A BOOK WITHOUT AN ENDING: AN IPA STUDY OF ADOLESCENTS ENGAGING IN

EDUCATIONAL TOURISM

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Abstract

For the last half of the 20th century, education systems world-wide struggled to produce a workforce adept at navigating a more culturally diverse landscape. By the onset of the new millennium, the ease of travel, the increased mobility of people, and the shift from an industrial age economy to the knowledge based economy had compounded the issues into everyday interactions amongst people of vastly different backgrounds. Empirical evidence capturing the learning experiences of adolescents who engage in educational tourism is notably absent in the literature concerning the edifying conclusions of international travel. Using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this study investigated the following research question: *What are the learning experiences of rural adolescents engaging in educational tourism and how do they make sense of the educational benefit of these experiential learning situations?* The findings of this study indicate that rural adolescents found participation in educational tourism a viable pathway to global exposure. Consistent with much of the literature, the participants reported positive gains in responsibility, learning and overall impact of engagement. Despite living in a rural, somewhat geographically and socially isolated community, participants, with support of their families, travel group members and their own initiative, successfully engaged in a self-selected and self-funded learning opportunity.

*Keywords:* educational tourism, experiential learning
Dedication

As a small child growing up in rural West Virginia, storytelling was as natural and as much a part of life as dirt roads and bare feet. It is with humble gratitude that I dedicate this work in memory of the three first storytellers in my life, my father and my grandfathers. As members of the United States Armed forces, you each travelled the world and the stories of your experiences, have, on occasion, been the footsteps I sought to trace. Likewise, to the first three readers in my life, my mother and grandmothers, thanks is simply not enough to express my appreciation for sharing your love of books. Finally, to my husband and daughter, a special thank you for your endless support.
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I would also like to acknowledge my participants. Not only did you join me in the initial adventure, but you came along for this journey as well. This production ultimately belongs to you, for it was your stories that made it possible. Thank you for allowing me to share.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Water, is taught by thirst.
Land- by the Oceans passed.
Transport—by throe—
Peace—by its battles told—
Love, by Memorial Mold—
Birds, by the Snow

Emily Dickinson

The new millennium and the world of the 21st century brought about a shift from an Industrial Age to a knowledge based economy. The volume of interaction or knowledge exchange between individuals and the ease of mobility of people across the globe demanded a citizenry and workforce equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of global competence (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Kirkwood (2001) describes globally educated people as “those who possess high-tech skills, broad interdisciplinary knowledge about the contemporary world, and adaptability, flexibility, and world mindedness to participate effectively in the globalized world” (p. 14).

The United States education policy and recent adoption of the Common Core Standards (CCS) supports and promotes the development of global competence through a curriculum of foreign language acquisition, an emphasis on national security, and workforce competitiveness (Frey & Whitehead, 2009). However, the authors suggest the contemporary approach to global and international issues is rather an inclusion of these topics into an existing curriculum as opposed to content specific courses designed around the specialized learning needs of 21st century learners.
Additionally, as a result of the decades-long approach to accountability through quantifiable test scores and the more recent federal mandates from *No Child Left Behind*, student instruction is narrowly focused on topics that appear on the standardized tests. Trilling and Fadel (2009) posit that summative assessments lead to “memorizing the content” (p. 130) and have “deemphasized the value of a whole range of other more authentic assessment methods” (p. 131). Combined, the method of instruction and high-stakes testing culture currently favored in American education systems leaves little time for exploratory, informal or self-selected learning choices.

The world class education rhetoric of the Common Core Standards cannot be limited to the inclusion of 21st century skills in the classroom, but needs to be practiced in learning opportunities outside the classroom and in international settings. In order for students to leave their secondary education experience with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for engagement in the global workforce and multicultural village, the traditional secondary public education systems must offer students experiential learning opportunities in real world environments.

**Justification of the Research and Deficiencies in the Evidence**

In the US, the traditional venue to gaining international experience is sought through a semester or year abroad during the junior year of college, but as statistics indicate, there is a significant percentage of the population who does not attend college or seek degrees from four year institutions. According to the US Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics 2014 news release, 3 million youth, aged 16-24, graduated from high school between January and October 2013. Of these graduates, 65.9% or 2 million students were enrolled in institutes of higher learning in October of the same year. Therefore, an estimated 33.8% or 1.1 million
students who are not enrolled in four year (or more) college programs have drastically reduced opportunities to seek an international experience offered through higher education institutions. According to Open Doors Data (2013), the total number of college students who engaged in any form of international study abroad for credit during the 2011/12 school year was 283,332 (Institute of International Education). Combined, these statistics indicate that a significant percentage of the population enters the workforce without an opportunity to participate in an international experience as a venue for developing 21\textsuperscript{st} century skills. Likewise, for students pursuing degrees from institutes of higher learning, relatively few take advantage of the opportunity to engage in an overseas program.

The United Nations World Tourism Industry (UNWTO) Annual Report 2012 (2013) indicated that a historic milestone of 1 billion tourists arrived at international locations in the year 2012 as compared to 25 million in 1952 (p. 3). Tourism is defined as a “social, cultural and economic phenomenon, which entails the movement of people to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or business/professional purposes” (Glossary of tourism terms, p. 1). Additionally, a tourist is defined as “A traveler taking a trip to a main destination outside his/her usual environment, for less than a year, for any purpose (business, leisure, or other personal purpose) other than to be employed by a resident entity in the country or place visited” (p. 12). More recently, tourism has developed into specialty trends as indicated by an adjective. One such example, educational tourism, has become a popular venue whose definition indicates it is “travel for purposeful study or education” and “travel incorporating elements of learning” (Ritchie, Carr & Cooper, 2003, p. 9). Pitman, Broomhall & Mochocha (2011) add to the earlier definition of educational tourism as a “form of touristic experience that explicitly aims to provide structured learning in situ through active and engaged intellectual praxis” (p. 6).
The consumer demand for international experiences has grown to a world marketplace where tourism accounted for 9% of the world’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the year 2012 (UNWTO, 2012). Despite a slow global economy, the report also states that international travel projections indicate that the industry will experience an estimated 3.3% growth, or an increase of 43 million tourists per year to reach 1.4 billion by 2020 and 1.8 billion by 2030 (UNWTO, 2012). Additionally, the report states that currently one in eleven jobs is either directly or indirectly related to the tourism industry (UNWTO, 2012).

The process of globalization demands that workers express cross-cultural sensitivity, adaptability, flexibility, and an understanding of economic and political influences. As a result of these influences on the global economy, there is a need for traditional secondary education systems in the United States to increase adolescent’s access to international experiences as part of their traditional secondary schooling.

The extant literature on the acquisition and development of global skills related to the world of adults through either higher education opportunities or work related experiences. Absent from the literature base, are studies focusing on the international experiences of adolescents or those between 10 and 19 years of age (World Health Organization, 2015). None of the reviewed studies explored the experience of adolescents engaging in the phenomenon of educational tourism through the lens of experiential learning.

This purpose of this study was to understand experiential learning situations, which occurred in the context of an educational tourism experience for three purposively selected participants, who traveled with the researcher to Costa Rica in November, 2011 or December, 2013. It investigated the narratives of participants based on post-travel interviews, digital documentation, and artifacts collected during the experience. These participants were chosen
based on their shared experience, age and time of travel, and the choice of engaging in a self-selected and self-funded learning opportunity. All participants travelled while considered an adolescent or between the ages of 10 and 19, as defined by the World Health Organization (2015). They have three years and two years of post-travel experience respectfully. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was chosen as the methodological approach for this study, which asks the following question: *What are the learning experiences of rural adolescents engaging in educational tourism and how do they make sense of the educational benefit of these experiential learning situations?*

In order to protect the identity of the site location, the researcher refers to this as Hill Top High School. Hill Top High School is located in the Appalachian mountains of eastern West Virginia. It is a public high school serving 542 students. The school is primarily white with 2.4% of the students claiming ethnic or minority heritage. Thirty-three percent of the students are from households that qualify for free and reduced lunch. Hill Top High School is one of the two high schools serving this rural county, and requires 27 units of credit selected from the programs of study curriculum in order to graduate.

The local school board supports the notion of globalization through foreign language acquisition and the incorporation of the Next Generation Content Standards, which are based on the Common Core Curriculum. In the past, it has welcomed international exchange students but at the present does not support any reciprocation with other countries. It does not support, at the home school of the researcher any form of international travel, language immersion, and short or long-term abroad study programs. Additionally, no specific curriculum in global or international studies is offered to students.
This situation makes an attractive environment for a study of how rural adolescents perceive the learning benefits of engaging in educational tourism. The contextual makeup of the student body and local community prevents exposure to a wide range of cultural, ethnic, or economic diversity. Likewise, opportunities for international travel are not part of the traditional educational trajectory offered at this institution. Therefore, students seeking this experience must engage in the process of self-selected and self-funded educational experiences, both elements of the experiential learning framework. Prospective travelers are responsible for all fees incurred, therefore, adding a holistic understanding of involvement not limited to the trip itself.

Opportunities for students to engage in foreign travel have implications for students, their country and their world. Gutek (1993) calls for the development of an international curriculum, while Clarke (2004) expands this proposal into requiring all students to participate in study abroad in a foreign country for at least a semester. Educating citizens of the 21st century world has shifted from “awareness to understanding and, finally, to competency in negotiating multiple perspectives as world citizens” (O’Brien & Eriksson, 2008, p. 3). The convergence of the Knowledge Age and the process of globalization have facilitated the mobility and transition in the traditional flow of people across the globe. Along with the movement of people, comes the influx of languages, cultures and customs. These elements introduce challenges to traditional methods of teaching, learning and acceptance as individuals from the far reaches of the globe converge in everyday interactions.

**Significance of the Problem**

The need to create an international workforce became the focus of U.S. national education policy as more and more skilled labor jobs required individuals to demonstrate global competence. The United States Senate Resolution 308 (2005) clearly indicates that responsibility
for ensuring that the citizens of the United States are globally literate lies with the educational system. This mandate encourages not only institutions of higher education, but also secondary school systems to increase student participation in study abroad programs. In addition, Senate Resolution 308 (2005) states that:

Study abroad programs help people from the United States to be more informed about the world and to develop the cultural awareness necessary to avoid offending individuals from other countries; [and]… exposes students from the United States to valuable global knowledge and cultural understanding and forms an integral part of their education.

(Section 4)

Despite being part of the mainstream educational agenda for nearly a decade, efforts to increase secondary students’ access to international experience remain rare and the mandates largely ignored.

Within the social context of the world in which we live, the process of globalization has been taking place since the end of WWII. Not only did the shift in the boundaries of nation-states begin to occur, but also rapid changes in “industrial capitalism, information technology and technology itself” (Jarvis, 2010, p. 18). By the end of the 1970s, a significant number of labor jobs from the industrial sector had been relocated to non-western societies, thus changing the educational needs of the society seeking to fill the void. Kerr, Dunlop, Harbison and Myers (1961) logically predicted that the need for skilled workers in the natural sciences would increase, that there would be less demand for social science workers, and that there would be an increase in the amount of leisure time as a result of the industrialization of the world.

Life and work in the 21st century calls upon individuals to exceed the basic skills that were the dominating characteristics of the Industrial Age. New forms of learning and the
simultaneous, influential force of globalization have altered the shape and purpose of education. Mass migration, rapid expansion of technology, a more interdependent world, and a knowledge based economy are only a few characteristics defining the new millennium. Likewise, opportunities to develop global competence through experiential learning and educational tourism continue to be relatively rare in the United States. Collectively, these forces present significant prospects for U.S. public school systems facing the challenges of cultivating men and women into productive and contributing members of a global society.

**Relating the Discussion to Audiences**

This study, which explores and interprets experiential learning situations as construed by adolescents who have engaged in educational tourism, has the capability to involve adolescent voices in research. These voices are often “marginalized” and without representation in “traditional research processes” (Lind, 2007, p. 373). By inviting adolescents into the academic conversation, their voices are ascribed the prominence of co-researcher through their stories and experience. Their accounts lend credence to the application of experiential learning theory as an equally valid and meaningful educational experience beyond formal classroom learning. Falk, Ballantyne, Packer and Benckendorff (2012) contend that “the nexus between learning and travel remains a relatively under researched field” (p. 909). Therefore, allowing adolescent voices to address this gap in the literature is valuable to a number of academic pursuits, which explore the viable learning opportunities within the context of travel.

Additionally, this research is useful for policy makers, local education leaders and business partners who are interested in creating experiential learning opportunities through educational tourism or developing a global curriculum for secondary students. For practitioners, this study should provide insight into the value of infusing educational tourism into the current
curriculum. Finally, interested parents may find the study helpful in encouraging and supporting their child to make decisions about engaging in educational tourism opportunities.

**Positionality Statement**

For the past 16 years, I have been employed as an English/language arts teacher in public school systems in eastern West Virginia. During this time, I have engaged in approximately 12 educational tourism experiences, both as a participant and group leader. Upon return, the trip participants speak of the experience within the context of learning outside the traditional confines of the classroom, especially in reference to an appreciation or heightened awareness of the “otherness” of cultures, languages and environmental concerns. Experiential learning in a foreign environment was most evident in participants on a 2011 trip to Costa Rica. For a number of the student participants, it was their first time away from home, first experience with being a minority and not speaking the native language, and finally, the first encounter with a culture and customs significantly different from their own.

When I initially began my doctoral studies program, I was intent on exploring the benefits of educational travel through the voice and experience of the teacher. However, after witnessing adolescents adapt and flourish in a Central American environment, I began to consider how easily the students transitioned to the unknown setting. Subsequent conversations with both participants and their parents revealed repeated phrases such as: “It was the best thing in their/my school career;” “I am so thankful for the opportunity you gave my child/me;” and “It is their/my favorite experience in life so far.” As a result of these and other positive remarks, I felt that the adolescent voices had something important to say about the experience. I began to pursue the existing literature on student participation in international travel and found the studies were primarily restricted to (a) study abroad during the college years, (b) the traditional gap year
travel for European students, (c) exchange students at colleges in the US, and (d) experiential learning for adults. Studying the topic from the prospective of the adolescents allowed me to uncover the meaning they attribute to engaging in self-selected, self-funded experiential learning choices.

While engaging in the post trip role of a researcher employing the double hermeneutic aspect of IPA, I bracketed my assumptions prior to the interviews with the participants. The focus of data collection moved from me and my assumptions to those of the participants. My role was to attend to the story being told and help participants uncover the meaning of his or her experience. I paid close attention to the voice of the participant during the interview. Once the conversation was over, I analyzed the material from wherever I started with my concerns, preconceptions, experience and expertise, while being mindful that my perceptions changed as a result of the engagement I experienced with the research participants. During analysis, I entered a mini-circle where I engaged with the material again and began to make sense of it from my perspective.

Because the nature of this particular experience of educational tourism involves taking adolescents to a foreign country, there is an inherent amount of trust and familiarity that must be established between the group leader, the participants and their parents prior to the trip. While on the excursion, my role of group leader granted me permission to attend to any medical emergencies or situations that may arise during the trip. Additional group leader responsibilities included: setting standards for behavior and expectations while in a foreign country, group supervision during waking hours and all scheduled activities, and room assignments for each night’s stay.
Theoretical Framework

The purpose of this study was to gain a greater understanding of how rural adolescent students perceive experiential learning situations in educational tourism. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) was chosen to explore this phenomenon. The three most prominent contributors to ELT, John Dewey, the 20th century American educational theorist, Jean Piaget, the 20th century French psychologist, and Kurt Lewin, the 20th century American social psychologist, offered an approach different than the traditional behavior theorists that dominated 20th century American educational systems. Within traditional behavior theory, acquisition, manipulation, and recall of abstractions formed the basis of empirical and idealist epistemology. In turn, these theories also denied the role of a conscious or subjective experience of the individual learner. Experiential learning, however, is characterized by the role experience plays in the acquisition of learning as well as the holistic experience of the individual in the learning process (Kolb, 1984).

Dewey’s contribution. Dewey (1938), in his attempt to defend his progressive approach to education against the more traditional approaches, stated, “That the fundamental unity of the newer philosophy is found in the idea that there is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (p. 20).
As illustrated in Figure 1, Dewey’s Model of Experiential Learning proposes that observation, knowledge and judgment work together to produce purpose, as opposed to action stemming from impulse. He writes:

The formation of purposes is, then, a rather complex intellectual operation. It involves:

1. observation of surrounding conditions; 
2. knowledge of what has happened in similar situations of the past, a knowledge obtained partly by recollection and partly from the information, advice, and warning of those who have a wider experience; and 
3. judgment, which puts together what is observed and what is recalled to see what they signify. A purpose differs from an original impulse and desire through its translation into a plan and method of action based upon foresight of the consequences of action under given observed conditions in a certain way….The crucial education problem is that of procuring the postponement of immediate action upon desire until observation and
judgment have intervened … Mere foresight, even if it takes the form of accurate prediction, is not, of course, enough. The intellectual anticipation, the idea of consequences, must blend with desire and impulse to acquire moving force. It gives them direction to what otherwise is blind, while desire gives ideas impetus and momentum. (Dewey, 1938, p. 69)

Therefore, for Dewey, an integrated process involving experience, concepts, observation and action, resulted in an intellectual response much more complex than responses resulting from instinctual impulses. In other words, the ideas generated from an experience and processed through a cycle of previous information and judgment, result in a more refined action or purpose when put into practice.

**Lewin’s contribution.**

*Figure 2. Lewin’s Model of Experiential Learning*


Lewin’s work on leadership and group dynamics in 1946 led to the discovery that learning occurs best in an environment where “dialectic tension and conflict” occurs “between
concrete experience and analytic detachment” (Kolb, 1984, p. 9). Borrowing heavily from action research and laboratory training, Lewin developed a four stage cycle beginning with immediate, concrete experience, or Stage 1. Stage 2 provides an individual a period of observation and reflection. Stage 3 allows for the formation of abstract concepts or generalization to be developed into more concrete theories, while Stage 4 serves as the proving ground for testing these newly generated theories in new situations.

*Figure 2* illustrates how the “here and now,” or immediate experience, is used to challenge the immediate environment. Likewise, personal experience develops into personal meaning through observation and reflection of the personal experience. The concrete, personal experience provides the forum for the generation of new theories and abstract conceptualization, which are shared both abstractly and concretely in new learning situations. Based on the laboratory method of electrical currents, this model operates on feedback as a continual process to achieve desired goals. An equal balance between observation and action must be achieved in order to reach the highest effective potential of an experience, wherein neither too much emphasis can be applied to data collecting or hasty decision making.

