To my husband Mike. All my love.
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Service learning is becoming an increasingly lauded practice within higher education, and students who participate in such experiences reap benefits such as personal growth, career insight, and community awareness. International service learning, an offshoot of service learning, produces similar benefits, but additionally contributes to students’ global awareness and intercultural competency. Existing literature reveals the positive outcomes that service learning and international service learning have on students from four year universities, but yields little regarding the experiences of community college students with these practices. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to investigate the experiences of community college students as it related to their perspectives of their participation in an international service learning program.

Through semi-structured in depth interviews, this study examined the effects that an international service learning program had on seven community college students through the framework of self-authorship. Student perspectives provided insight that demonstrated they strengthened their capacities epistemologically, intrapersonally, and interpersonally due to their participation. Through their experiences, students found
affirmation with career choices, confidence in their identities, and appreciation for diverse cultures.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Service learning is a pedagogical practice that has gained popularity across higher education over the past 20 years (Campus Compact, 2016). Colleges and universities have experienced growth in service learning programs, and acknowledge the value in academic opportunities outside of the traditional classroom, particularly those that offer opportunities in civic engagement, multi-cultural connections, and self-development (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Bureau, Cole, & McCormick, 2014; Chang, 2015). Often, service learning is speciously titled and interchanged with other initiatives such as community service, volunteerism, and field service. Service learning is a pedagogical tool that combines academic curriculum with hands-on meaningful experiences beyond the classroom (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009; Sessa, Natale, London, & Hopkins, 2010) and is an evidenced-based opportunity to assist college students in developing skills and perspectives to meet the goals of graduating employable community-minded citizens (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Prentice & Robinson, 2010).

Stemming from the work of Dewey (1938) and experiential education, service learning is typically structured within a course or curriculum to offer students opportunities to be placed in communities with specific goals to accomplish; this can occur locally or internationally (Chang, 2015). Research indicates service learning can lead to increased scholarship, a broader field of career choices, purposeful learning, immersed learning, and deepening of knowledge retention (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Hatcher 2011; Jeandron & Robinson, 2010). An extension of service learning is traveling abroad to serve international communities. Adding the international aspect has
been shown to increase global awareness and intercultural competence, attributes that colleges value in their graduates (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Kiely, 2005). The success of the practice in four year universities and colleges has been well documented, but gaps remain in the research about the impact the practice may hold for community college students (Fleishman, Brezicha, & York, 2014; Taggart & Crisp, 2011; Taggart & Crisp, 2014; Traver & Katz, 2014). This study sought to provide evidence of the value of such experiences for community college students and how they can better prepare for life beyond college as self-aware, global citizens, equipped with skills to enrich their futures.

Within the landscape of higher education, community colleges have moved slower than their higher education counterparts toward initiatives involving international service learning (Bradshaw, 2013). This may be due to the assumptions in higher education regarding community college students and the perception of time and resource restraints these students face. Pelletier (2010), a contributing author to Purpose, a publication sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), explains that community college students are considered non-traditional or adult. Indeed, the majority of community college students are considered non-traditional, meaning they have one or more of seven identified characteristics: being financially independent, having dependents, being a single parent or caregiver, having delayed post-secondary pursuits, attending school part time, working full time, or lacking a high school diploma (Choy, 2002; Horn, 1996; Pelletier, 2010; Radford, Cominole, & Skomsvold, 2015). These students cite limited time for opportunities such as service learning (Largent, 2013), however, the issue of limited time may be more common to all undergraduates. Although the traditional college student is assumed to
have more time to participate in service learning, a preconceived stereotype exists that predicts the average college student is 18-22 years old, lives on campus, attends full time, and does not work; this only applies to about 16% of the population of all undergraduates across the nation (Pelletier, 2010). Non-traditional students represent about 75% of all college undergraduates, and community colleges represent a majority of non-traditional students (Pelletier).

A historical role for community colleges in higher education has been to provide education and training for students to enter the workforce (Witt, Wattenbarger, Gollattscheck, & Suppiger, 1994). Employers today not only want employees trained for a skillset, but also want employees prepared to communicate, think critically, make decisions, and to be globally minded (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2013). Unfortunately, many students graduate ill prepared to enter the workplace at that level of expectation (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007).

