INVESTIGATING THE TRANSFORMATIVE VALUE OF LEARNING EXPERIENCES ABROAD IN A SUMMER FIELD STUDY PROGRAM

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Abstract

Study abroad is often believed to bring a broad range of benefits to its participants. In the context of Canadian higher education, the results of study abroad participation to student identity formation and transformation have not been sufficiently studied. Using transformative learning theory as its main theoretical lens, this qualitative, narrative study aims at understanding the lived experience of Canadian students who study in Barbados through a summer field study program. Research data are collected through a series of interviews, conducted individually, with a total of four participants before, during and after their study abroad trip. Results show that through the learning experiences abroad, a certain degree of transformation has happened in the contextual, intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of participants' identity. Particularly, they demonstrated enhanced self-understanding by going through the process of "experimental transformation". The findings from this study can guide study abroad organizers and coordinators to improve program design.

***Key words**: Canadian students, study abroad, transformative learning, identity*

Résumé

Selon une croyance populaire, les études à l'étranger apportent un large éventail d'avantages à ses participants. Dans le contexte de l'enseignement supérieur canadien, les résultats de la participation à des études à l'étranger pour la formation et la transformation de l'identité de l'étudiant n'ont pas été suffisamment étudiés. Utilisant principalement la théorie de «transformative learning» comme objectif théorique, cette étude narrative qualitative vise à comprendre l'expérience vécue par les étudiantes canadiennes qui étudient à la Barbade dans le cadre d'un programme expérimental d'été. Les données de recherche sont recueillies au moyen d'une série d'entretiens menés individuellement avec un total de quatre participants avant, pendant et après leur voyage d'étude à l'étranger. Les résultats montrent qu'au travers des expériences d'apprentissage à l'étranger, un certain degré de transformation s'est produit dans les dimensions contextuelle, intrapersonnelle et interpersonnelle de l'identité des participants. En particulier, ils ont démontré une meilleure compréhension de soi en passant par le processus de «experimental transformation». Les résultats de cette étude peuvent guider les organisateurs et les coordinateurs des études à l'étranger pour améliorer le dessein des programmes.

***Mots-clés**: étudiants canadiens, études à l'étranger, transformative learning, identité*

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I begin with an outline of the research background and problem to be studied, followed by introducing the research purpose and the research questions. Then, I discuss definitions of key terms I use in this paper, after which is a brief discussion on the limitations and delimitations of this study. The chapter concludes with the position from which my interest in this research area started.

1.1. Background and research problem

The contemporary world is rapidly changing and increasingly globalized. One aspect of globalization is the international mobility of people. Statistics Canada has shown a steady increase of international student flow across borders over the past few decades (UNESCO, 2015). "International students" is an umbrella term and often with unclear boundaries. In a broad sense, it includes all "those who have crossed borders for the purposes of study" (Global Affairs Canada, 2016). It corresponds to the indication of "global education" or "international education", including both incoming and outgoing student flow, for a variety of lengths (from several weeks to several years) and purposes (degree and non-degree, credit and non-credit etc.) of study.

As a country that often boasts of its diversity and inclusiveness, Canada has put international education high on the agenda. According to Canada's international education strategy, "international education" contains the aspect of "[f]oreign students studying in Canada for any length of time" as well as "Canadians studying outside of Canada" (Government of Canada, 2014).

Nevertheless, in existing educational policy, "coming in" and "going out" are not treated with equal importance. Apparently, the current policy gives more emphasis to the increase of incoming international students as compared to Canadian students studying abroad. According to the Report of the Study Group on Global Education (subsequently referred to as "the Report"), while "Canada has a national strategy to attract international students, it has no national strategy to enable Canadian students to go abroad" (Centre for International Policy Studies, 2017). The strategy of attracting incoming students has been successful as the number

of international students studying in Canada "has surpassed the 2022 goal of 450,000" (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2018). On the other hand, "[d]espite the documented personal and national benefits of education abroad, only 3.1% of full-time Canadian undergraduate university students and 1.1% of full-time college students have a credit or not-for-credit education abroad experience annually." (CBIE, 2016)

The Report argues for international education as a means to meet a number of major challenges Canada faces in the new century (Centre for International Policy Studies, 2017). At the national level, priorities and targets have been set to enable more young Canadians, regardless of their backgrounds, "to gain international experience as part of their education" (p. 32). However, promoters of study abroad often remain uncritical towards the outcomes of these experiences (Twombly, Salisbury, Tumanut, & Klute, 2012). Tiessen and Huish (2014) also point out the need to critically reflect on international experiential learning, of which study abroad is an important part. Is study abroad intrinsically beneficial? To whom do the benefits go? These are questions to be studied especially in the Canadian context, where research literature on study abroad is relatively thin and scarce.

One of the critiques noted by Twombly et al. (2012) is about "the nature of the study abroad experience itself" (p. 95). While most research focuses on academic achievements or career related skilled developed as an outcome of international education, "the limited qualitative research on study abroad as actually experienced suggest that much more of this kind of research is necessary" (Twombly et al., 2012, p. 103) to better understand and improve the learning outcomes of study abroad. This study is indented to contribute to this area.

Potential beneficiaries of this study are future students who participate in similar study abroad programs, researchers who study similar and related topics, educational policy makers at various levels as well as educators who design, organize and coordinate field study programs and trips of similar types. Results of this study can help study abroad participants achieve better learning outcomes. Educators can also consult this research to better design and organize programs that offer students better learning experiences.

1.2. Purpose statement

This qualitative, narrative study aims at understanding the lived experience of Canadian students who study in Barbados through a summer field study program. The lived experience is assessed based on student stories collected during a series of interviews and written communications with the researcher. In this paper, I utilise a framework based on transformative learning theories with a focus on identity to explore the links between student's experiences and their learning outcomes.

1.3. Research questions

Based on the research problem and research purpose discussed above, the research questions are:

1. What has changed in study abroad participants' identity that is linked to the learning experiences they had during their field study in Barbados?

   This research question consists of three sub-questions. I seek to understand changes that participants experienced in relation to the following:

   (1) participants' understanding of the social world,

   (2) their self-conceptions, and

   (3) their relations with other people.

2. What factors contributed to study abroad participants' learning outcomes and identity transformations?

For the purpose of this paper, the term "factors" may refer to (1) social background and cultural heritage; (2) experiences in and out of educational settings, such as a trip abroad, a course at the university or working on a project; (3) personality traits such as being outgoing, social, introverted, studious or independent; (4) personal, academic and professional interests; and (5) the structural design of the study abroad program such as program length, schedule and group size.

1.4. Definition of key terms and abbreviations

Canadian students

Canadian students are defined as citizens of Canada who are registered in a Canadian educational institute. All participants of this study fall into this category.

Disorienting dilemma

A period of learning when learners encounter novel experiences that challenge their previously held assumptions and expectations (frames of reference). According to Mezirow's transformative learning theory (Merriam & Taylor, 2008; Mezirow, 1981, 2000), it is the first stage of a transformative learning process.

"Disorienting," indicates an emotional challenge or discomfort, which promotes the initiation of an inquiry as a means to resolve the conflict (Elkjaer, 2009).

Education abroad

"Education that occurs outside the participant's home country" (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 12), which includes study abroad as well as other learning experiences such as work, volunteering and internships abroad.

Critical reflection

According to Mezirow (1990), even though all reflections involve some degrees of criticality, the type of critical reflection that can trigger perspective transformation involves "reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling and acting" (p. 4).

Frame of reference (FOR)

A "meaning perspective" and "the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 16), view the world, and attribute meanings to our experiences (Mezirow, 2008).

Field study program

"A study abroad program type whose pedagogy revolves around experiential study outside the classroom setting." (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 13)

Identity

A person's understanding about oneself, including "both internally in relation to the individual and externally in relation to the individual's interaction with the surrounding world" (Illeris, 2014a, p. 153). A full discussion on the concept of identity will be presented in chapter 3.

Participants

The terms "participants" or "research participants" in this paper refer to the four students who participated in the study and offered their insights to be analyzed as research data. They are distinguished from participants of the study abroad program, who are referred to as "study abroad participants".

Study abroad

"A subtype of [e]ducation [a]broad that results in progress toward an academic degree at a student's home institution" (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 12).

Study abroad program

"An education abroad enrollment option designed to result in academic credit." (The Forum on Education Abroad, 2011, p. 13) There are many different types of study abroad programs. In this study, participants come from a summer field study program organized by their home university.

Transformative learning (TL)

A learning process "by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindset, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumptions and expectations – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change" (Mezirow, 2008, p. 92). In an updated definition proposed by Illeris (2014b), "[t]he concept of transformative learning comprises all learning that implies change in the identity of the learner" (p. 40). Transformative learning theory will be discussed in more details in chapter 2.

1.5. Delimitations and limitations of the research

This study is qualitative in nature. Its purpose is to investigate the personalized learning experiences of individuals involved in a particular summer study abroad program. The results of this study are not able to, and not intended to be generalized. Even though the term "Canadian students" is used in the research questions, the small sample size of this study cannot represent the entire population of Canadian students.

Methodologically, a narrative research approach has been chosen based on the research questions, the theoretical framework as well as the timeline of the master's program which this thesis fits into (see chapter 3 for more details on the choice of research methodology). Ideally, narrative research requires the collection of "extensive information about the participant", "a clear understanding of the context of the individual's life" and "active collaboration with the participant" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 76). It is more likely to obtain thick and information-rich data when there is good rapport between the researcher and research participants (Spradley, 1979).

However, I faced a few limitations and restrictions during the course of this research, which might have limited the potential of the chosen methodology. First, there was only limited time allowed to complete data collection. The first-round interviews were done shortly before the departure of participants, who were busy preparing for their trip to Barbados. Therefore, the length of most of the interviews were restricted and I conducted them without much pre-established rapport with the participants. I faced a similar issue during the second-round interviews, because participants were busy with their studies and were unable to spare much time for the interviews. However, in the third round of interviews, participants devoted significant time speaking with me, in order to reflect upon their experiences. Data collection was also limited by space and distance between the researcher and participants. In the first round, two interviews were conducted via Skype calls, since the spring semester had ended, and participants were away from campus. All interviews in the second round were conducted over Skype. The use of distant or telephone interviews has the advantage of saving time and cost of traveling, but it may also lead to a few issues (Bryman, 2016; Sapsford & Jupp, 1996). As

Bryman (2016) notes, a telephone interview might "not work well with interviews that are likely to run on for a long time" (p. 488) as in the case of most qualitative interviews. In the first-round interviews, the two interviews conducted over Skype are noticeably shorter as compared to those conducted fact-to-face, though all interviews were guided by the same set of questions. The interviewees' relatively limited access to Internet while in Barbados was another issue, which might have compromised the depth of the second-round interviews.

Finally, the use of reflexive journals in which participants add one entry every week was initially part of the research design, but was given up later because the participants were too busy during their studies in Barbados (see chapter 3 for more details).

1.6. Researcher's perspective

There were a number of reasons that motivated me to choose this research topic. The most personal reason was my passion for travel, which had initiated my quest for pursuing study abroad experiences in many different parts of the world. Among these experiences, worth mentioning were two study abroad programs I participated in while studying at the University of Jyvaskyla, Finland. One was an intensive summer program similar to the case studied in this paper. I stayed at a research institute in India for six weeks with a group of students from Finland and other Nordic countries. The other was a one-week intensive field course in Ethiopia. While working as a teacher, I also had the chance to meet with students who had participated in study abroad programs. It was always interesting to listen to these students describing their experiences, which I could not help but relate to those of my own. Being able to relate to personal experiences offered me a deeper understanding of those I got from the research participants. Meanwhile, I acknowledge the importance of critical reflection and reflexivity that were always required to minimize the bias my own experiences might introduce to this study.

I was aware of my own positionality and stances I took in the process of conducting the research. First, having lived in Canada for only one year at the time this research was conducted, I perceived myself as a newcomer to Canadian society. This social positionality was in contrast to those of the participants in this research, all of who were self-identified as Canadians, as they grew up and had spent most of their life in Canada. In this respect, my position as a newcomer

or “foreigner” might have created distance with the participants. On the other hand, as an outsider who was not assimilated into any dominant culture of Canada, I had the advantage of adopting a more curious, or “intelligent novice,” and unattached view towards various elements of the Canadian cultural and education systems. Similarly, my role as a graduate student from a research faculty unaffiliated with the study abroad program gave me the advantage of neutrality. But, at the same time, I was in a disadvantaged position in recruiting and collecting research data from participants, as compared to one that took an insider’s role such as a program organizer, teacher or coordinator. In terms of gender, I have a male identity while all participants in this study were self-identified as female. The perceived gender difference might have created a barrier and affected the way participants answered the interview questions. In the social context where the research was carried out, I might also have had the disadvantage as a non-white person (more specifically I am Asian or Chinese). Since the participants in this research come from various racial backgrounds, the factor of racial identity might affect the research data collection and interpretation but in a subtle manner.

Language also probably influenced the rapport I had with participants and my positionality. The majority of data collection in this research, including all interviews and most of the email exchanges, were done in English. This choice was made because English was the only language all participants and I were fluent in, though it is neither my first language nor the first language of several participants. One participant, in particular, mentioned to me that she felt more comfortable speaking French, her first language, and she would express herself more clearly and precisely if the interviews were conducted in French. To make sure both questions and answers were mutually understood during the interview process, I rephrased the interview questions and double-checked participants’ answers whenever necessary.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is a review of studies published in recent years that are most relevant to this investigation. The search of literature focuses on studies of university students' learning experiences abroad, and especially those that use transformative learning as a theoretical lens. I have identified a few patterns in the literature related to my research questions, the purpose of which is to demonstrate the significance of my study and how it may contribute to this field of scholarship.

2.1. Overview

There is an emerging body of literature on study abroad experiences using transformative learning theory (TLT) as an analytical tool or framework. The majority of these studies have been conducted in the past ten years, reflecting a shift of overseas education scholarship from larger-scale evaluation of outcome-based results such as language acquisition and academic performance, to more detailed analysis of personalized and subjective experience and processes of learning.

A few gaps can be found in the existing literature. First, there is a lack of empirical studies on Canadian university students' learning experiences abroad. Second, in this area of research, the student population involved in most studies comes from a narrow range of academic fields. Third, based on the reviewed literature, results of transformative learning from study abroad experiences are overwhelmingly positive, confirming the transformative effect of studying overseas. However, when it comes to the aspects of transformation, results vary from case to case. Finally, previous studies showed no clear correlation between certain factors and learning results, but a few common factors that are believed to affect transformation can be identified in the literature.

2.2. Geographical contexts

Geographically, most studies under this topic are limited to the US context, reflecting a general historical trend of scholarship on participation in study abroad (Nguyen, 2015). For understanding the study abroad experience of students from higher educational institutes

outside the US, the results of these studied can provide valuable insights. However, they still need to be contested and complimented by studies conducted in other contexts. My study is a move towards such a less explored territory.

In the Canadian context, research on university students' study abroad experiences is sparse. For instance, using the ERIC Pro-Quest engine, a search with the key words "Canadian student(s)" and "study abroad" found only 14 results. A search for resources within libraries worldwide using the same key words has found 17 peer-reviewed articles and 3 thesis/dissertations.[1] Among these previously conducted studies, a few are relevant to this paper and therefore worth mentioning. First, Barnick (2010)'s study on Canadian students' motivation to study in Australia shows that abroad participants are motivated not primarily by instrumental gains such as employment benefits but rather personal growth and novel life experience. Another study in the British context has revealed similar results (Trower & Lehmann, 2017). Accordingly, more studies on personal experience and growth are needed to gain a better understanding of study abroad motivations and benefits from the students' perspective. This in turn will provide useful guidelines for institutional policy and program design to better fit the expectation of students. Second, though using the theoretical framework of Bourdieu's sociology (instead of transformative learning), the study of Lehmann and Trower (2018) indicates that students' social status might impact the result of transformation. Specifically, study abroad experiences are more likely to fit well into the existing frames of reference for students who are privileged to travel abroad frequently since their childhood, rather than transforming these frames of reference, as in the case of less privileged students. The factors of social privilege and previous travel experience, therefore, need to be taken into consideration in my study.

With regard to the use of TLT to understand Canadian students' study abroad experience, only three published studies have been found (Chaput & O'Sullivan, 2013; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Two of them (Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), both involving Canadian preservice teachers, point out the fact that the Canadian society is

[1] Note: These searches were conducted on November 29th, 2018. Results are subject to change and update.

multicultural, and students come from different backgrounds. In education, factors such as race, gender, class and position in a power relation may play an important role in identity formation and transformation.

The case study by Mwebi and Brigham (2009) provides supporting evidence for the positive effect of study abroad in helping students recognize privileges and international power dynamics. Through participating in a short internship in Africa, Canadian preservice teachers recognized economic privileges of their own and the cultural privileges of their African counterparts, as well as the necessity of bringing in an Afrocentric perspective to challenge the dominating Eurocentric model in curriculum design. The same study has also noted identity change of study abroad participants, but neither the concept/components of identity nor the details of change are explicitly included. Similar but more detailed findings come up in the study by Trilokekar and Kukar (2011). Focusing on the "disorienting dilemma", the initial phase of transformation (Mezirow, 2008), their study has identified four patterns in the disorienting experiences of study abroad, namely the experiences of racial dynamics, "outsider" status, engagement in risk-taking behaviours as well as recognition of privilege and power relations. The findings underline the importance of understanding identity, its link to students' self awareness, background and connection between past and future experience. Identity as the target of transformation and its complexity will be further discussed in the theoretical framework section.

Finally, the study by Chaput and O'Sullivan (2013) is worth mentioning here because among the reviewed literature this is the only study that demonstrates negative results. With a focus on citizenship education, the authors conclude that the sojourn in Cuba (as part of a university course) did not transform students' problematic frame of reference – cultural liberalism. This again leads to the question regarding the definition of transformative learning and the target of transformation, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.3. Fields of study

On a worldwide scale, one noticeable trend in the existing literature over the past ten years is that most data on student experience comes from study abroad programs that are field-specific.

In particular, the study abroad experiences of students from business and management (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Hallows, Porter Wolf, & Marks, 2011; Rexeisen & Al-Khatib, 2009; Wright & Larsen, 2012), nursing (Foronda & Belknap, 2012; Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012) and teacher preparation (Addleman, Nava, Cevallos, Brazo, & Dixon, 2014; Dunn, Dotson, Cross, Kesner, & Lundahl, 2014; Martin & Griffiths, 2014; Mwebi & Brigham, 2009; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Vatalaro, Szente, & Levin, 2015) programs attract a substantial amount of scholarly attention. Two studies in the Canadian context also involve students from social science and humanities (Knight & Madden, 2010; Lehmann & Trower, 2018). On the other hand, the experiences of students from other fields of study are rarely researched. There is practically no research focusing on students of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (SETM) majors. This trend in research, however, does not reflect the lack of participation in overseas education of students from other fields of study. For instance, in the United States, where most research on this topic have been conducted, statistics show that during the academic year of 2015-16, the largest proportion of students studying overseas came from STEM fields (25.2%), followed by business and management (20.9%) and social sciences (17.1%), whereas students from education only made up 3.4% (Institute of International Education, 2017). In Canada, the most recent statistics show that a significantly large proportion of students studying overseas come from engineering (14%) and social sciences (12%), two out of the top five fields of study of all outbound students (CBIE, 2016).