**Piaget’s contribution.**
Piaget’s work in the 1920s diverted from the traditional scientific-mathematical approach of learning to that of a cognitive understanding between a person and the environment. Intelligence, then, was a natural result of this interactive experience. For Piaget, learning occurred at the crux of tension in the processes of accommodation and assimilation. Accommodation occurs when an individual encounters an experience in his or her life world that

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causes an internal altering of pre-established personal ideas, thoughts, feelings or notions, otherwise known as schemas. Assimilation occurs when an individual redistributes a new experience into already pre-existing or established internal schemas and is, by far, the less painful of the two. Both processes, however, operate in a continuous, parallel motion in which one builds upon the constructed knowledge of the previous process. Therefore, an individual is engaging in a tension filled experience that shifts from concrete to abstract and action to reflection that ultimately leads to a higher level of cognitive understanding.

Vygotsky’s (1980) thesis states, “Learning from experience is the process whereby human development occurs” and that this perspective “forms the basis for applications of experiential learning to education, work and adult development” (Kolb, 1984, xi). According to Kolb (1984), human beings are superior organisms in their ability to adapt and survive to the physical and social constructs of their world, in addition to creating and shaping the world in which they live. Common among the assertions of the above theorists is the centrality of the individual in the learning process, while maintaining the value of experiential learning as the individual interacts with his or her life world.

**Contemporary applications of experiential learning theory.** Theoretically, experiential learning posits that knowledge is created through a process that involves experience and a transformation of the individual as a result of that experience. Modern and contemporary applications of experiential learning theory remain heavily influenced by the works of Dewey, Piaget and Lewin. *Figure 4* illustrates the themes postulated on the earlier works of these theorists as they have encompassed the needs of 21st century learners.
Learning is a process, not an outcome. Experiential learning views learning and the acquisition of knowledge as a process and not as a set of measurable outcomes or a product (Bruner, 1966). The Brazilian educator and activist, Paulo Freire (1974), stated, “Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing,
hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 58).

Experience within one’s life-world allows an individual to form and reform ideas based on current interaction with stimuli and association with past experiences. Ideas are not fixed and emerge through continuous interaction based on accommodation and assimilation.

**Learning is an experience based process throughout life.** Experiential learning also considers learning as a continuous process that occurs throughout the entire life span of individuals. Dewey (1938), stated:

> As an individual passes from one situation to another, his world, his environment, expands or contracts. He does not find himself living in another world but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he has learned in the way of knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. The process goes on as long as life and learning continue. (p. 44)

This implies that all learning is relearning wherein humans become comfortable with their ability to navigate the world based on previous knowledge and experience. However, when situations occur outside of a zone of predictability, optimal learning conditions result. During this time of challenge and uncertainty, humans engage in the process of learning; a remarkable phenomenon that leaves them intact, yet changed, and able to navigate unfamiliar territory with a different knowledge system.

**Learning requires a resolution of conflicts.** For Lewin, Dewey and Piaget, conflict arose when opposite ways of dealing with the world were forced to interact. Lewin focused on the concrete versus the abstract and observation versus action. Dewey felt that conflict was best represented through impulse and desire. Finally, Piaget approached conflict resolution as either a
result of assimilation or accommodation. A more contemporary approach to conflict resolution is expressed in the “reflection and action” in order to “transform” work of Freire (1974, p. 36).

Kolb (1984) identifies four abilities required for effective learning to occur as a result of conflict: “concrete experience abilities (CE), reflective observation abilities (RO), abstract conceptualization (AC), and active experimentation (AE)” (p. 30). These dialectically opposed manifestations allow learners to synthesize their involvement in experience, reflect on that experience, integrate the experience into the self and finally, commit to action using the newly constructed information.

**Learning is holistic.** Experiential Learning approaches learning as a holistic response between a person and his or her adaptation to the social and physical world (Kolb, 1984). Borrowing heavily from Jungian psychology types (Jung, 1923), it conceptualizes learning as occurring in the integration of thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving, wherein these functions serve as basic human responses to stimuli experienced (Kolb, 1984). In other words, it is the cumulative response of the human, rather than a behaviorist approach, which accounts for the process of adaptation.

Research on human behavior considering this characteristic of experiential learning, is vast and diverse. It encompasses all of the human experience in virtually every setting and life stage. Therefore, the scope of the studies has grown to include specialized topics such as creativity, problem solving, decision making and attitude change (Kolb, 1984). As a whole, these topics form a body of literature that reflects the interdependence of the situations and responses a human being experiences throughout life.

**The person and the environment.** Experiential learning recognizes the dual relationship between internal and external conditions of experience. According to Dewey (1938), the
convergence of these two interrelated factors combines to form a “situation” (p. 42). In other words, while a person can be said to be “in” the world, or present in bodily form, he or she is also actively engaged “in” a transactional relationship with any number of elements that make up his or her present environment. Therefore, the two constructs of “in” are completely separate yet dependent on the existence of each other in order to experience a situation. Individuals, then, become an active and self-directed processor of environmental stimuli in order to adapt to the necessary conditions needed for a successful relationship with the environment.

**Knowledge is created through the process of learning.** Human beings are born “in” cultural and social relationships with stimulus and environment and therefore, acquire knowledge based on these relationships. Social knowledge is objective and based on the totality of the human experience both in local and global aspects. It is assimilated into experience through cultural and social practices. On the other hand, personal knowledge is subjective and is the result of the individual testing acquired social knowledge against the factors of the present environment. As a result, learning is highly individualized and personal. Despite any number of identical factors, no two individuals experience the life-world in a duplicate manner. Each individual must create, recreate and transform according to experience.

Kolb (1984) stated the “emphasis on development toward a life of purpose and self-direction [becomes] the organizing principal for education” (p. 18). The vast application of ELT includes: social policy, competency-based education, lifelong learning and career development and curriculum development. Ultimately, learning is a result of humans experiencing their world and therefore, is based on the context that we exist. Through the existential interaction with everyday phenomena, an intrinsic relationship develops between the person and his or her experiences of living. This relationship, in turn, becomes the storyline for a personal biography,
which continues from birth to death. As a whole, the intellectual and philosophical orientations of experiential learning provide a viable path of exploration into the nature of how humans create meaning in their personal and professional lives.

**Organization of the Thesis**

This doctoral thesis is organized into five chapters. The first chapter presents the topic, statement of the problem, justification for the research, significance of the problem, how the discussion of the research relates to a number of audiences, the study limitations, positionality of the researcher, and theoretical framework. Chapter two contains a review of the literature beginning with the educational struggle to place global education on the mainstream agenda, in addition to producing a workforce with the necessary skills of 21st century work. This chapter also explores the documented benefits of travel as revealed through the literature on study abroad, the most widely used venue for gaining such experience. Chapter three contains a detailed examination of IPA, the methodology chosen to explore the topic under research. Also included are the method of data collection, analysis and ethical concerns of the study. Chapter four provides details of the research findings. Chapter five situates the thematic findings of this research within the extant literature concerning the learning outcomes of international experience. The thesis concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research upon educational policy and practice.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Most scholars who study aspects of individuals with international experience agree that there is a significant change such as increased self-esteem, independence, and global awareness in participants who engage in the phenomenon (Cushner & Mahon, 2002; Mahon & Stachowski, 1990; Kauffman, 1983). The body of research concerning the outcomes of an international experience is well represented by a number of disciplines with participants usually being identified by profession (e.g. nurse, teacher, business) or by group membership (e.g. student, backpacker, study major) as opposed to an individual. Despite numerous studies which report quantifiable measures in applications to the fields of business, marketing and economics, the nexus of tourism and learning, or the educative outcomes of the experience is often mentioned as a by-product of engagement.

The scope of this review first covers a brief history of efforts from the field of education to produce global minded citizens through research and reform practices. Next, in terms of length and purpose of travel, the extensive body of literature on study abroad offers a comprehensive base to explore the learning opportunities that result in engagement with the phenomenon. In terms of duration, a multitude of study abroad programs can last anywhere from one to eight weeks. As such, the participants can be considered as tourists and their purposes for travel as education or learning, thereby, making study results applicable in terms of educational tourism. The review moves forward by discussing the benefits of experience for the student in terms of identity and global citizenship, the development of phronesis, and finally, to the development of intercultural competence and sensitivity. A final outcome of workforce desirability is the last section of the literature review.
Educating Global Minded Citizens-Historical Roots

Over the last 40 years, the idea of preparing a nation’s citizenry for work and life in a
global world has been steadfastly embedded in the field of education. In his self-proclaimed
“beginning effort to define some elements of what we call a global perspective,” educator Robert
Hanvey (1976) highlighted the needed educational response to the changing dynamics of the
latter half of the 20th century. He determined five viewpoints were essential for a global
perspective. These include (a) perspective consciousness, (b) state of the planet awareness, (c)
cross-cultural awareness, (d) knowledge of global dynamics, and (e) awareness of human choices
(pp. 2-46). Also at that time, work was being carried out in the UK by Robin Richardson and his
World Studies Project, which ran from 1973-1980. Richardson’s work was based on radical
educators such as Johan Galtung (peace research), Paulo Freire (political education), and Carl
Rogers (humanistic psychology) (Hicks, 2003).

King (1976) also identified four perspectives that defined a global mindset. These include
(a) awareness of involvement in the world system, (b) decision making, (c) judgment making,
and (d) exercise of influence (pp. 10-11). Stillman (1978) offered five goals necessary to work
toward a global perspective. These include

(a) appreciate the interrelation between a given society and major world concerns, (b)
recognize basic human commonalities as well as cultural differences, (c) understand
how perceptions vary among individuals, (d) respond to information with skills
adequate for the electronic age, and (e) react objectively to national and world events
(p. 2).

A decade after A Nation At Risk (Gardner, 1983) helped bring the idea of global
education to education reform, Roland Case (1993) called for greater clarity of the goals of
global education. His work, *Key Elements of a Global Perspective* (1993), added to the foundational perspective by distinguishing between the two interrelated dimensions of a global perspective: the substantive and the perceptual. His substantive elements include (a) universal and cultural values and practices, (b) global interconnections, (c) present worldwide concerns and conditions, (d) origins and past patterns of worldwide affairs, and (e) alternative future directions in worldwide affairs (pp. 318-320). His elements from the perceptual conception include (a) open-mindedness, (b) anticipation of complexity, (c) resistance to stereotyping, (d) inclination to empathize, and (e) nonchauvinism (pp. 320-324). Within these constructs, Case (1993) called for an examination of global issues through “a point of view” of events; he believed that by looking at issues and events without preconceived notions and stereotypes, students would develop an “open-mindedness” about the context in which they occur (p. 318).

Closer to the beginning of the new millennium, Merryfield (1995) argued students should be prepared for “human diversity, cross-cultural interaction, dynamic change, and global interdependence” and that “cultural pluralism, interconnectedness and international competition” require knowledge, skills and attitudes particular to the 21st century (p. 2). She later added to her body of work by reducing, if not eliminating, the definitional ambiguities and clearing the path for global education in a global age. Her eight elements include (a) human beliefs and values (b) global systems, (c) global issues and problems, (d) cross-cultural understanding, (e) awareness of human choices, (f) global history, (g) acquisition of indigenous knowledge, and (h) development of analytical, evaluative, and participatory skills (Merryfield, 1997).

Research in the field of global education continued to grow, and Tye (1999) noted in his study of global education in more than 50 countries, the most common issues identified were (a) ecology/environment, (b) development, (c) intercultural relations, (d) peace, (e) economics, (f)
technology and (g) human rights. He also found global education to be closely connected with issues (i.e. peace education, environmental education) that retained their own identity thereby making it difficult to classify them with the global domain.

Much controversy exists as policymakers struggle to define the words global and international, and the subsequent documents they create express that dilemma. Hanvey (1976) argues that global education requires perspective-taking along with the development of a clearer understanding of one’s point of view. In practice, global education usually focuses on global environmental, humanitarian, and economic developments (Gutek, 1993). Osler and Vincent (2002) define global education as:

…the strategies, policies and plans that prepare young people and adults for living together in an interdependent world. It is based on the principals of cooperation, non-violence, respect for human rights and cultural diversity, democracy and tolerance. It is characterized by pedagogical approaches based on human rights and a concern for social justice which encourage critical thinking and responsible participation (p. 2).

Global education has evolved into an umbrella term that encompasses a diverse spectrum of topics and issues. Pedagogical practices in the new millennium must reflect the diversity and interconnectedness of the world. Global understanding has become the hallmark skill of the 21st century workforce. Both Dewey and Kolb advocate the role experience plays in education. Likewise, research indicates that engagement in study abroad most adeptly covers the academic and experiential nature of acquiring these necessary skills.

**Study Abroad and Its Benefits**

Faced with a rapidly changing political and economic world, higher education institutions in the US were called upon to produce globally competent citizens with “the ability not only to
contribute to knowledge, but also to comprehend, analyze, and evaluate its meaning in the context of an increasingly globalized world” (NASULGC, n.p. 2004). As a result, colleges and universities revisited the age old concept of travel to enhance learning and supported the development of global competence by expanding study abroad programs.

For students who seek to add global experience to their resume, study abroad programs continue to be the most popular venue for exposure to foreign cultures. Study abroad is divided broadly into long-term and short-term time periods, and an ensuing debate remains as to the effectiveness of each. Long-term abroad is defined as one or two semesters or a full academic year, and research supports the suggestion that long-term abroad is more effective. Davidson (2007) claims that “substantial immersion” is necessary in order to achieve levels of language proficiency (p. 27). Hunter (2004) noted that “brief cultural injection” was not as influential as study abroad lasting longer than one semester, and that in order to develop into fully global citizens, students had to first understand their own “cultural box” (p. 18). Additionally, studies by Hoff, (2008); Ingraham & Peterson, (2004); and Medina-Lopez-Portillo, (2004) found that an increase in the amount of student’s intercultural growth and competence was directly related to the amount of time students spent in an international setting.

Likewise, Dwyer (2004) found that students with one academic year abroad were

(a) more likely to live with host country nationals, (b) represented a self-selected group who had more interest in study abroad to begin with, (c) used the ability to study abroad as a criteria for college selection, (d) enrolled in foreign university courses, (e) showed increased confidence in their linguistic ability, (f) were more inclined to increase college majors, (g) and twice as likely to earn a Ph.D. than their counterparts who experienced short-term time abroad (pp. 155-157).
Despite the reported advantages of longer stays, short-term study abroad is the fastest growing component of study abroad due in part by its affordability, lesser time commitment and little interference with prescribed programs of study (Donnelly-Smith, 2009). McKeown (2009) suggested that study abroad for any length of time is beneficial, especially for students experiencing a foreign culture for the first time. Short term abroad can be experienced on all seven continents and is defined as one semester or less with the duration of one to eight weeks. A number of experiences ranging from service learning to immersion to collegiate courses make up the base of short-term study abroad. According to the Institute for International Education Open Door Data (2008), over 50% of study abroad program offerings ranged from one to five weeks and were comprised of faculty and students from multiple institutions. The report also indicated that there was a 150% increase in study abroad participants over the last 10 years and that 70% of the participants were juniors, seniors and graduate students.

A number of U.S. leaders have voiced their opinions on the merits of studying abroad. While releasing a statement for International Education Week 2011, former Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton stated, “Study abroad can be one of the most rewarding experiences in a young person’s life, and when students return home they bring new knowledge, new perspectives, and a deeper understanding of the world” (http://youtu.be/QYfnjYp933M). In a meeting with representatives and supporters of International Youth Exchange Programs, former President Ronald Regan (1982) stated:

There is a flickering spark in all of us, if struck at just the right age…can light the rest of our lives, elevating our ideals, deepening our tolerance, and sharpening our appetite for knowledge about the rest of the world. Educational and cultural exchanges… provide a
perfect opportunity for this precious spark to grow, making us more sensitive and wiser international citizens through our careers. (The White House, May 24, 1982).

Former President, Bill Clinton, himself a recipient of a Rhodes scholarship for study at Oxford University, stated, “No one who has lived through the second half of the twentieth century could possibly be blind to the enormous impact exchange programs have on the future of countries” (The White House, May 1993). Former President, George W. Bush’s (2001) International Education Week Message stated:

By studying foreign cultures and languages and living abroad, we gain a better understanding of the many similarities that we share and learn to respect our differences. The relationships that are formed between individuals from different countries, as part of international education programs and exchanges, can also foster goodwill that develops into vibrant, mutually beneficial partnerships among nations. (The White House, November 13, 2001)

These statements indicate recent U.S. political leaders demonstrate unquestionable solidarity and support for study abroad being a critical addition to the educational trajectory. Despite calls for college students to take advantage of international study opportunities and a plethora of research which documents the positive outcomes of the experience, the number of participants, about 2.1 %, remains alarmingly low (Donnelly-Smith, 2009).

**Identity and Global Citizenship**

Global citizenship is a modern definition of the ancient Greek construct of cosmopolitanism where one was considered a “citizen of the world” who dwelled locally while in parallel union with the larger universe or “cosmos.” Contemporary cosmopolitanism relies heavily on definitions from the works of Nussbaum (1997) who wrote “…we should make all
human beings part of our community of dialogue of concern, base our political deliberations on that interlocking commonality, and give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect” (p. 9). Additionally, Appiah (2006) contends that our differences can bring us together through understandings common to the human spirit.

The U.S. construct of global citizenship became intricately interwoven with the increase of study abroad programs and the perceived inadequacy of the US to defend its boarders in combination with the determination that Americans were globally ignorant and unable to lead the world. The Lincoln Commission (2005), a group of federally appointed politicians and educators, recommended a set of guidelines to ensure that students from the United States were provided with the opportunity to engage in multicultural and international educational settings. Congressional powers were quick to respond, and 2006 became the “Year of Study Abroad” with the postulation that “leadership cannot be sustained without an informed citizenry with significant knowledge and awareness of the world” (S. Res. 308, 2005, p. 3). These efforts were grounded in Van Gunsteren’s (1988) belief that citizenship was constructed, not a birthright, and contained the condition of knowledge or “communicative competence, culture [and] information” (p. 733). Consequently, this theory is supported by a number of research studies, which suggest that immersive situations such as those included in study abroad, provide an assimilative experience aimed at constructing a global identity.

Tarrant (2010) advocates for programs to include experiential situations where students were expected to engage in environments that challenged preemptive beliefs about others. This study further encourages empirical testing of the Value-Belief-Norm (V-B-N) theory to validate the personal and professional impact of study abroad as opposed to traditional on-campus global preparation programs. In addition to developing an awareness of environmental stewardship,
students who traveled internationally were increasingly aware of themselves as American and the privilege and responsibility as such. This position of power could be manipulated into the Dobson (2003) model of the Earth Citizen, or one who feels he or she is personally responsible, actively engaged and justice oriented (Tarrant, 2010).