**Problem Statement**

While traditionally viewed as an offering of four-year, bachelor degree or higher granting institutions (Traver & Katz, 2014), service learning opportunities are available to students within all sectors of postsecondary education. Despite approximately 60% of community colleges offering some form of service learning, a high percentage of community college students, 77%, are not invited to participate in community projects or are unaware of the opportunities (CCCSE, 2012). As far as engagement in service learning, 31% of students at four-year institutions participate in some form of service learning or community service, compared to only 13% of community college students (Campus Compact, 2009).
If service learning cultivates so many of the attributes colleges desire in their graduates and employers covet, and is deemed an effective practice throughout higher education, it is important to explore the effects of international service learning on community college students. Limited research is available about service learning and community college students, as the majority is dedicated to four-year institutions (Taggart & Crisp, 2011; Traver & Katz, 2014). More studies are necessary that demonstrate the benefits of this successful pedagogical practice to this population of students.

This study presents an illustration of the impact an international service learning experience had on community college students, by examining the personal narratives of seven students. Through semi-structured interviews collected before, during, and after an international service learning experience, this study showed how international service learning can work to change beliefs, identity, and relationships resulting in meaningful outcomes for students. The theory of self-authorship was used to examine these epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal changes that occurred as the result of the experience.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Based on Kegan’s (1994) work of self-development, the theory of self-authorship explains a person’s capacity to generate cognizant personage that assists in creating a system of beliefs and self-identity (Baxter Magolda, 2008; 2014). It is interpreted from the tradition of social constructivism, which draws from the perceptions individuals conceive based on their personal and interpersonal interactions in the world (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Schwandt, 2014) but expands this theory of knowledge development to a person’s ability to decipher, critique, and then assimilate the myriad of
voices and experience-based information, which then develops and positions their unique identity, value, and belief systems (Baxter Magolda, 2008; 2014). Self-authoring is the fruition of meaning-making, interpretation, identity development and agency that leads to maturation and enlightenment. According to the theory's author “self-authorship is the capacity to internally define a coherent belief system and identity that coordinates engagement in mutual relations with the larger world” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. xxii).

College curriculum and classroom opportunities purposely designed by professors with an experiential element can provide platforms for self-authorship development (King, Baxter Magolda, Barber, Brown, & Lindsay, 2009). Research demonstrates the benefit of experiences beyond the traditional classroom and how such enterprises impact students' self-authorship (Hodge, Baxter Magolda, & Haynes, 2009; King et al., 2009; Pizolatto, 2007). Students who actively participate in opportunities that require evaluation, decision making, and collaboration are better positioned to further their self-authorship (Barber, King, & Baxter Magolda, 2013). Service learning is an effective way to provide opportunities for students to make meaning from their experiences and advance their self-authorship in the college setting (Barber et al., 2013). Culturally diverse experiences such as international service learning may provide avenues for self-authorship development because the transformative impact of the practice becomes developmentally effective for the student if he or she experiences a change in their meaning making orientation (Pizzolato, Nguyen, Johnston, & Wang, 2012; King et al., 2009).

**Purpose of the Study and Research Questions**

Using self-authorship and social constructivism as interpretive frameworks, the purpose of this study was to identify the essence of changes and growth gained through
key meaningful events contributing to community-college students’ self-authorship. The aim of the study was threefold: to determine if and how an international service learning experience impacted community college students’ self-authorship, to identify key experiences within the international service learning program that influenced the students’ self-authorship, and to discover the predominant takeaways students had in relation to the service learning aspect of the experience. Specifically, the three research questions were:

1. How does an international service learning experience contribute to the development of community college students’ self-authorship?

2. What components or experiences of the trip most impacted the development of self-authorship in community college students?

3. What are the predominant takeaways for community college students who participate in an international service learning trip?

From a methodological standpoint, the study utilized qualitative procedures through a phenomenological approach to present the perspectives of the community college students’ experiences. Qualitative researchers are primarily curious about how a person experiences the world (Vagle, 2014). The results and findings of the study will provide community college students, faculty, and administrators with greater insight into the benefits of service learning programs for this subset of the college population.

The seven community college students who participated in this study were enrolled in a six-week service learning course with a seven-day international trip component. The duration of the study was approximately eight months, and during this time, four interviews were conducted with the participants – one prior to the trip, one while on the trip, one immediately following the conclusion of the trip, and one eight months after the conclusion of the trip. Participant perspectives were later analyzed to
determine meaning units that led to the discovery of the service learning trip’s impact on students’ self-authorship.