Arguably, in the context of a globalized world and a multicultural society, business professionals, health care professionals and teachers may directly benefit from a global mindset and intercultural competence developed from study abroad. Nevertheless, it does not diminish the value of international experience for students from other fields of study. If higher education is considered beyond its instrumental or marketable values, more emphasis needs to be put on students' holistic development regardless of their fields of study and career perspectives. In this study, most student participants are from an environmental science background and they may have unique insights on their study abroad experience. Hopefully the results of this study can contribute to bridging the current knowledge gap in this area of study.

2.4. Convergence and divergence

Almost all recent empirical studies reviewed in this paper have confirmed the transformative effect of participating in educational activities abroad (Brenner, 2016; Cooper, 2017; Dunn et al., 2014; Gardenier, 2014; Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012; Moinette, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011; Vatalaro et al., 2015; Walters, Charles, & Bingham, 2017). However, divergence appears when it comes to the two major questions. What factors of study abroad experience leads to transformation? To what kind of transformation?

In terms of factors attributed to a transformational experience, results vary from study to study. This is not surprising because all these studies use qualitative methodology, the results of which are not to be reproduced or generalized (Silverman, 2016). Nevertheless, a few common factors have emerged repeatedly in the literature. These factors include time and opportunity for critical reflection (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Cooper, 2017; Mkandawire-Valhmu & Doering, 2012; Moinette, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), engagement in collaborative activities and community experiences (Brenner, 2016; Cooper, 2017; Dunn et al., 2014), immersion in or exposure to local culture and society (Brenner, 2016; Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Dunn et al., 2014) and language preparation (Brenner, 2016; Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Gardenier, 2014). Walters et al. (2017) also point out a number of factors that can influence “the likelihood of transformative learning to occur during a study abroad program”, including “student characteristics and prior experiences”, “destination of travel”, “novelty of experiences”, “service learning” as well as “journal writing […] tailored to facilitate reflective thinking” (p. 117). Also needs to be noticed is that in many previous studies on TL related to study abroad experiences (Brenner, 2016; Cooper, 2017; Gardenier, 2014; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), the start of a transformation is often linked with culture shock, a term generally believed to occur when one is exposed to a cultural space different from back home.

This list needs to be expanded and enriched with more factors and details. For example, journal writing is not the only method used for facilitating reflective thinking. Other methods include talking with friends, family or a roommate and sharing experiences via an online blog (Moinette, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). Language is also not included in this list, but it comes up frequently in empirical studies (Brenner, 2016; Namaste, 2017; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), indicating its importance. Also, there is a whole body of literature on the relation between

study abroad immersion and language learning (Marijuan & Sanz, 2018), while in studies on transformative learning and study abroad experience, the factor of language is mainly considered when English is not widely spoken in the study abroad destination, but has not yet emerged in cases of English-speaking students studying in another English-speaking country. Despite its lack of comprehensiveness, this list provides a good starting point, especially considering that the topic is far from being extensively studied. More factors are to be added and the existing ones need to be contested and elucidated by further studies.

There is far less consistency regarding the results of transformation, or the types and extent of changes as results of learning. This inconsistency partly reflects the subject-specificity of different studies, a trend mentioned in the section above. For instance, change in pedagogy is seen as a result of transformative learning by a study involving preservice teachers (Dunn et al., 2014), while in another study (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014) that focuses on business management and leadership, transformation is closely linked to the development of intercultural competency, a concept discussed mainly in international business literature. Finally, among the existing literature on study abroad experiences using TLT, many studies specifically focus on the student experiences in the first stage of TL, facing a disorienting dilemma (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). On the other hand, the later stages and especially the "reintegration" stage is seldom discussed. The differences in learning results and the limited focus on the process of transformation also lead to questions about the theory of transformative learning itself, the discussion of which continues in the next chapter.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter I have identified a few gaps in the existing literature on study abroad literature, especially studies using transformative learning theory to investigate student experiences. Most studies on transformative learning experiences abroad have been conducted in the US context and with students of a few majors such as business, teaching and health professions. While a number of factors that affects transformation can be identified, there is still inconsistency in the learning results and a lack of coverage on the entire learning process.

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter aims at constructing a framework based on transformative learning theory (TLT). The conceptual framework is used for data analysis corresponding to the research questions that guide this study, which are:

- What changes have occurred in (1) study abroad participants' understanding of the social world, (2) their self-conceptions, and (3) their relations with other people, which are linked to their learning experiences in the field study in Barbados?
- What factors have contributed to these changes?

3.1. Transformative learning theory

Initially, Mezirow and Marsick (1978) introduced the concept of perspective transformation in a nation-wide study on community college women's re-entry programs, based on which TLT was subsequently developed. Even though the original concept came out four decades ago and back then it was meant to indicate "a crucial dimension of adult development" (Mezirow, 1978, p. 108), it laid the foundation of TLT and the core components of the theory have remained largely unchanged over the years. These core components, which are discussed in 3.1.1, include the definition of transformative learning, the stages in the process of transformation and the central role critical thinking plays in the process. Following the questions regarding the target and process of transformation in Mezirow's theory, a revised version of TLT proposed by Illeris is discussed in 3.1.2.

3.1.1. Transformative learning according to Mezirow and his colleagues: definition, process and critical reflection

According to a later and more explicit definition given by Mezirow (2008), TL is "the process by which we transform problematic frames of reference (mindset, habits of mind, meaning perspectives) – sets of assumption and expectation – to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, reflective and emotionally able to change." (p. 92) This definition is the result of modification in response to earlier critiques, which will not be covered due to the length of this paper.

Central to Mezirow's above definition is the concept of "frame of reference", which means a "[structure] of culture and language through which we construe meaning by attributing coherence and significance to our experience", and includes both a broader dimension referred to as a "habit of mind" as well as a narrower but more specific one, a "point of view" (Mezirow, 2008, p. 92). "Frame of reference" is often used as a synonym to "meaning perspective" (Taylor & Cranton, 2012), which means "the structure of psychocultural assumptions within which new experience is assimilated to past experience" (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978). Learning, for Mezirow (1991), is essentially a process of meaning-making. To understand experiences and make them meaningful, a frame of reference (meaning perspective) is applied, against which the significance of a new experience can be confirmed or rejected. These meaning-making structures are mainly formed in childhood and then transformed in adulthood, when a challenging situation demands new way to make meaning of the experience that the old frame of reference is insufficient to provide (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978).

In this paper, I use concepts including "frame of reference", "habit of mind" and "point of view" based on the above definitions from Mezirow and his colleagues.

Based on the ground-breaking study on women's re-entry program that laid the foundation for TL (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978), the entire process of a perspective transformation consists of a number of "elements" (Mezirow, 1981). Later in his life, Mezirow (2008) modified these elements (or phases) and presented them in a ten-phase model:

1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt or shame;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions;
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and action;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan;
8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective. (p. 94)

This later version features a few changes to the original list. These changes indicate the direction in which the theory itself has evolved over the years. The first change is the inclusion of "feelings" (phase 2). This can be seen as a response to the critique of TLT being overly rational and that it excludes emotional factors (Mezirow, 1997; Taylor & Cranton, 2012). The second difference is that in the original version, phase 3 is "a critical assessment of sex role assumptions and a sense of alienation from taken-for-granted social roles and expectations" (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978, p. 15), while the later version has lifted the gendered condition to make the theory more generalizable. This generalization is also related to a question that I will discuss later. Finally, there is more emphasis in the later version on the interpersonal dimension of transformation, or "relationships", corresponding to a question regarding whether TLT is solely confined to the individual level (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

I would like to address two points regarding the process of TL before moving on to discuss the critical role of critical reflection. First, it is worth noticing that Mezirow never claimed that a learning process must include all ten phases listed above to be classified as TL. Transformations may happen in a cumulative manner and are more likely to follow the ten phases sequentially, but it can also be epochal, which means sudden and more dramatic change in a habit of mind (Mezirow, 2008). In the latter case, it is less likely that all ten phases can be identified in the process of transformation. Second, the sequence of the ten phases does not imply a direction or order in which any process of TL must follow. According to Mezirow (1981), "although one does not return to an old perspective once a transformation occurs, this passage involves a difficult negotiation and compromise, stalling, backsliding, self-deception and failure are exceedingly common" (p. 8). However, it is widely agreed among scholars that TL always starts with a disorienting dilemma, and it is also the encounters with disorienting events and learners' responses that attract most research interests in recent years (Cranton, 2016). It is important to understand the above two points because they give the theory of TL enough flexibility to allow alternative learning routes that look differently from the standard ten-phase model to be classified as TL. These alternative routes include "regressive transformation" and "restoring

transformation" proposed by Illeris (2014b), which I will return to later in this chapter, as well as a new model emerged from the research data of this paper, which I term as "experimental transformation" and will discuss in chapter 5.

"Self-examination" (phase 2) and "critical assessment" (phase 3) of the transformation cycle imply the necessity of critical thinking and reflection. "Reflection is the central dynamic involved in problem solving, problem posing, and transformation of meaning schemes and meaning perspectives." (Mezirow, 1991, p. 116) Its importance has also been confirmed by results from reviewed literature in this paper, as noted above.

Apart from the important role of critical reflection, a few common factors that may influence transformative learning have been identified between the study abroad programs (SAPs) reviewed in this paper and the college re-entry program in Mezirow's (1978) original study. They include assistance from program staff (Gardenier, 2014), connection between the program and community (Brenner, 2016) as well as other institutional and structural supports. These factors and their relations to critical reflection need to be further explored by future studies to improve the design of study abroad programs and facilitate transformative learning of students who participate in them. In this study, I acknowledge the importance of critical thinking, and takes into account factors identified in earlier research, especially in discussion and answer to the research question "What factors have contributed to these changes?".

3.1.2. Theoretical challenges and reforms

In recent years, scholars have raised questions concerning both the target and the direction of TL. In other words, there is confusion about "what is transformed" (Kegan, 2009) and the direction of change that can be classified as transformation (Merriam & Taylor, 2008). These two general questions shape the way the research questions are answered in this study, and thus need to be briefly discussed in this section.

At fist glance, it seems that the answer to the first question, "what is transformed", is readily available in the definition of transformative learning. It is the frames of reference or meaning perspectives that undergoes transformation. However, the definitions and explanation of these concepts seem unsatisfactory to critical scholars who keep asking the question of "what exactly

is transformed" (Illeris, 2015, p. 3; Merriam & Bierema, 2013, p. 99). Related to this question is also the question concerning the boundary of transformation, or whether transformation can go beyond the individual level and bring about changes to the community or society. Essentially this comes down to the same question of "what is transformed", the individual learner, a group of learners (such as a class), a community or larger society?

A careful examination of the concepts will reveal that a frame of reference or meaning perspective may include everything from "social norms", "ideologies", "personal traits", "learning styles" (Mezirow, 1994, p. 223) to "concepts, values, feelings, conditioned responses" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5), which are "sociolinguistic", "moral-ethical", "psychological" and "aesthetic" (Mezirow, 2008, p. 93). To put in simple terms, it seems that everything that can be learned can be transformed. Such an "all-inclusive" concept might reflect Mezirow's ambition at a "reconstructive theory" that "seeks to establish a general, abstract, and generalized model that explains the generic structure, dimensions and dynamics of the learning process" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 21). The flipside of the generalizing and inclusive power of a theory is its vagueness and lack of focus, which may cause confusion among scholars and even compromise the practical value of the theory. Illeris (2015) has pointed out such a risk that transformative learning may lose its "significance" and "emancipatory power" when every learning experience that is somehow different from the traditional classroom model becomes transformative.

To address this issue, Illeris (2014b) redefines TL as "all learning that implies change in the identity of the learner" (p. 40). I use this definition in the discussion of results of this paper. The complexity of identity will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

The second question concerns whether TL is always positive, or whether transformation is always for the better. This is an ethical questions raised by Merriam and Bierema (2013), asking whether a good person could turn to a criminal or terrorist through TL. Based on Mezirow's theory, I argue that such concern is unnecessary. According to Mezirow (2008)'s definition presented earlier in this chapter, the pre-transformation frame of reference is "problematic", and it becomes more "inclusive", "open" and "reflective" after the learning process, which indicates a moral direction in TL. In the case of a "perspective transformation to a violent

jihadist" (Merriam & Bierema, 2013, p. 100), the individual certainly becomes more narrow-minded, rigid in thinking and unable to reflect on the problematic doctrine that eventually leads to violence. The questions therefore can easily be debunked because the "jihadist brainwash" is not TL but rather its opposite. How this type of "de-transformative learning" happens can be a research topic in its own, but it is unrelated to the study of this paper and thus will not be further discussed.

A similar question to whether TL has to be positive is whether it has to be "progressive", meaning that the learning process unfolds in the direction indicated in Mezirow's ten-phase model (3.1.1.2). As discussed earlier in this chapter, Mezirow did not restrict TL to strictly following the model and thus opened up possibility for alternative routes. However, how these alternative ways of TL may look like still remains an under-explored question.

Illeris (2014b) has partially addressed this question by introducing the concept of "regressive transformation" (pp. 92–97). In this case, the learner starts a learning process that challenges a frame of reference but instead of going through all stages and complete a standard "progressive transformation", at some point, they find out that the aimed change is not worth pursuing. Instead of adopting a new frame of reference, they simply retreat to the old one. The point of breaking away from the standard ten-phase model usually appears at phase 5, when learners explore possible options with their new roles and ways of action, the results are not satisfying, and the most realistic option seems to be a return to where they have started.

However, this process should not be understood as a simple "regression" in a negative sense, nor would the regression erase changes that have already happened in the earlier phases of the learning process. Even though the learner has not achieved a progressive transformation by dropping the old frame of reference (FOR 1) and adopting a new one (FOR 2), through the learning experience they have critically reflected on their assumptions, weighed them against the expected learning goal and decided not to continue in the progressive route (Figure 3.1 a). In this process, especially through critical reflection, the learner has acquired a new understanding of FOR 1, which becomes FOR 1' as a result of learning (Figure 3.1 b). Giving up one's goal and stopping to look back might be accompanied by negative emotions such as

despair and frustration, but the emotional turbulence can be overcome once learners realize the experience has helped them to achieve a better self-understanding, and once they reconcile with their identity. The learning that leads to restoration of confidence and identity affirmation is called “restoring transformative learning” (Illeris, 2014b, p. 97).

In this study, I contend that TL is a type of learning that involves the leaner’s identity and self-understanding (Illeris, 2016). Therefore, enhanced self-understanding is regarded as a result of TL and will be discussed in chapter 5.

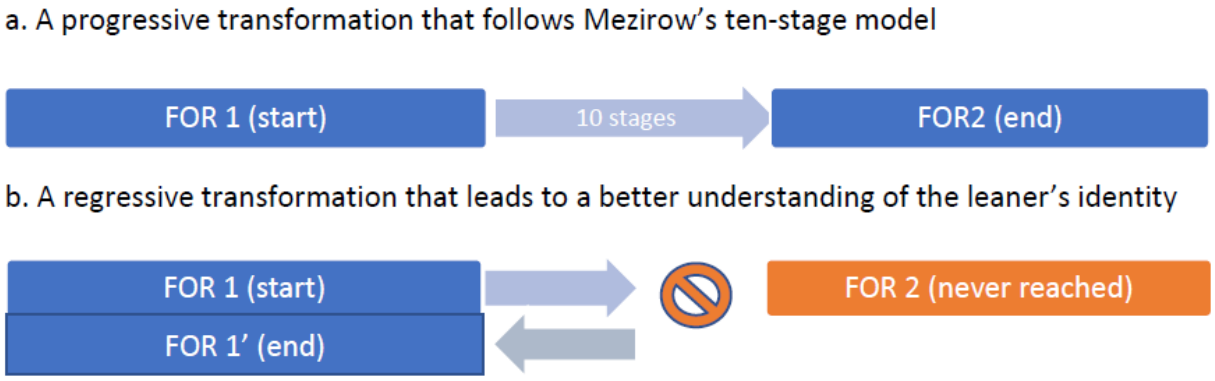

Figure 3.1 Progressive and regressive transformation

3.2. Identity, youth and learning experiences

In the study of this paper, I used a theoretical lens of TLT based on the founding works of Mezirow and his colleagues, but with a shifted focus on identity, as suggested by Illeris (2014b, 2014a).

3.2.1. Youth and identity development

A major reason I chose to bring the focus of the framework to identity is its significance in the personal developmental stage of youth. All four participants in this research, and the group of study abroad participants they were part of, are undergraduate level university students. These students, most of whom are between 18 and 25 and have little or no professional work experience, are very different from the middle-aged women studied in Mezirow’s original work (Mezirow & Marsick, 1978) from which the theory of TL was developed. Applying TL to the

study of the experiences of the much younger group requires a realignment of the theoretical lens to get a better understanding.

The link between the life stage of youth and the significance of identity development was most notably made by Erikson, especially in his book “Identity Youth and Crisis”, first published in 1968. Erikson’s life cycle theory assigns a sequence of stages to the entire life of an individual, and each stage features an “epigenesis”, or a binary the growing individual must struggle with and from which results either a successful or unsuccessful personal development (Erikson & Coles, 2000). Among all stages in a life cycle, the stage of adolescence not only caught most attention among scholars (Arnett, 2015) but also plays a central role in Erikson’s theory of identity development.

According to Erikson (1994), adolescence is a crucial period of identity formation when one is faced with an identity crisis. Success in passing through it leads to the establishment of a mature identity ready for a stable adulthood, while failure in dealing with the crisis causes identity confusion. This identity crisis is not unlike the life crisis that triggers TL in Mezirow’s (1978) theory. The major difference is that in Mezirow’s case, those women who re-enter into formal education have already formed their identity as professionals, wives and mothers, and it is their own choice to acquire a new identity as students for the hope of a better life in a changed and changing social context. In the case of youth in Erikson’s theory, however, identity formation is still on its way, and dealing with the crisis is a necessary step for the transition into adulthood, or the “transformation” from the role of a child to an adult.