Likewise, the transformation from individuals acknowledging environmental concerns to that of global citizenship was also the subject of a study conducted by Paige, Fry, Stallman, Josic and Jon (2009). This study of 6,391 participants indicated a long-term impact in “five dimensions of global engagement including (a) civic engagement, (b) knowledge production, (c) philanthropy, (d) social entrepreneurship, and (e) voluntarily simplicity (p. S29). The instrument, Global Engagement Survey, empirically and systematically documented the impact on individuals who had studied abroad during a 50 year period. Through quantitative and qualitative data, the research supports that study abroad held the most impact of the total undergraduate experience (p. S42). Additionally, the scope and magnitude of this study indicated an overwhelming, 94.2 % (p. S39) of the respondents reported civic involvement, primarily through voting, while 54.7% of the respondents report being engaged in some type of volunteer work (p. S40). Finally, the work of Schattle (2009) sought to identify paths an individual can embark upon to achieve the status of global citizenship. Among the five, he contended “…traveling abroad to participate in educational programs has served a pivotal step in the lives of many self-described global citizens” (p. 15).

Research demonstrates that study abroad is a vital component of developing global citizenship. As a government influenced and supported program, study abroad offers individuals the opportunity to challenge the ethnocentric beliefs of local culture while developing the knowledge base and attitudes necessary to become aware of the world as an interconnected
whole. Research also demonstrates that this connection has positive life-long effects on environmental stewardship, civic engagement and justice oriented volunteer work.

**Phronesis**

The Greek philosopher Aristotle believed in the concept of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom as gained through experiences, settings or situations a person encounters as he or she lives life. A number of studies are situated at the intersection of practical wisdom encountered through types of free choice learning such as the decision to engage in international travel for educative purposes. The conceptual framework of Falk, Ballantyne, Packer and Benckendorff (2012) provides support for the value of educational tourism as a venue to build generic skills in an active and absorbing environment where learning goes beyond doing the right thing but doing it in the proper context and for the proper reasons.

Additional studies support the notion that students seek study abroad as a venue of gaining access to skills necessary for everyday life. Kitsantas, (2004), and McCabe, (1994) found cross-cultural skills and global understanding to be the primary motivator for participants, while foreign language acquisition was the motivating force in a study conducted by Opper, Teichler, and Carlson (1990). International political concern was the most influential motivator for student travel as determined by Carlson and Widaman (1988), and a desire to learn more about another country’s literary and artistic culture was the subject of Carsello and Creaser’s (1976) contribution.

Using the framework of phronesis, a qualitative analysis conducted by Pitman, Broomhall, and Majocha, (2011) collected data from 613 travelers, and explored the relationship of educational tourism and life-long learners, (i.e. community members) through university based travel opportunities. This study identifies three characteristics relevant to educational
travel based on Pitman, Broomhall, McEwan & Majocha (2010). These include (a) experiential learning, (b) learning accessible to wide range of adult learners, and (c) tour leader plays crucial role in learning experience (p. 235). Additionally, three key ideas about phronetic learning were found (a) learning was intentional, (b) it was a structured exercise of pedagogy, and (c) it was an experiential incident of learning, involving immersive, hands-on encounters in situ (pp. 234-235).

Pearce and Foster’s (2007) generic skills assessment sought to (a) determine if level of travel experience was relevant to skill development, (b) assess the amount of travel needed to change skills, and (c) compare skill development between travel and education and other skills developed by travel (p. 1296). It found that students with four or more travel experiences (a) had higher skill development, (b) scored higher on the assessment, and (c) twelve of the most important skills assessed were positively impacted by international travel (p. 1296). This framework was also useful for researchers comparing traveling to non-traveling students in addition to policy makers and curriculum designers seeking to develop travel opportunities for students.

Black and Duhon (2006) employed the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) designed by Kelly and Meyers (1993) to evaluate U.S. students from a ten-institution consortium, who participated in a month-long study abroad. Positive gains were determined in enhanced cross-cultural tolerance and empathy, as well as self-confidence and independence. The CCAI was designed to assess four dimensions of cross-cultural adaptability: flexibility, perceptual acuity, emotional resilience, and personal autonomy. Students in this study were assessed in each of these areas both at the beginning and end of their abroad experience.
Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) large scale assessment of student attitudes after short-term study abroad found 27% of comments focused on personal growth and development in the areas of (a) adaptability, (b) flexibility, (c) patience, (d) responsibility, (e) respect for others, and (f) appreciation for the arts (p. 173). The study also indicated nearly 30% held different views of the US, and acknowledged the privileged position of U.S. citizenship. Additionally, the study indicated that 10% of the study participants engaged in repeat international experiences.

The acquisition of generic skills which are transferable to everyday life has been well documented through research. Knowledge development is evident in a reported appreciation for the arts and culture of others vastly different from us. Likewise, personal development occurs as individuals interact with others and navigate foreign cultural norms. The research also supports the suggestion that experience with other cultures becomes a viable pathway to life-long learning. Therefore, the attainment of generic skills through educational travel can be viewed as a positive benefit of the experience.

**Development of Intercultural Sensitivity**

From cognitive psychology and constructivism theory, studies on short-term abroad indicate that people follow a “predictable path” toward the development of sensitivity to other cultures (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006, p. 460). These findings helped to facilitate the creation of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DIMS) and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI). Bennett’s (1986, 1993) DIMS was developed as a model of “explanation of how people construe cultural difference” (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423). Furthermore, the model accounts for “changes in worldview structure, where the observable behavior and self-reported attitudes at each stage are indicative of the underlying worldview” (p. 423). The process is represented by the illustration below.
The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1986, 1983) divides intercultural sensitivity into two parts comprised of six stages. The ethnocentric or reality portion includes the stages of denial, defense and minimalization, while the ethnorelativistic portion includes acceptance, adaptation and integration stages. Following Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) and Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) grounded theory approach, Bennett (1986, 1983) applied cognitive psychology and constructivism worldviews to posit that:

The extent to which the event of cultural difference will be experienced is a function of how complexly it can be constructed, while the crux of the development of intercultural sensitivity is attaining the ability to construe (and thus to experience) cultural difference in more complex ways. (Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423)

In other words, as experience becomes more complex or as illustrated within the first three orientations, the construction of the events taking place will become more complex, as indicated in the last three orientations.

The first empirically-based study used to measure intercultural sensitivity was conducted by Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova and DeJaeghere (2003). This preliminary study led to the development of a 50-item paper and pencil instrument of measurement known as the IDI.
Jackson (2008) applied the framework of the DIMS and IDI as an illustrative case study of advanced foreign language students from China on a five-week sojourn to England. The results support the theoretical underpinnings of the DIMS and IDI models, in addition to sustaining the claim that study abroad experiences lead to an awareness of (a) cultural differences, (b) sociopragmatic awareness, and (c) empathy (p. 356). Students who showed higher levels of intercultural sensitivity were reported to be more open-minded and demonstrated a willingness to try new things. However, the students with the highest reported levels of intercultural sensitivity indicated they developed a “broader worldview” and “global identity” (p. 356). Finally, the study revealed the development of intercultural sensitivity did not parallel the development of second language proficiency, and therefore offered caution to program administrators who seemingly overlook this barrier.

**Development of Intercultural Competence**

Deardorff (2006/2004) was the first to study and document the elements of intercultural competence as a measurable benefit of study abroad. Both scholars and administrators came to a general consensus using qualitative and quantitative methods of assessment. The resulting two models of intercultural competency: The Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence and The Process Model of Intercultural Competence, indicate the 22 agreed upon elements.
Figure 6. The Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence

**DESIRED EXTERNAL OUTCOME:**
Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one’s goals to some degree

**DESIRED INTERNAL OUTCOME:**
*Informed frame of reference/filter shift:*
Adaptability (to different communication styles & behaviors; adjustment to new cultural environment):
Flexibility (selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviors; cognitive flexibility):
Ethnorelative view;
Empathy

**Knowledge & Comprehension**
Cultural self-awareness;
Deep understanding and knowledge of culture (including contexts, role and impact of culture & others’ world views);
Culture-specific information;

**Skills:**
To listen, observe, and interpret
To analyze, evaluate, and relate

**Requisite Attitudes:**
Respect (valuing other cultures, cultural diversity)
Openness (to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures, withholding judgment
Curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty)

- Move from personal level (attitude) to interpersonal/interactive level (outcomes)
- Degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of underlying elements

*Figure 6. The Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence. Deardorff, D. K. (2006/2004).*

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The pyramid model allows for general and specific degree of intercultural competence to be determined both at the personal level and the overall level. It focuses on the internal and
external attributes of cultural competence wherein attitudes (i.e. respect, openness, curiosity, and discovery) are the essential base for acquisition. The model compares closely with the 1996 American Council on International Intercultural Education developmental stages where again, the base level was considered most important for the development of global mindedness (Deardorff, 2006).

*Figure 7. Process Model of Intercultural Competence*

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of
doi:10.1177/1028315306287002

The second model developed by Deardorff (2006/2004) contains the same elements as the first, yet emphasizes the movement between the elements. Likewise, a learner can move directly from attitudes or knowledge and comprehension to external outcomes without completing the process. Illustrated as cyclic in nature, this model indicates the continual cycle individuals experience as they move through situations of contact. Additionally, it indicated that complete attainment may not be a possibility, but rather that individuals remain in an ever evolving state of adaptability.

Workforce Desirability

The complex and diverse cultural differences expressed by the world’s inhabitants can challenge one’s attitude, beliefs and world views. Research identifies that the workforce of the 21st century requires proficiency in the following areas: people skills (Bush & Bush, 1999); multicultural environments in the workplace (Ismail, Morgan & Hayes, 2006); communication unhindered by cultural background (Carnevale, 2008); and an understanding of others different from one’s self (Jones, 2003). While visiting another country, long-standing generalizations, assumptions, and stereotypes are often challenged by the openness and communication required simply by placing one’s self in a foreign environment. As a venue for actively pursuing the creation of a globally minded citizenry, study abroad programs have shown positive increases in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of world mindedness. The knowledge, skills and attitudes, in turn, are highly valued in the business industry and are especially attractive to perspective employers.
Several studies suggest career mobility and graduate employability were major factors in individuals seeking to study abroad as well as prospective employers looking to hire. Crossman and Clark’s (2010) qualitative study found that would-be employers and other stakeholders place value on (a) international experience in terms of employability, (b) networking, (c) experiential learning, (d) language acquisition, (e) generic skills development, and (f) personal growth (pp. 604-608). Wright and Clarke III’s (2010) empirical investigation into 85 business students on a semester-long, faculty-led study abroad to Belgium stated that participants in study abroad return “with better intercultural communication skills, more global worldviews, and a greater sensitivity to cultural differences” (p. 156). These findings maintain the claims of Hett (1993) through five dimensions of global mindedness (a) responsibility, (b) cultural pluralism, (c) efficacy, (d) global-centrism, and (e) interconnectedness. Evidence from Wright and Clarke III’s (2010) also supports Carter’s (2005) position that study abroad leads to changes in U.S. students. Notable gains were demonstrated in appreciation for (a) diversity, (b) an awareness and connection to others, (c) self-confidence, (d) flexibility and finally (e) effective communication.

Peacock (2005) suggests students with overseas experience are more competitive in job hunting and compiled a comprehensive list of the value of international experience during the application and interview process. She found strong cultural diversity skills to be a critical factor necessary to relay to prospective employers. Toncar and Cudmore, (2000) determined that the experience offered students a more effective resume.

Curran (2007) sought to dispel the myth that overseas experience automatically makes a more desirable employee. While listing time spent abroad on a resume may catch the attention of a prospective employer, Thompson (2004) determined that although employers may not place a high value on an international experience in its own right; they do, however, seek prospective
employees who demonstrate cultural awareness, competent communication, leadership skills, independence, and maturity.

Research also indicates the prospective employees with international or study abroad experiences seek new themes to define their career. Richardson and McKenna (2003) conducted a study of 30 British academics in four different countries using Weick’s (1996) “patterns that compromise the boundaryless career” as motivators in seeking an overseas appointment (p. 41). Travel and personal learning were cited among the most popular influences. These academics were however, more traditional in their beliefs about the career boost offered by overseas experience both in their employability and marketability, expecting a type of upwards mobility in comparison to their colleagues lacking this experience.

Therefore, employees and employers of the future should recognize the market worth of an individual with overseas experience. Exposure to the others outside one’s comfort zone plays a significant role in the holistic development of an individual. A young adult with the knowledge, skills and attitudes of global competence has a marked advantage over counterparts without such attributes.

**Summary**

A number of studies exist to support the claim that international travel has a positive impact on an individual’s journey toward global competence. While on the excursion, learning opportunities exist with each new animal sighted, food tasted, and conversation with a local. Simple money exchanges in foreign currency and ordering food from a menu are viable learning venues for phronesis, or practical wisdom. The navigation of international airports and public transportation systems are also global curriculum spaces valuable for learning life skills. Students who wish to compete in the global workforce should take advantage of opportunities to
travel abroad and gain the perspective of global citizenship. They must be diligent in establishing their own curriculum through self-selected learning choices. The world of work is immensely different from the one that awaited their parents, grandparents and even many of their teachers. It is a world that expects acceptance and understanding of people vastly different than the local population. It is also a world that changes rapidly and requires its citizens to adapt and respond just as hastily.
Chapter 3: Research Design

This chapter describes the selected research methodology for this study. Included in the description are: the paradigm, study approach, tradition and the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the selected research approach as they relate to the research questions. This chapter also describes the study participants, recruitment strategies, access to the study location, data collection methods, storage and analysis of data, and the establishment of trustworthiness of the participants.

The purpose of this study was to explore the meaning adolescent participants’ make of the experience of educational tourism. The following research question was formulated to investigate the phenomenon shared by the participant group: What are the learning experiences of rural adolescents engaging in educational tourism and how do they make sense of the educational benefit of these experiential learning situations?

Paradigm

Social constructivism, according to Creswell, (2013) holds the view that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 24) and that “the research relies as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (p. 25). This worldview posits that subjective views are held through cultural and historical norms that influence individuals as they interact with others in a social context. The ontological and epistemological underpinnings of social constructivism call for multiple realities to be co-constructed between the researcher and the researched through interpretation of individual lived experiences (Creswell, 2013). These interactions or experiences form complex meanings that can be studied through qualitative methods.
Merriam (2009) lists four characteristics of qualitative research wherein (a) the focus is on the process, understanding, and meaning making and meaning, (b) the researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, (c) the process is inductive, and (d) the product is richly descriptive (p. 14). Qualitative research assumes that individuals interpret meaning through social interaction with the world. Merriam (2009) states “all qualitative research is interpretative as individuals construct reality within their social worlds” (p. 22). Qualitative research allows for the construction of meaning or the importance that individuals attribute to a phenomenon. Therefore, researchers attempt to replicate a written analysis of how participants understand experiences specific to a phenomenon by considering the thinking and engagement processes of the individual.

A qualitative approach was selected to allow for an inductive analysis of responses. Within qualitative research, causal, statistical or overt generalizations are not made, but rather the everyday sense making, subjective experiences of participants are explored. Themes are developed within and across cases, which are narrowed down by common characteristics. These sub units of data then provide the basis for the researcher’s written narrative. The narrative description written by the researcher is interpreted or “mediated” according to the researcher’s own personal experience or concern with the phenomenon, but in a manner that allows the participant’s experiences to dominate and validate the findings (van Manen, 1990, p. 26). The proposed qualitative study aligns under the social constructivist paradigm through the use of an Interpretative Phenomenology Analysis (IPA) method, making it appropriate for the researcher to interpret or make sense of individuals’ experience with experiential learning in educational tourism.
Research Tradition

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is a relatively new approach to investigate qualitative inquiry borrowing heavily from the field of psychology. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis assumes humans exist in a world where semantics, culture and connections are situated in a temporal and perpetual based construct, and has more recently been applied to research in the human, social and health sciences (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). It is informed by three theoretical underpinnings including: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, in addition to the four major philosophical theories of Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is phenomenological because it attempts examination of human experience in terms of the individual. As such, it is interpretative, or based on the participant’s individual experience with the phenomenon. Lastly, it is idiographic, wherein the particulars of single cases are singularly detailed and examined before any general statements are made regarding the essence of an experience.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis searches for moments of precise implication or worth for individuals. In order to uncover the particulars of an experience, an individual reflects on the significance of the experience and attempts to make sense of it. At its core, it is the exploration of the meaning humans ascribe to everyday lived experience. Therefore, the philosophic underpinnings of IPA may prove “illuminating and insightful” but are not intended to replace the “lived dynamic activity” of experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 33). Researchers using IPA methods seek to examine a participant’s subjective experience of something through a systematic and scientific application of data collection of “first and second mental and affective responses” to a phenomenon (p. 33). Thus the engagement and interaction becomes “an experience of importance as the person reflects on the significance of what has
happened and engages in ‘hot cognition’ in trying to make sense of it” (p. 33). Therefore, the findings of IPA research present data that has been made sense of not only through the participant, but also through the researcher.

Likewise, personal experience becomes an interpretative endeavor of both the participant and the researcher. Themes postulated during this interpretation will produce both the distinctive voices of the participants as well as shared experiences. Readers of IPA studies also ultimately share in the process of interpretation as they bring their own assumptions to the piece of work and as a result, seek to verify the claims against theoretical and practical applications of the research.

**Philosophy and Theory of IPA**

**Phenomenology.** Phenomenology was mentioned in the works of Immanuel Kant as early as 1765. The French philosopher, Descartes, (1596-1650) had, nearly a century earlier, suggested that experiences and the senses played a role in knowledge acquisition. However, German-born philosopher and scientist Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was the first to seriously consider its applications to learning. Kant, Descartes and Husserl all held the belief that “knowledge based on intuition and essence precedes empirical knowledge” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Van Manen, (1990) states that phenomenology “is the systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience,” and that “a universal or essence may only be intuited or grasped through a study of the particulars or instances as they are encountered in lived experience” (p. 10). The researcher asks what (textural) and how (structural) questions to participants to search for meaning common to all participants, while seeking to also define the essence that was shared by all participants.
According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenon should be a single concept or idea which is explored within a group of individuals who have all experienced the same phenomenon. There is a focus on the subjective lived experience of the individual, in addition to the objective experience of the participants who have all shared this experience. Phenomenological research questions the lived experience of human beings as they live and interact in the world. It searches for the very essence of experience through reflective measures of the participants. Through inductive patterns, the researcher is able to build a “bottom up” analysis of the participants lived experiences into an abstract account of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). It also contains a sense of uniqueness to the individual experience as research worthy; therefore making qualitative, phenomenological studies replicable, but lacking in the generalization or theory making characteristics of quantitative studies. As an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the phenomenon, phenomenological studies serve as a gateway to understanding for individuals wishing to know what constitutes the experience of something. Additionally, these studies serve to inform practices and policies which govern a specific approach to introducing the experience of the phenomenon.

The goal of phenomenological research is to provide the reader with an essence of what something is like as experienced by a group of individuals. The research subjects are therefore human and the research belongs to the field of human science. As such, phenomenological research follows a scientific pattern. Moustakas (1994) claims, “The method of reflection that occurs throughout the phenomenological approach provides a logical, systematic, and coherent resource for carrying out the analysis and synthesis needed to arrive at essential descriptions of the experience” (p. 47).
Husserl’s philosophy and theory of phenomenology. Husserl’s views encompass both philosophical assumptions of phenomenology in addition to being the first major theoretical underpinning of the IPA tradition. By including an actual human subject, Husserl challenged the accepted quantitative scientific approaches dominate in research through the mid-20th century. His early training in science and mathematics was abandoned in favor of a focus on the subjectivity where minds and objects both occur within experience (Laverty, 2003). Husserl believed that intentionality or where the “mind is directed at an area of study” and essences, the “ultimate structures of consciousness” were the keys to understanding phenomenology (Laverty, 2003, p. 5).