**Significance of the Study**

The findings of this study provided greater insight regarding the benefits of international service learning programs for this college student population. This information is important for community college students, faculty, and administrators, as it may address some of the rising issues in higher education today. For example, the Community College Research Center recently chronicled the work and challenges of 30 community colleges working together to improve outcomes in their publication Implementing Guided Pathways: Early Insights from the AACC Pathways Colleges (Jenkins, Lahr, & Fink, 2017). This report outlines the action plan to address the fact that less than half of all community college students who begin their pursuit of a degree achieve that goal (CCESE, 2012). The purpose of their project is a redesign and reform of current practice to improve outcomes for students (Jenkins et al., 2017). One of the goals is to ensure students are learning, and recognize the impact of experiential learning, they address this by spotlighting that, “active learning is relevant to a student’s field of interest” (Jenkins et al., 2017, p. 2).

It is important to provide experiences that will compel community college students to continue on to completion. Experiential learning and educational opportunities that take students out of the classroom and immerse them in real-world problem solving situations, better position them to test their aptitudes for their world apart from didactic classroom application, increasing their likelihood of engagement and degree completion. Research has shown that adult learners prefer to be actively engaged with their learning (Pelletier, 2010). Practices such as service learning and
international service learning often assist students in determining their career choices (Gross & Maloney, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Community college students often cite their life responsibilities and time constraints as reasons for their lack of participation (Largent, 2013). However, experiences that assist students in determining their passion and propensity toward a profession could be reframed as a meaningful contribution of their time, as these experiences can help a student choose and affirm their career choices (Felten & Clayton, 2011; Hatcher, 2011; Jeandron & Robinson, 2010). The end result could be less time in college as they determine goals, spend less energy and money searching for their vocation, and spend more time on developing their chosen career.

Service learning provides students the opportunity to engage culturally with the communities in which they serve. Cultural and global education is engendered through service learning, as students are immersed in communities that allow them to ruminate and expand their knowledge and cognitive perspective (Pasquesi, 2013; Warren, 2012). International service learning can further these acquisitions by altering current views as students encounter new realities, different societies, and struggles and obstacles incongruent to their own actuality. These experiences designed for community college students by educators can contribute to students’ abilities to foster and further their comprehension, introspection, and relational capacities (Bamber & Pike, 2013; Chang, Chen, Huang, & Yuen, 2012). In fact, community college students as typically non-traditional students may be uniquely positioned and already immersed in the self-authoring process in college due to their age and life experiences. Identifying catalysts for self-authorship development in international service learning programs can help with
designing curriculum with the goal of producing community college students who graduate poised to compete and succeed in their worlds beyond the classroom. The contribution of this study highlighted experiences of community college students, added to the literature on service learning, and has the potential to inform higher education leaders and faculty about the impacts of this practice for this population.

**Definition of Terms**

To help orient the reader to the language used within this dissertation, the following provides an overview of key terms and definitions.

**Becoming the Author of One's Life**: purposeful and independent choice of beliefs and actualization

**Community College Student**: for the context of this study non-traditional students characterized as over the age of 24, may work full time while attending classes, may have care giving responsibilities, may attend classes part time or full time

**Crossroads**: rejection of other’s definitions, not blindly following others, but not yet independent, difficulty distancing from other people

**Following External Formulas**: following formulas from other people, following authority, advice, guidance from others

**Internal Foundations**: individuals identify who they are and look to their own values and beliefs to determine course of life and decisions

**International Service Learning**: participation in a study abroad trip to participate in a service learning experience.

**Meaning Making**: how one constructs meaning and sense within their world
**Self-Authorship:** an individual’s ability to construct their own meaning dependent on their internal capacity to analyze, judge, understand, create relationships and to ultimately build belief systems customized to their own thinking

**Service Learning:** reciprocal educational strategy that offers results impacting the student and the community the student serves, the student not only receives course credit, but will engage with his or her community in a civic manner through contribution of service (Deeley, 2010)

**Chapter Summary**

The literature about service learning and international service learning present these practices as influential and transformational for college students (Nickols, Rothenberg, Moshi, & Tetloff, 2013; Crabtree, 2013). While this has been well documented for higher education in general, the impact of this practice for community colleges is not as prevalent in the literature (Taggart & Crisp, 2011; Traver & Katz, 2014). Studies present the benefits of service learning and international service learning to promote personal and professional growth, global awareness, and intercultural sensitivity (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011). Due to the fact that community college students represent close to half of all undergraduate students (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014), institutions of higher education would be well suited to investigate ways to expose more community college students to the pedagogical practice of international service learning considering the documented benefits to students.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In an era when the outcomes of higher education are often reduced to those that are easiest to measure (i.e., graduation rates) or that tie directly to notions of workforce preparation (i.e., occupational certificates), the other outcomes students gain—the intangibles, the soft skills, the ability to communicate effectively and work well with others, the capacity to advance in a career instead of simply function in an occupation—are frequently overlooked (Kisker, Weintraub, & Newell, 2016, p. 316).