There are two points regarding Erikson’s theory on youth and identity crisis that facilitate understanding about the phenomenon under investigation here. First, it needs to be noted that neither the term “youth” or “adolescence” is clearly bounded. For Erikson (1994), adolescence is a period between childhood and adulthood and starts after puberty and lasts until a stable adult role is established and confirmed. As Arnett (2015) has pointed out, most research on adolescent identity development focuses on college and university students, a group that marks the profile of all participants of this research. Second, Erikson’s theory took shape more than fifty years ago, and since then both the concept of youth and identity has been redefined in the

context of a rapidly-changing world. Illeris (2014b) notes that the period of youth in contemporary society has a much longer duration. This indicates that undergraduate students, including participants of this research, may expect a remarkably lengthy period of time during which they explore various possibilities before making the important choices of life such as a life-long occupation or a marriage partner. Furthermore, Erikson's theory of identity is specific not only to its time but also cultural context (Arnett, 2015). How young people in today's society perceive love, work and ideology, the three domains of identity in Erikson's theory, may be very different from the time when the theory came out half a century ago.

3.2.2. The complexity of identity

So far, I have explained their choice of identity as the focus of TL. However, the concept of identity is known for its complexity, as it has various types and each type consists of many components that have different levels of salience and fluidity (Levitan, Mahfouz, & Schussler, 2018; Levitan & Carr-Chellman, 2018). In the book "Transformative Learning and Identity", Illeris (2014b) devotes several chapters to discuss the concept of identity before proposing a structural model that consists of three layers: the core identity, the layer of personality and the layer of preference. Using the model to reconceptualize Meirow's theory, he argues that TL mainly happens in the personality and preference layers. Then he adds the concept of "part identities" which is incorporated in a model of "transverse identity structure" (Ileris, 2014b, pp. 75-76).

If a researcher ventures to look at every component of identity in all these layers plus all part-identities, the amount of work will be overwhelming. Such an attempt is far beyond the scope of a master's thesis, and the loss of focus might even render the results unconvincing. How might a researcher narrow down the focus within the concept of identity to aspects in which changes are clearly identifiable? To answer this question, it is helpful to return to the purpose and nature of each case of research. My intention here is not to acquire a comprehensive understanding of the concept of identity but rather to use it in the setting of educational research to understand learning experiences. In this respect, American Pragmatism has offered valuable insights. Following this tradition, identity is constructed in experiences. According to

Carr-Chellman and Levitan (2016, p. 44), "[t]he fundamental insight that American Pragmatists offered scholars was the experiential nature of knowledge—the understanding that knowledge, and identity (or self-concept) […] is contingent, relational, and in constant process."

One common understanding shared by Mezirow and the pragmatist school is that learning is the process of making meaning out of experiences. A meaning scheme or frame of reference is constructed based on past experiences and becomes challenged by new experiences that cannot be explained by the old frame, leading to perspective transformation (Mezirow, 1991).

What is a learning experience that contributes to identity formation and can also lead to identity transformation? In order to answer this question, I turn to the concept of experience explained by John Dewey, one of the most prominent figures in the American Pragmatism tradition.

3.2.3. Learning experiences and identity

As Elkjaer (2009) has pointed out, Dewey's interpretation of experience falls largely in line with the pragmatist tradition but still has its distinct features. First, experience for Dewey (1916) is "primarily an active-passive affair" (p. 147). It is seen as a transaction between the individual and the world, including an action taken by the individual and a consequence received. This concept of experience is also featured by the "principle of interaction", that a "normal experience is an interplay of" the internal factors and external conditions (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). This idea could be a valuable complementation to TLT because it takes learning beyond cognitive level of meaning making and involves interaction with the world.

The second feature of Dewey's pragmatism is its future-orientation, building connections between the past and the future. This is related to the other key principle in Dewey's concept of experience, the principle of continuity, that "every experience both takes up something from those which have gone before and modifies in some way the quality of those which come after" (Dewey, 1938, p. 35). Following this principle, an educative experience has to be one that leads the learners to, instead of blocking them from, new experiences (Beard, 2018).

Identity is formed and transformed through learning experiences. With a pragmatist read of experience in mind, I choose three aspects of identity in which the results of transformative learning are examined for this research: intrapersonal, interpersonal and contextual (Figure 3.2).

1) Intrapersonal: This aspect of identity concerns one's inner voice and intuition that influences one's choices and preferences. It is shaped by learning from past experiences as well as expectations for the future, but it has become part of the inner-self independent of the social context or interpersonal relations. It is also similar to that which is influenced by the "responsive subconscious" or "the part of the identity that make up the 'core' self – those parts of the self that one 'discovers' from time to time", according to Pragmatic Identity Theory (Carr-Chellman & Levitan, 2016, p. 47). It often influences one's opinions and decisions in a subconscious way (Levitan & Carr-Chellman, 2018). When asked for an explanation, one might answer, "I did that because I was just following my heart." or "This is the way I am."

2) Interpersonal: This is the part of identity formed and maintained in relations and interactions with other people. When opinions and decisions are based on one's interpersonal identity, the person usually appears conscious and rational, but interpersonal identity can also be influenced by the larger and more abstract social context. An individual might justify their choice or behaviour by arguing, "I am in this group" and "I have this relation with this person". Typical examples include answers such as "I am Canadian. Of course I want my team to win the Hockey World Championship." or "I lent her the money without a second thought because she is my sister. We grew up together, so I trust her."

3) Contextual: This identity is also relational. It exists in either a physical space one is aware of, a time period, or a more abstract social or cultural "context" rather than a concrete "relation" with certain people. One's cultural identity usually belongs to this category, though occasionally and similar to interpersonal identity, it can be internalized and become part of the inner-self. More often, opinions and choices influenced by contextual identity can be explained by references to a specific context. Examples may include answers such as "I go skiing because I am in Canada for this winter. It is a popular activity here and the place where I live is close to a ski resort."

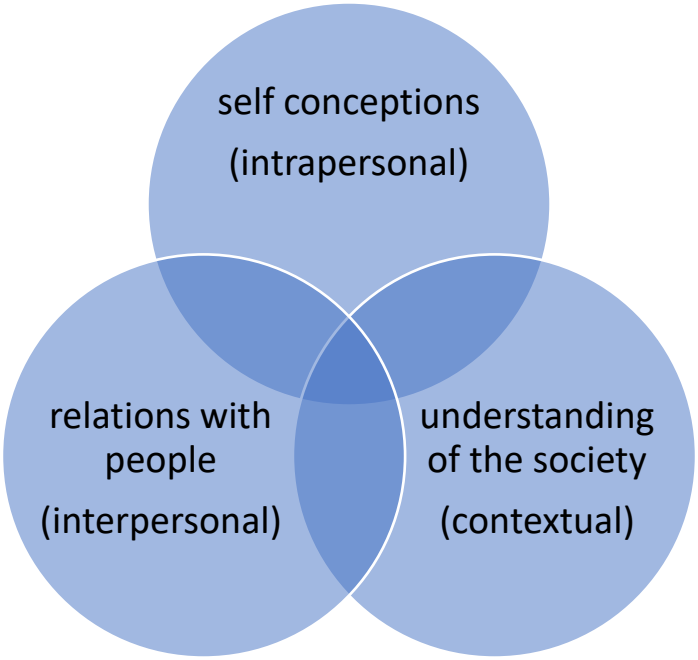

Figure 3.2 The three aspects of identity investigated in this study

3.3. Summary

In this chapter, I have presented a theoretical framework that shaped the focus of this study and directed the interpretation of research data. It began with an outline of TLT developed by Mezirow and his colleagues, a number of theoretical challenges and modifications, then I shifted the focus to identity. Following a brief discussion on the significance of identity in the personal development of youth and the complexity of this concept, the framework finally narrowed down to three essential aspects of identity: contextual, intrapersonal and interpersonal, which correspond to the three aspects outlined in the research question:

What changes have occurred in (1) study abroad participants' understanding of the social world, (2) their self-conceptions, and (3) their relations with other people, which are linked to their learning experiences in the field study in Barbados?

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

4.1. Introduction

The design of this study was guided by the research questions:

- What changes have occurred in (1) study abroad participants' understanding of the social world, (2) their self-conceptions, and (3) their relations with other people, which are linked to their learning experiences in the field study in Barbados?
- What factors have contributed to these changes?

In this study, I selected four individual cases to investigate using the approach of narrative inquiry. I collected qualitative data through a series of interviews and text-based communication, after which narrative analysis was conducted to answer the research questions for each case studied. Finally, I used cross-case analysis to compare the results and identify common themes across individual cases.

4.2. Research design and rationale

As mentioned in chapter 1, the aim of this research is to understand individual experiences. Individualized, case-specific data largely based on opinions, feelings and personal stories is favoured for the research purpose. The results are not to be generalized nor used for prediction. For these reasons, a qualitative methodology was chosen (Reid, Greaves, & Kirby, 2017).

I decided to design a narrative research based primarily on interviews and complimented by written texts. Although there are different types of narrative research, what they share in common is "the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events" (Clandinin, 2007, p. 3). In the research questions, the recording of lived "learning experiences" requires the telling of personal stories. The focus on "changes" demands the comparison of a series of stories collected chronologically over a period of time. According to Creswell (2014), a narrative research design is typically used when the stories from an individual are collected in chronological order, and when the research focuses on individual experiences rather than broader social context or theories. Therefore, it was considered as a methodology suitable for this study.

Besides its value in gathering important information for the researcher, the study of personal narratives also has empowering value for understanding the formation and transformation of the human agent within complex social relations and over time (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, 2008). Creswell (2014) points out the advantage of narrative methodology in "reporting individual experiences" that study participants feel important to them and "discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual" (p. 530). It corresponds well to not only the research questions about understandings of society, self, and social relations, but also the core components of the theoretical framework used in this study, transformative learning and identity. The sense of an embodied self is constructed and reconstructed over time through narratives (Maynes et al., 2008) which are social actions in themselves (Slembrouck, 2015). TLT also implies the change at a personal level that can lead to positive social change (Merriam & Bierema, 2013).

In this research, four participants were willing to share their stories from the time they decided to study abroad during the summer until one month after their return and the beginning of a new semester back in Canada. The series of stories from each participant created a unique case through which the changes from a learning experience could be examined and discussed. It needs to be noted that the term "individual case" or "case of study" used in this paper implies the scope of study and is different from the methodological term "case study" (David, 2009).

4.2.1. Participant selection

In this study, the number of participants were inherently restricted by two factors. First was the scope of a master's thesis and time frame within which it must be completed. Second, the topic of this study had already limited its participants to the group of 18 students selected for the summer field study of the year 2018. However, selection criteria were still designed to make sure the informant of each individual case could provide information that fits the purpose of this study and help in answering the research questions more effectively. According to Merriam (2009, pp. 77–78), the "criteria you establish for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases."

Initially, I expected all participants in this study to meet the two following criteria:

1. Participants have never been to Barbados before the summer program.
2. Previous to the experience of [Barbados summer program], participants have never had any educational experience (e.g. schooling, student exchange, summer/winter camp, work, volunteer program or internship etc.) outside Canada.

Criterion 1 was chosen based on both the purpose of this study and important elements of the theoretical framework. First, due to the use of pragmatic identity theory, it was important to consider what Dewey refers to as "the principle of continuity" of experiences, due to which "something is carried over from the earlier to the later ones" (Dewey, 1998, p. 44). Therefore, previous experience in Barbados might reduce the uniqueness of the summer field study experience that this study aims to investigate. Second, according to Mezirow's TLT, a transformation usually takes place when one encounters a "life crisis" or new situation where taken-for-granted perspectives are challenged (Mezirow, 1978). Even though new experiences that lead to perspective transformation can also occur in a familiar learning space, the aim of this study was to identify changes related to the experience in a new space of learning, and stories from those who had been in Barbados would be less likely to contribute to this aim.

Criterion 2 was devised due to the concern that either international students new to Canada or Canadian students who recently returned from work or study abroad might be undergoing a confounding transformation caused by their new or re-entry experience in Canada prior to the summer field study, and the revealing of which might require a more complex data collection procedure.

The second criterion was later changed due to both practical reasons, the concerns of social justice, and a more careful consideration of the theoretical framework.

Practically, those within the group of summer study who met the two criteria were too few and it would be difficult to get enough participants with a volunteer-based recruitment. However, since transformative learning focuses on the personal level and whether an experience is considered "disorienting" or significant enough to challenge the old frame of reference, is mainly subjective. Therefore, it would suffice that participants had no educational experience they considered significant outside a familiar learning environment back home. Also, "Canada"

is a politically defined territory without the consensus of all who live on it. The arbitrary use of this geographical definition might imply social injustice. This issue can be avoided when participants voluntarily identify themselves as Canadians.

In the actual procedure of data collection, all recruited student participants met the following three standards:

1) Participants have never been to Barbados before the summer program.
2) Participants are self-identified as Canadians.
3) Previous to the summer program, participants have never had any significant educational experience (e.g. schooling, student exchange, work, volunteering or internship etc.) outside Canada and the United States.

4.2.2. Interviews

I conducted semi-structured, one-on-one interviews with each participant either in person or via Skype calls. All participants agreed to be audio-recorded during the interviews. During the interview process, I took notes of key words, important facial expressions and gestures used by the interviewees. Additional notes were added immediately after each interview to capture the information not recorded but might have value to the research (such as small takes before or after the formal interview).

The choice of using interview as the primary means of data collection was based on the research questions, which focus on changes as the result of learning. To answer these questions, information on individual feelings, opinions, attitudes and intentions was needed. This type of information usually cannot be directly observed but can be effectively obtained by asking questions (Reid et al., 2017). At the same time, interviews are a powerful tool in the narrative inquiry, since story-telling "is rooted in interaction" (Slembrouck, 2015, p. 252).

The research questions also guided the form of interviews conducted in this research, which were all semi-structured. On the more structured side, a list of questions was used to guide each interview and to make sure important aspects of the research questions were addressed.

To encourage the telling of stories, however, most questions asked during the interviews were open-ended. Close-ended questions were usually followed to verify an answer from the interviewee. Through the interview process narratives were co-constructed by the participants and me. In the whole interview process, special attention was given to descriptions of a particular event, or a critical incident. As Slembrouck (2015) points out, "in the course of a series of question-answer exchanges, which are characteristic of the research interview as an activity type, the answer to some questions will constitute an account of what happened on a particular occasion" (p. 241). In such cases, the interviewer avoided interruption and asked follow-up questions to gather more information for the construction of a detailed story.

To capture changes over time, I chose to conduct a series of interviews at different time points instead of using a single interview with each participant. Even though the study focuses on the results of TL, TL is more often considered as a process rather than a single event (Mezirow, 1990). Therefore, a series of narratives along the timeline have the advantage over a single narrative collected retrospectively in capturing the changes occurred in the learning process. Multiple stories could provide richer context for these learning results and allow the researcher and participants to co-construct their narratives. The multi-story narrative construction could also help me capture a more detailed picture of personal identity, a target of transformative learning and a focus of this study, which is fluid, contextual and narratively renewed over time (Illeris, 2014a; Maynes et al., 2008).

With each participant, three interviews were conducted during the entire research. The interview before the departure served as a "baseline assessment" concerning participants' knowledge background and their expectations of the exchange experience. The interview during the exchange aimed at gathering information on indicators of change through the learning experiences. The last interview focused on changes as learning results, the duration of changes after return and reflection on the learning experiences.

4.2.3. Collection of text-based data

While interviews are dynamic and interactive, texts are more stable and can be used to crosscheck oral accounts (Silverman, 2016). The use of written texts as complimentary to

interviews has proven valuable in previous studies on student experience abroad (Hutchison & Rea, 2011; Lu, Reddick, Dean, & Pecero, 2015).

In this research, text-based data was collected mainly in the form of email exchange between the participants and me and lasted for less than a month between the first-round and the second-round interviews. Initially the method was designed as reflexive journal that the participant would write and share with me on a weekly basis. After discussions with the research supervisor and consultation with the program director, the method was made more flexible by giving participants more choices. Beside the original opinion of keeping a weekly journal, they could also choose to write brief answers to weekly questions I asked via email and send them in a reply email over the weekend. Alternatively, they could record an audio answering these questions and send it back to me. However, in the first week of their trip, a few participants did not send me answers during the weekend of the same week but did it in the week after. In the second week, more late answers occurred. All participants mentioned the tight schedule or heavy workload of their study. Some even showed signs of unwillingness to continue answering weekly questions. In the third week, no reply was received on time, for the fear of participants quitting the research, I cancelled the method after consulting the research supervisor. As a compensation, the remaining questions for the weekly emails were added to the second-round and the third-round interviews to capture changes occurred during the rest of their stay in Barbados.

4.3. Data collection

Throughout the course of this research, preparation was done over a period of three months before actual data collection began, during which I designed the methods, established contacts with the summer program, applied for and obtained ethics approval and finally recruited research participants. After obtaining written consent from participants, data collection was conducted in three stages and over five months.

4.3.1. Ethics approval and participant recruitment

Before recruiting research participants, I applied for and obtained Research Ethics Board (REB) approval through McGill University, my home institute. The latest edition of Tri-Council Policy

Statement or TCPS 2 guidelines (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, 2014) were referred to in the handling of ethical issues during this research. Information provided by the participants were kept confidential. Pseudonyms were assigned to all the people and academic institutes involved in this research.

After receiving the REB approval to conduct the research, I sent invitations to students who expressed interest in the study during an information session, along with an electronic copy of the ethics consent form. Five people agreed to participate. Upon my request, all of them read through the ethics consent form, after which they signed the form, scanned it and send it back to me via email. Before conducting the first-round interviews, I reviewed with each participant the consent form they had signed and confirmed their consent. Before the second and third round interviews, each participant was reminded verbally of their consent and voluntary participation.

4.3.2. Stages of data collection

Data were collected in three stages. The first stage of data collection was before the students left for Barbados and consisted of one interview with each participant. These interviews were conducted around one week before the departure. Three of them were in the form of meeting in person and two were long-distant calls over Skype without video. These five interviews lasted from 20 minutes to one hour.

The second stage of data collection lasted from early June to the end of August. During this period all participants were in Barbados for the study program. In this stage the total number of participants dropped to four, as one participant of the first stage chose to withdraw due to a robbery incident. Most of the data were collected through Skype interviews in early July (or half-way in the study program). These interviews were relatively short, lasting from 15 to 30 minutes. A small portion of data was collected through emails (3.2.3).

The final stage started when participants returned from the trip (end of August to the beginning of September) and lasted until one month after the beginning of the new semester (early October). All data were collected from interviews in person. The lengths of these interviews

ranged from 50 to 70 minutes. No participant withdrew in this stage and the total number remained four until the end of the study.

Table 4.1 Data collection timeline

Action	Time
REB review	March – May 2018
First round interviews	May 2018
Weekly emails (truncated)	June 2018
Second round interviews	July 2018
Third round interviews	September – October 2018
Member-check and reflection	November 2018

4.4. Data analysis

4.4.1. Methods and procedures

When analyzing the data collected from interviews and supplementary texts, I considered the suggestions from Creswell and Poth (2018) on doing a narrative research, and paid attention to important elements of story-telling such as the chronology of a series of events and turning points of a storyline.