Husserl believed that a return to ‘the things themselves’ or an in-depth analysis of a person upon their own experience of a phenomenon would help them “identify essential qualities of an experience” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 12). Once identified, these essential qualities may take on a transformational appearance and in turn, offer an illuminating quality of the experience for others. By removing experiences from pre-conceived categories, individuals can gain a more authentic insight and awareness of the experience. In other words, he encouraged individuals to focus on the perception of the experience with sensitivity and discernment rather than subconsciously move through it. In order for this analysis to take place, one must enter a state of reflective consciousness wherein thinking about the thoughts and feelings associated with the experience takes place. He writes:

Focusing our experiencing gaze on our own psychic life necessarily takes place as reflection, as a turning about of a glance which had previously been directed elsewhere. Every experience can be subject to such reflection, as can indeed every manner in which we occupy ourselves with any real or ideal objects-for instance, thinking or in the modes
of feeling and will, valuing and striving. So when we are fully engaged in conscious activity, we focus exclusively on the specific thing, thoughts, values, goals, or means involved, but not on the psychical experience as such, in which these things are known as such. Only reflection reveals this to us. Through reflection, instead of grasping simply the matter straight-out – the values, goals, and instrumentalities- we grasp the corresponding subjective experiences in which we become ‘conscious’ of them, in which (in the broadest sense) they ‘appear.’ For this reason, they are called ‘phenomena,’ and their most general essential character is to exist as the ‘consciousness-of’ or ‘appearance of’ the specific things, thoughts (judged states of affairs, grounds, conclusions) plans, decisions, hopes, and so forth. (Husserl, 1927, para. 2)

Husserl applied the term “intentionality” to describe the relationship between the person and the awareness of the experience or object in the consciousness (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 13). Thus phenomenological studies are grounded in the intentional conscious relationship between a person and an object or experience. However, in order for the relationship to occur, an individual must ‘bracket’ or remove from the consciousness, the deeply-rooted or familiar ways of interpretation (p. 13). According to Husserl, (1927) the process known as ‘reductions’ isolates the experience, and once the experience is free from all preconceived and established assumptions, only the essence remained (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 14). The subjective essence of an experience is therefore highly individual, but can then be postulated into common essential features that describe the experience of ‘the things themselves’ (p. 12). Thus, through the establishment of the fundamental characteristics of an essence, the realistic and poignant response to life world experiences begins to share a universal meaning.
While Husserl was a philosopher and trained scientist, he felt that science was a “second-order knowledge system” based on “first-order personal experience” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 15). His approach to the phenomenological process was highly conceptual and lacking in specific detail. His contributions to IPA, namely the process of reflection and bracketing, were instrumental in helping researchers establish IPA as a valid research method.

Heidegger’s philosophy and theory of hermeneutics. Husserl’s theory subsequently developed a following of other academics that were beginning to challenge the notion of scientific methods as applied to psychological processes. One such academic, Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), a fellow teacher at Freiberg, was trained by Husserl in the methods of intentionality and reduction (Laverty, 2003). The relationship was not to last, however and once Heidegger succeeded Husserl’s position, he began to posit the notion that language, thinking, and being are one (van Manen, 1990).

Heidegger, the second philosophical and theoretical contributor to IPA methodology, posited language added the dimension of hermeneutics to the methodology of phenomenology. Heidegger felt that hermeneutics, or the interpretation of text allowed for one to “grasp one’s own possibilities for being in the world in certain ways” (van Manen, 1990, p. 180). Rather than simply retaining the descriptive nature of phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology adds the interpretative nature of hermeneutics in such a manner that the lived experience is captured in a reflective, textual description as interpreted in the participant’s own words. The reflective nature of phenomenology combined with hermeneutic interpretation through the language of the participants, provides the researcher with an effective data collection process to begin the search for the essence of a lived experience.
Heidegger (1962/1927) contested the abstract qualities of Husserl’s views through questioning if the possibility existed of any knowledge outside of the meaning individuals construct as they engage in the experiences of their life world. Through conscious interpretation, human beings interact with the elements of the existing world in such a manner that these interactions take on meaning that becomes significant. Heidegger’s ontological application of the quality of ‘human being,’ which he referred to as Dasein, was primarily concerned with the idea of existence and secondarily with the meaning of the experiences ascribed to existence (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 16). For him, humans existed in a world full of objects, ‘ready to hand’ to a person for use and interpretation (p. 17). His worldly perspective encompassed a range of “physically-grounded (what is possible) and intersubjectively-grounded (what is meaningful) activities” (p. 17).

Heidegger termed this worldly perspective ‘intersubjectively’ and believed that human beings cannot be divorced from active engagement with the world (p. 17). This implies that our very existence with the objects, language and cultural aspects of our pre-established world force us into a relationship that can only be terminated with the absence of the human entity. This relationship, according to Heidegger (1962/1927), could best be expressed through hermeneutics, the second major theoretical underpinning of IPA.

**Main theoretical contributions of hermeneutics.** Hermeneutics, or the theory of interpretation, was developed in response to the need for a foundational approach to interpreting biblical texts. Hermeneutic theory asks the following questions:

- What are the methods and purposes of interpretation itself?
- Is it possible to uncover the intentions or original meanings of an author?
What is the relationship between the context of a text’s production (e.g. its historical genesis in the distant past) and the context of a text’s interpretation (e.g. its relevance to life in the present day. (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 22)

As a much older theoretical approach to interpretation, hermeneutics provided the newer phenomenological theorists a systematic and accepted approach of inquiry that was easily applied to a multitude of literary genres. Three main theorists: Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer, form the foundational body of hermeneutic theory.

Schleiermacher’s contribution. Schleiermacher focuses on the dualistic nature of text interpretation. He writes:

Every person is on the one hand a location in which a given language forms itself in an individual manner, on the other their discourse can only be understood via the totality of language. But then the person is also a spirit which continually develops, and their discourse is only one act of this spirit connection with the other acts. (Schleiermacher, 1998, pp. 8-9)

For him, a writer of a text, through grammatical construction and linguistic expression is able to impress a particular meaning upon a reader. However, the reader of words must also consider the context in which the words were written. Therefore, once a written text has been artfully crafted by a writer, a reader has the ability to interpret meaning at the face value of the words, in addition to analyzing the underlying choice of the writer’s linguistic expression. This analysis, in turn, offers “meaningful insights which exceed and subsume explicit claims” made in the general composition (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 23).

Schleiermacher justifies this claim based on the relationship between the author and the interpreter of the text. The interpreter’s perspective is based on three components: the
“systematic and detailed analysis, connections which emerge through having oversight of a larger data set, and dialogue with psychological theory” (p. 23). Likewise, Schleiermacher (1998) claims that every person contains “receptivity for all other people” (pp. 92-93). Therefore, Schleiermacher’s holistic approach to interpretation is based on the relationship between the author, the work itself, and the contextual circumstances surrounding the creation of the text. This relationship provides a justified account of meaning far beyond the author’s initial purpose or understanding.

**Heidegger’s contribution.** Heidegger incorporated Schleiermacher’s much older theory of hermeneutics into Husserl’s philosophy and theory of phenomenology, but retained his own belief in the concept of *Dasien* or human existence, and the interpretative quality humans place on the experience of existence. Through careful dissection of the etymological roots of *phenomenology*, he found ‘show’ or ‘appear’ the most accurate translation (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 23). By developing his belief that all things are experienced through interpretation, Heidegger focused on the appearance of things not only as they present themselves, but also on the underlying meanings associated with the presentation.

The process of interpreting phenomena, according to Heidegger (1962/1927), occurred through the analytical process of logos, or “discourse, reason, and judgment” (p. 56). Moran (2000) writes:

> Phenomenology is seeking after a meaning which is perhaps hidden by the entity’s mode of appearing. In that case the proper model for seeking meaning is the interpretation of a text and for this reason Heidegger links phenomenology and hermeneutics. How things appear or are covered up must be explicitly studied. The things themselves always present themselves in a manner which is at the same time self-concealing. (p. 229)
By combining the theory of hermeneutics with phenomenology, Heidegger defined phenomenological studies as hermeneutic and thus raised opposition to the use of bracketing as proposed by Husserl. Heidegger insisted that interpretation was based in preconception. In addition to claiming that individuals have preconceived judgments toward all things, Heidegger also claimed that a true understanding may not occur until an actual encounter with the “thing” takes place. Therefore, a person’s prior experience, assumptions, and preconceived notions cannot be isolated from interpretation of an experience, and may often not be fully understood until reflective thinking about an experience occurs.

**Gadamer’s contribution.** Gadamer (1990/1960) continued with the Heideggerian tradition of examining the relationship between the interpreter, any pre-existing conditions, and the thing or object. He further developed the idea of prior meaning as a central element in the interpretation of a new experience. He states:

> It is necessary to keep one’s gazes fixed on the things throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text… Working out this fore-projection which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there. (Gadamer, 1990/1960, p. 267)

He offers a more detailed and descriptive account of the interaction that occurs between preconceptions and experience wherein interpretation is in a “constant process of new projection” which produces understanding (Gadamer, 1990/1960, p. 267).
**Merleau-Ponty’s philosophical contribution.** Merleau-Ponty (1962) added to the philosophical assumptions of IPA by considering Husserl’s idea that knowledge was a first order and science was second order and supports both Husserl’s and Heidegger’s beliefs of the existence of “Being- in the world” (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 18). For Merleau-Ponty, the physical body of the human serves as a “means of communication” with the world rather than being an object contained within the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 106). He writes:

> I am not the outcome or the meeting-point of numerous causal agencies which determine my bodily or physical make-up. I cannot conceive myself as nothing but a bit of the world, a mere object of biological, psychological or sociological investigation. I cannot shut myself up within the realm of science. All my knowledge of the world, even my scientific knowledge, is gained from my own particular point of view, or from some experience of the world without which the symbols of science would be meaningless. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. ix)

He also contended that each individual experience represents a dual nature of observation and experience. The in-the-world experience of an individual will hold significant meaning for that person as he or she moves through it. On the other hand, the same experience can be observed by another individual, and while this observation is a meaningful experience in its own right, it will never be the same as for the person who is actually experiencing the phenomena. Therefore, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the physical body is the venue for interaction and experience with the world, and that contact with the world interprets the abstract signs and symbols into personal meaning for the individual experience.

**Sartre’s philosophical contribution.** As the fourth and last influence on the philosophical assumptions of IPA, Sartre (1956/1943) added to the contributions of Heidegger,
most notably by emphasizing the “developmental, processual” engagement of the human through “action-oriented, meaning making and self-consciousness” involvement in the world (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 19). For him, the human being is an ever-evolving entity who develops into what will be based on the perception and meaning ascribed to experiences as they appear in a particular context and time. These experiences are governed by the complexity of the individual, the biographical inheritance of the individual, and the social climate surrounding the experience as the individual focuses on the presence and absence of things to fix meaning. Therefore, the worldliness of the experience as conceived in terms of personal and social relationships with pre-existing conditions, becomes a point where humans are better able to conceive experiences as “contingent upon the presence and absence of our relationships to other people” (p. 20).

Theory of idiography. The third and final theoretical underpinning of IPA methodology, idiography, adds a focus on the particular or a systematic and detailed description of a particular phenomenon as experienced by a particular group of people in a particular context or setting. This approach permits IPA researchers to focus on small samples or single case studies in order to provide an in-depth analysis of particulars. The methods of inquiry respect the individual experience as unique and influenced by social, cultural, and situational norms, while also being part of the worldliness or shared experience of human beings in the world. While individuals have access to experience of the same phenomena, the interpretation of the experience can occur at two levels: first, at the personal level for the individual, and second, to establish particular generalizations about the experience. The latter can then be postulated into loosely constructed generalizations said to be part of the holistic relationship between humans and the physical, social, and cultural objects of the world. The immersed and embedded relationships experienced
by being present in the world can be interpreted not as ownership of the experience, but rather as an individual perspective of experience with particular phenomena distilled to an essence shared by all perspectives.

**Participants**

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), recommend between three and six participants for an IPA study. A total of three participants who traveled with the researcher to Costa Rica in November 2011 or December 2013 as part of larger groups were purposively selected for this study. This particular study group can offer insight into experiential learning situations encountered while engaged in educational tourism prior to adulthood. This sampling strategy allows researchers to select individuals with prior knowledge, who “can purposively inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon under study” (Creswell, 2013 p. 156). While the sample size is not representative of a population, the case-by-case analysis of individual perceptions and understandings allow the data to be interpreted on a variety of levels. A fairly homogenous sampling permits researchers to investigate data through patterns of convergence and divergence (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Homogeneous participant groups also allow for group generalizations or claims to be made on the basis that factors most important to the group can be matched to theoretical components.

**Data Collection**

Interviews (See Appendix A and B) were the primary form of data collection. Participants were also invited to include self-selected photos, or artifacts collected during the excursion. Three interviews with participants followed Mustakas (1994) recommendations of being “long, informal, interactive and open-ended” (p. 114). The first interview, to gain informed consent and demographic data lasted between 30-45 minutes; the second interview took place
during a 60-80 minute time frame; while the third interview for the purpose of member checking lasted between 45-60 minutes. The questions sought a comprehensive explanation of the participant’s personal account of learning experiences during an educational tourism experience.

In depth, semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions provide researchers with vivid and descriptive data. By using a topical approach, “specific facts, descriptions of events, or examples that answer a particular, focused research question” can be mined from the participant responses (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31). A semi-structured style allows researchers to “focus more narrowly on the planned items that speak to the research question” because limited open-ended questions prepared in advance permit the respondent to answer how he or she wishes as opposed to choosing from a pre-arranged list (p. 31). Questions prepared in advance also give the researcher some control over the focus of the interview and permits the use of probes or follow-up questions when responses reveal examples or narratives of the experience which express deeper meaning. The goal of in-depth interviewing is to ask non-confrontational and non-judgmental questions in such a manner that the researcher is able to “work out a coherent answer to a research question by piecing together what a variety of people with different information and different perspectives” have to say about a shared experience (p. 32).

The process of photo elicitation, according to Collier’s (1957) seminal proposition, “allows for longer, more comprehensive interviews but at the same time helps subjects to overcome the fatigue and repetition of conventional interviews” (p. 858). Matteucci (2013) states photo elicitation “provides visual stimuli to encourage respondents to reveal their unconscious feelings and experiences without them being aware of doing so” (p. 192). In consideration of the potential findings offered through visual artifacts, participants will also be asked to select five of
the photos that best represent or illustrate their stories, thoughts, feelings and everyday personal learning experiences while engaging in educational tourism.

It is the personal belief of the researcher that interviews, photos and/or artifacts will reveal an authentic account of the participant’s interpretation of their learning experiences while engaging in educational tourism.

**Data Storage**

All data collected was stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home, with the researcher holding the key. Interviews were recorded using a flip camera and stored on a password protected computer and thumb drive. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and stored on a password protected computer and thumb drive. Two hard copies of the transcriptions, one kept clean and one for marking remained in the researcher’s possession during analysis and were stored in the locked file cabinet when not being used. Photographs remained in the possession of the owners until delivered to the researcher at the time of the second interview. They were stored with the other data collected in the locked file cabinet. Since participants already held a copy of their self-selected photos, the copies provided to the researcher will be destroyed upon validation. The method of identification was the assignation a color code to each participant in order to insure identity was kept secret. The color code was used on all materials exchanged between the researcher and participants. All names were replaced with pseudonyms and the key to identifying participants through color coded materials and names was kept in the locked file cabinet and on a password protected computer and thumb drive.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of data for IPA research studies first requires the researcher to become completely immersed in the data. This can be achieved by listening to a recorded version of the
interview in conjunction with reading and re-reading the transcript. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) claim that this process allows for the participant, rather than the researcher, to “become the focus of analysis” (p. 82). While the researcher may record some of his or her initial responses for the purposes of bracketing, the repetition of reading highlights the structural and narrative accounts of the participant’s responses. Additionally, concentrated familiarization with the content of the interview can illustrate connections and discrepancies within the data which are often overlooked with rapid or once-over reading.

While actively and attentively engaging in the data reading, the researcher is likely to segue to the second step of IPA data analysis. During this step, the researcher returns to the phenomenological roots of IPA by indicating, in descriptive comments, the “things that matter” (p. 84) and the “meaning of these objects” (p. 88). Saldaña (2012) posits, “Child and adolescent voices are often marginalized, and coding with their actual voices enhances and deepens an adult’s understanding of their cultures and worldviews” (p. 91). Therefore, the use of In Vivo coding in the first round analysis preserves the integrity of the approach, framework and methodology of this study.

During step two, researchers look at semantic content and language used by the participants and record comments in the following three areas: descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual. Descriptive comments consider the “face value” of objects, events, and experiences revealed by the participant as important in his or her relationship with the world (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009 p. 84). In turn, IPA researchers are able to construct an examination of deeper meaning of objects through interpretative analysis of the significant and recurring statements revealed in the data. Following descriptive comments, a careful analysis of the linguistic content allows for a “potential discussion of a range of more conceptual meanings” to be derived from
the transcript (p. 88). Patterns of repetition, tone and pronoun use are concealed aspects of verbal language that highlight the importance participants place on objects and experience. Additionally, the use of metaphor to describe what something is like or make comparisons can also provide links from the descriptive to the conceptual by ascribing an “explicit claim” that can be further explored throughout the text (p. 88).

Finally, the third aspect of initial noting, conceptual comments, considers the interpretative nature of IPA studies. When employing conceptual annotation, the researcher employs the theoretical underpinning of Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle, where he or she engages with the text through the lens of personal experience. At this point, the text analysis will move from the parts to the whole in search of common themes amongst the data. This stage of analysis may also feature abstractions which deviate away from the In Vivo coding techniques used earlier; however, a parallel relationship continues to exist between the original text and the researcher’s theoretical connections. This double hermeneutic provides researchers with a tool to move back and forth between data segments of part and whole in order to produce an analysis of meaning. The following chart illustrated the individual and holistic comparisons available to IPA researchers.

*Figure 8. The Part/Whole Chart*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The part</th>
<th>The whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The single word</td>
<td>The sentence in which the word is embedded</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The single extract</td>
<td>The complete text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The particular text</td>
<td>The complete oeuvre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The interview</td>
<td>The research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The single episode</td>
<td>The complete life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After the data analysis through the first two steps of IPA analysis, the next step seeks to discover interrelationships, connections and patterns and then postulate those findings into emergent themes. Returning once again to the hermeneutic circle, the researcher considered fragments of the original text in an interpretative manner to produce a number of themes that contained the “psychological essence of a piece” with “enough particularity to be grounded and enough abstraction to be conceptual” (p. 92). Themes, then, reflected the original words of the participant and the interpretative endeavors of the researcher in a collaborative effort that represented an understanding of an experience from both perspectives.

