experiences and activities you have prepared?
6. How do you plan to maintain interest/excitement/enthusiasm during the rest of your practicum?
7. How have your skills been used since the start of your practicum?

**Post-completion of practicum in Tanzania**

Focus Group

1. In one word describe your experience.
2. What are your feelings now upon having to return to Canada?

3. Were your worldviews challenged?
4. Have your world views/thoughts/opinions changed since your experience in Tanzania? If so, how have they changed? What was the catalyst to this change (i.e., Moments, sights, experiences, etc.)?
5. Did you acquire any strategies or skills that you feel will be relevant to teaching in the Canadian context?
6. Would you recommend this experience to other Teacher Candidates? Why or why not?

#### Interview

1. Have your impressions of Tanzania changed since this experience? If so, how?
2. What were some of the key challenges you faced while in Tanzania, both in and outside of the classroom? Have any of these challenges changed the way you see or do things?
3. How do you think this experience will influence you as a future educator?
4. Did this practicum provide you with any specific strategies that you hope to implement in a classroom here in Canada?
5. Do you feel that you are more self-aware now? Why or why not?
6. How would you describe this experience overall?
7. Was your experience positive/negative? Explain.

Appendix B  
Consent to Participate in Research

**Title of Study: Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates.**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Hassan Adan from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The results of this study will contribute to my Masters of Education Thesis. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel to contact the researcher, Hassan Adan or by email [adan@uwindsor.ca](mailto:adan@uwindsor.ca). Conversely you can also contact the Faculty Supervisor Dr. Andrew Allen a 519-253-3000 Ext. 3829 or by email [allen@uwindsor.ca](mailto:allen@uwindsor.ca)

**PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of teacher candidates in an international community service-learning program in Tanzania, East Africa. I also explored how those teacher candidates made meaning of their experiences. The impact on their personal and professional selves was carefully investigated. The profound and enduring experiences that shaped the students' understanding of their roles as teachers and members of an increasingly diverse society were interrogated by addressing the following research questions:

5. What is the nature of teacher candidates' learning experiences as international teachers in Tanzania?
6. How does the ISL experience impact teacher candidates' personal and professional roles as beginning teachers?
7. How did the teacher candidates describe their experience with and participation in the ISL program in Tanzania?
8. What are the implications for such international teacher education programs in Canadian faculties of education?
- 9.

**PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Allow the researcher to observe you during your experience in Tanzania. The researcher will sit-in while you are teaching classes and participate with you in various activities in Tanzania.
- Participate in three separate focus group sessions. The first focus group will take place approximately one week prior to departure and will require approximately one-hour of your time. The second focus group will take place approximately halfway through the trip, around the end of the first week and will require approximately one hour of your time. The final focus group will take place approximately one week after the group has arrived back in Canada. This session will require up to two hours of your time. The focus groups will require approximately four hours of your time.
- Participate in individual semi-structured interviews. The researcher will not be conducting interviews with all participants. If identified for an interview the researcher will provide you with

at a minimum 24 hours notice. You have the option to decline to be interviewed. If you are asked to participate in an interview session, approximately one hour of your time will be required. The researcher will be conducting interviews at three separate times during the study, following each of the focus group sessions.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

Similar to any seminar course discussion, there is some risk related to confidentiality of responses during the Focus Group Interviews. For this reason, all participants will be asked to respect the confidentiality of all the participants. All participants will be provided the option of speaking to the researcher one-on-one about anything they do not wish to share in the focus group.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study presents an opportunity to reflect on your experiences of teaching across social difference in an international context and with vulnerable children. Interviews conducted with participants will enable you to share your perspectives and experiences about the trip to Tanzania and the Teacher for Tanzania program more broadly. The study aims to highlight the your experiences in learning to teach in a foreign country, the challenges you encounter and the strategies you implement in catering to the learning needs of vulnerable children.

#### COMPENSATION FOR PARTICIPATION

No compensation will be provided for your participation.

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

To uphold confidentiality in both the recording and reporting of data, participants will be given pseudonyms.

All data gathered from participants will be communicated in a way so as not to compromise the anonymity of participants, and places and persons to which/whom they have referred.

All data collected will be stored under lock and key, and will be destroyed after one year. Recordings will be destroyed after transcription and verification.

#### PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

The investigator may withdraw you from this research if circumstances arise which warrant doing so.

You have the right to withdraw from the study up to the point of analysis.

At any time you may request that an interview be discontinued without any consequences to you.



In the event the participant requests to withdraw, the audio recording of the interview will be erased, any transcript stored will be destroyed, all data relating to your participation will be destroyed.

#### FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE PARTICIPANTS

You will receive post-study feedback at a group meeting after the study is completed. The researcher will also e-mail a reader friendly summary of the research results to participants once the study is complete.

Copies of the full thesis report will be made available through the University of Windsor Leddy Library archive.

#### SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA

These data may be used in subsequent studies, in publications and in presentations.

#### RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact: Research Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; Telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3948; e-mail: [ethics@uwindsor.ca](mailto:ethics@uwindsor.ca)

#### SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE

I understand the information provided for the study **Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Appendix C  
Consent for Audio-Taping

**Title of Study: Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates**

This study involves audio tapping of interviews with the researcher. I understand that neither my name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or the transcript resulting from the interviews. After the tapping is complete the tapes will be stored in locked cabinets. The recorded information will be listened to by the researcher who will also be responsible for transcriptions and writing the results of this study. Once the researcher has satisfactorily completed transcribing the information the tapes will be erased.

I am aware and I understand that participating in this research is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time by requesting that the taping be stopped. I understand that confidentiality will be respected and that the audio tape will be for professional use only.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

I understand the information provided for the study **Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates** as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to audio tapping as part of my participating in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

These are the terms under which I will use audio recordings.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

Date

### Vita Auctoris

Hassan Adan lives in Ontario and works for the Government of Ontario. His educational background includes a Bachelor's degree in Criminology and Sociology and a Master's degree in Education with a focus on curriculum development from the University of Windsor. His research interests include issues of social justice, and the welfare of vulnerable people especially children. His thesis focused on Examining the Experiences of an International Service Learning Program in Tanzania for Canadian Teacher Candidates. Hassan has presented his findings at several high-profile conferences in the United States and Canada, including the American Educational Research Association conference in Washington, D. C. and the Canadian Society for the Study of Education in Calgary, Alberta. Hassan is currently working on a documentary and a book.