Data analysis began after the first round of interviews were transcribed. For preliminary analysis, I read through the text of each individual participant's interview transcript to get a general outline of they story they told and made margin notes. In the next reading, I assigned codes to particular sessions of the data according to their relevance to the answer of specific research questions.

Four codes were used:

1= student's understanding of the society (learner identity reflected in their view of the social context);

2= student's self-consciousness (personal identity)

3= student's social and interpersonal relation (social identity)

F= experiences/factors that might influence learning results

The coded data were read again when quotes from each participant' answers in an interview were selected and reorganized into an analysis table. Each table represents one interview with one participant. It has three columns corresponding to the three sub-questions of the first research question (code 1, 2 and 3). Factors identified in the previous reading were also reorganized into the three columns based on which aspect a factor is most relevant to. Some factors (such as language) appear in more than one column because they were relevant to more than one aspect.

Meanwhile, I reflected on how the categorized data might contribute to the answer of a research question, and what questions would be asked in the next round to further inquire into the research question. Therefore, data collection and data analysis were not two separate process running parallel to each other but were interconnected. Interview questions of later rounds were designed based on the analysis of data collected in the previous rounds.

After the last round of interviews, reorganized data from each participant were in three tables, which were put chronologically into an Excel sheet, and all data were arranged into a single Excel file (workbook) for the convenience of reference and further analysis.

At the last stage of data analysis, I read through the reorganized data (analysis sheet) of each participant together with the coded interview transcripts to capture a whole story, and identified several themes under each research question. Finally, the results from individual participants were compared and a number of common factors were identified for discussion.

4.4.2. Member checking and result verification

As noted in the first chapter, the study presented in this paper is qualitative in nature, validity does not apply. However, since narrative inquiry focuses on telling a story from the participant's perspective (Saldaña, 2011), it is important to make sure their views are accurately

represented. In the initial design, the reflexive journals were used to triangulate data collected in the interviews. However, since the use of journals were truncated due to practical difficulties, member checking was added to verify the results at the end of the study.

As noted by Richards (2005), member checking "usually proposes that the researcher produces the report, and subsequently has it reviewed by those who [were] studied" (p. 140). In this study, a summary of findings from the data of each participant was sent back to them individually. Participants were informed that if they had any disagreement or any question about my interpretation on their narratives, they should let me know so that further discussion could be arranged to resolve disagreements and clarify uncertainties.

4.5. Summary

In this study, I chose a qualitative, narrative based research design in collecting and analyzing data. I collected narratives from four participants through a series of interviews and written communication. I applied narrative analysis on the raw data and analyzed data through the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3 to answer the research questions. All research participants signed an informed consent form, and REB approve steps were taken to ensure confidentiality.

CHAPTER 5. FINDINGS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Late adolescence and emerging adulthood are a stage of life crucial to identity formation and interesting for the understanding of transformative learning. This study was designed to elucidate and analyze the learning experiences of four Canadian students who participated in a summer study program in Barbados.

The qualitative study presented in this paper was guided by these research questions:

- What changes have occurred in (1) study abroad participants' understanding of the social world, (2) their self-conceptions, and (3) their relations with other people, which are linked to their learning experiences in the field study in Barbados?
- What factors have contributed to these changes?

This chapter begins with an overview of the participant profiles (5.1), followed by a presentation of the findings from individual narratives across the entire length of data collection (5.2). The discussion of results comes in two parts. Section 5.3 focuses on changes occurred in the three aspects of the first research question above. Section 5.4 focuses on factors related to the changes, corresponding to the last research question.

5.1. Participant overview

Research participants were recruited from study abroad participants of the 2018 [summer program] cohort, and studied in Barbados for a period of three months (from June to August 2018). There were a total number of four participants in this study, who completed the entire process of data collection and verification, as mentioned in the previous chapter.

All four participants are female, aged above 18 and below 25, full-time university students in their undergraduate years (U1-U4) at the time of joining the field study program in Barbados, and self-identified as Canadian. Though all of them had traveled abroad (outside Canada and the US), no participant in this study considered any of their previous experience abroad as educationally significant compared to the field study program in Barbados.

Profiles of all four participants, including their pseudonyms, gender, years of study (by the time they participated in the study abroad program) and whether had been abroad before the summer field study program, are listed in table 5.1. Certain information that may accidentally reveal participants' real identities, and thus breach confidentiality, is intentionally omitted or masked in this paper. For the same reason, this table does not include participants' ethnicity, program of study at their home university, family background and origin, province of residence and countries they had visited before studying in Barbados.

Table 5.1 Participant profiles

Pseudonym	Gender	Year of study*	Whether having been abroad previously
Joyce	Female	U2	Yes
Sophie	Female	U1	Yes
Samantha	Female	U3	Yes
Korra	Female	U3	Yes

* U=undergraduate. For example, U1 means the participant was in her first year of undergraduate study by the time she participated in the summer field study program.

5.2. Findings from individual narratives

This section is divided into four parts corresponding to the four individual cases. Findings in each case are presented under four themes. The first theme is "opinion/understanding of the society", representing the contextual domain of identity. The second theme is "personality and self-consciousness", which represents the intrapersonal domain. The third theme, "social relations", matches the interpersonal domain. I employed these three themes to construct each individual narrative and identify changes that occurred in the three corresponding identity domains along the time-line. Finally, the fourth theme contains factors identified from each individual narrative that might contribute to change in the three identity domains.

The findings presented in this section will be further discussed in sections 5.3 and 5.4 to answer the research questions.

5.2.1. Findings from Joyce's narrative

5.2.1.1. Opinion/understanding of the social world

Before departure, Joyce's impression of Barbados was an isolated island lacking access to the world outside. She felt it was "tiny", "like a circle" and without "open access to other countries". This image was challenged when she discovered a relatively big section of imported food and the presence of many Canadian products in a grocery store. She explained it by guessing that there might be a trade agreement between the two countries.

In Joyce's narrative, another predeparture image of Barbados was a closed social network among the people living there. It is related to the previous image of Barbados as a small and isolated island. Comparing it with Canada, which is huge but divided between different groups of people based on languages and political views, she thought in Barbados, "maybe there is division, but it'll be really closer." Rather than being challenged, this impression of Barbados as a closed society was reinforced by the experience of people being friendly to each other even on the street, and the image of an undivided community.

"[…] I feel a lot of people know a lot of people."

"Even though they voted for different people, they weren't divided as a community."

She saw language as a factor that might create difference among people. Before departure she knew that English was widely spoken in Barbados, but she was not sure if they had "a second language", as in the case of French in Canada. In Barbados she noticed that English is a common language for everyone living there. This fact reinforced her image of a "closer" society, which was clearly identifiable from her description of the country after return:

"[In Barbados] everyone speaks English. [...] I felt like they were very united."

"[In Canada] you can clearly see who's [...] French and then who is English [speaker], [but] over there [...] everyone seemed like on the same page."

The discovery that Bajans use English as a common language reinforced the homogenous image of the Barbadian society Joyce had since before the trip. On the other hand, she also mentioned

that the common use of English language opened up the country to the outside world, and Canadians had no difficulty understanding the Bajan English. As a comparison, Joyce said if she went to France, she would have to change the way she speaks French, whereas in Barbados she did not notice Bajans switch their accent or expressions when talking to foreigners.

Before departure, Joyce expected a challenge of having classes with local students, because she was not sure how the modes of education, methods of teaching and learning would be different between Canada and Barbados.

"[In Barbados] we're also going to be having classes with [students from] another university over there, so maybe our levels of education won't be the same, or maybe we'll learn differently."

After the trip she realized that such concerns were rather unnecessary, since both Canadian and Barbadian students could achieve high as long as they put serious effort to their work, despite the differences they might have in their education systems and ways of learning.

5.2.1.2. Personality and self-consciousness

Change in her understanding of learning and learner identity

The study abroad experience offered Joyce a chance to try new ways of learning, such as going on a field trip and working on a project, which were not commonly experienced back home. Reflecting on these new learning experiences and comparing them with those she had back home led to transformation in her learner identity.

Before the trip, Joyce mentioned that a major motivation for her to take on this trip was the chance to work in a project, because it would offer her the practical experience that she could not get from her studies back home:

"I really like the idea of having a project. […] a lot of the classes we have at the university [are] theory based, so I don't have any experience. [The project] will probably make me use whatever [I have learnt in class] or at least, I want to be more hands-on and to actually work."

The quote above shows that experience of working on a project was new to her, and the longing for this new experience made her excited to take on the trip. On the other hand, her eagerness to try a different learning mode also reflected her dissatisfaction towards the traditional, theory-based learning.

The actual experience of working on a project, however, caused some uneasiness and anxiety, which she expressed in both an email during the second week of the trip and the interview one month after arrival. In the email she mentioned that meeting her mentor of the project made her a bit anxious. “We are meeting our mentor on Monday, but we have been told that she is super busy and that we shouldn't lose any of her time. This scares me a little bit.” The initial uneasiness was largely dissolved during the meeting, when she discovered that the mentor was “really nice” and she also tried to understand her mentor’s mentality as a businesswoman. “I understand why she acted [a bit weird] form a business standpoint.” Nevertheless, not everything worked out as planned. First, she wrote me that the project was “going a bit slow” and it took quite a long time to get the device she needed to collect data. Then during the second interview, she expressed her concern that the device might not work well. “I’m just scared that it’s not gonna give us the data we want.” But it was not within her control because her mentor had chosen to buy the relatively cheap device. Finally, in the interview after return, she told me that even the data given by the device were not very accurate, they were sufficient for her project. “[Our project] paper is definitely not […] super scientific, but […] it’s enough to prove to the people that […] there’s pollution happening, and they should do something about it.” Overall, working on the project was a unique learning experience to her. It helped her realize that in reality things are not, and do not always need to be idealized and accurate as the theories she learned in class.

Another learning experience she enjoyed, and felt valuable, was the combination of classroom learning with fieldtrips.

“The learning experience in Barbados was very different. It was very motivating because you got to actually like… to see in real life what you were learning. So like in the morning we have

classes and then in the afternoon we have fieldtrips. […] In that ways I felt I learned better cos I could see it."

After return, she appreciated the learning experience during the summer and wished more experiential elements be added into the courses offered in her university back home.

"I guess with science [subjects] that's how I would do it [to learn more effectively]. Just like… field trips in general… [for example] in a geography class or something, [students should be given a chance to] go outside the classroom."

In the same (post-return) interview, she also reflected on a course she was required to take back home. Before the summer, she took the course where she had to sit in a big class of about 600 students. She felt it was very boring and dropped the course. After the summer she took the same course again, but this time she enjoyed it because she was in a smaller class, so she had more opportunities to interact with people and to do experiments. "[…] they also have labs and I think it's more interesting because I'll be able to do problems with what I'm analyzing." Even though she could not change the way classes were delivered at the university back home, she could choose to take classes that had more experiential elements such as labs and projects.

To sum up, through participating in the summer program, she understood that the best way for her to learn science was to combing classroom-based teaching with experiential elements such as fieldtrips and projects, where she could actively observe theories being applied and test them in real life. Her identity as a learner was also transformed from a passive role of "receiver" to a more active role of "inquirer".

Change in self-consciousness of national identity

Another change that appeared from Joyce's narrative is her understanding of her own national identity. Before the trip, she simply identified herself as Canadian and "not exotic" based on the fact that she grew up in the country, and that her parents and grandparents are also Canadians. Through the learning experiences in Barbados, however, she seemed to be less strongly attached to this simplified concept of national identity, and her self-identity as a Canadian became situationally varied and intersected with other identities. For example, during the trip,

when I asked her about Bajan students' opinions on Canada, she replied that it was more justifiable to talk about their opinion on her group of Canadian students, because she and her fellow [home university] students could not represent Canada. At this point, it seemed that her student identity, and more specific facets of her identity became more salient in her self-concept.

The expression of her cultural and national identity became more nuanced after the trip, when she acknowledged the variations of Canadian identity, and distinguished herself from the "in-your-face kind of Canadian". Even though she still self-identified as Canadian (especially in a different cultural context), she would prefer not to let this identity stand out:

"I'm not like [the] 'in your face' kind of Canadian, so when they're like, 'hey, there's a Canadian!' I'm just like… [shrug, keep silent] If I had to identify myself, I would say Canadian, but if I don't have to, then I won't mention it."

"Growth as a person"

After returning from Barbados, Joyce stated that the trip had given her a sense of personal growth, which she considered more valuable than academic experiences:

"I learned a lot […] academically but I also grew as a person just because I have more experience, like [experience of] working in a group [and] adapting to different situations."

"I think the growth as a person, that's the biggest selling point of this trip."

However, she did not give further explanation on the meaning of "growth as a person". From her answer, the meaning of personal growth is three-folded. It includes the accumulation of experience, being more adept in working within a group and improvement in adaptability. On the other hand, this sense of growth was not associated with changed views of herself, of the society, or any personality change.

The personal growth coming from working with a group falls into the interpersonal aspect and will thus be explained in the next section (social relations). In this section, I focus on the other

two results that she perceived as personal growth, accumulated experience and improved adaptability.

For Joyce, experience was understood as the opposite side of theories. She felt that a big takeaway from the summer program was the "doing" part of learning, which transformed her learner identity. This transformation was mentioned earlier, and I will not repeat the results here. To sum up in one sentence, "learning how to learn" was considered an important part of her personal growth.

Adaptation

As another important part of her personal growth, adaptation first implies changing one's routine and schedule according to the demands in a new environment. In this respect, the trip offered Joyce an opportunity to test her adaptability. From her description of the first week's experience, she made quick adjustment to her schedule and formed a new routine. By doing this Joyce demonstrated strong ability to adapt to new situations. This "good start" also made her confident in facing more challenges.

Second, adaptation concerns reacting to and dealing with unexpected events. The critical incident of on-campus robbery which happened towards the end of the first month helped Joyce become more adaptable. From her description of her response to this incident, she learned to stay calm and control her emotion (but she was not a victim of it), even when people around her became stressed. "I was trying not to stress out too much cos everyone else was already like… really stressed." After the incident she became more careful with her belongings, and she accepted the change in her behaviour with ease. "I [learned that] sometimes you just have to change the way you do [things]. […] I mean you just have to adapt to the situation."

The third aspect of adaptation is related to academic learning. Joyce learned to be more adaptable through working on the project. As mentioned earlier, the work turned out to be slow and not everything was working according to the original plan. However, she learned to compromise, such as accepting the "not super scientific" results based on data from a relatively cheap device. She also learned to shift focus to things she had control over, such as making her own schedule of planning her part of the work. "I was in charge of [shooting] the video, so

some days I would just go and […] film some stuff. But it was really nice, that experience [of] making my schedule." Meanwhile, she shifted focus out of things that were unfamiliar to her and not under her control, such as communicating with the local hospital and the administrator of transportation. "We never got the chance to talk [with them]. [T]hat was a little bit disappointing, but we were able to do our research anyways."

Finally, working and living together with other students facilitated her social adaptation. The learning results concerning social relations are explained in the next section, but learning to adapt to the group dynamics was also accompanied by an increased level of self-understanding. For instance, Joyce realized that similar to other field study participants, she needed personal space and to time spent alone. "[B]eing in a group all the time makes everyone sometimes on their nerves. […] it's nice to be in a group but we all need our private space at some point…" However, compared to some fellow students, she felt she needed more time alone because she was an introvert. "[E]veryone needs alone time, but introverts need a lot more."

5.2.1.3. Social relations

Although Joyce stated that she was shy and introverted, she had positive experiences making friends during the trip. It surprised her that she became friends very quickly with other students in the study abroad group. She maintained contact with many friends she made in Barbados after her return. This made her realize it was possible to have friendships that were both quickly formed and durable.

Before the trip, she saw being in a big group and with only girls as a big challenge. She was worried that she might not be able to get along with other students in the group, and the big group of Canadian students would be a barrier for cultural immersion in the host country. In her reflection after the trip, the group was still identified as the biggest challenge, but it had more to do with the lack of personal space and easily being affected emotionally by people surrounding her.

After the trip, she still maintained the view that the biggest challenge she faced during the trip was "definitely the group dynamic", but she also realized that the challenge mainly came from

her need of personal space, and her tendency to avoid social interaction: “[…] sometimes I tend to […] close myself off”.

On the other hand, the challenge of being in a big group was countered by the formation of smaller groups within the big group, and the “magic moments” of making friends. In the interview after the trip, she described how the big group broke down into smaller but tighter groups of people who had similar personalities and interests: “people just got along better within a smaller group […] because we were more similar… because of the kind of interests, like what we did in our free time”. She used the phrase “little clicks” to describe what brought people closer to each other. She also realized that friendships could be formed more quickly during such a trip, and she described the refreshing experience of making a friend instantly after arrival in Barbados: “one of the persons that I was close to, we just met when we got off the plane [...] then we just started laughing, so we just became friends right away."

The actual experience of being in an all-female group also made her realize that the “girl drama” was not as big an issue as she had expected before the trip: “[T]here’s no big drama, […] just people talk to other people’s backs. Like once you’re in a group, people just start complaining about certain people.”

5.2.1.4. Factors related to the changes

A few personality traits can be identified from Joyce’s narrative that might contribute to her changes through learning abroad. First of all, love for travel and the adventurous spirit motivated her to get out of her comfort zone, try new experiences, reach out to people and make changes to her routine. She remained passionate about traveling throughout the trip. Moreover, throughout the entire study she demonstrated a high level of cultural sensitivity and a non-judgemental attitude, which allowed her to be tolerant to differences and adapt to new situations quickly. On the other hand, characteristics such as “shy” and “introverted” made it difficult for her to make friends with people who were perceived to be from a different culture.

Other experiences related to Joyce’s changes included uncomfortable experiences being catcalled, which resulted in a response of closing herself up and avoiding interaction with local people. On the other hand, it drew her closer to her “own group” of Canadian students since

she was aware it was a shared experience. The incident of on-campus burglary did not affect her impression of Barbados because she thought crimes could happen anywhere. However, being in a group made it easy for stress to build up, when “everyone’s feeding each other’s stress”.

Other factors for change are related to the program arrangement. The experiential elements of the study program contributed to her positive feeling to the experiences abroad. The project also gave her the chance to be in close contact with the local culture. One reason Barbados did not make her feel “at home” was the lack of personal space. The “not very organized” nature of the program made her more adaptive. The timing of the program (during the summer) led to the holiday mood which made her enjoy the study experience but at the same time limited her cultural immersion. Finally, the length of the program was seen as a positive factor before the trip as it would give her more chance to immerse in the local culture, however, after the trip she thought three months was a long time and it was enough for her. She did not think she would want to go back to Barbados later.