Once themes are postulated, grouping techniques help identify patterns and connections based on the research question. A number of grouping techniques are available to IPA researchers. These include (a) abstraction, (b) subsumption, (c) polarization, (d) contextualization, (e) numeration, and (f) function. Abstraction allows for like themes to be grouped under a new heading or ‘super-ordinate’ theme (p. 96). Subsumption groupings appear when an emergent theme encompasses a number of related emergent themes and therefore reaches ‘super-ordinate’ status itself (p. 97). Polarization occurs when emergent themes are considered in light of their differences or when juxtaposed with other emergent themes. A contextual organization is the result of narrative structures providing a local understanding of key elements. Organization by numeration refers to the number of times an emergent theme presents itself or the value a single revelation has for further exploration. Finally, organization by function indicates the positive or negative manner in which emergent themes present themselves.
While researchers manipulate data into organizational patterns, Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) suggest keeping a researchers’ diary in order to record notes on the analysis progression. The final stage of this step is to produce a graphic representation of the structure chosen to represent the emergent themes.

The process was repeated with each remaining case. Careful attention was paid to each individual transcript in order to adhere to the third theoretical underpinning, Idiography, or the focus on the particular. Once all data sets were analyzed, the researcher searched for patterns across each individual data set to discover the particulars shared by all the cases. Finally, the researcher once again returns to the interpretative nature of IPA to present a deeper analysis of the descriptive, linguistic and conceptual parts as they work together to strengthen and support the epistemological and theoretical underpinning of IPA.

**Trustworthiness**

Guba (1981) defined the following four criteria in order to establish trustworthiness in research studies utilizing both a quantitative and qualitative approaches. Arguing that each approach contained its own definition, Guba (1981) applied different terms to each criterion as illustrated below.

*Figure 9. Comparison of Criteria by Research Approach*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Qualitative Approach</th>
<th>Quantitative Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Truth value</td>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>Internal validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>External validity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In qualitative research, truth value refers to the lived experiences of humans as they are defined by the research participants and not the researcher. Credibility, as defined by Lincoln and Guba, (1985) occurs when the researcher replaces assumptions with the reality of the participants. Sandelowski (1986) further suggests that credibility occurs when the findings of a research study are presented in a manner consistent with the experience of others who have experienced the phenomenon.

Guba (1981) defined applicability as the transferability of research findings into independent situations that hold the same context. In other words, the results will hold the same truth value, despite being applied to another study population or situation. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further posit that the responsibility for this transfer lies with the secondary researcher under the condition that the original findings contain enough comparative data.

Qualitative studies focus on the individualities and experiences of participants and therefore produce a variability of results. However, the dependability of the findings lies in the trackability of various findings to identifiable sources (Guba, 1981). The range of experience that constitutes the makeup of qualitative study includes variations so unique that it is acceptable to consider them as important findings.

Neutrality for qualitative studies is established through the data as opposed to the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The relationship between the researcher and the participants includes prolonged contact or extensive observation. However, the data speaks for itself and can be verified by an external auditor as he or she traces the research progression to arrive at similar
findings or conclusions. Guba (1981) also suggested (a) two sources to verify each claim and interpretation, (b) a research team of other qualitatively trained researchers as opposed to an individual researcher, and (c) reflexive analysis performed by the primary researcher in order to identify bias or pre-conceptions (p. 87).

A fifth criterion, authenticity, was later added to the original four. While acknowledging that the criteria were incomplete and needed further work, Lincoln and Guba (1988) determined that the authenticity of a work lies in the researcher’s ability to effectively represent the trueness of the experience based on accounts of the participants. Verification of authenticity is most easily achieved through member checking procedures conducted by participants. Researchers engaging in these established criterions establish the trustworthiness of their research study.

Validity

Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) suggest Yardley’s (2000) principals for establishing validity in IPA studies. First, Yardley (2000) advocates that researchers display sensitivity to context. The nature of IPA research invites purposively selected members who share an experience to tell their story in their own words. Researchers using IPA should recognize the difficulty of the expression process and of members having their thoughts recorded. Therefore, the researcher should respect the experience from the point of view of the participant by allowing them to read the transcription write up. To further consider the sensitive nature of the content, the researcher should adhere to reporting claims using the participants own words in verbatim as extracts to support the argument. Sensitivity is also measured by making connections to literature not previously discussed in the study.

Researchers demonstrate commitment and rigor through careful attention to the participant. During the interview, the researcher sees to the comfort of the interviewee and
engages in close listening to the words spoken and later, conducts a “thorough and systematic”
analysis of the data (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 181). Rigor is established through the
appropriateness and quality of the interview. Asking engaging questions and careful listening
allows the researcher to probe, offer cues, and dig deeper into stories offered by participants. A
researcher’s final expression of commitment and rigor is revealed in the completeness of the
analysis of the data.

The transparency and coherence displayed by the researcher is also suggestive of the
validity of a study. Researchers should provide tables, which indicate the selection, interview
schedule and analysis steps. A coherent argument established through careful and attentive
analysis in consideration of new literature also helps researchers to adhere to the principals of
IPA investigating.

Finally, the impact and importance of the subject matter should remain interesting while
reporting on significant findings in a useful manner. Yin (1989) offers an additional tool to
ensure validity of research studies. By filing data in a linear progression, independent researchers
are able to trace the steps taken by the original researcher. Not only does this process facilitate
the location of data for validation purposes, but also is useful for the researcher conducting the
study. Additionally, the filing process adds to the “rigor of one claims” because all arguments
can be supported through documented evidence (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 183).

**Ethical considerations**

Prior to the collection of data, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Northeastern
University approved the study. The Institutional Review Board requires a submission of consent
forms prior to approval. Approval involved a full disclosure of the purpose of the study with
marked emphasis on the amount of risk involved by participation. This study involved minimal
risks to the health and well-being of the participants. While participants in this study were not considered an at risk population, they were asked to read and sign formal written consent (Appendix C) before the research began. The written consent form included the purpose for research, the limited risk involved in the research and the benefits of the study. All protocols regarding participant’s rights and privacy followed the guidelines of the IRB and NIH protocols. Participants were reminded participation in the research was strictly voluntary. Verbal reminders were also used issued prior to the interview. Additionally, all photo images included by the participants were acknowledged as part of the research data. Lastly, participants were told they would receive a ten dollar gift card from Sheetz upon the completion of member-checking of their interview.

Participants were informed the written documents and any interview notes would be color-coded to avoid misidentification of the participants. Videos of the interviews, photos and any other data forms were kept secure through a password protected computer and thumb drive and in a locked storage area. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009) state that, “anonymity is all that qualitative researchers can offer” to participants (p. 53). Once told, stories become data that is shared with others through reports and papers and therefore cannot be considered confidential. Participants were told, however, they would be identified through pseudonyms with only the researcher knowing the true identity of each. After the study is validated, all digital recordings will be destroyed. The researcher’s notes, photo submissions and interview transcripts will be kept for a period of three years, after which they will be shredded.

Study Limitations

This qualitative study is based on an analysis of interview data collected from three adolescents who engaged in educational tourism during the later years of adolescence. The
results may not be transferrable to other populations of adolescents who engage in educational tourism during early or middle adolescence. There are three primary concerns for limitations related to this study. First, the researcher has engaged in educational tourism with students for over fifteen years, both as a participant and a group leader. Her personal experience with the phenomenon under study has the potential to produce some bias. Attempts to eliminate bias occurred through a bracketing process, the use of inductive and InVivo coding techniques, and member checking of the transcripts to ensure validity. Although several actions were employed to increase the trustworthiness of the data and study results, some bias may invariably appear during the interview sessions. Second, the study group was small, consisting of only three participants whose primary residence consisted of a rural Appalachian setting. Third, the study was based on an experience, which occurred during a particular time in their educational trajectory, and in a particular international setting. Therefore, the data collected was representative of a limited time frame as well as geographic location.

It is important for future readers of this document to remember that the theoretical foundations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) support the use of small sample sizes in order to “examine convergence and divergence” of particular groups of participants in particular settings or context (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 3). Because the cases within an IPA study are held to the local, they remain particular to a community. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the reader to make the theoretical generalizations and transferability of the results to similar contexts.
Chapter 4: Report of Research Findings

Despite Alexander, Bakir, and Wickens’ (2010) claim that travel has the ability to impact behaviors, emotions, knowledge, skills and confidence, travel for the purpose of learning remains an under-researched method of obtaining the global skills necessary for life in the 21st century. Additionally, the vast majority of studies focus on the experiences of college students and working adults. With a significant portion of the high school population not matriculating to four year institutions of higher learning, opportunities for study abroad and contact with other cultures are greatly reduced. Therefore, the public school system of the United States must incorporate opportunities for international experiences in the standard curriculum if it is to meet the goal of producing a globally educated workforce and citizenry.

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of rural adolescents who had engaged in educational tourism while in their late teen years. The three participants traveled with the researcher to Costa Rica in 2011 or 2013, as part of an educational tourism experience. When asked, *What are the learning experiences of rural adolescents engaging in educational tourism and how do they make sense of the educational benefit of these experiential learning situations,* Christine, the first of the interview participants provided a laughter-filled tale of an adventure seeking teenager. Jill, the second of the interviewees, detailed a journey of self-discovery for a shy, socially uncomfortable young lady. Finally, Sam, who was looking for some time away from parents, detailed the challenges he knowingly and willingly accepted in order to learn and grow.

The participants delivered a rich description of their pre-departure and post-departure experience through a series of two open-ended interviews. Specifically, they were able to provide an account of their decision to engage in a self-selected and self-funded learning
experience as well speak candidly of the experience itself. This chapter is divided into five categories of superordinate themes and explains the sub themes present in each category.

The following chart illustrates the learning experiences of the participants and highlights how they made sense of each experience.

*Figure 10. Themes and subthemes from research findings*

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*Figure 10. Themes and subthemes from the research findings*

For contextual purposes, it is noted that when referring to parents, participants lived in the home with their respective biological parents and that only one of the six parents had
obtained a college education. It is also noted that participants registered for the trip at least twelve months prior to traveling. Within the context of this educational tourism experience, potential travelers were presented with an itinerary which contained pre-selected daily activities. All meals, transportation and lodging were included in the price. Additionally, the tour participants were accompanied by a group leader (the researcher) whom they knew in a professional manner, and were greeted at the airport by a certified tour guide who remained with the group for the duration of the tour. For this research study, participant responses are referenced within these contextual facts.

**Pre-trip Reflections**

When participants were asked to describe the experiences that led to their decision to travel, they produced two distinct themes. First, there was a strong awareness of their lack of involvement with diverse cultures. Second, was the recognition of an opportunity to experience an international culture through educational tourism.

**Limited exposure to different cultures.** When participants were asked to describe the community they lived in during high school, all three unanimously noted the lack of cultural exposure and limited diversity. Despite the unanimous description by the participants as living in a middle class community, opportunities for engagement with others from around the world simply were not part of their lived experience. Sam stated, “My community was a small one. Where some people say that everyone knows everything and before you even walk out your front door everyone knows what is going on. They know you. They know your story.” Jill continued the sentiment, “I think our community is like a small community where everyone knows everyone and there’s not really cultural or ethical differences. So we’re all pretty much the same.
Christine describes her encounters with others as being limited to “three foreign exchange students” and a “handful of African American students.”

The participants in this study acknowledged prior vacation travel within the United States; however, they felt that it was without the diversity offered by travel to an international destination in addition to lacking an educational component. Primary destinations included the beach and Disney, which they felt were more family vacation, entertainment and relaxation orientated. None had previously engaged in travel and education as the combined purpose for the trip.

**Opportunity to see something different.** All three participants indicated a yearning to experience something “different.” When asked why they decided on this particular travel experience, Jill explained, “To see how other people around the world were and also see different things that are different from around here. I feel like a lot of America looks the same.” Christine stated, “I felt like it was just going to be awesome. I was ready to meet people from different cultures. I was really interested in that. The whole traveling aspect… just getting out there and meeting different people.” Sam maintained:

> For me, I guess it was something that was always in my head. Even though my, even though my parents and stuff didn’t travel. For me, I was not your typical high schooler. I watched the news, I read the newspaper, and I was up to date on what was going on in the world and in the area. So I was always researching different things and seeing that there was different things’ going on outside of our area and outside of the country. So that I was wanting to go and see the different things.

It became apparent in the participant’s responses that “being ready” were a central component to engagement, indicating that they had reached a certain level of maturity in respect
to their own development and learning. The participant’s use of the word “different” indicated an awareness of a world beyond their small, somewhat isolated community. However, all three participant’s dialogue indicated they exhibited a strong desire to experience life beyond their rural familiarity. While they did not discredit their upbringing or seek to change their overall living conditions, they instead seized upon what they considered an “opportunity” to explore a specific location within a set time frame.

Support with Decision to Travel

**Seeking support from family.** Seeking family support was important to all three participants. Two sets of parents were automatically supportive as revealed in the responses by Christine and Jill. Christine stated, “My mom supported it 100%. She wanted us to get out there and learn about different parts of the world and do things like that.” Jill replied, “I wanted to kinda get the experience and see what it was like to be away from home and be out and just see what the rest of the world was like. Sam’s parents, who he described as “never going outside the community” took a bit longer:

Starting out I had zero support. The facial expression of my mother was indescribable when I told her. My father just looked at me and said, “Really?” And probably after that day, it just took them a day, then the next day at dinner, they were like do you really want to do this? I said, Yes, I want to go. After that, that support changed and it was 100%. They were like, “You want to go, we’re going to support you to go. We’re gonna help you go."

There was an obvious pattern of support from the families to endorse educational travel. While Sam faced early scrutiny, his parents rapidly came on board and supported his desire to travel. Despite the overwhelming majority of parents not having traveled outside the country,
they supported the notion of their children doing so. Participants also indicated their parents were aware that the world was a different place that what they encountered as teenagers and realized the need for their children to have more global awareness than was required of them.

The participant’s dialogue also indicated that parents readily supported the idea of education tourism with a trusted teacher and retail provider of the educational experience. While two of the participants had older siblings who had engaged in educational tourism prior, Jill, whose older sibling had previously participated in an educational tourism experience, clearly articulated her parents response, “I think with my sister going, they felt relieved. They already knew kind of what to expect, like they felt like I was in safe hands and everything.”

Seeking support from the group. For all three participants, this was their first experience with travel to an international destination. Two of the participants had never been away from their parents for any length of time and the one who had, travelled with a trusted grandmother. The importance of group travel for adolescents became the first apparent theme that was observable in both pre-trip and engagement responses. All three participants spoke of the other group members as reasons for engagement. Sam replied, “Because of how close I was with the people I went with, it gave me that sense of security and I’m like you can do this, you can go, you’re gonna have fun, you’re gonna learn.”

Likewise, this sentiment was supported by photographs selected by the participants. Two of the participants submitted the same photograph. One participant stated, “That was towards the end and we were reminiscing on everything we had learned… I was happy to see how close we were. We were practically a family during that whole trip, so it hit home with this picture.” Another participant, with self-described “social anxiety” replied,
This picture, it’s at the beach also. We made a volcano and it says pura vida on it. But I like this picture because it shows like how much of a good time I was having and how close I got with everyone, and how it was comfortable to be around everyone and how I just had a good time.

The third participant, who supplied a photo of the group in the jungle, replied, “I went with a good group.” It became evident that for adolescents traveling to an international destination for the first time, there was safety and security in being with people they knew. In turn, their dialogue supported the notion that this familiarity with the group members appears to have allowed participants to develop closer relationships with these individuals. References to these relationships continued throughout the interviews as participants recalled experiences reflective of individual growth and learning facilitated by the presence of others. Additionally, participant responses indicate feelings of safety and security with travel companions thereby allowing engagement in the experiential learning framework.

**Responsibility for Learning**

All three participants displayed a remarkable cognizance towards their personal responsibility for learning. Prior to the trip it was most evident in their responses about research and attitude. By taking responsibility for learning, students quickly gained ownership of the experience. This ownership in turn, appeared to be manipulated to meet individual learning needs. While engaging in the foreign environment itself, participants repeatedly mentioned being out of their comfort zone, yet displayed a willingness to embrace the learning opportunities found therein.

**Pre-trip research.** Participants in this research study were aware of the learning opportunities they would encounter while in Costa Rica through a pre-arranged itinerary. When
asked how they prepared for the trip, all three indicated they had used the Internet as a source for information. Their individual responses were reflective of their personalities and overall purpose for traveling. It became apparent as the interviews continued that participants remained true to their purpose for engagement and sought activities or experiences that provided them with the cognitive, physical and emotional growth they were seeking. Sam best described the cognitive element:

    I tried to read as much about all of our events that we were doing. I feel like that is the pre-knowledge you needed before you went in, because that is, when you were there, when you were talking to them there, when you were physically there, at the volcano, they are telling you stuff you aren’t going to see on the Internet. They are telling you real stuff as they see, that they deal with, whereas, the Internet was preparing me, I was getting the background information on it, but then when I went here, I really knew it. Once I got there, like I said, background knowledge gave you everything you needed.

Christine, who admitted that she was initially drawn to the adventure and physical activities, and who could be considered the most outgoing of the participants, replied:

    I did like Google some different things we were going to be doing down there just to check it out and see. Like the zip line and stuff like that. Yeah, I just checked out some of the things like that. I was like oh, yeah, this is gonna be good.

Jill, on the other hand, used the pre-trip research phase to focus internally. She stated:

    Cause not everything’s gonna be the same as what you’re used to. So whenever you came into the country, whenever you signed up for the trip, you should have known things were gonna be different, so you should have prepared yourself to have like a good attitude.
Positive attitude. Jill’s mention of attitude highlights the second observable theme mentioned by participants as necessary in both pre-trip and actual engagement. Participants used words like “open, positive and good” to describe the attitude they felt was necessary for a successful experience. They processed this concept at both the social level as a member of a group and at the personal level as an individual.

When asked what attitudes were necessary for engagement in educational tourism, Sam acknowledged the difficulty of keeping a positive attitude in the midst of the experience. “You get frustrated, but then you have to remember you are learning so much and at times that can be overwhelming. You get a sense of overwhelmingness. But the most thing, I would say is be positive.” Jill replied, “If you are going into someone else’s country and they’re going to show you around and everything, you need to respect them and follow what they’re doing.” Christine stated, “I feel like you just needed to be open-minded and yeah, just not…just learn, just take it all in, just a good attitude, and upbeat attitude not, I think the judgmental part was a big thing too.”