According to an employer survey conducted by Hart Research Associates for the Association of American Colleges & Universities (Hart Research Associates, 2015), employers place high value on experiences of college graduates where a project based component was central. In fact, employers are more likely to hire students who are prepared with educational experiences such as internships, service learning projects, projects in a diverse community, or a study abroad program (Hart Research Associates). Additionally, the survey presents key learning outcomes in which employers count premium in college graduates (Hart Research Associates). According to the AACU survey these outcomes include: knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. Of the employers surveyed, 91% ranked college major less important than identified essential job skills which included: effective communication, critical thinking, and problem solving (Hart Research Associates).

Employers were asked to grade graduates on the array of learning outcomes and the results were less than positive as employers ranked graduates low on the desired outcomes (Hart Research Associates, 2015). The job market calls for colleges and universities to be tasked with providing educational experiences that challenge
students to foster learning outcomes that transfer beyond mere major acquisition. Colleges must heed this call and design educational experiences to cultivate student development. This development should focus first on the student’s growth. Nurturing personal growth impact the advancement of learning outcomes coveted by employers. One such framework to further a student’s development is through the theory of self-authorship, when a person develops and uses their own voice to guide their belief system (Baxter Magolda, 2008). The role of higher education is more than preparing students for the workforce, it also has the responsibility to contribute to a student’s self-development and ability to find their value in their life beyond college (Finley, 2016).

The genesis of this literature review encompasses a review of the tenets of service learning and the benefits students garner from such experiences and how these experiences translate beyond academic pursuit. Within the scope of the service learning literature a micro lens is cast on international service learning and the additional advantages a student can gain from participation in this global pedagogical design. While service learning has gained momentum over the last few years and literature supports this growing trend, much of the research represents traditional four-year college students. Much less is readily available about community college students’ participation in service learning and more specifically, international service learning. Service learning has been lauded as an experiential practice that breeds transformational learning (Nickols et al., 2013). Through these experiences, students may acquire the ability to begin or continue the self-authorship process and position themselves to contribute to their success and champion their acquisition of necessary skills to prosper in the 21st century (King et al., 2009).
This chapter reviews the tenets of service learning and international learning and the benefits these pedagogical practices have to students. Further, the theory of self-authorship is reviewed to provide a blueprint of this study's intent to determine how an international service learning trip impacts community college students' self-authorship.

The Effects of Service Learning

Regarded as a critical thinking practice for colleges and universities service learning fosters higher order thinking, empathy, cultural awareness, personal and interpersonal development in students (Warren, 2012). Additionally, participation in service learning has proven to help students develop knowledge acquisition and gain insight into future career options (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Felten & Clayton, 2011; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). Service learning courses utilize the service learning activity within the class to develop civic skills and dispositions in students (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Bureau et al., 2014; Furco, 1996; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Sessa et al., 2010).

Throughout the rise of service learning, many questions for clarity have been posed as to the nature of service learning. The term service learning is thought to be interchangeable with volunteerism, community service, internships, and field experience. Bringle and Hatcher (2007) offer an illuminative clarifying interpretation that brands the practice of service learning as not just “serving to learn,” but also “learning to serve” (p. 38). The reciprocal attribute of service learning is at the core of its practice (Deeley, 2010). In an earlier study by Bringle and Hatcher (1996) they pose this definition of service learning “We view service learning as a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain
further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility” (p. 222).

Chang (2015) states as his working definition of service learning, “I operationalize SL as a pedagogy that extends beyond the immediate learning space of a class or meeting room, and connects students to a community where they are engaging in a practice that is tied to what they have been learning and the needs of said community” (p. 30). Successful service learning programs elicit: self-growth and relational growth; application of theory and practice, ability to see multiple perspectives, and increased citizenship (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

History

Within the last 20 years, service learning has gained momentum within higher education. Campus Compact, a consortium of colleges and universities counts no less than 1,100 colleges and universities as partners, and is committed to the advancement of civic engagement in higher education (Campus Compact, 2016). Within community colleges, at least two thirds include components of service learning on their campuses (Cohen et al., 2014). According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU, 2017), service learning is considered a high impact practice that couples curriculum and service, challenging students to engage in real world critical thinking and problem solving skills that impact their communities. The practice fosters a student and community collaboration while simultaneously preparing students with transferable skills for their lives beyond the college classroom (AACU, 2017). Service learning has the potential to cultivate competencies coveted by employers (Ramson, 2014).
Experiential Learning

In what I have said I have taken for granted the soundness of the principle that education in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience—which is always the actual life-experience of some individual (Dewey, 1938, p.89).