5.2.2 Findings from Sophie’s narrative

5.2.2.1. Opinion/understanding of the social world

From “just another Caribbean island” to a destination of “high-end tourism”

Sophie’s pre-departure knowledge and expectations about Barbados were largely based on her previous experience in [another Caribbean country]. However, this frame of reference started to be challenged before the trip. After some research, she was surprised to find out that Barbados was even much smaller than [another Caribbean country].

“I didn’t think it was that small in my head, but when I saw it on the map, I was so surprised and just [wanted] to know how people function on such a tiny, isolated location.”

After this surprising “discovery”, Sophie slightly modified her frame of reference. Her impression of Barbados was still similar to [another Caribbean country] in many ways, such as having a “more relaxed atmosphere” and “the island time” (flexibility in schedule and tolerance to impunctuality), but on top of that, it was also a “tiny and isolated” place.

The frame of reference Sophie had about Barbados continued to change throughout her stay there. She learned many things about the host country through shocks upon arrival, such as driving on the left side of the road, and the presence of luxurious cars near beaches and the airport. These experiences were new to her and quite different from those she had previously [in another Caribbean country]. Sophie did not seem to reflect on the difference in driving rules (a heritage from British colonization), but through observation of the environment around her, especially the city where she stayed, she was able to reach the conclusion that "tourism is very big in Barbados". Due to the importance of tourism and the frequent presence of tourists in the part of the country where she stayed, she no longer felt Barbados was an isolated place.

As her stay in Barbados went on, Sophie began to see more details and her understanding of the country became more nuanced. Barbados was not just a country of tourism but more specifically, "high-end tourism", which created separation among the locals and the visitors. For instance, she noticed that buses ran less frequently to places that were less touristic, and that small local houses were "pushed back behind the villas (of rich tourists)".

The change in her understanding of the country was accompanied by her reflection of her own place in the country. Towards the end of the trip, she began to realize that the economy was tailored for rich tourists, and if she was not able to afford the luxury lifestyle, living in Barbados could not be enjoyable. For this reason, she did not want to return:

"Probably I would need like a ten-year break [before considering going to Barbados again]. [Even after] ten years, I wouldn't be able to go back, because it's such […] high end tourism that […] it just costs too much [to live there in a decent condition]."

However, she did not reflect on questions such as why the tourist industry would take hold in Barbados, how her position was different from a local person who had no choice but to live on the island, and what could be done to change the situation.

A religious people

During her stay in Barbados, Sophie also noticed the importance of religion in local people's life, as she mentioned the popularity of going to attend church meetings among the local people,

and especially the incident when a Bajan student of her age (with who she had no close friendship) coming to her over lunch to talk about her religious belief. Sophie was shocked because in her mind, religious belief was a personal affair and should not be shared openly with outside the family, especially with "complete strangers" from another country. She first suspected that the Bajan student was trying to convert her, then she interpreted it as "some people really take their belief to a higher level".

The new experiences with locals challenged her frame of reference established in previous experiences living in Canada (a secular country) and traveling in another Caribbean country with strong socialist background, where most people, or at least the younger generation, are non-religious.

However, she made no extra effort in getting further out of her comfort zone and trying the local way of life, such as going to attend a mass in the church. Neither did she reflect on the reasons behind people's behavior that did not fit into her expectations. For example, after being shocked by some Bajan students' strong religious belief, she did not try to find out why people were so religious. She could have engaged further with critical reflection by asking questions about the country's history, cultural background, geographical features and try to link them with religion.

5.2.2.2. Personality and self-consciousness

Switching between the tourist identity and the student identity

Before the trip, Sophie's frame of reference regarding her identity as a summer study abroad program participant consisted of a "habit of mind" of spending the summer in the South relaxed and to some extent as a tourist.

This frame was challenged at the very beginning of the program, as the first course was particularly intense. She experienced feelings such as "angry" and "exhausted" for about a month and half, before she eventually "gave up trying to have fun".

After the readjustment of her position and expectations, Sophie had better experiences with the last two courses of the program. She switched back to the role of a student and spent more time on her studies. Meanwhile, she lowered her expectation from the teachers:

"[…] the teachers, when we had them […] in Barbados, they were obviously more relaxed. [Even though they were not in a mood of teaching], I don't blame them, [because if I were in their position], I wouldn't be […] focusing on… trying to teach these kids [either]. [Instead, I would be thinking], 'I'm in Barbados.' and [something] like, 'Ok, I'm going to the beach. Bye!'"

This attitude of understanding, expressed with a noticeable doze of irony, served as a coping strategy that facilitated her adaptation. It shows that even though her original frame of reference formed on the projection of "spending the summer in the South" was challenged by her study experience in Barbados, it still helped her to understand the mentality of the teachers.

However, perhaps due to the negative first impression from the first course, even the last two courses did not meet her expectations. In her post-return reflection, she felt all the courses were "badly organized". This result indicates that her preference of clear course structures and instructions, rather than dealing (or being forced to deal) with unexpected situations, did not change.

On the other hand, Sophie enjoyed the project, even though she faced some challenge working with her group mate on the project. Similar to Joyce, Sophie appreciated the opportunity of learning by doing offered by the project: "it was fun, cos I had to go into the field and kind of explore stuff." The project also offered her a sense of achievement when she saw her effort turning to concrete results:

"I mean not everyone liked their project, but I did. […] I feel like it's gonna make […] not a big impact but like… it can definitely be used not only at the nature reserve where I was working. They can [also] share it."

"Becoming a local" is unrealistic

Before departure, Sophie expected more cultural immersion with the local people than merely staying with a group of Canadian students, even though she was aware of her would-be tourist

position. Some research into the demography of the country made her worry about standing out as a foreigner, because the majority of local population in Barbados was of African descent. She compared this lack of diversity with a city in her home province where her parents used to live, where most local residents were white.

The pre-departure fear of standing out in a crowd was confirmed by her experiences in Barbados. For instance, she described an incident of passing through a local market and was bothered by people selling her things she did not want to buy.

"As soon as you look at something on their stands, they go like, 'Do you wanna buy it?' […] I guess if I looked more like a local, maybe I wouldn't be [called on]."

Similar to Joyce, Sophie also mentioned the experience of being catcalled while walking on the streets in Barbados. She did not feel threatened but still wished to be left alone. Relating to her previous experiences, she said, "[Back in Canada] I had a couple of times (being catcalled) too, [but in Barbados] I guess it's probably heavier because I look more like a tourist […] They will clearly spot me."

These incidents usually did not make her feel threatened and they did not change her impression of Bajans as "friendly people". However, she felt "creeped out" when she realized that the locals could tell her identity as "Canadian", a [home university] student and point out the place where she stayed, and that it was useless even if she tried to lie or hide it.

Self-understanding: a sense of home and belonging

After the trip, Sophie began to appreciate certain things that she used to take for granted back home, such as silence, time to be alone, and space. Through the change of environment, she realized the essential role these things played in shaping her identity. For instance, she described that upon return, her parents went to the airport to pick her up and drive her home. While sitting in her father's car, she suddenly felt that she really enjoyed the silence, which she had missed in Barbados.

"I enjoy silence. I like it a lot more. […] I realized that I really missed the silence of […] just being in your own sort of zone."

The trip also helped her understand the amount of social interactions she wished to have. For example, she realized that more (interaction) is not always better. Before departure, she expected to interact more with the local people and to immerse more in the local culture, as she had had positive experience living with a local family in [a South American country]. However, she noted after return that even the amount of time spent with other participants of the summer program was too much for her, and she needed time alone.

In the interview before the trip, Sophie stated that a main motivation for her to participate in the summer program was the longing to leave home, since she had always lived with her parents. After the trip, however, she realized that rather than going somewhere far away, it would be better to do an internship in her home province because of the importance of staying in touch with her family and friends. In this sense, the trip helped her acquire a better understanding of her cultural identity and sense of home. The experience in the summer program also made her more careful in making choices.

"[In the future] if there's like a really good opportunity […] somewhere super far away that I actually wanna go, I wouldn't stop myself from going, but I would […] think more before saying yes. I would [ask myself], 'Do I *really* want to do it?' 'Is it going to help me later on?'"

5.2.2.3. Social relations

In terms of social relations, one dilemma Sophie faced was staying in close touch with her family while becoming more independent. She mentioned before the trip that a major motivation for taking this trip was the desire to live away from her family for a while, since her home is close to the university and moving out was not a practical option during the school year. On the other hand, she still needed to stay in touch with her parents, as she expressed her anxiety that she was not sure if she could use her phone in Barbados to call home. While in Barbados she maintained regular contact with her parents, talking to them several times in a week. After spending three months abroad, she felt happy to be back home. Finally, the dilemma was resolved by her realization that at least in the current stage of her life (as a university student), family connections were more important to her than the quest for independence. In the future even if she was offered a chance to go abroad, she would think

carefully and weigh the gains from the trip against her loss of close connection with her family before making the final decision.

Sophie acquired new friendships during the trip, which continued after her return. For instance, on the day before the last interview, which was scheduled one month after the trip, she visited one of the friends she made from the program. She also mentioned the frequent contact among these friends and that they felt the need to give each other a break.

During the trip, Sophie also encountered difficulties working with people. She mentioned the problem working with her groupmate on the project, because the groupmate did not work hard enough, and Sophie had to contribute much more than her fair share in the groupwork. She first responded by trying to remind the groupmate of her responsibility, but it did not work well. When her effort to communicate failed, Sophie had to contribute more to the project to make sure it was completed properly but she felt her contribution was not recognized or respected by her groupmate. Feeling that she was treated unfairly, Sophie reported this to the university. As a result, she got a good mark for the project.

This experience led to her change of attitude towards injustice, which she saw as a big take-away from the trip: "[After this trip] I'm less tolerant to bullshit. […] If someone said something that […] I found disrespectful towards me or my effort, I'm probably gonna tell them [to correct it]."

However, she did not reflect on the reasons why some people would try to not take their share of groupwork, and how/whether this problem could be resolved through better communication.

She also became aware of the challenge of group dynamics when living and working with other people. She saw herself as a "sensible person" who did not want to look for drama, but was aware that other people had issues getting along.

Reflection on the faculty's role in resolving interpersonal conflicts and responding to critical incidents such as the burglary on campus also helped her to form opinions on the importance of the leadership role in organizing a trip.

“I realized that [the program director], she was kind of lost a lot of times. […] The TA that was with us did so much more than her in those cases […] I felt instead of in the position of leadership alone, maybe a co-leadership would have [worked better].”

5.2.2.4. Factors related to the changes

Culturally, Sophie strongly identified herself with the francophone community. During the trip, it helped her adaptation when she found other French speakers in the study abroad group. Her shift of language use (from speaking French most of the time back home to mainly speaking English for the program) was also associated with identity change.

Certain personality traits could explain her lack of interactions with local people. For instance, she described herself as “not social” and that she favoured staying in her room than socializing with people. In the third interview, she talked about an incident when her friends told her, “We don’t know where you are. You’re always in your room. We don’t know what’s going on, half the time…”. Other traits might have helped her adapt to a new culture. For instance, she expressed appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity by comparing the city of her home university with her parents’ home town. She enjoyed the former due to its multicultural and bilingual environment.

Even though past experiences contributed to the formation of old frames of reference, certain experiences, such as the catcall incidents back in Canada, were drawn on for comparison with new experiences acquired during the trip. In this way, they facilitated critical reflection that led to a better self-understanding. Similar to Joyce, the catcall experience discouraged her from interacting with locals. Experience with the on-campus robbery incident gave her an opportunity to reflect on her own positionality and the program arrangement. She felt that the regular visit of Canadian students, the location of the institute and program organizer’s response to previous incidents as well as lack of security measures all contributed to the incident.

In respect of the structural design of study abroad program, she identified the schedule (lack of free time), accommodation arrangement (staying with fellow study abroad participants in an

institute that regularly hosts Canadian students) and the location of institute where she stayed (a tourist city) as barriers that discouraged her from interacting with the locals.

5.2.3. Findings from Samantha's narrative

5.2.3.1. Opinion/understanding of the social world

Phase I of a transformation: Painting an idealized picture

Regarding Samantha's view on the host country, one perspective transformation clearly emerged throughout the study period. Before the trip, the image of Barbados Samantha had in mind was a small but self-sufficient country where people were warm, friendly and enjoyed themselves. Talking about the difference in national identity, she compared Barbados with Canada and the US, where people tend to feel a responsibility towards the whole world, which was not always justified:

"I feel [that] countries like Canada and US are kind of… they feel more on top of the world than a small island like Barbados would. […] in a country like US or Canada, there's always a responsibility towards the world, maybe sometimes where we shouldn't have been."

"Barbados just seems like a self-sustaining island, where people are just kind of worried about their own lives, and not much about getting into other people's businesses."

These comments reflected an idealized and romanticized view towards a place she felt was different. This image continued to her first month in Barbados, and even intensified, as she developed a sense of belonging. One week after arrival, she wrote me in an email that her impression of the local people was that they were "super friendly and welcoming". Then after the first month, she mentioned in the interview the community feeling she had on the Bajan society, which reminded her of the country (in Asia) where she was born and where her parents come from:

"I feel the way people interact is similar to [an Asian country]. Whenever you go out, you kind of feel like everyone treats each other like their own brother or sister […] You feel pretty much like you're in a big family. That's kind of what it's like here too."

Samantha also described the experience of a farm visit, where the smell of cows reminded her of her parents' home country in Asia. These experiences reactivated the cultural identity she once strongly attached to, and she even wanted to stay there longer or return later for a bigger project that could benefit the local community.

Phase II of a transformation: Dropping the rosy glasses

However, as her study in Barbados continued and her experience of the host country enriched over time, she began to drop the "rosy glasses" and see things more realistically. For instance, she realized that Bajans were not always "just kind of worried about their own lives, and not much about getting into other people's businesses". They also talked about politics in the US and had a strong opinion on it. Neither was Barbados a "self-sufficient country", because the economy relied on international trade.

"Economically, they don't have a strong hold in the global economy. I think also they rely on a lot of connections with the world, like they have a very strong connection with Canada."

She learned that Barbados would import fertilizers and even food from Canada. Many Bajans also went to work in Canada because it was hard to find a job on the island.

With more time she spent on the island, the impression she had on the country and its people was no longer simplified. Gradually she began to understand the social and environmental issues faced by the country. Alongside the fancy shows of festivals, here were people who always got drunk. Also, the tourist industry was destroying many traditional economic sectors, affecting people's livelihoods and making the eco-system less sustainable:

"The sugar industry is running down, and the rum industry, [it used to be] a big thing, but [with the change in the economic structure], a lot of the sugar plantations are gone. I think they rely on tourism because of globalization. Like [in the city where we are staying], they cleared the island and built like shopping malls and hotels [on what used to be] agricultural land where they grew sugar to make rum, but now, I guess with tourism, they can make more money."

Even the project, which Samantha had given much hope to, disappointed her at the end. This was demonstrated by the contradicting opinions at different points of the narrative. She came

to Barbados with a sense of mission, as she talked about her passion of “having an impact” on the island earlier in the trip. She also mentioned in an email during the first month that she felt the ideas from [her home university] students were taken seriously by the locals. After the first month she was so encouraged that she even started to plan for a return to Barbados in the future, and to do a research project for her master’s program.

“[…] as my project for [the master’s program] I could maybe come back and actually do the waste water treatment stuff that I wanted to do.”

However, the work on the project made her feel she was merely helping the institute make money rather than making any real impact on the island by working on solutions to the environmental problems they faced. She was disappointed and at the end, and gave up the idea of returning to Barbados for a bigger project.

“At the end of the summer I was kind of done with Barbados.”

Meanwhile, she still appreciated the beautiful landscape of the country, and its unique flora and tropical climate. For instance, during the interview after return she made a nostalgic note that there was “no winter there to kill the plants”. Also she was amazed to find out that certain technologies for sustainability were so widely applied in Barbados: “I think Barbados is kind of among the leading countries in sustainability. […] they have solar water heaters basically everywhere.” Overall, her knowledge and opinions on Barbados became more realistic through the summer study experience.

5.2.3.2. Personality and self-consciousness

Before departure, Samantha expected the trip to make her “a bit more outgoing”, since it would give her a chance to live with other people and to explore a different culture through interaction with the locals. During the first month, she tried pushing herself out of her comfort zone and socializing with people:

“As to extraordinary moments, I have been doing a lot more here that I didn’t expect of myself. For example, we went out on Saturday night and I ended up asking a guy for his number, something I’ve never done before and someone I would never have approached otherwise! I

guess it's a product of drinks and being in a completely new place. I'm learning interesting things about myself on this trip […]"

However, there was a turning point towards the end of the first month, as she described in the interview at the beginning of the second month:

"[O]ne weekend I just sort of started feeling really bad for some reason I couldn't understand why. After I thought about it for a while, I realized that it was because we were partying a lot, you know, going out, having a lot of fun, which is… It was really fun, but I realized… I felt so bad because I thought I was losing focus on what really matters."

After that she shifted her focus back to study, learning about plants and agriculture. It made her happy because she thought learning was the main purpose of being in Barbados, not just academically but also through living experiences and learning about herself:

"I think I'm learning a lot more about myself and what matters to me, what I wanna do with my life."

After the trip, she felt more confident and more independent. Even though it was her first time studying abroad, the learning experience in this summer program encouraged her to go abroad again and experience another country, but she would prefer doing it more independently:

"I would definitely want to go to another country, but I don't know if I'll do another field study through [my home university]." "If I were to do something like this again, I would probably go on my own, to a different university somewhere, trying to get to know people… by myself."

Academically, the intensity of courses helped her to improve work efficiency. However, she saw the summer program as a break from the routines of the undergraduate program she was enrolled in. It was a different area of study, but she enjoyed trying new things in a different place, and the change in learning environment also helped her to switch between subjects:

"This (her home university) is where I do maths, that (Barbados) is where I do plants."

Also, the trip broadened her vision of the field of study she is currently working in. She had a better understanding of the different streams she could choose, her interests as well as her

potential working with different subjects of study. In this sense, the learning experience was empowering.

Self-discovery and understanding

The study abroad trip helped Samantha discover certain interests and potentials that she had not realized before. “I surprised myself a lot. […] I did stuff that I had never thought I would do, and I reacted to things in ways I didn’t think I would react to.” In Barbados she tried a new philosophy of “work hard, play hard” only to find out later that it was not quite suitable for her. In the end, she realized that a “work hard, sleep hard” type of life would suit her better.

She also discovered the importance for her to spend time alone, “In terms of personal relations, I learned that I need a lot more alone time.” In particular, she was not used to being with the same group of people all the time:

“[When I study] here (in my home university), like I see my friends in classes, and then I go home (and be alone), so it’s fine. But there (in Barbados), it’s like I see my friends in classes and I go home, they’re there too. When I go to eat food, they’re there. When I go to a party, they are there too.”