Throughout the interviews, it was apparent that the participants felt personally responsible for their learning and positive contribution to the group. They approached the new situation with a teachable spirit and willingness to learn. Despite the injection into a culture different from their own, a language barrier and minority status, these participants found positive learning experiences in situations unfamiliar to their traditional methods of learning.

Situations of Learning

While engaging in the foreign environment itself, participants repeatedly mentioned being out of their comfort zone, yet displayed a willingness to embrace the learning opportunities
found therein. They details offered by the participants often mirrored each other suggesting the importance of the experience in addition to the participants being fully present in the experience.

**Drawn to difference.** Participants were initially drawn to the differences they would encounter while in Costa Rica. In particular, they were mesmerized at the thought of being up close to a volcano which was additionally supported through the presentation of photos.

Christine describes her experience in childlike terms, “I’m just a little kid on the inside and something about volcanos. And it just seemed like something almost mythical to me. Almost like a unicorn or something I had never thought I would get to see.” Jill continues the story of fascination, “You could actually see like the crater and everything and I just thought it was really neat because I’d never seen it in real life I was, it was one of the neatest things to get to experience there.”

Participants also shared photos and memories which indicated a macabre encounter with crocodiles was one of the most memorable encounters. Two participants retold practically an identical story. While looking through her photos, Christine stated:

> It was creepy and also cool. And then a couple hundred pound one was fed right in front of us and I was almost positive it was gonna eat the tour guide. It was just really neat. I’d never done anything like that.

While looking at the photo of a rather large crocodile, Sam provided an even richer description of his thought process which indicated just how uncomfortable he was with the encounter.

> This one was quite an adventure for me because I had never been on a boat that much before either. I forget what even the guy’s name that was getting off and doing it, but he told us, I’m going to get off now and give them this meat. I’m like, you’re going to get
off now and give them that meat? You’re going to get off and get him to come out of that water and give him meat? And the crocodile went right underneath the boat and was coming out my side. I don’t even want to be near it. That was, that was neat to see that part though.

**Comparison to familiar.** Participants in this study appeared surprised with the similarities they discovered in a Central American environment. The similarities were evident in the activities and the geographical features of the landscape. Jill stated:

I thought everything would be completely different and then I found that some things were the same, like the back roads, and when we went kayaking we were allowed to swim in the lake, something we do here. Everyone from our group got in the water because that’s what we are used to I guess. So I mean it was kinda surprising a couple of things that were the same, we did here.

Likewise, during a visit to a local school, two participants candidly recalled their startled reaction to children “learning so much with so little.” Sam replied, “Because here it’s like we need all these books. We need all this stuff off the Internet, we need all these hands-on things for our kids to learn and they don’t end up learning it. Jill remarked:

I learned about the whole school thing where they had less but they could still learn with all that. They didn’t need, they didn’t need 100 computers in their school and ten different classrooms and a bunch of different teachers to learn.

**Learning through contact.** Activities that were not part of the participants’ normal routine provided not only a physical challenge but also and internal conflict which had to be resolved. Sam beautifully narrated his encounter with horseback riding. He stated,
Once I registered, I sat back and said, Sam, you don’t know how to horseback ride, you don’t know how to horseback ride. You’ve never rode a horse in your life and you signed up to do this. You’re not going to survive it. It’s in the mountains of Costa Rica.

He continues with describing the actual experience:

I wanted to get on, at the same time even though I was fighting it, like get back on the bus, get back on the bus, I wanted to get on the horse and go because I knew it was going to be beautiful where we were going and I knew in the end if I didn’t get on it, I would regret it. And I did not want to regret it because that whole trip was about learning. And I felt like if I didn’t do it, I wasn’t teaching myself something. Which really I wouldn’t have been. I was teaching myself that backing off is okay with yourself, when it’s really not. You have to be open-minded to want to learn more, even if it is outside your comfort zone. That was defiantly outside of it.

For Christine and Jill, the most memorable learning experience was zip lining. Although her favorite, Christine had a difficult time articulating the actual experience. She stated:

It’s like indescribable. When your like zip lining, when you’re going down through, you know you’re going really fast, but nothing else is going fast, everything else is moving slow. You can just look out over everything. It’s just a different kind of feel.

As she continued, she also captured a significant cross reference between the actual experience and the learning which occurs as a result of that experience.

There is no turning back once you get to a certain point, there is no turning back… it was just awesome. Like flying through the rainforest. I can scratch that off my bucket list now cause, that was just awesome and it was, you can’t describe that feeling and you would
never have it again unless you were on that zip line flying through the air again. So that was really, really neat.

Jill produced another account of the same experience which indicated her internal struggle to overcome fear and the reward of such an engagement. She recalled:

One of my favorite things was the zip lining. I actually still have a scar on my leg cause I think I hit a branch or something and it cut my leg. But that was one of the, I’m afraid of heights and my mom’s afraid of heights and I didn’t think I’d ever like anything like that. I was really nervous for that but it was really fun and that Tarzan like rope that we went off at the end, that was fun. It really like gets your adrenaline going and makes you realize how much fun you could be having if you let yourself have some fun.

When pressed for more information on how she overcame her fear she replied:

I just said one, two three and on three I went. I wouldn’t, I didn’t think about it and when I was actually on there I wouldn’t look down, I just looked straight ahead. So it was still fun, I just didn’t look down.

Although not part of the routine interview questions, the interviewer inquired of all three participants why they had not previously engaged in these activities, which are relatively common in the home area of the participants. All three readily supplied they simply had not been offered the opportunity prior to traveling to Costa Rica, in addition to not having local companions who were interested in such activities. They did, however, seize the opportunity when presented as optional activities through the itinerary.

Reflection after experience. Despite adrenaline inspiring activities and close encounters with deadly creatures, participants also spoke of quieter moments in which they were fully engaged in learning opportunities provided by the environment. Christine, who famously went in
search of the adventure recalled a particular hike, “And the cloud forest. It’s like you forget about it and when you stop and realize ‘I’m walking through a cloud forest.’ It’s like when am I ever going to have this chance to do this?” Ever the pensive thinker, Sam stated:

I think it was my personal way of processing everything we did. I felt like I was asking our tour guide or I was talking to the other members of our group to see if they saw something different, just to see if I could learn more about that or even preparing myself for what we were going to do later in the day. I caught myself thinking a lot about what we did during the trip.

**Impact After the Experience of Educational Tourism**

Participants were asked about changes they noticed in themselves after engagement with their first international travel expedition. Their responses indicated skill development in the area of confidence, a resounding life-long commitment to engage in education travel, and the desire to share the experience with others. Sam and Christine indicated that this particular travel experience led to subsequent international travel. Jill indicated that she had traveled independently, but found it difficult to travel internationally with her busy college schedule and work.

**Confidence.** All three participants noted specific instances of personal growth as a result of engaging in educational tourism. When asked what they felt constituted the most valuable learning experience, the participant’s responses were concentrated under the theme of confidence and surprisingly, could be individually cross-referenced with their original purpose in traveling. Likewise, their responses indicate an inner manifestation of self-assurance. Their repetitive use of the pronoun “I” places them directly in the situation while actively engaged in a mental
reconstruction of their previous knowledge. Christine, the thrill seeker whose interview was
enshrined in the physical challenges of the trip stated:

I felt good. It was just like I said. I’d always talked about traveling and thought about
traveling but I just never had gone out and did anything. So after I finished anything out
there, even riding horses, or hiking through the cloud forest or anything like that, I just
felt accomplished. Like I did something with my life. Like, I went to Costa Rica, and I
did all these things. It was just a really good feeling.

She went on to add, “I think I gained not only confidence but just a lot of experience to or
exposure I should say to different things like that.” When pressed to expand on how she felt this
this newfound confidence would affect her future international travel, she replied, “I’d be less
nervous to or just get out there and ask somebody. What’s this? What’s this? Yeah, I think I
would be less nervous to just jump in and start using it and figure out how it works.”

Jill, whose primary purpose in traveling was to “be away from home” stated, “I think
that’s one of the main things I learned from this trip was about myself.” While recalling her
initial nervousness upon arrival, she quickly supplied the process to navigating the unfamiliar
culture. “I feel like I adapted after a couple of days and once I got the feel of how they did things
and everything, I was fine.” She recalled consciously making choices that she described as “odd
for her” and out of her “normal” pattern of behavior. However, after hanging out with members
of the group during free time, she found herself getting more comfortable with everyone. As a
result of this learning experience, she replied:

I try to make myself do things that I know are out of my comfort zone. Because I know
that good things can happen out of it. And I think that going to Costa Rica helped a lot
with that because that was like the first major thing that I had done away from home.
When asked if she transferred this newfound knowledge to situations post travel, she indicated she has grown a bit more adventurous since engaging in educational tourism. Her remark, “I feel like after that I am more up for trying anything” suggests that the confidence she gained has transferred to a profound effect on her engagement with her physical world.

Sam, who at one point in the interviews stated he couldn’t wait to say “bon voyage, parents” remained true to his initial purpose of traveling, as did the other participants. He proudly remarked, “I want to travel more without my parents. There comes a time when you are gonna have to go and do and learn on your own and I think that’s what really hit me.” He admitted the struggle of reaching this point when recalling the feelings of despair when “being left” at the airport by his parents, however, he quickly gained control over his emotions by telling himself, “You’re here for a week, you’re not going home until the trip is over, so suck it up and deal with it. Make the most out of it because this doesn’t come all the time.”

He, like Jill, were caught in the internal struggle of facing their first time away from home, yet desirous of the opportunity to explore an international environment on their own. This crux of tension forced them to rely heavily on their own abilities to adapt and learn in the midst of conflict. Likewise, confidence developed on this trip appears to be the most influential learning experience for all three participants as they have engaged in national and international travel sans parents since their return from Costa Rica.

**Life-long desire to travel for learning.** As a result of engaging in this educational tourism experience, participant’s attitudes towards travel shifted from the pre-trip vacation model of travel to seeking adventures that contain a learning element. Christine stated “I tried to make a pact with myself that I want to leave the country once a year. Hopefully that works out.” When asked to expand on the reason for this pact, she replied, “you get to learn about different
currencies and food and everything like that, and it’s just awesome all together.” Jill, the only participant who has not engaged in international travel since this original excursion replied “I’ve been looking at places, but it will probably be awhile until I can save up money and everything. I want to go to Ireland and Hawaii and a couple of other places around the world.” Sam continued, “After that trip, that set me that I wanted to travel and see other things.” Moreover, indicated a regret at not taking advantage of learning opportunities while on previous state-side travel as well as the approach he plans to use in his future travels.

I catch myself looking back and it’s just United States travel and I could have learned so much more there and I guess part of me is regretful that I wasn’t willing to learn those different things there. But now I’m defiantly, I’m going and I learn different things when I’m in different areas. I want it to be educational when I go, even if I go when I’m 80, 90, I want it to be educational. I don’t want it to just be a trip. I want it to be educational for me. Because I’m willing to learn more and I want to learn more about different areas of the world.

He likewise supplied an appropriate metaphor to describe the role of travel in his life. A self-described “book without an ending” Sam has incorporated much of what he learned in Costa Rica to travel to Europe for two weeks in addition to two cruises since his return. His use of the term “willingness to learn” is an additional metaphor that can describe the experience of all three participants. From the initial commitment to engage in this experience, each of the three participants engaged with specific learning purposes in mind and used the overall activity or situation to meet their individual learning needs.

**Share travel learning experience with others.** When participants were asked if they would recommend educational tourism to others, in particular students, parents and teachers,
they were highly encouraging to all three groups. Their responses of encouragement provided
dialogue similar to their original stated purpose of traveling. Sam replied:

Don’t be afraid. Go outside of your comfort zone, because it’s the best decision I ever
made in my life to do that. Be willing to learn. Don’t ever say that you can’t learn more
because you have no idea what’s outside this area, out of your comfort zone. You can
learn so much.

Christine’s advice to students was, “Just get motivated about leaving… you can do it, even if you
aren’t lucky enough to have your family support it, there are still ways you can get there on your
own. And it’s well worth it.” Jill, who repeated the sentiment she used when asked about how
she overcame her fear of heights while on the zip line, as well as her previously mentioned
struggle of finding the time and funds to do so while in college.

I would really recommend if you have the opportunity to go and if you have the desire to
go and you can afford it, just go, don’t think about it. Especially when you’re in high
school and you don’t really have a job that you have to worry about taking off for. Or if
you have money saved up or if your parents help you, take full advantage of it.

The participant’s responses offered encouragement to other students and suggest that they
felt the experience was attainable. During the interviews, two participants specifically noted they
engaged in fundraising to help pay for the trip. While all acknowledged they received some type
of support from their parents, they also indicated they had contributed financially through
savings and job earnings.

Likewise, the participants offered advice to teachers, who as the group leader and the
primary person responsible for supplying this opportunity during the secondary experience. Sam
everently suggested:
Give them that opportunity because we can learn so much more from our teachers than
we can our parents, family and friends and we have to have that teacher that’s willing to
do that with us and take us outside the country because many teachers aren’t. It defiantly
says something about that person when they say hey, I’m gonna take a group of kids
outside the country and it makes the students feel like they are a million bucks. It really
does. And it was something that I will never forget.

Jill on the other hand, encouraged teachers themselves to engage in educational tourism as a way
to enhance their practice,

I think teachers should go on educational tourism too because it will give them a better
understanding so they can interpret what the book says. If they have actually lived that
experience, maybe if the students don’t understand, they can explain it their way. Maybe
if they took pictures of what it’s like now or how they see it instead of how the reader
sees it because the students might be able to relate more to their teacher than the author of
the book, who they don’t even know.

Advice given to parents inherently followed the theme of each participant’s individual
experience with educational tourism and engaging in the experiential learning framework. Sam
requested of parents,

Let your kid explore, without you. Most important is for parents to be open-minded and
let your kid learn. Always be open-minded with education because there is so much more
and we need to be able to learn it, see it and experience it.

Jill insisted,

Not only is it a good learning experience, it’s good they get out of America. I think
anyone who travels outside of America defiantly has a better understanding of what goes
on outside of America, I guess they have more of like a background in different experiences that other people don’t have that they can fall back on that can reflect their personality, their ethics and morals and things like that.

The participants overall highly recommended the educational tourism experience to anyone wishing to explore a different culture. While acknowledging the emotional challenges of leaving home for the first time, they encourage other adolescents to move beyond the fear in order to learn, see and experience the world.

Summary of Findings

This analysis uncovered five superordinate themes and thirteen sub-themes that characterized how adolescents made sense of the experience of engaging in educational tourism. There was a general consensus that the experience represented a positive interaction with the concept of travel for educative purposes. Their motivations for travel and engagement in the trip itself helped contour their attitudes about the purpose of future travel. Consequently, the preparation period and actual excursion also offered insight into the importance of educational tourism for adolescents.

Participants valued the opportunity for international travel during their secondary career. All three confirmed specific purposes for travel but agreed on the overall benefit of engagement. In addition to the experience itself, participants met individual learning needs and personal growth through engagement with pre-arranged activities, the environment and group members.

Their reflection on their international experience uncovered an overwhelming positive association of educational tourism as a viable means to meet learning needs not possible in the traditional classroom setting. The central argument for the inclusion of tourism opportunities in the secondary trajectory was based on the notion that students seek the opportunity to explore
their world *in situ* and learning occurring within that context is easily transferrable to the real world. The students in this study acknowledged an increase in confidence and the desire to continue to engage in education tourism as a viable path to explore their world.
Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

This study engaged an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to investigate how adolescents make sense of engagement in educational tourism. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis is based on the belief that humans construct meaning based on relationships with their world. Therefore, significance is placed on interpretation on both that of the participants as well as the researcher. This qualitative inquiry attempted to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomena of travel for educative purposes. This study sought to copiously understand how adolescents make sense of engagement with the phenomenon, and how, if any the engagement led to learning. The research was guided by the following research question: What are the learning experiences of rural adolescents engaging in educational tourism and how do they make sense of the educational benefit of these experiential learning situations?

Research findings support much of the extant literature that was reviewed in chapter two; however, a few findings could not be matched to current literature. What is significant about this study is that it is focused on adolescents who engaged in a self-selected and self-funded learning opportunity that was neither part of their traditional secondary schooling trajectory nor offered any formalized learning component like those commonly found in study abroad programs. The findings will offer a unique perspective on the benefits of non-academic travel, while traveling for the purpose of learning. Thirteen subordinate themes emerged from the analysis of narratives under five categories including: (a) pre-trip reflections, (b) support with decision to travel, (c) responsibility for learning, (d) situations of learning, and (e) sharing travel learning experience with others. This chapter will include a summary of the significance of the findings of the previous chapter, the correlation of these findings to the experiential learning framework and study abroad literature as well as implications for future practice.
Findings in Relationship to the Literature

**Limited exposure to different cultures.** These participants revealed they were acutely aware of their lack of experience with others from around the world. They detailed this awareness by describing de facto circumstances of their normal environment. Analysis of the interview dialogue exposed an innate desire to learn more about other people and places in the world. They indicated that conversational interactions with older siblings or close friends who had participated in international travel experience or educational tourism highlighted a desire among the participants to seek the same experience for themselves. Consequently, when presented with the opportunity to engage in an international educational tourism experience, these participants described themselves as “ready” to explore the world.

Likewise, these participants actively engaged in a quest to learn about a culture and environment quite different from their previous lived experience. This cognitive engagement prior to the actual experience of travel was instrumental for understanding when the participants encountered the places they researched. The excitement leading up to the first international experience was replicated in the responses by all three participants. While two participants revealed they traveled internationally after this initial experience, they did not report the same level of excitement as with this particular experience, nor did they indicate they spent as much time preparing for departure, suggesting the first experience maintained a profound significance that was not replicated in subsequent international travel. This finding supports McKeown’s (2009) claim that any length of time abroad is beneficial to cognitive or intellectual development, especially for the first experience.

**Seeking support from family.** Participants expressed the importance of support as a central element of engagement in educational tourism. Their primary resource of support prior to travel
was their parents. The dialogue revealed that parents were willing to support the participants through fundraising and financial contributions. Of particular interest to this finding was that only one of the six parents held a college degree, but perceived the importance of a relationship between their child’s exposure to international experience and success in the workforce. Additionally, only one set of parents had traveled outside the United States, but all parents valued the experience for their adolescent child. Participant dialogue indicated that parents were aware of a different world than the one that awaited graduates in the 1970’s and 1980’s. The necessity of multicultural interaction and cultural understanding of others were revealed to be two primary factors evoking parent support.

Inkson and Myers (2003) found that family, social and personal relationships played a large role in a study of 50 New Zealanders who had spent more than six months abroad. Only three of the participants indicated they selected an international experience on their own while the remaining 47 indicated it was support from family and encouragement from friends that influenced their decision. While the focus of this study centered on career development in independent participants, (only two reported being under the age of 20) as the sole support for the correlation between family support and educative travel, it highlights the need for more research in this area.