The study abroad experiences also helped her reflect on (the complexity of) her national identity and cultural heritage. However, this reflection did not lead to a significant change in her sense of national identity. A few years ago, she would identify herself strongly with [an Asian country], while currently, both before and after the trip, she felt no attachment to either [that country] or Canada. Only during the trip, while in Barbados with other Canadian students, her Canadian identity became more salient, “I would just say I’m from Canada, cos that’s what people knew best.” Therefore, it was not a real change in national identity but rather an “identity mask” used in a particular situation.

5.2.3.3. Social relations

In terms of social relations, Samantha demonstrated noticeable changes in two perspectives, one was relations with local people in Barbados, and the other was relations with other study abroad participants.

Shortly after her arrival in Barbados, the friendliness of the local people confirmed her pre-departure impression and made her feel she was part of the community. However, this idealized view was challenged, and she became more aware of her tourist position. After returning and when reflecting on her experiences there, she thought it was almost impossible for someone not from the island to fit into the society there and be treated as a local.

“It’s kind of hard to separate yourself from being a tourist, especially if you don’t look like a local, people won’t treat you like a local.”

At the end of the trip, she became more comfortable with a tourist stance, and she felt “boring” after three months on the island since there was not much left to see (and no need to get to a deeper level of understanding).

This change in perspective also contributed to her decision of not going back to Barbados for a bigger (master’s degree) research project.

She also idealized the group of study abroad participants at the beginning of the trip. She felt being in a community and people were supporting each other to over come the difficulties in a new learning environment and with the heavy workload.

The robbery was a turning point when she began to discover the down side of being in a group, as her initial calm attitude was disturbed by other people’s reaction. She realized that “the way everyone was reacting to the incident was the way they were reacting to each other". At the end of the trip, she ended up feeling she was in an episode of a TV show “The Big Brother” and had a little “cabin fever”. Instead of working in a community, she intentionally separated herself from the group when she was busy doing her own work towards the end of the trip. As mentioned before (5.2.3.2), she also realized the importance of solitary time and was tired of being stuck to the same group of people.

5.2.3.4. Factors related to the changes

Samantha’s multicultural background might help explain her open attitude towards the local students (inviting them to hang out with her fellow Canadian students). Her detachment to all aspects of her cultural/national identity could have contributed to her search for belonging and

the false sense of community, while on the other hand, it might explain her sensitivity of an outsider position and the result of not feeling at home in Barbados. Her cultural background from a “developing country” also made her stay calm when facing the burglary incident.

In terms of personality traits, she described herself as “mature” and demonstrated a rational attitude in making choices, such as stopping partying after the first month, and studying alone for the finals at the end of the program. Her answers also indicated a clear sense of purpose both for the short term (in the summer) and the long term. Partying with other students at the beginning of the program could be linked to her pre-departure expectation of becoming “a bit more outgoing”, but she stopped the new routine as soon as she realized that partying had become excessive and interfered with pursuing her long-term goals. Her rational attitude and preference of “sticking to the plan” might also contribute to her quick adaptation upon arrival and well-managed interpersonal relations throughout the trip.

From Samantha’s perspective, the program arrangement facilitated friendship formation among participants. On the other hand, there were less opportunities to connect to the local students. It took some time for her to reach out and break the barrier. Similar to Joyce, Samantha also felt that being in a group made her vulnerable to stress from others when the burglary incident happened.

The length of the program helped her try out a “more-than-tourist” position but might not be long enough to lead to further transformation.

In terms of previous experiences, pre-established relations with certain people in the participant group facilitated her social interaction and adaptation.

5.2.4. Findings from Korra’s narrative

5.2.4.1. Opinion/understanding of the social world

There was no drastic change in Korra’s view on Barbados and the Barbadian people, when answers from before and after the trip were compared. However, her pre-departure impressions of the country and the local people became more detailed through the learning experiences there. For instance, before the trip, her impression of Barbados was “a really small

country” with “quite a bit of social issues”, but she did not specify what those issues were. Through close contact with local people, she was able to gain a better understanding of the social issues and difficulties they faced.

"I think a lot of Bajans love Barbados, but [...] they have a lot of issues as a lot of small islands do. […] They don’t really have that much money. […] There’s limited room for people to get ahead. […] A lot of people are [struggling] to find a job [and] a lot of young people have children".

Also, before leaving for Barbados, she pictured Bajans with certain traits related to “a typical island life” such as being “really friendly and laid back”. After being in Barbados for a while, she acquired a better understanding of their friendliness:

“I think the local people are generally very friendly towards everyone as it seems to be part of their culture. However, their main industry is tourism, so they have to make an extra effort to be accommodating and friendly.”

Eventually, the image of “friendly and relaxed” Bajans did not change, but she noticed more details of the social network, such as the importance of knowing someone inside the community, and the significant role of neighbourhood in bringing people together:

“It’s all about who you know, I feel if you know people, they’re gonna be very nice to you, but if you don’t, they may be a little bit more standoff-ish, but in general it’s been really good. I felt very welcomed and everything. And they’re just nice people.”

"In Barbados, it’s all about neighbourhoods, and who you’re around [...] They all call each other family. They’re very close."

After the summer study experience, Korra was also able to recognize a few similarities shared by Canada and Barbados. For instance, similar to her image of Bajans as friendly people, many local people she talked to also thought Canadians were friendly. Meanwhile there were social issues shared by the two countries such as inequality and unemployment. Through talking with Bajans she acquired a new perspective on Canada. She could also acknowledge the bias of people from different cultural backgrounds, as well as the commonalities across cultures:

"[Bajans came to Canada] mainly for the opportunities. […] Canadians are known for being quite nice and friendly, […] but I think it's kind of an idealistic view of Canada."

"I think they (Bajans) know it (their country) is a very beautiful place, and they want to be proud of that. […] I think in most countries, even with their issues, people are still like… proud of it. It's hard not to be."

Korra demonstrated a cautious attitude and cultural sensitivity by claiming that a program of three months was too short to fully grasp the social issues on the island and to adopt a local perspective. However, she showed little interest in achieving a better understanding by going back for a longer stay. Rather, she would prefer to explore new places in the future.

She affirmed the positive value of getting exposed to different cultures. However, based on the answers she provided in the study, she only recognized the exposure could help people understand the differences between cultures. She did not seem to move beyond the differences and appreciate the common humanity shared across cultures.

5.2.4.2. Personality and self-consciousness

Korra summarised the main take-aways from the trip into three aspects. First, she experienced a new place and learned about a culture different from her home country. Second, by taking courses and working on a project during the summer, she acquired new academic knowledge. The third take away was new friendships forged during the trip, which was a change in social relations and will be presented in the next section.

Apart from the acquired knowledge and skills, she also thought the trip was an important experience and Barbados would "stay with" her for the rest of her life. However, she did not feel any significant change in her identity, or the sense of "who I am" as a person. In other words, it was considered an unforgettable experience but not life-changing experience.

"Maybe [the trip has changed] the way I'm interacting with the world, but I don't think [it has changed] what I identify as or who I identify as."

Korra also felt the personal change resulted from the trip was not obvious to herself. “I think it’s a new experience, so obviously it changes you to some extent, but I can’t really see myself change that much… Maybe I did, but I don’t know.”

Self-understanding

First, through experiencing a different culture and understanding social issues in another country, Korra became aware of her own privilege associated with living in certain places in Canada. For instance, when talking about the robbery incident during the program, she felt lucky to grow up in a safe neighbourhood, so that she “didn’t need to think about any of that kind of things”. Also, hearing that many Bajans were going to Canada for better opportunities, she felt privileged as a Canadian:

“We have a lot of privilege and a lot more opportunities here than a lot of places in the world.”

Second, the study abroad experiences, especially the project experience, helped her to better understand her academic interests and the type of projects she would work on in the future:

“[Through working on the project,] I learned a lot about […] what aspects do I dislike, what aspects do I like, […] if I want to do things like that (the work involved in project), and that kind of things.”

Third, the trip helped her confirm her belief that in-depth cultural experiences were more valuable than the “check-the-list” type of trips and tourism abroad:

“I liked that about Barbados (the length of the program), because you could just meet people, go hanging out with them. You got to know the island well enough that you could kind of do your own things. I think if you’re moving a lot, you might be more hesitant to be going out on your own and things like that. You wouldn’t know areas very well.”

5.2.4.3. Social relations

As briefly mentioned in 5.2.4.2, when asked about the biggest take-aways from the trip, Korra believed that one of the three main things she got from the trip were the friends she made within the group of [home university] study abroad students.

She experienced faster formation of friendships with fellow Canadian students. She reached out to everyone and became closer to a few. These friendships also continued after her return. However, she saw it as circumstantial and was related to being forced to stay with a big group in a new place. The experience of making new friends during the trip was similar to the beginning of university, when she was in a new learning environment. Therefore, it did not change her way of making friends and connecting to people back home.

On the other hand, her friendship with the locals (Bajans) was mainly strategic. While in Barbados, the connections with local people helped her understand the culture and experience the local lifestyle, which she showed great interest in. It also provided an escape from the challenges she faced staying in a big and dynamic group and sharing the limited space with other people. After return, she no longer maintained frequent contact with the Bajan friends.

Before departure, she was worried that sharing the living space with other people might be challenging, since she had never had a roommate before. It turned out that living with others was not as big a challenge as she had thought, because she was able to get along well with her roommates. However, the experience of sharing a room with others did not change her preference of having her own room: “I miss the people, but not sharing the same room with them.”

5.2.4.4. Factors related to the changes

Korra’s self-perceived multicultural heritage might contribute to her passion of getting to know different cultures. Past experiences of frequent moving and living in various places in Canada might facilitate her adaptation to new situations. Certain personality traits she attributed to herself, such as easy-going, not nervous, and being “pretty comfortable around new people” could make her adapt quickly in a new environment. They might also explain her friendships with local people, as well as quickly making new friends within the study abroad group.

As mentioned earlier, Korra stated after the trip that she could not see herself have changed much as a result of the trip, even though she acknowledged that small changes happened to her and that any new experience would inevitably result in a certain degree of personal change. This result is consistent with a statement she made before departure. When asked how she

would expect herself to change as a person after return, she answered, “I think I’ll be changed in some small ways but essentially, […] I’ll be the same person.” This predeparture expectation might have served as a self-suggestion and limited the scope of her identity change.

In terms of program arrangement, she felt that the length of the program was long enough to make participants “know the island well enough that you could kind of do your own things”, but it was still too short to give her a local perspective on many social issues. Also, she mentioned the location of the host institute, its easy access to the beach, practical design and beautiful view. These factors made her comfortable and excited upon arrival and might facilitate her adaptation in the new environment.

5.3. Discussion on identity change and transformation

A number of results, which I believe are worth discussing due to their originality or significance, emerged from the findings. In this section, I discuss results concerning identity change of the four participants through their summer study abroad experiences. Factors related to the change are discussed in section 5.4.

5.3.1. Decoupling of disorienting dilemma and cultural immersion

In previous literature, the first stage of TL, “disorienting dilemma” (Mezirow, 2008), is often believed to start when study abroad participants arrive at their destinations and are exposed to cultural or social elements new to them. For instance, the study by Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) focuses exclusively on disorienting experiences during study abroad. There is an assumption that the disorienting dilemma begins after leaving home and arriving in a new environment, which can be reflected in the methods of data collection. In their research, interviews were conducted after the return of participants, and began with the question:

“During your time abroad, did you face any disorienting, confusing and/or discomforting incidences or experiences? If so, what were these experiences?” (p. 1143)

This shows the disorienting experiences before departure were not considered. The assumption that disorienting dilemma starts during the study abroad period resonates with a result in the study of Clapp-Smith and Wernsing (2014, p. 668), that “immersing with local customs and

people" such as participating in local cultural events and interacting with the host family, triggers TL.

The findings of this study indicate that disorienting, confusing and discomforting feelings may occur before the departure. The feeling of uncertainty or anxiety before going abroad has been documented in study abroad literature (Mitchell, 2015; Holmes, Bavieri & Ganassin, 2015). However, the phenomenon of pre-departure disorienting dilemma before the trip abroad has not been specified in any previous study on university students' learning experiences abroad using TL theory.

Methodologically, one major difference of this study, as compared to previous studies on TL through study abroad experiences, is the use of pre-departure interview (4.2.2), in which I asked participants questions about their expected challenges during the trip as well as expected changes that would occur after coming back. Before leaving home for Barbados, participants expressed feelings such as "worried" (Samantha), "stressed" (Sophie), "not sure" (Joyce) and "nervous" (Sophie, Korra and Samantha), though these feelings were usually accompanied by the excitement of heading to a new cultural experience. These disorienting feelings were often associated with expected challenges they would face in Barbados. For example, Sophie expected that she would miss home, and she was worried that she would not be able to use her phone in Barbados, so she would lose contact with her family. Being away from home, however, was linked to her expected identity change after the trip, of becoming more independent and better at self-organizing.

There is a general consensus among contemporary scholars of TL regarding the importance of emotions (Brenner, 2016; Merriam & Taylor, 2008; Walker, 2017). Especially in the stage of disorienting dilemma, emotional factors may lead to the development of coping strategies (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011). In this respect, the findings of this study also show that participants started doing research about Barbados before their trip. This can be seen as a coping strategy, as in the case of Samantha. Before leaving for Barbados she was worried that she might not understand some of the cultural norms there, and indicated a willingness to study more about the country before going.

Both Joyce and Sophie also mentioned that they read about the country before the trip, and both of them made interesting discoveries. From her predeparture reading Joyce learned about the country's history, especially slavery and sugar plantations, which made her curious about finding the historical marks on the island during her trip. Her particular interest in the chattel houses during her stay in Barbados was a continuation of this learning process. In the case of Sophie, she clearly mentioned being "shocked" when she saw how small the country was on the map. This predeparture shock led to questions such as how the structure of a country would function on such a small scale, and what kind of social network people would form. Searching for answers to these questions required careful observation and critical reflection during the trip.

The case of Samantha, on the other hand, shows that a disorienting dilemma could also start after being in the new cultural space for a certain amount of time. In other words, cultural immersion could precede TL. As demonstrated in the findings, she formed an idealized image of the Bajan society before departure, and this point of view was reinforced at the beginning of the sojourn, but began to change later. The study abroad experiences led to the transformation of her old frame of reference, romanticizing a culture different from back home. However, different from the result of an earlier study mentioned above (Clapp-Smith & Wernsing, 2014), immersing with local culture and people did not trigger TL. From Samantha's story, it would be more precise to interpret that the experiences accumulated after arriving in a new cultural space triggered critical reflection at a certain point, which in turn led to transformation. This insight is also a confirmation of the crucial role of critical reflection in Mezirow (1990, 1991)'s TL theory.

5.3.2. Returning home is easier than leaving

In the previous section, I mentioned that most participants experienced anxiety before their departure to Barbados. The first one or two weeks were also challenging, as participants mentioned feelings such as "tired" (Joyce, Korra) and "débordée" (Sophie). They had to adapt to a new climate (Sophie, Samantha), create a new daily routine (Joyce) and face a tight schedule that one student (Sophie) was mentally unprepared for.

By contrast, the transition back home was much easier. All participants expressed positive feelings when leaving Barbados and when arriving home. Though Samantha and Korra felt “sad” to leave because the summer was over, and Joyce noticed that things appeared “weird” the first week back home, none of the participant wanted to stay longer after the three months and none of them wanted to return to Barbados either. Towards the end of the trip, they felt “three months was a long time away from home” (Joyce), it was “enough” (Sophie), it started to get “boring” (Samantha) and they were all ready to go back. They felt “happy” (Joyce), “nice” (Korra) and “excited” (Sophie) to be back home.

It was also relatively easy for all participants to transit into the new semester after the trip. For instance, Joyce said the summer program put her “in the mindset” of study so the new semester was not a big transition, even though she missed the experiential components of the summer program and would like to have them integrated into her courses back home.

In a study similar to the one presented in this paper, Cooper (2017) has recognized that the re-entry transition was more difficult for study abroad participants than the outbound transition. That finding seems to run contradictory to the results above, yet a close look into Cooper’s work would reveal that those students who found it more difficult to transit back to their home institute had certain issues in their community and family life, which they avoided or escaped from when studying abroad. In this paper, however, none of the four participants mentioned any of these issues back home. Quite the opposite, they experienced issues in Barbados which made them appreciate certain privileges and positive elements back home. For instance, Samantha was grateful that back home she could drive around and not be restricted by the space or unfamiliar rules, while in Barbados she had to rely on the public transport that she was not familiar with. Comparing the classes she had in Barbados with the ones she took back home, Sophie felt back home the courses were generally more structured and the professors were more dedicated to teaching. Even though Joyce missed the hands-on learning experiences in Barbados, back home she still had the freedom to choose courses that include more experiential components such as labs, and drop those where she had to sit in an auditorium with hundreds of other students. Also, all participants mentioned that they kept touch with their parents during the summer. Finally, all of them expressed a certain degree of appreciation

to the personal time and space they could enjoy back home but was missed when abroad. The feeling of appreciation often led to self-realization, a result of TL which will be discussed in the next section.

One explanation for the relatively easy return compared to leaving is that participants had different expectations. Before returning home, they were expecting the start of a new semester of school, which could be reflected in Samantha and Korra's feeling of sadness that the summer (holiday) was over. On the other hand, participants left for Barbados with a holiday mood, which was illustrated in Sophie's story. Similar to the case of volunteering abroad studied by Tiessen (2017), advertising to the study abroad program also features exotic sights and places such as fine beaches with almost no people, a beautiful ocean, and clean clear blue sky—visual images that can easily evoke imagination of a holiday trip. Participants all expected to explore the island and engage in certain touristic activities before the trip, and after return many mentioned they missed experiences such as "floating in the water" (Joyce) and "swimming in the sea" (Korra).

5.3.3. Identity change, conflict and rebalance

In terms of change in the domain of self-consciousness and self-identity, a highlight from the findings is enhanced self-understanding and self-discovery, which happened to all four participants.

Identity change can be noticed in the results of each participant. According to pragmatic identity theory (Levitan & Carr-Chellman, 2018), an individual's identity is constituted of multiple identities which can be classified into three types, namely role identity, group identity and personal identity. All four participants demonstrated change in all three identities.

In their stories, all participants identified themselves as part of the study abroad group (of Canadian students). This newly-acquired group identity was temporary and was usually intertwined with national identity (Canadians) and organizational identity (students of home university). Though started before the trip (the group was already formed by the time of the orientation meeting), this identity only began to make sense in the new learning environment and when study abroad participants lived and studied together as a group. After retuning home,

it was left behind together with memories of the summer. Even though the social network formed within the group continued into the new semester, they saw each other as friends or classmates instead of colleagues of the summer program.

Changes in personal identity include participants becoming more confident (Sophie), independent (Samantha), social (Joyce and Sophie) and knowledgeable (Korra), as results in section 5.2 have revealed.

In terms of role identity, even though they kept the role as "students" from before the trip until after return, the role of a student at their home university was not exactly the same as a student of the summer study program. All of them acquired the new role of "tourist" or holiday seeker during the trip. This new role intersected with other roles and sometimes caused identity conflict that required a (re)balance between different roles. An example is from Sophie's story, as she first expected to spend a large portion of the trip on relaxing and tourist activities such as "lying on the beach". However, she realized soon after arrival that the schedule of the summer program was very tight, so she had to spend most of the time on studying. This conflict between expectation and reality initially caused negative feeling such anger and frustration, which climaxed after the critical incident of on-campus robbery, but eventually she was able to adjust her expectation and balance between the two roles. After the first month she adapted to the role of a summer program student and felt at ease spending most of her weekends studying, while still being able to go to the beach and enjoy her (much less than initially-expected) free time.

Samantha's experiences showed a good example of identity conflict between her two roles, a tourist/holiday maker and a student. While the former was asserted through activities such as partying and hanging out for fun, the latter required taking time to study. Initially she tried to balance the two but after a period of struggle, she realized the student identity was more important to her and gave up the demands from the tourist identity.

5.3.4. Regressive and experimental transformations

From Samantha's story, a "regressive transformation" (Illeris, 2014b) can be identified. At the beginning of the trip, she felt the program could be an opportunity for her to leave an impact

on the island and it might lead to a bigger research project for her master's program. She even considered changing her career path because some courses she took in Barbados, especially the field trips, made her very interested in agriculture. However, at the end of the trip she gave up these ideas and decided to continue with the original plan of study as she had before the trip. The end result of learning was that she had a better understanding of her own interests vis-à-vis the reality and realized more options and alternative paths she could take. This was similar to the example given by Illeris (2014b) on regressive transformation (pp. 96-97).

Sophie's case described in the previous section (5.3.3) is also similar to a regressive transformation but not exactly the same. She showed signs of intentionally breaking away from the old identity of a [home university] student by assigning herself the tourist identity and switching her student identity to a "summer mode" that requires less time spent on studying. With the conflict and disorienting experiences at the beginning of the trip, she realized that the change of place did not change her identity as a [home university] student, and by enrolling in the summer program she would have to study as hard as before.

However, Sophie's intended identity change was only temporary. Same was the adoption of a tourist identity by Joyce and Korra during the summer. Even Samantha adopted the tourist identity after realizing it was not realistic to be a helper or change maker. In all these cases, the new identities they had during the summer, such as a tourist, a summer program student and a Canadian in Barbados, were not meant to last longer than the three months abroad. According to Illeris's (2014b) definition new identity formation did happen, thus the learning was transformative. However, seemingly until this day, no study of TL has involved any case where the learner intentionally planned to change their identity for a limited time. Even though the results from a previous study (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011) indicate that students experimented with new identities in a different cultural space, it was not clear whether these new identities were intended for only a short period. Theoretically, the results presented above from this study should be distinguished from the "regressive transformation" discussed in chapter 3. According to Illeris (2014b), regressive TL happens when the learner intends to transform their old identity to become someone better but "does not have the strength to get through something new and then must resign and accept things as they are, or restrict oneself or find a

more secure position" (p. 92). Clearly, the result of going back to who they are and accept their old identities is not the learner's initial plan but rather an adjustment and rational choice they make along the learning path.

Due to the absence of theoretical resources to rely on, I tentatively uses the term "experimental transformation" to capture the unique features of this type of learning. It involves a learning process where the learner has set a limited period of time (an "identity trial") to get out of their comfort zone and to try on new identity masks rather than initiate a permanent identity shift. There is no doubt that more empirical studies are needed to achieve a better understanding of this type of TL, but its importance should not be underestimated. When a learner feels the need to form a new identity but is unsure or hesitant in starting a transformation that leads to a permanent identity shift, they might test the feasibility with an experimental transformation, so they can have a taste of what the new identity is like, whether it really fits well into their identity structure and whether it is worth the effort to start the big transformation. It may increase the chance of success in successfully going through a progressive transformation, especially for leaners who are less prone to risk-taking (which will be discussed in the next section). Even without leading to a progressive TL, the experimental TL itself can result in better self-understanding.

After the trip, all participants achieved a renewed understanding about themselves, as presented in section 5.2. For instance, they realized the importance of spending time alone (Joyce, Samantha), with their family (Sophie) and having personal space (Sophie, Korra). They also acquired a better understanding of their academic interests and the direction of study they would pursue later on (Samantha, Korra).

5.3.5. Taking risks while sticking to the plan

In the study of Trilokekar and Kukar (2011), results showed that the students studying abroad were more likely to engage in risk-taking, which was related to experimenting with new identities and coping with the outsider status. However, the authors of that paper did not specify what types of risks they would take and if they had such plan before departure. Exploring the phenomenon of international volunteerism, Tiessen (2017) also mentions that

volunteers often demonstrate an adventurous spirit and go abroad to seek "authentic experiences" that often involve risk taking. The participants in the study of this paper, on the other hand, showed a cautious attitude and limited willingness in taking risks, even though they all had a passion for travel and new cultural experiences.

However, this result does not contradict findings from the previous studies mentioned above. Compared to international volunteer programs and independent study abroad trips, the summer program in Barbados was clearly a safe option. It was organized by participants' home university and credits could easily be transferred back home. Therefore, when going for this safe option of study abroad, participants already exhibited a tendency of risk avoidance. Also, there is variation among participants in terms of their risk-taking spirits. The variation may be explained by participants' different personality traits and cultural backgrounds, as demonstrated in section 5.2.

All participants tried activities that were different from back home, such as swimming in a cave (Joyce), swimming in the sea (Sophie, Korra), visiting a local market (Sophie, Samantha) and scuba diving (Korra). However, taking these risks was part of their plan for the trip. For instance, Korra mentioned before the trip that she would try scuba diving and other water sports, and Samantha expressed earlier in the trip her eagerness to visit (more parts of) the island and experience the Bajan lifestyle. Some of the seemingly risk-taking choices were also strategic. For instance, studying in a local café was for Joyce not just a way to experience the local culture but also to escape from her roommates. Even though Korra was not used to sharing her room with other people, she made friends with her roommates to ease the situation. Occasionally, she also hung out with local friends so that she did not have to be with her roommates all the time. The strategic friendships, especially with local students, were discontinued after the trip, which was again a rational choice because they were too far, and she would no longer see them. Finally, they showed clear limits in taking risks. In other words, they would avoid risks that they considered unnecessary to take. For instance, Joyce chose to talk to local students but not to hang out with them. Sophie avoided going to places she considered beyond of her limits, such as a rum house or a church. Samantha stopped partying after realizing it was too much for her. Korra would hang out with local friends but she never wanted to adopt a new identity. Both

Joyce and Sophie mentioned the experience of being catcalled, but they both chose to go straight back to the institute where they stayed and to avoid further interaction with the locals.

5.3.6. Becoming more tolerant to differences

In terms of change in the interpersonal domain, results from this study indicate an increase in participants' tolerance towards differences. This is a change in the personality layer according to the model of Illeris (2014b).

First, in Joyce's case, she became more tolerant to different opinions and habits after returning from the trip. She indicated that before the trip, a first impression would often serve as the basis of her opinion on people, and she was less willing to engage in further interactions to change the first impression. During the trip she had to stick with the same group of students for three months in Barbados, and interact with them from time to time when they took classes or had free-time activities together. She discovered that some of her first impressions of people were not accurate, and they changed over time. As a result of the experiences from this trip, she became less "quick to judge" and more open to interacting with people she did not know very well. This result corroborates with what Clapp-Smith and Wernsing (2014) have noted in their research that TL contributes to intercultural competency. Joyce's changed view of social interaction is a development in one primary intercultural competence known as "nonjudgmentalness" (Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou, 2010).

Second, Joyce, Sophie and Korra all indicated in their stories that they had overcome difficulties living in a shared space. As a result, they showed sighs of increase in tolerance and adaptability. While previous literature on study abroad often emphasize the development of "intercultural" competency such as being more tolerate and adaptable when interacting with a new culture (Conner & Roberts, 2015; Irvine, Theresa, Newell, & Robert, 2009), there is also a tendency to oversimplify the matter of differences, which often lie beyond the cultural dimension and include issues of gender, race and social class (Kubota, 2016). The findings in this study revealed that the interpersonal challenges encountered by study abroad participants mainly came from inside a group of all-female Canadian university students. The differences they learned to tolerate and understand could not be neatly classified into cultural differences, nor even

"gender" or "social class". However, this learning result might be a more significant and practical takeaway and apply to situation they would later encounter back home. Clearly, intercultural competency is important especially to a society self-branded as "multicultural", but in reality, it is often interpersonal differences that really matter.

5.3.7. Becoming less tolerant of injustice

Findings from Sophie's narrative demonstrate her decreased tolerance towards (perceived) injustice and unfair treatment.

To recap the result, the project component of the study abroad program gave her the opportunity to work with another student in a small group. However, while working on the project Sophie realized she was doing much more work than her group mate. The situation continued on as Sophie's attempt to reach an agreement through communication failed. This made her realize the groupwork could open the door to a freeride. Feeling that she was treated unfairly, Sophie reported it to the university. At the end of the program, she got a good grade for the project, which she linked to her "call out" reaction, and she saw the result as a confirmation that she did the right thing. After her return, Sophie became determined to continue calling out unfair treatment. She gave an example that she was preparing to report to the university an unqualified course teacher.

Decreased tolerance to injustice and increased willingness to speak out are two size of the same coin. This change of attitude could be associated with taking more risks, as discussed in 5.3.5. However, calling out for justice is not simply a risk-taking behaviour or experimenting with new identity, as Trilokekar and Kukar's (2011) study has shown. More importantly, it contains social-changing potential.

Initiating social change requires the oppressed to not just identify injustice but more importantly, have the courage to speak out openly and break the culture of silence, as Freire (1998) reminds us. Freire's critical pedagogy and the concept "conscientization" clearly influenced the development of TL theory (Mezirow, 1991), though some scholars have questioned how far TL can go in the direction of social justice, especially when its focus is mainly on the individual (Merriam & Taylor, 2008).

From an individual student's transformation to the promotion of social justice seems a far stretch, since participants in this study were not in an oppressed position, and power is a complicated matter in any real situation. However, it points to the possibility of using study abroad as a means to empowerment. Learning experiences in a different cultural space might enable students from a disadvantaged social position (such as students from indigenous or ethnic minority groups) to become aware of the injustice they face, and encourage them to speak out.

5.4. Discussion on factors related to the learning results

Previously in this chapter (5.2), I have identified factors that might contribute to participants' transformation through the study abroad experiences. In this section, a few of these factors, which are unique to this study and contain aspects uncovered in previous research, are selected for further discussion.

5.4.1. Trigger events: burglary on campus and "magic moments" of friendship

As discussed in chapter 2, critical reflection plays an important role in TL according to Mezirow's theory. Personal experiences are the raw material from which transformative learning emerges, and critical reflection is the catalyst of the transformation process. Some experiences, however, are more likely to trigger TL. These kind of experiences are known as "epochal moments" (Mezirow, 1985) or "trigger events" (Mezirow, 1990).

One such event during the summer abroad was a burglary that happened at the institute where the group of Canadian students stayed. Late in the first months of the program, thieves broke into a room where two students stayed and stole some of their belongings. One of these two participated in the first-round interview of this study but withdrew due to the serious effect she felt from the event. Though none of the four participants in this study was a direct victim of the robbery, their experiences were affected, and as a response, the program organizer canceled the first month's final exam. All four participants felt the impact of the event emotionally. For instance, Korra was "surprised" that it could happen. Sophie was "angry" towards the program organizer because she thought it could have been easily prevented. Joyce felt "stressed out" and "creeped out".

Both Joyce and Samantha identified the group dynamic as a factor that contributed to the escalation of negative feelings. Joyce felt that in that situation everyone in the group was "feeding each other's stress". Samantha was able to remain calm and rational at the beginning but was later affected by the group atmosphere and began to get "scared".

In their reflections on this critical incident, participants noticed certain factors regarding program arrangement and faculty facilitation. Both Sophie and Samantha mentioned that the summer program was organized every year and the Canadian students always stayed in the same place. This arrangement made it easy for thieves to target the students for robbery. Both of them also mentioned the lack of security measures on campus as a main cause of the incident. While Samantha thought they just happened to be the "unlucky group", Sophie thought the faculty from [home university] were also responsible. First, similar incidents had happened on that campus before, and the faculty could have cautioned students before departure to let them stay alert during the trip. Second, after the incident, the coordinator of the program did not respond properly. Instead of calming down the students and taking precautious measures to minimize the loss, the coordinator was panicking and at loss herself. This reaction made Sophie question her leadership role and feel that necessary support was missing at the crucial moment. Faculty support was a noticeable factor from previous literature on TL and study abroad (Dunn et al., 2014; Wright & Larsen, 2012) as well as international education (Kumi-Yeboah, 2014). Joyce also noticed the lack of faculty support but unlike Sophie, she felt the unorganized aspects of the program offered students more chance to grow and become more adaptive.

The burglary incident was a "collective trigger", but participants responded to it in various ways which led to different learning results. Another "trigger" during the trip, which was less dramatic but more personal, was the occasion when a friendship was formed almost instantly. Both Joyce and Samantha described such "magic moments" of friendship they experienced during the trip. For Joyce, it was the time when she just arrived and the airport and was waiting for the taxi to pick her up. There she met another summer program participant and they started chatting with each other and quickly became friends. They stayed close to each other during the entire trip. Samantha had a similar experience on the way to a field trip, when she started

chatting with the person next to her and made friends with each other during a bus ride. Reflecting on these experiences made them feel that people who were strangers to each other might have many things in common and could get along well, but without proper occasions to bring them into interaction, they might never realize it. In this respect, the program arrangement, such as taking participants to the field trip in the same bus, facilitated social interaction among students.

5.4.2. Reflections on experiences with different food

TL does not always come with epochal events. More often it is a result of accretion or a mixture of accumulated experience and less dramatic trigger events (Brock, 2010; Mezirow, 1985). An example of experiences closer to the "accretion" end of the spectrum could be found in participants' descriptions of their experiences with food during their stay in Barbados.

All four participants had negative impressions of the food served at the host institute. They said that it was "repetitive" (Joyce, Korra) and "unhealthy" (Korra, Samantha, Sophie). All of them also missed food from home during the trip. Each participant offered different explanation to the negative experiences with food. While both Samantha and Korra attributed the "unhealthy" food to the Bajan cuisine, Joyce thought it was just because the cook they hired was not good enough. For Sophie it was mainly due to the budget as the host institute offered "the cheapest option". A previous study documented food as a non-academic component of study abroad that could trigger change in students (Hanna, 2016). In this study, however, the food experience, though described by all participants, was not associated with any learning results or identity change. It reflected their sense of belonging, habits and preference as well as their opinions on what is healthy and proper, but did not lead to change in any of the identity dimensions.

Nevertheless, these experiences could lead to TL if opportunities and facilitation on critical reflection were offered.

5.4.3. Reflections on components and schedule of the program

All four participants had positive learning experiences with the experiential components of the program including the field trip and the group projects. These components not only helped participants link classroom learning with practices in the real world, as discussed in Ritz (2011)'s study, but also led to learners' self-discovery and self-understanding. Both Joyce and Korra realized that they could learn more effectively by doing and seeing how theories were applied in real situations. By working on a group project, Joyce acquired leadership skills and learned to manage her schedule better. Sophie encountered interpersonal issues with her groupmate during the project, but the reflection and effort to solve the conflict led to the learning result of becoming less tolerant to injustice, as discussed before (5.3.7).

In a study on student transformation during service learning abroad, Brenner (2016) has found that the tight schedule of the study program could strengthen interpersonal bonds between participants and forge a sense of community. However, in the study presented here, no such positive impact on the interpersonal relations was identified by any participant, even though all of them mentioned the tight schedule and intensity of the program in Barbados. Only Samantha mentioned the "community feeling" at the beginning of the program, but this was not a learning result through the program and quite the opposite, the tight schedule only made her isolate herself in study (for assignments and exams) and sacrifice her social hours with fellow students. Sophie felt the tight schedule of the program had an overall negative impact on social interaction and cultural immersion. After a long day of school, many students were too tired to go out in the evening. Even during the weekends she had to spend most of the time at the library studying. Korra mentioned that the intensity and tight schedule led to fatigue and thus a decrease in motivation for learning.

5.4.4. Language, identity and transformation

In the study abroad literature, identity change and development are almost always associated with language learning, acquisition and the change of language use (Tullock, 2018). Language has been identified as a factor that contributes to TL by a few previous studies on study abroad experiences. For example, the study of Clapp-Smith and Wernsing (2014) identifies "communicating a new language" (pp. 699–670) as one of the triggers for TL and the authors

point out the pervasiveness of language as the carrier of culture and identity. Moinette (2011) and Brenner (2016) also point out in their respective studies the significance of learning and using a language of the study abroad destinations.

However, all these previous studies involve study abroad participants speaking languages different than their mother tongues while studying abroad, while in the research presented in this paper, English is a common language of both Canada and Barbados. For two participants in this research (Samantha and Korra), English is their mother tongue. Even though the other two (Sophie and Joyce) speak French as their first language, they were used to studying in English at their home university and did not consider English as a foreign language. Therefore, it became interesting to investigate whether language was a factor related to the learning results.

Findings showed mixed results varying across cases. Among them, only two results clearly marked language as a factor related to TL. The first on came from the case of Joyce, in which language influenced her view on the society. Her own experience back home gave her the impression that Canada was divided among English and French speaking communities. Therefore, language might create differences among people and draw them into communities that could easily distinguish from each other. This view was confirmed by her experience in Barbados when she found out they speak English as their common language, which was connected to her feeling that Bajans were more united as a community.

Although Joyce and Sophie were both francophone, Joyce did not connect the language with her personal identity. Sophie, on the other hand, expressed a strong attachment to the French language. She was worried before the trip that she might not be able to find people to speak French with. During the trip, she was happy to find other francophone participants. She also saw talking to her parents over the phone during her stay abroad as “taking a break” from speaking too much English. This attachment to a language might contribute to the fact that Sophie did not make friends with local students, as she felt the interaction with Canadian students (who spoke English most of the time) were already overwhelming. She even used French in a strategic way to shun a person who annoyed her by keeping asking her to go for a boat ride, as she pretended not understanding him. Finally, her wish to stay in her home

province instead of going far away for an internship might also be partially explained by her preference of staying close in touch with the French speaking communities.

5.4.5. Gender as a potential factor of impact

Thus far, no previous research on transformative learning of study abroad has specifically discussed the impact of gender on learning results. Terzuolo (2016) notes that it is rather unclear how gender as a student characteristic could impact the intellectual development of students who study abroad. In this paper, results were not able to be compared across genders to identify its impact since all participants are female. However, some results might indicate a potential role gender played in constructing frames of reference, coping with disorienting dilemmas and triggering/blocking critical reflection. Below are two examples.