Participants in the present study revealed through dialogue that their parents supported personal growth in their child as a result of engagement in educational tourism. Likewise, they indicated that their parents wanted them to explore the world on their own and felt that the opportunity to travel with a trusted teacher and tourism provider offered a safe venue. Additionally, the time frame of travel was also attractive to parents as the excursions lasted slightly under two weeks. Parents were also aware they would be provided with a detailed list of
lodging arrangements, daily activities and contact numbers prior to departure. Consequently, the positive parent support could be attributed to the contextual factors of this particular experience. No existing literature could be located to support this specific finding, therefore, more research is needed on the experiences of parents whose adolescent child/ren seek to engage in educational tourism.

**Seeking support from the group.** Participants in this study placed great significance on group travel with peers of common association. During the interviews, all three participants repeatedly mentioned “the group” as being a factor in the decision to travel in addition to being a support resource while on the trip. While none of the participants traveled with a close friend, they all had social connections with other travelers. While being away from home for the first time, each participant indicated he/she looked to other group members to meet individual social or emotional needs. They also indicated feeling a particular “closeness” with others who shared this experience, and while not currently in daily contact with other travelers, often reminisce about this particular experience when contact occurs.

Hanvey (1976) posits that a global perspective is constructed in the matrix of human concerns tightly interwoven between different inhabitants of the earth. These concerns are not regulated to time and space, but rather transcend the boundaries of cultural and social identities into what become the elements of human understanding. McCabe’s (1994) study on 23 college-age participants in the University of Pittsburgh’s Semester At Sea program revealed that a community of learners provided “comfort in learning, processing and digesting new information” as one moved through an experience with others (n.p.).

**Positive attitude.** Attitude is considered a developmental element of global competence by the American Council on International Intercultural Education (1996). This present study
supports that attitudes of global competence can be found in adolescents in their openness to explore other cultures, respecting the people and culture found in international destinations, and withholding prior judgment based on knowledge acquired before the personal experience. Particular to their claims was the repetitive use of “open-minded, respectful and positive.”

Smith (1955) was one of the earliest researchers to consider the impact of intercultural experiences on the attitudes of individuals. His study on 310 American secondary and college students who either travelled to Europe in the summer of 1950 or participated in a control group in the US, found that post international travel attitudes were more likely to reflect the pre-trip manner of thinking as opposed to a resonating or profound experience while engaging in the experience. Analysis of the participants’ responses in the current study displayed attitudes of both ethnocentric and ethnorelative values occurring simultaneously. While somewhat romanticizing the Latin American culture and voicing criticism of aspects of their own culture, they appeared to fluctuate between the privilege of U.S. citizenship and the opportunities afforded with such a birthright and struggling with the perceived happiness of a culture lacking much material wealth and possession.

According to Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003), “The extent to which the event of cultural difference will be experienced is a function of how complexly it can be constructed, while the crux of the development of intercultural sensitivity is attaining the ability to construe (and thus to experience) cultural difference in more complex ways (p. 423).” Participants indicated that the experience and people of Costa Rica were never far from their thoughts and a various times since their return had found themselves “wondering what the tour guide was doing today” and how “beans and rice didn’t taste like they did in Costa Rica.”
This finding is also confirmed by Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) study on perceived and recalled attitudes of over 2,300 students from the University of Delaware indicated that students who engaged in a short-term abroad study were more able to recognize “the whole world is not like the US” and “there are other cultures that exist very differently from our own” (p. 170). Additionally, this finding indicates the participants were fully engaged in the basic element of Deardorff’s (2006/2004) Pyramid and Process Models of Intercultural Competence. Likewise, they noted that their attitude was dynamic throughout the progression of the experience wherein movement from the personal level to an intercultural level was indicated by the appropriate response to each stimulus. Finally, participant’s responses showed they were able move fully through the process circle and/or to the top of the pyramid to achieve the desired external outcomes in all situations.

**Confidence.** Personal growth in the area of confidence appeared to hold the most impact for the participants in this study. All three readily supplied examples of the changing dynamics they acknowledged were a result of engaging in educational tourism. Each participant described an individual experience that was uniquely tied to his or her original purpose for traveling. The thrill seeker Christine used the term “accomplished” to describe her feelings about meeting the challenges of the new environment and revealed she had the confidence to ask questions in future travels. Both Sam and Jill gained confidence in their ability to be away from their parents and have applied this new knowledge to independent travel since this first initial experience. These findings are widely supported in the extant literature on study abroad. An increase in self-confidence was reported by Black and Duhon’s (2006) evaluation of U.S. students from a ten-institution consortium, who participated in a month-long study abroad. Positive gains were determined in self-confidence and independence among others. Likewise, Evidence from Wright
and Clarke III’s (2010) and Carter’s (2005) studies suggest that study abroad leads to changes in U.S. students. Notable gains were demonstrated in appreciation for diversity, an awareness and connection to others, and self-confidence among others.

Other notable studies supporting the development of self-confidence through travel include Pearce and Foster’s (2007) two-part study on long-term backpackers to determine a list of generic skills that were developed as a result of the travel experience. The first study, conducted through content analysis of 95 web-based travelogues, determined 42 learning skills such as self-confidence, adaptability and patience were developed. The second study conducted primarily through a survey with open-ended questions, developed a framework applicable to determining the results of travel experience. The results determined 62% of respondents indicated 20 generic skills were developed or improved, while 35% of the respondents indicated development or improvement of 42 generic skills.

Gmelch (1997) found in his study of 51 American university students on a six week study abroad to Europe that independent travel provided the students with more self-confidence and adaptability as opposed to regular course work in the foreign environment. The program was arranged to allow for three day weekends, on which, students would use their Eurail passes to travel to popular destinations in central and Western Europe. Additionally, students reported that the new languages and different cultural settings they encountered forced them to seek appeasement of their basic needs through a new set of skills.

**Life-long desire to travel for learning.** Participants in this study displayed the intention to become lifelong learners through the declaration that future travels would be educational versus a traditional vacation. When asked for examples of what future travel would include, they responded with “architecture, music, food and the local people.” Their responses suggest they
share the sentiment that all experiences hold learning value. They revealed a desire to travel extensively over an extended period of time, further suggesting that each travel experience represents a small portion of the overall life experiences of the individual. Sam speaks for the group with the “book without an ending” metaphor in regards to the limitless possibilities of learning found in educational travel. Jones and Symon (2001) posit “Life–long learning through serious leisure provides individual freedom for self-actualization and self-expression in an activity which is often freely choses and which satisfies a quest for excitement” (p. 912). Two participants have subsequently engaged in international educational travel since the return from this initial Costa Rican experience. One participant has engaged in independent travels with friends, however has remained stateside for a number of reasons.

Participants’ responses to the questions on life-long learning can be matched to the claims of Pittman, Broomhall, McEwan and Majocha (2010) whose body of research primarily examines educational tourism through the lens of adult learners engaging on “a deliberate and explicit learning experience” (p. 221). Analysis of the interview responses indicate this particular group of rural adolescents participated in an active development of skills both in the cognitive and affective areas. Janes (2008) study on 23 American study abroad students found that during non-academic travel students “initial constructions derived from preconceptions were challenged, developed or reinforced during the semester” (p. 33). This change most often occurred while students were in contact with the general public as opposed to formal instruction in the academic setting. Likewise, the study also suggests this learning was more holistic in terms of life-long learning as the participants were engaging in activities selected by own personal interest or choice.
The deeper levels of learning and self-discovery experienced when students encounter the local culture may lead to a more culturally complex view. For students in this study, the visit to the local school appeared to have the most impact as the story was told as one of the most meaningful experiences of the trip. Thousands of miles from the structured, formal classrooms of their lived experience, these participants found themselves challenged by the social structure of a different culture. The intensity of the experience continued to resonate several years post travel.

Participants revealed that the people of Costa Rica were never far from their thoughts and often found themselves paying more attention to information about Costa Rica and asking themselves, “I wonder what Victor [tour guide] is doing today?” “What is going on in his life right now?” Likewise, they also acknowledged they would have never thought about others from different places without the influence of this experience further indicating that learning continues to take place long after the experience.

**Share travel learning experience with others.** As a biological process in which human beings engage, learning occurs primarily in social contexts. In a social setting, learning often results through an exchange of information and interaction with others. This interaction of shared interests can often lead to more enthusiastic learning experiences. Participants in this study were unanimous in their responses that this experience should be shared with others. Primarily, they suggested travel in groups with like-minded individuals. This finding differs slightly from the findings of Alexander, Bakir and Wickens (2010) whose participants preferred to travel with family members first and friends second. While the participants in the present study knew each other through school related activities, none were especially close to each other.

Participants in this study frequently engaged in post facto reflection during periods of down time on the trip. Pitman, Broomhall and Majocha (2011) state that this type of critical reflection
is important to the major stakeholders in the educational tourism field including (a) experiential learning theorists, (b) educationalists, (c) the tourism industry itself, (d) tour leaders, and (e) the participants themselves (p. 10). Analysis of the responses indicates that the conversations with other group members once again met individual personal learning needs as well as validate the individual experience with the phenomenon.

Participants in the present study recommended educational tourism to other adolescents as a way to gain valuable personal knowledge in addition to cultural exposure. In sharing their stories, the physical experience previously confined to a place and time, and understood through location, geography and local culture, took on the expert knowledge of real life experience in such a way that participants were actively reengaged in the learning process. Through recalling details and sharing photos, participants enhanced the influence of place on the content they learned while once again making a progression through the learning process of sharing.

**Connections to the Theoretical Framework**

**Opportunity to see something different.** All three participants acknowledged their inquiry into international travel was heavily influenced by internal desire and to seek learning experiences beyond the classroom. In a manner of speaking, they had outgrown their backyard and wished to see more of the world. Two of the participants specifically mentioned meeting other people and their excitement over discovering the differences. The search for different topography was also attractive to two participants. Physical landscape features which captured their attention included a tropical country with beaches and monkeys, and the jungle.

These findings correlate directly to Dewey’s model of experiential learning. First, the participants made observations of their current surroundings. Second, they used their observations and the contact with a wide array of sources to enter the third phase, judgment.
Next, they put together a plan of action, i.e. engagement in an educational tourism opportunity full of anticipated learning situations outside the classroom, which would satisfy the purpose of the experience. By establishing purpose and direction with the desire to expand knowledge, they were able to fully participate in the cycle of experiential learning according to Dewey’s model, in addition to becoming the purveyor of their own learning outside the classroom.

Learning outside the classroom has been documented as a positive outcome within the literature base. Lamet and Lamet (1982) found that over 99% of the 184 American study abroad students who participated in their study considered “out-of class” learning experiences valuable. Laubscher’s (1994) study on 30 American study abroad students determined that participants “were able independently to engage in activities and immerse themselves in experiences that they felt contributed significantly to their learning and development” (p. 95). The findings of the current study suggest that the desire for an immersive experience within another culture can occur before the onset of adulthood or the college experience, or while the participant is still considered an adolescent. The findings also suggest that rural adolescents with limited exposure to different ethnicities are capable of active construction in their own pedagogy in regards to contact with other cultures.

**Pre-trip Research.** Participants in this study were united in their pursuit of knowledge about the country and places to be visited prior to travel. Operating under Dewey’s position that observation, knowledge and judgment produces purpose, they used Google and Internet searches as antecedent activities to gain background information. Participants indicated they used the literature provided by the travel company as a source of information. Additionally, they revealed they sought answers from other travel companions.
Within the context of using the same information sources, the analysis revealed the participants’ search for knowledge was centered in individual learning needs and motivations for participation. One participant was especially diligent in the pursuit of contextual material, which he indicated was later recalled while in the situation of experiencing the thing itself. He indicated he relied heavily on the narrative details of the tour guide’s presentation in conjunction with his prior knowledge and sensory interpretation of the sights, sounds, and smells to make sense of the moment. Two participants specified they were interested in the acquisition of knowledge about basic skills such as currency exchange and the activities dictated by the pre-arranged itinerary. This finding reveals positive learning situated in the affective, cognitive and behavioral domains similar to the work of Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2003) which explored the impact of short-term international travel on students pursuing an EMBA. This study concluded that when using travel as an immersive learning tool, students have the opportunity to engage active learning skills in a real-world context wherein they will gain first-hand knowledge, and the categorical divisions closely mirror those of the experiential learning framework. Therefore, the activities reported by the participants in the current study are reaffirmed by the findings of this previous study.

Through analysis of the participant’s responses about pre-trip preparation, findings in the present study support Hansel’s (1988) position that experiential learning requires active participant ownership and knowledge acquisition based on needs. The students in this study gained ownership of the experience, first by seeking to travel independently and second through the motivation of learning what they needed to know in order to satisfy basic needs. These needs in turn, were reflective of the dynamics of time and place. As one need was fulfilled, another need presented itself in a different area forcing the participant to rely on knowledge in order to meet the need.
**Drawn to difference.** Participants indicated learning situations were noted in differences found while engaging in the phenomenon. Consistent with Piaget’s theories of accommodation and assimilation, participants designated tension filled moments of comparison between the experience itself and their preconceived schemas based on prior knowledge. Most impactful were climbing to the crater of an active volcano and an interaction with deadly crocodiles. All three participants indicated they were consciously aware of the danger presented by close proximity to an active volcano, yet they also described it as one of the “neatest” things they experienced, and on the last day of the trip were building sand volcanos on the beach. The encounter with the crocodiles, while also described as “neat,” did not merit a sand replication and appears to have remained in the original pre-trip schema of dangerous things to avoid. However, the contact was impactful enough that it warranted documentation both verbally and digitally, suggesting that the experience was indeed noteworthy for these participants.

This finding is supported by Alexander, Bakir and Wickens’ (2010) exploratory study on vacation travel found that encounters with the “other” provided the most opportunity for growth. While this study focused on the impact of vacation on the self, a number of the participants indicated they were most impacted by interaction with the natural environment including wildlife and scenery. This finding also correlates to Coryell’s (2011) study on 24 American students studying for a short-term abroad in Italy which found learning that occurred during free time as participants interacted with the sights, sounds and people of another culture was determined to be of value. Such unstructured events often place participants in real-world situations and enable them to practice skills and apply problem solving strategies that are not replicable in a formal education setting.
**Comparison to familiar.** Tension filled moments of discovery were more profound as indicated in the analysis of everyday similarities the participants found in a foreign environment. All three participants made mention of what was described as the “bumpiest back roads ever” in comparison to their everyday experience at home, as well as the food they ate. One participant indicted she bought snacks because they were “pink and blue,” colors she associated with snack food at home. Likewise, the infamous beans and rice were food items experienced by the participants prior to traveling, however not to the extent that they were served three times a day. None of the participants stated that consuming this fare in large quantities was a hardship, thereby indicating assimilation into the culture in order to meet basic needs. Bhawuk and Brinslin (1992) linked trying different foods to one’s ability to be “open-minded and flexible” and “willing to try new things” (p. 432). These characteristics suggest a higher personal level of understanding towards cultural development wherein one begins to see the interconnectedness of people from across the globe.

Furthermore, Bhawuk and Brinslin (1992) state that “To be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures” (p. 416). Recognition of similarities led participants in the present study to try new things, remain open-minded and flexible in order to successfully continue engagement in an educational tourism experience. Additionally, participant responses indicated they already developed basic ethnorelative thoughts and behaviors prior to travel, supporting Hammer, Bennett’s and Wisemans (2003) view that ethnocentric beliefs must first be overcome.

Participants also reported that kayaking produced a tension filled opportunity for learning. Participants revealed they held a different perception of lake kayaking, such as the opportunity
experienced in Costa Rica, and river kayaking; the most common experience found in their home area. Because they associated river kayaking with more danger, they neither had previously engaged in the activity, nor had friends who engaged in the activity. While the still water of the lake provided for a less intimidating surface, all three participants expressed a struggle with tandem kayaking, wherein they had to learn to row in sync with another person. All three indicated they watched other kayakers who were moving forward and observed their actions. They next conversed with their partner and developed a system of counting out the pace needed to row properly. Within these moments of observation to perform a physical task, participants were fully engaged in Lewin’s “here and now” challenges of the immediate environment. Participants also reported they felt confident to engage in this particular activity again, or had done so since the return from Costa Rica.

Two participants were quick to point out that during a visit to a local school they were confronted with an opportunity to learn about learning. When faced with the stark realities of just how little learning material was available for the children of a small school located in the mountains, they remarked on the abundance of educational resources in the United States. Both participants repeated the word “need” in the verb form; the first by describing the lavishness of the United States educational system, and the second by describing what the Costa Rican system lacked. They perceived their experience with US education as opulent, wasteful, and full of children unwilling to learn. They described an acute awareness of the excess and life of ease they felt was provided to school children in the United States. Additionally, they vocalized what they deemed the hardships and struggles Costa Rican children face in order to obtain an education.

These participants concluded their school visit with (voluntary) monetary and material gifts to the school, but also left with a conscious awareness of what Tarrant (2010) described as the
privilege and responsibility of American citizenship. This finding also is validated through the conceptual framework of Falk, Ballantyne, Packer and Benckendorff (2012) which provides support for the value of educational tourism as a venue to build generic skills in an active and absorbing environment where learning goes beyond doing the right thing but doing it in the proper context and for the proper reasons. Hansel (1988) further claims that knowledge gained through senses in experiential learning situations is holistic and reveals “gaps, deficiencies and misunderstandings in current knowledge” (p. 179).

Learning through contact with the environment. Analysis of the interviews indicated two particular physical activities were crucial points of personal learning and growth. For Sam, the most important learning experience occurred on horseback. He indicated he was uncomfortable with horseback riding from the onset of his decision to engage in educational tourism. However, he forced himself out of his comfort zone and signed up for the excursion. He indicated that when the time actually came, he had to make a conscious decision to truly participate. His internal dialogue revealed he saw persistence in times of struggle as a viable learning outcome of an unsavory situation. Jill recounted conquering her fear of heights while on the zip line. Her internal dialogue revealed she mentally talked her way through the uncomfortable experience. Christine, who initially went on the trip looking for a “bucket list” adventure, described her learning through the use of metaphor and as a euphoric experience unlikely to be replicated. In referencing that things experienced cannot be undone and that experiences are particular to specific references in time and space, her remarks illustrate the dualistic nature of experiential learning within environment.

All three participants were engaged in what Kolb (1984) considered the “subjective” or personal and “objective” or environmental experiences (p. 35). The active and self-directed
process situates an individual physically in an environment while simultaneously processing the environment internally. Although initially measured by Lewin within group learning, it is considered by Kolb to include everyday learning situations. The participant dialogue captures the essence of the real-world experience unhindered by laboratory control or artificial manipulation. This finding is additionally supported through a study conducted by Pitman, Broomhall, McEwan and Majocha (2010) which concluded the intentionality of learning and the situational immersion of experiential learning situations were key characteristics of educational tourism.