Joyce's point of view that there would be "girl drama" in a group of girls might reflect a gendered habit of mind. Formed by experiences in a cultural context that assigns to people different gender roles, the meaning perspective was changed to some extent through the summer study as she realized that compared to a movie or a TV show, there was less chance to have big drama in real life, or it would happen in a less dramatic way. On one hand, it could help her adapt to the group dynamic by using gendered explanations such as "we are a group of girls and it is natural to gossip", and in this way she would be less shocked when people were complaining about each other behind their backs. On the other hand, it stopped her from searching for answers beyond the gendered assumptions, such as "why we would assume it is natural for girls to gossip". Promoting this kind of critical reflection may lead to a further examination of the meaning perspective and a more thorough transformation.

Students' responses to catcalls (Joyce and Sophie) during the trip in Barbados could also be further reflected upon. Especially, Sophie mentioned that being catcalled during the study abroad trip was not new to her, as she had experienced similar incidents back in Canada. She might relate to her previous experiences as a coping strategy and see it as a cross-cultural phenomenon. However, she could be guided to further contemplate on the roots of such practices and relate them to gender inequality.

5.5. Summary

The findings from this study show that a disorienting dilemma could start before the arrival at a new cultural space. Leaving home was accompanied with anxiety but returning home was an easier and more enjoyable experience for these participants, contrary to findings from other studies. Canadian students experienced identity change and learned to balance different identities, but the change and acquisition of identity was most often planned for a limited duration. This is a type of TL uncovered by any previous research and is termed “experimental transformation”. The study abroad experiences also led to increases in tolerance to differences as well as decreases of tolerance to injustice.

Among the factors that affect TL, unique to this study are the trigger events of an on-campus burglary, magic moments of friendship, experiences with food as well as program components and schedule, leading to results that were not found in previous studies.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I conclude this paper by answering the research questions. These answers, however, by no means indicate the conclusion of the scholarship on study abroad. On the contrary, they open up possibilities for study abroad practitioners to improve program design and practice. They also lead to new research questions to be answers by future studies.

6.1. Conclusions

Based on the findings and results discussed in the previous chapter, the answers to the research questions that guide this study are presented below.

6.1.1. What has changed in participants' understanding of the social world that is linked to the learning experiences they had during their field study in Barbados?

Participants demonstrated enhanced knowledge and deepened social insights regarding the host country and Canada as well as their own positions in society. By comparing their experiences of living in Barbados and in Canada, especially after retuning home, they were able to acknowledge and appreciate certain privileges they enjoyed back home.

Participants' predeparture impression and/or first impression of the host country were often simplified, romanticized and based on past experiences or unexamined assumptions, reflecting their old frames of reference. These frames of reference changed over the period of their stay abroad. The change could have begun before departure, but it was also possible that initial experiences in the new space reinforced the students' predeparture impressions, and a turning point occurred later, often due to the accumulation of various experiences which triggered critical reflection. At the end of their study abroad, all participants showed changes in their social understanding. Their views towards both the Barbadian society and their own perceptions of their positions in society became more nuanced and more realistic.

6.1.2. What has changed in participants' self-conceptions that is linked to their learning experiences in the field study in Barbados?

Participants became more aware of their habits and of elements that construed their personal integrity and sense of belonging, such as food, living space and time spent alone.

The frames of reference held by participants, which consisted of their assumptions of having these habits and essential elements, were seldomly questioned before the trip. Their experiences of studying abroad challenged these old frames of reference, triggered critical reflection and led to a higher level of self-understanding. Through balancing various roles and adjusting to unfamiliar situations, they also acquired a sense of personal growth, including increased self-confidence, open-mindedness, independence and adaptability.

Some participants also exhibited changes in their awareness of cultural or national identity. They devised a simplified national identity mask in the new environment, or turned down their cultural or national profile to avoid standing out.

6.1.3. What has changed in Participants' relations with other people that is linked to their learning experiences in the field study in Barbados?

Participants established friendship and interpersonal connections with each other. They realized the possibility of quickly forming friendships which could not only sustain during the summer program abroad but also continue into the new semester after return. Many participants showed signs of change in their pre-departure frames of reference by becoming less judgemental, more tolerant to differences, and more willing to engage in social interactions. However, for some participants, the group dynamic challenged their first impression of being in a supportive community, and led to an escalation of negative emotions such as anxiety and fear, especially in unexpected situations.

Sharing the living space with other people might have been challenging but lead to improved adaptability, and made participants realize the significance of having their personal space. Working in a group could have contributed to some participants' development in leadership skills, while the conflicts that occurred during the process of cooperation might have helped participants to become more aware of, and more courageous in challenging injustice at various levels.

6.1.4. What factors have contributed to the participants' learning outcomes?

Many factors were identified from the results as having been potentially influential on the learning outcomes of the study abroad participants.

Some of these factors and their impact on TL have been indicated or discussed in previous studies, from personality traits including curiosity, love for travel or an adventurous spirit (Brenner, 2016; Tiessen, 2017; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011) to structural factors including program length (Strange & Gibson, 2017), faculty support and facilitation (Cooper, 2017; Gardenier, 2014).

Other factors were relatively unique to this study or different from what previous studies have revealed. These include language and its relation to both student identity and cultural context, especially in a program where the language of the study abroad destination is the same as that of the home institution. Also, group dynamics and shared living spaces, as well as food that was different from home, could have served as potential triggers for TL that led to self-understanding and identity transformation. An unexpected incident during the trip, in which participants had the experience of their fellow students being robbed on campus, was unique to this study, and became an opportunity for participants to engage in critical reflection. Program design, especially the experiential components such as projects and field trips, have led to learning results that were not discussed in previous studies. Finally, the ways in which gender differences could influence outcomes of TL needs to be explored in future studies.

6.2. Recommendations

Below are a few recommendations based on the results and findings. Recommendations are meant for practitioners in study abroad programs, as well as scholars conducting future research in the area of study abroad and TL.

6.2.1. Recommendations to study program design

6.2.1.1. Community building before departure and during the trip

For many participants, a main source of challenges, both anticipated before their departure and actually encountered during the trip, was getting along with fellow students such as classmates, roommates and group-mates working on the same project. The results also indicate that pre-departure acquaintance with other students in the same cohort could facilitate adaptation, friendship formation and social interactions. Even though students attended a pre-departure orientation meeting, joined a mailing list and a Facebook group, during the meeting (which I was invited to attend), they spent most of their time receiving information from the faculty and had no team-building activities that encouraged them to interact with each other. Some participants also mentioned they were too shy or too busy to reach out to other people in the mailing list or Facebook group.

Therefore, organizers of future study abroad programs should consider organizing social events and team-building activities before the departure. These events and activities would give study abroad participants more opportunities to get to know each other and even make friends before the trip, which could in turn facilitate adaptation upon arrival and ease their pre-departure anxiety. These efforts might also reduce the chance of unpleasant experiences during the trip such as “girl drama” or in-group conflicts while working on a project. Community building is also part of faculty support, which is known as a contributing factor to TL. By helping students get to know each other before the trip, the faculty could create a safe learning space, so instead of seeing each other as competitors, students would be more willing to work together on their studies during the trip.

6.2.1.2. Logistic improvement

When asked what could have been changed to improve the quality of their study abroad experiences, all participants mentioned food. They all missed food from home, and some complained the unhealthy composition of meals serviced during the study abroad trip. One participant even claimed she was suffering health issues after the trip, which might be cause by the lack of certain nutritional elements. However, she also mentioned that she disliked the taste of certain foods cooked at the host institute. Therefore, it was unclear if the food offered during the trip was indeed unhealthy or she ate less than normal during her stay in the institute.

In either case, it would be advisable that future program organizers make sure participants eat well and stay healthy. For instance, introduction to Bajan cuisine could be made part of the pre-departure orientation. Students would also be more prepared if program staff ensure them before the trip that the food offered during the program contains sufficient nutrition, even though they might not be used to its taste, especially at the beginning of the trip.

6.2.1.3. Encouraging and facilitating critical reflection during the stay abroad

Based on the results of this study, one recommendation for future design of the study abroad program is to offer students more opportunities of engaging in critical reflection. For instance, Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) have identified the habit of journal keeping as a contributor to transformative learning. During the study abroad trip, the faculty might require students to record their experiences in a learning journal or a blog.

Collaborative and dialogic groups are also believed to be effective in promoting critical reflection and facilitating transformative learning (Schapiro, Wasserman, & Gallegos, 2016). The faculty can organize group discussion sessions, and encourage students to share some of the stories recorded in their journal with others in the group. As an integrated part of the program, critical reflection groups can be organized weekly where participants actively engage in dialogues with each other (with the help of a facilitator) and reflect on their learning experiences. Nevertheless, group discussions need to be combined with community building activities to achieve better results, since students need a safe space to share their stories openly.

The experiences with food different from home could also be an opportunity for students to practice critical reflection. Food-based teaching methods have already been practiced in a higher educational setting (Sumner, 2013). Teachers of the program can encourage students to share their opinions, feelings and experiences on food, asking questions and having discussions. Teachers can then facilitate these discussions and guide students to enhanced knowledge of the society and better self-understanding. For instance, they may link the privilege of living in Canada with “eating healthy food” and the choice of a balanced diet, and reflect on global inequality.

6.2.1.4. Post-return knowledge transfer to improve course design at the home institution

Improvement in learning mode and enhancement of learning efficiency are often limited by structural restrictions. All four participants in this study mentioned their positive experiences with the experiential components of the program such as projects and labs, and two of them expressed their wish to “take them home”. However, this was not easy because the courses back home were structured differently. For instance, some lectures were taught “in an auditorium with 600 people” (Joyce, post-return interview), and in some study programs, courses did not “really have any visual, or hands-on stuff” (Korra, post-return interview).

Even though the summer study program could offer its participants a taste of these experiential modes of learning, the time-span was very short compared to the length of a normal degree program, and those who got the chance to participate were no more than a tiny fraction of the entire student population. Therefore, better designed courses in the home institution could offer more students an enjoyable learning experience without going abroad.

6.2.2. Recommendations for future study abroad participants

The recommendations to faculty and program staff (6.2.1) could also be used by future study abroad participants as a self guide, especially if they are interested in initiating the process of TL. They may find the results helpful in making preparations, devising strategies of adaptation, avoiding losses and optimizing learning results. For instance, they may voluntarily engage in critical reflection by keeping a journal to reflect on the events they find most unusual and stimulating, though it is not obligatory.

Similarly, applicants to a study abroad program, and students who plan to study abroad, could use these recommendations to help themselves decide whether to choose the program or not based on their personal development plans.

6.2.3. Recommendations for future research

As mentioned in earlier chapters, there is not abundant literature on the impact of study abroad to student development using TLT, among which only a tiny proportion of studies were conducted in the context of Canadian higher education. In order to enrich the knowledge on

this area of research, more cases need to be studied with students from various majors, cultural backgrounds participating in study abroad programs of various lengths and destinations.

One result from this study that contributes to the development of TL is the proposed concept of experimental transformation. Further research needs to be conducted to understand the process and details of this type of TL as well as its significance and potential effects on subsequent transformations. How can experimental TL be used as a pilot for a more thorough transformation? Can it increase the chance of progressive TL and reduces the chance of regressive TL? These are just examples of questions that may guide future research topics.

Finally, some results that came out of this study differed from those of previous studies, indicating the need of future research that shed more light on the understanding of these results.

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Appendix A: Guide for first-round interview questions (one week before departure)

What made you decide to participate in this field study program? (Is there any particular reason for you to choose Barbados?)

Do you think this study abroad experience will be very new or different from your past experiences?

Can you tell me a bit more about your background (cultural heritage)?

What preparations have you done for the trip so far?

How do you feel now that you are getting ready to take this journey?

What do you think you will experience there? (Are there any challenges you expect to face?)

What is your opinion about Barbados?

What do you know about it so far? (Some people say it is a tiny island and developing country, and it depends heavily on powerful western countries like the U.S., what do you think?)

How might you compare Barbados with Canada? (Sure they are very different, but do they have any similarities?)

What do you expect to get from this study abroad experience?

Do you think you will be the same person after the field study?

Appendix B: Guide for second-round interview questions (one month after arrival in Barbados)

How are you? How is everything in Barbados?

How was your trip/flight to Barbados?

Tell me about the moment you arrived/stepped out of the plane.

How did you get to the institute the first time?

What is the campus of the institute like?

How is the learning environment different from back home?

How do you like the courses there? How are they different from what you imagined?

What is a typical day of study like? What do you do after class?

How is your project going so far?

What do you usually do at weekends?

Have you got time to explore the local culture?

How do you feel being in the Barbadian society?

Last time we talked about a few challenged you thought you might face in Barbados. Now that you have been in Barbados for a while, do you find those challenges real or do you meet with different challenges? (This question is specifically tailored according to the first-round interview data from each participant.)

Who do you usually spend time with?

How do you get along with other participants and teachers?

How is your experience with the local people from Barbados so far?

Since your arrival in Barbados, have you talked with your family? Is there anything you miss from home?

Appendix C: Guide for third-round interview questions (one month after return)

How was your trip back home? How did you feel when you left Barbados?

Tell me about stepping out of the plane back in Canada.

How do you see things back home now, after the trip?

How is your new semester going so far?

How would you compare your learning experience in the [summer field study] program with the studies you are doing now back home? How did you learn differently there?

Last time you said (you mentioned in your email) the Barbadian people/ local students were very friendly, did that surprise you?

Questions on the burglary incident:

Why did it happen?

Who was responsible?

How did that affect your opinion on Barbados?

What did you learn from that incident?

You mentioned last time that you spent more time with certain people in the big group, so what brought you closer?

Can you share with me some experience you had about making friends in Barbados?

How is it different from your experience of making friends back home?

How do you think this experience will change your social relations/ the way you socialize with people in the future?

To sum up, what is the biggest take-away from the trip?

During the trip, who did you learn most from?

What was the biggest challenge during this trip? How did you cope with it?

How do you see yourself now as compared to before going to Barbados? What has changed in you?

Do you miss Barbados? Do you plan to go back later?

Next summer or next year maybe, if possible, would you do another field study similar to this, but in a different country? Why/why not? If yes, for that trip what would you do differently?

Appendix D: Consent form

Department of Integrated Studies in Education

Faculty of Education

Participant Consent Form

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Title of Project: Transformative experiential learning through a summer field study program

Sponsor(s): No

Purpose of the Study: In this study, the researcher would like to know (1) what experiences students have by participating in the [redacted] program; (2) their feelings, reflections and responses to the experience; and (3) what learning and personal change occurs during and after their trip. The researcher would like participants to help him understand the field study abroad as if he were in the position of the student participants. Through analysis and discussion, this research project hopes to shed light on factors that contribute to effective learning and growth through experience.

Study Procedures: All research participants will be participants of 2018 [redacted] program. After signing this agreement, you will be contact by the researcher via email and be asked to participate in the following research activities:

(1) There is an optional informal meeting with the researcher (one on one) before the beginning of any formal data collection. This is the chance for us to know each other better and please feel free to ask questions about the research and express any concerns you may have.

(2) The first interview is to be scheduled shortly before your departure. This interview will be conducted one on one in person and in a place agreed by both you and the researcher (preferably on [redacted] campus). It will take from 30 minutes to 1 hour to complete this interview. The researcher will take notes during the interview. If you agree to be audio recorded during the

interview, an audio recorder will be used. The recorded audio will be kept in a password-protected folder in a secured online storage space (McGill OneDrive).

(3) During the field study period, you will be asked to write or record a reflexive journal. In this journal you will reflect on the most remarkable experiences during the field study. You will be asked to write one entry per week and share it with the researcher via email or on [redacted]. Alternatively you can choose to record one audio per week and share it with the researcher.

(4) About halfway through the field study abroad, you will have a second one on one interview with the researcher. This interview will be conducted online (via Skype, Zoom or Whatsapp) and will take around 30-60 minutes. The researcher will take notes during the interview. With your agreement the interview will be recorded using an online recording software. An audio file will be generated and kept in a password-protected folder in an online storage space only.

(5) About one month after your return from the field study, you will have the last interview with the researcher. It will be conducted one on one in person, in a place agreed by both you and the researcher (preferably on [redacted] campus). It will take around 30-60 minutes. The researcher will take notes during the interview. Upon your agreement, the interview will be recorded with an audio recorder. The recorded audio will be kept in a password-protected folder in a secured online storage space.

(6) The data from the interviews and the reflexive journal will be analyzed for this research only. After the analysis, the researcher will send you a report in which the findings based on your individual data will be shared (with you only). Upon reading the findings you can ask questions about the research and discuss the findings with the researcher, either via email or a scheduled one on one meeting.

Voluntary Participation*:* Participation in this research is voluntary. You may refuse to participate in parts of the study, may decline to answer any question, and may withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason, and without any penalty. Whether you choose to participate in this research or not will NOT affect your current or future grades, services you are entitled to receive from [redacted] and any other organization involved in the [redacted] program. If you decide to withdraw, any data collected from you until that point will be destroyed immediately after the researcher receives your notice of withdraw.

Potential Risks: There are no anticipated risks to you by participating in this research.

Potential Benefits: As a participant of the research you might benefit by getting more out of the experience of study abroad. Participation in the research might help you to form a habit of self-reflection and become a self-initiated active learner. The interviews and reflexive journal might also help you to develop communication and self-management skills.

Compensation: There is no monetary or material compensation for participating in this research. A certificate of research participation can be rewarded to participants after the project is completed.

Confidentiality: If you agree to be audio recorded during the interviews, the recording will be used solely by the researcher for this research project and will under no circumstance be disseminated in

public. All recorded audio files, notes taken during the interviews, transcripts, journals and other data collected during the research will be protected by passwords and stored securely. Identifiable data will be accessible only by the researcher and the supervisor. No real name or identifiable personal information (e.g. student number, contact information or address) will appear in the thesis or any other published results or research findings. Pseudonyms will be used to replace real names. All raw data (with real names and identifiable information) will be destroyed one year after the research is complete. All coded data (with pseudonyms and masked identity) will be destroyed seven years after the completion of the research.

Yes:___No:___You consent to be audio-taped during the interviews.

Questions*:* If you have any questions about the research project, please feel free to contact Haoming Tang at haoming.tang@mail.mcgill.ca.

If you have any ethical concerns or complaints about your participation in this study, and want to speak with someone not on the research team, please contact the McGill Ethics Manager at 514-398-6831 or lynda.mcneil@mcgill.ca.

Please sign below if you have read the above information and consent to participate in this study. Agreeing to
participate in this study does not waive any of your rights or release the researchers from their responsibilities. A copy of this consent form will be given to you and the researcher will keep a copy.

Participant's Name: (please print) _____

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____