Kuh’s (1995) qualitative study of 149 American study abroad students found that planning and decision making were the most valued outcomes of non-academic interaction with people in the real world. Contact with others outside of class was found to reinforce “affirmation, confidence and self-worth” (p.146). The study also concluded setting plays an important role in learning experiences because it offered an opportunity to merge the formal classroom learning with real world situations. Non-academic experiences that required students to sustain an effort to complete a task were reported as important to life in general because these skills are often not part of academic coursework.

**Reflection after the experience.** Participants in this current study produced evidence which suggested full engagement in the four abilities Kolb (1984) considers necessary for the highest level of learning to occur. First, participation in educational tourism and engagement in physically demanding activities indicates they were capable of the concrete experience (CE). Second, they demonstrated reflective observation (RO) through responses to being asked what they did with their down time. Their replies indicated they used it to further their own personal learning needs by cognitively bridging to the third mode, abstract conceptualization, (AC) based
on the outcomes of their concrete experience. Finally, they were able to actively experiment (AE) through the new experiences of the itinerary or within their own particular learning needs.

The learning was highly individualized and personal, and occurred in three types. First, the intentional learning or the deliberate engagement in an activity in order to increase exposure to another culture or knowledge was the primary component in the decision to participate. Second, the learning was immersive in that participants had prior knowledge of the unfamiliar things they would be asked to complete and were well aware of the new skills they would be forced to acquire during the experience itself. Thirdly, the itinerary provided structured and experiential activities to engage in pre-travel, during travel and after experience learning opportunities. Participants indicated they were especially active participants in learning while engaged in the activity or during the down time after. This time, they indicated, was used for clarification of material, verifying understanding or just sharing the experience with others.

**Implications for Future Practice**

The overarching goal of this study was to better understand the experience of educational tourism as it related to adolescents who have self-selected and self-funded this opportunity. The research sought to uncover the learning value these participants ascribe to the experience. Although the literature on international travel is vast, it is heavily concentrated on study abroad in college students as well as the business and medical professions. Therefore, this study provides valuable insight into the experience of three rural adolescents who engaged in educational tourism.

It is recommended that secondary schools increase student’s ability to succeed in a globalized world and society as supported by the Senate Resolution 308 and adoption of the Common Core Standards. It is understood that not all students are willing or able to achieve the
knowledge, skills and attitudes of global competence, however, schools still have the primary responsibility to produce students adept at success in a global workforce. Participants indicated the opportunity to engage in educational tourism was an important factor that assisted in the development of achieving the ability to interact with others from around the globe.

Dialogue with the participants indicated support for engagement in travel was multidimensional and occurred at the personal, familial, and social group levels. Participants were first and foremost aware of their lack of experience in global knowledge. They sought to first support themselves in search of attainment of this knowledge. It is recommended that additional systems of support be established for adolescent travel groups. This can include an approved curriculum of global studies in local school systems and partnerships with local businesses that support adolescents seeking an international experience prior to graduation from a secondary institution.

When evaluating the experiences of participants who engaged in educational tourism, it did seem that the opportunity for engagement was a significant learning opportunity unobtainable in the classroom setting. Therefore, it is recommended that school administrators seek to create and support opportunities for students to engage in educational tourism. This could be achieved by reaching out to parents and staff with the goal of educating individuals about the importance of global competence and changing deep rooted ethnocentric perspectives. This may seem as somewhat a simplistic approach, but by creating an atmosphere of support for the curriculum and teaching of global attitudes, schools are more likely to establish successful programs of educational travel. The opportunity for travel was an element that participants appeared most grateful and was positively linked with learning opportunities.

**Implications for Future Research**
Two additional challenges adolescent’s encounter when interested in educational tourism surfaced during the interview analysis. First, adolescents must secure the permission of their parents, as they are not legally considered adults and still live at home, relying on their parents to provide for their basic needs. Second, adolescents still attending school full time face the challenge of securing the financial support required to engage in overseas travel. Participants felt that the financial obligations were attainable and detailed their commitment to secure the needed funds through employment and fund raising. These efforts place the participants securely within the criteria of self-selected and self-funded learning choices of the experiential learning framework. No extant literature could be located to correlate these findings, calling for more research in this area.

**Limitations of the Study Size**

The researcher was only able to interview three participants for this study. Despite the initial interest of three additional participants who traveled with the researcher on these two trips, time and geographical locations prevented the additional subjects from participation. A number of other travelers experienced contextual factors such as age at time of travel, previous international travel, and parent accompaniment during travel which excluded them from the selection process.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the purpose of this research study was to uncover and investigate the learning experiences and sense making processes of rural adolescents who engaged in educational tourism. This study’s findings support much of the current literature on study abroad, thereby indicating positive outcomes for the holistic experience of international travel. Participants welcomed the opportunity to participate in a self-funded and self-selected learning activity, and
indicated support from family members and fellow travelers was essential to success in the overall experience.

Participants reveled they were heavily involved in the process of learning in the months prior to the trip. Likewise, students reported situations of learning reflective of the experiential learning framework. Participants were unanimous in stating that educational travel offered the opportunity for personal growth, especially in the areas of self-confidence and independence. Finally, participants indicated that engagement in educational tourism is achievable through personal persistence, commitment to one’s self and a willingness or desire to obtain knowledge.

This study provides another prospective towards the phenomena of educational tourism, and therefore is useful information for policy makers, curriculum designers, teachers and parents as they expand their knowledge and understanding of the Knowledge Age and global economy. While the development of globally competent citizens is an issue facing educational systems across the globe, the findings of this study advance the understanding of the importance of in situ learning experiences for geographically and culturally isolated adolescents. The findings suggest the need for a shift in adolescent’s access to international experiences prior to the departure from the traditional secondary school experience. In doing so, both students and teachers will have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, skills and attitude required of the 21st century citizen.
References


Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic News Release College enrollment and work activity of 2013 high school graduates Tuesday, April 22, 2014 10 AM

[www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nr0.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/hsgec.nr0.htm)


Intercom, 84(85), 9-31.


Appendix A
Signed Consent Document

Northeastern University, Department of Education, College of Professional Studies

Name of Investigator: Kelly Conn, PhD, (857) 205-9585; k.conn@neu.edu

Student Investigator: Melissa Skidmore, Doctoral Student, (301) 268-6803;
skidmore.m@husky.neu.edu

Title of Project: Making sense of learning while on tour: an IPA study of adolescents engaging in educational tourism

Dear Participant:

We are inviting you to take part in a research study. This form will tell you about the study, but the researcher will explain it to you first. You may ask this person any questions that you have. When you are ready to make a decision, you may tell the researcher if you want to participate or not. You do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, the researcher will ask you to sign this statement and will give you a copy to keep.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You have been selected to participate in this research study because you have been identified as someone who has engaged in educational tourism as an adolescent.

Why is this research study being done?

The purpose of this study is to explore the experience of learning during educational tourism from an adolescent perspective. The primary research question for this study is:

What are the learning experiences of rural adolescents engaging in educational tourism and how do they make sense of these experiences?
What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to participate in two face to face interviews, and a final review of the data. For the second interview, you will be asked to provide the researcher with five self-selected photographs that were taken during your touristic experience. Additionally, you will be provided a copy of the interview questions upon deciding to participate in the study. Ideally, the time between scheduled interviews will be no more than two weeks and the time for the final review session will be no more than three months. Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed by the researcher into written format. All transcripts will be assigned a color-code and your name will be replaced with a pseudonym. The third session will provide you with the opportunity to read the written description and determine if I have captured your experience accurately. You will be given the opportunity to make changes to the transcript to more precisely reflect your experience if necessary. Additionally, you will receive a final copy of the completed study if you so desire.

Where will this take place and how much of my time will it take?

You will be interviewed at a time and place that is convenient for you. The first interview will take approximately 30 minutes, the second interview will take approximately 60-90 minutes, and the final review session will take approximately 30 minutes.

Will there be any risk or discomfort to me?

There are no foreseeable risks or discomfort associated with participation in this study.

Will I benefit by being in this research?

There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in the study. However, the information learned from this study may help the researcher better understand how adolescent students perceive learning while engaging in educational tourism. Additionally, this research is useful for
policy makers, education leaders and business partners who are interested in creating experiential learning opportunities through educational tourism or developing a global curriculum for secondary students. The research should also interest teachers who are committed to creating experiential learning opportunities for students beyond the boundaries of the traditional classroom and simulated experiences of technology. Furthermore, for practitioners, this study should provide insight into the value of infusing educational tourism into the current curriculum. Finally, interested parents may find the study helpful in encouraging and supporting their child to make decisions about engaging in educational tourism opportunities.

**Who will see the information about me?**

Your identity in this study will be confidential. Only the researchers on this study will see the information about you. No reports or publications will use information that can identify you in any way or any individual as being of this project. However, once told, stories of the experience become data that is shared with others through reports and papers and therefore cannot be considered confidential.

All data collected will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home, with the researcher holding the key. Interviews will be recorded using a flip camera and stored on a password protected computer and thumb drive. Interviews will be transcribed by the researcher and stored on a password protected computer and thumb drive. Two hard copies of the transcriptions, one kept clean and one for marking will remain in the researcher’s possession when being analyzed and stored in the locked file cabinet when not being used. Photographs will remain in the possession of the owners until delivered to the researcher at the time of the second interview. The self-selected photographs will be stored with the other data collected in the locked file cabinet. Since participants will already hold a copy of their self-selected photos, the copies
they provide to the researcher will be destroyed upon validation. The method of identification is
to assign a color code to each participant in order to insure identity is kept secret. The color code
will be used on all materials exchanged between the researcher and participants, including
transcripts. All names will be replaced with pseudonyms and the key to identifying participants
through color coded materials and names will remain in the locked file cabinet and on a
password protected computer and thumb drive. Upon validation, the remaining data will be
destroyed, while the signed consent forms will remain in the locked file cabinet for a period of
three years; after which, they will be destroyed.

If I do not want to take part in the study, what choices do I have?

Participation in this study is strictly voluntary.

What will happen if I suffer any harm from this research?

No special arrangements will be made for compensation or for payment for treatment solely
because of my participation in this research.

Can I stop my participation in this study?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You do not have to participate if you
do not want to and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may
quit at any time.

Who can I contact if I have questions or problems?

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact, Melissa Skidmore, (301)
268-6803, or at skidmore.m@husky.neu.edu the student investigator for this research. You can
also contact Kelly Conn, (857) 205-9585, or at k.conn@neu.edu the Principal Investigator.

Who can I contact about my rights as a participant?
If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, 960 Renaissance Park, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@neu.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

**Will I be paid for my participation?**

You will be given a $10 gift certificate to Sheetz soon as you complete the third interview.

**Will it cost me anything to participate?**

There is no cost associated with participating in this research.

**Is there anything else I need to know?**

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

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Appendix B

Interview #1 Questions

Northeastern University, Doctor of Education Program

Principal Investigator: Kelly Conn, PhD, (857) 205-9585; k.conn@neu.edu

Student Investigator: Melissa Skidmore, Doctoral Student, (301) 268-6803; skidmore.m@husky.neu.edu

Title of Project: Making sense of learning while on tour: an IPA study on adolescent’s engaging in educational tourism

Interviewees:

In order to obtain parental permission, participant consent, permission to record via video, and demographic data about the selected participants, the following questions will be asked during the first interview using a semi-structured, face to face style.

Introduction/Warm up questions:

1. Please describe the community where you lived during high school.

Prompt: ethnic concerns

Prompt: cultural concerns

Prompt: socio-economic concerns

2. Please describe your family.

Prompt: jobs held

Prompt: education level and prominence

Prompt: cultural exposure

Prompt: ethnic exposure
Prompt: types of learning activities engaged in or encouraged as a family

Main Interview/Demographic Questions:
Responses should reflect your pre trip experiences.

3. Please describe your thoughts and feelings about your personal knowledge, skills and attitudes toward others from around the world.

4. Please describe your prior travel experience.

5. Please explain why you decided to engage on this particular international travel experience.

6. Please describe any support you had with your decision.

7. What role do you think international travel experience has in your future?

8. Please describe your experience with learning about the world beyond your community.

9. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your pre trip experiences?

Closing:
Thank you for taking the time to provide me with the demographic information needed for my study. Once all the interviews are complete and transcribed, you will be asked to review the content to make sure I have accurately described your experience as revealed through photos, artifacts and verbal responses. I would also like to remind you to bring six or seven pre-selected photos of the trip. Please read the questions for Interview 2 prior to making your photo selections. Before we leave, I would like to schedule your main interview at a time and place that is convenient to you.
Appendix C

Interview #2 Questions

Northeastern University, Doctor of Education Program

Principal Investigator: Kelly Conn, PhD, (857) 205-9585; k.conn@neu.edu

Student Investigator: Melissa Skidmore, Doctoral Student, (301) 268-6803; skidmore.m@husky.neu.edu

Title of Project: Making sense of learning while on tour: an IPA study on adolescent’s engaging in educational tourism

Interviewees:

In order to obtain participant consent, permission to record via video, and responses to the main interview questions, the following questions will be asked during the second interview using a semi-structured, face to face style.

Introduction/Warm up questions:

1. Please select your favorite photo from the trip. Explain why this is your favorite.

2. While you were on the trip, you were given some “free time”. Please describe something you did with your free time. You may use a photo to accompany the description.

Subquestion: Why did you choose this activity?

Subquestion: In your opinion, did you learn anything while engaging in this activity. Provide examples.

Main Interview Questions:

Responses should be considered from the time you enrolled in the trip until the time you returned home from the trip unless otherwise noted.
3. Please describe what would you consider the most valuable learning experience of engaging in educational tourism? You may use a photo to accompany this description.

4. Please describe any challenges you faced during the time of departure from home until your return home. You may use a photo to accompany this description.

Subquestion: Can you describe how you solved the problem?

Subquestion: What, if anything, do you feel you learned as a result of this situation?

5. What knowledge, skills and attitudes do you feel were necessary for engagement in educational tourism?

Subquestion: How did you feel about your ability to survive in an international environment?

6. Can you please describe a situation beginning with your departure from home and ending with your return home, where you felt you were actively learning new skills? You may use a photo to accompany this description.

7. Please describe an interaction you had with the local culture. You may use a photo to accompany the description.

Subquestion: During the interaction, in your opinion, were you consciously aware of new learning taking place?

Subquestion: Can you provide me with some examples of how or what you were learning?

8. Please describe any changes you have noticed in yourself after your return home.

9. Given this experience, what are your thoughts, feelings or motivations toward international travel in your future?

Prompt: Career

Prompt: Global citizenship

Wrap up Questions:
10. What thoughts/advice would you give teachers, parents, students or anyone considering educational tourism?

11. Is there anything else you would like to add to our interview today?

Closing:

Thank you for taking the time to provide me with the information needed for my study. I would also like to thank you for providing me with your pre-selected photos. I will retain these copies and securely store them with the other data. Once all the interviews are complete and transcribed, you will be asked to review the content to make sure I have accurately described your experience as revealed through photos, artifacts and verbal responses.
Appendix D

*Figure 1* Dewey’s Model of Experiential Learning

Source: Kolb, 1984
Appendix E

*Figure 2* The Lewin Experiential Learning Model

![Diagram of the Lewin Experiential Learning Model](image)

*Figure 2* The Lewin Experiential Learning Model

Source: Kolb, 1984
Appendix F

*Figure 3* Piaget’s Model of Learning and Cognitive Development

*Source: Kolb (1984)*
Appendix G

*Figure 4 Three Traditions of Experiential Learning Model*

![Diagram showing three traditions of experiential learning model: Lewin, Dewey, Piaget, with associated theories and concepts]

**CONTEMPORARY APPLICATIONS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social policy and Action</th>
<th>Competence- Based Education</th>
<th>Lifelong Learning and Career Development</th>
<th>Experiential Education</th>
<th>Curriculum Development</th>
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<td>Access and influence on the symbolic/technological culture for:</td>
<td>- Assessment of prior learning</td>
<td>- The nonuniversity education industry</td>
<td>- Co-op education</td>
<td>- Implementation of Bruner’s manifesto: “Any subject can be respectfully taught at any level.”</td>
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<td>- Minorities</td>
<td>- Assessment centers</td>
<td>- Adult development programs in higher education</td>
<td>- Internships</td>
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<td>- The poor</td>
<td>- Competence- centered curricula</td>
<td>- Integration of learning and work</td>
<td>- Simulations</td>
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<td>- Blue-collar workers</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Experiential exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- On-the-job-training/learning</td>
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<td>- Developing Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The arts</td>
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Source: Kolb (1984)
Appendix H

Ethnocentrism/Ethnorelativism

Denial → Defense Reversal → Minimalization → Acceptance → Adaptation → Integration

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ETHNOCENTRISIM</td>
<td>ETHNORELATIVISM</td>
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*Figure 5*

Source: Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman, 2003, p. 423
Appendix I

*Figure 6 The Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence*

| DESIRED EXTERNAL OUTCOME: | Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one’s goals to some degree |
| DESIRED INTERNAL OUTCOME: | Informed frame of reference/filter shift: |
| | Adaptability (to different communication styles & behaviors; adjustment to new cultural environment): |
| | Flexibility (selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviors; cognitive flexibility); |
| | Ethnorelative view; |
| | Empathy |
| Knowledge & Comprehension | Cultural self-awareness; |
| | Deep understanding and knowledge of culture (including contexts, role and impact of culture & others’ world views); |
| | Culture-specific information; |
| Skills: | To listen, observe, and interpret |
| | To analyze, evaluate, and relate |
| Requisite Attitudes: | Respect (valuing other cultures, cultural diversity) |
| | Openness (to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures, withholding judgment) |
| | Curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty) |

- Move from personal level (attitude) to interpersonal/interactive level (outcomes)
- Degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of underlying elements

*Figure 6 The Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence*

Appendix J

Figure 7 Process Model of Intercultural Competence

Appendix K

*Figure 8* Part/Whole Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td>The single extract</td>
<td>The complete text</td>
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<td>The particular text</td>
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<td>The single episode</td>
<td>The complete life</td>
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*Figure 8*

(Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009, p. 28)
Appendix L

Figure 9 Comparison Criteria

Comparison of Criteria by Research Approach

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<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>Qualitative Approach</th>
<th>Quantitative Approach</th>
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<td>Credibility</td>
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<td>Applicability</td>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>External validity</td>
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<td>Consistency</td>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Reliability</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutrality</td>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Objectivity</td>
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Figure 9

Source: Kreftig p. 217
**Appendix M**

*Figure 10. Themes and subthemes from research findings*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre-trip reflections</th>
<th>Support with decision to travel</th>
<th>Responsibility for learning</th>
<th>Situations of learning</th>
<th>Impact after the experience of educational tourism</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Limited exposure to different cultures</td>
<td>Seeking support from family</td>
<td>Pre-trip research</td>
<td>Drawn to difference</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to see something different</td>
<td>Seeking support from the group</td>
<td>Positive attitude</td>
<td>Comparison to familiar</td>
<td>Life-long desire to travel for learning</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Learning through contact</td>
<td>Share travel learning experience with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reflection after the experience</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 10. Themes and subthemes from research findings*