Dewey’s sentiment from over 70 years ago is still poignant and appropriate for service learning today. Dewey’s stance on experiential learning and exposing students to practices prompting them to understand and participate in a democratic society provide a foundation upon which service learning is built. Dewey believed that experience coupled with more importantly the reflection of that experience, allowed students to process and apply what they learned beyond that one moment.

Service learning if designed with components of experience and reflection becomes an experiential opportunity; the immersion component brings student and community together to tackle the problems and issues within the shared community (Mellow & Heelan, 2014). In Deeley’s (2010) study, students credit the experiential aspect of service learning as the major impetus for their intellectual growth. Deep engagement within communities is indeed a hallmark of service learning. The practice can further positively impact students and equip them with multiple benefits including intellectual and personal development, relationship building, confidence in career skills and choices, self-efficacy and increased global perspectives (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee 2000; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006).

Architecture of a Service Learning Course

Service learning may be considered transformative (Nikols et al., 2013). When students have the opportunity to assimilate their belief system through a different lens or frame and reflect on the experience, transformative learning takes place as they adopt
new ways of defining their worlds (Mezirow, 2000). The transformative element in service learning must be shaped by the fidelity and accountability in which the activities are designed and a particular architecture implemented into the planning and execution of the course and activities. According to Felten and Clayton (2011), specific elements must be in place and activated to promote optimal learning for students involved in service learning. Their recommendations include: alignments of service and learning objectives, collaboration with community partners during all stages from planning to execution, integration of experiential and classroom learning, and purposeful activities that are structured yet fluid to adapt to various situations (Felten & Clayton).

“Fundamentally, service learning challenges students out of traditional roles and asks them to not just consume knowledge, but produce it” (Felten & Clayton, p. 82)

To ensure the quality and success of service learning all stakeholders should be involved in the process. Faculty, community members, and students should work together to establish the need that will drive the project and then establish the goal (Bringle & Hatcher, 1994). Arends (2013) recommends including students, faculty, and community members in the planning in order to draw students into a new role as collaborators in knowledge production. Studies in service learning additionally recommend that resource and skill inventories be utilized in preparation for the activities (Arends, 2013; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). Furthermore, the service learning activities must be continually linked to the tenets of service learning including the content, assessment, reflection, and victory (Jenkins & Sheehey, 2011). Inclusion and linkage of the aforementioned create optimum learning for students within the course.
As service learning has a direct connection to the community, and places students in positions to garner tangible results from their work, it seems as if the community is the stakeholder that would incur the highest return from service learning. The students, however, stand to glean tremendous benefits from these opportunities. Faculty who employ service learning within their teaching find increases in student performance and interest in their courses (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). In Warren’s (2012) study, which extended a meta-analysis of eleven studies about service learning (conducted by Novak, Markey, and Allen, 2007), it was found that service learning had a positive impact on student learning outcomes; the areas of impact included not only learning outcomes, but cultural awareness and social responsibility as well. Bureau et al. (2014) determined that students practical and general education incurred positive increases and students experienced growth both personally and socially.

Benefits

Research presents the many benefits of service learning, and many studies support the positive results for students who engage in service learning experiences; however, these studies typically highlight the practices in four year institutions. Service learning differs from other practices like internships and work placements as it benefits the student and the community together (Deeley, 2010). The practice if done correctly, has the potential to positively impact all key stakeholders (student, community, and faculty) and produce collaborative relationships (Felten & Clayton, 2011). Projects that are purposely and collaboratively designed draw the most success. Students and faculty must work in concert with community members to craft activities that will directly meet the needs of the community (Arends, 2013; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996). For the sake of this study, the benefits of service learning to the student will be highlighted.
**Intellectual and Personal Development**

Professors, understandably position the content of their courses as the focus of the class. Through service learning, the content can be learned on a deeper level with an experiential learning component such as a service learning. “Personal development and social engagement are two particularly important and worthwhile goals for college education and are especially germane to discussions of service-learning. Regrettably, many professors prioritize content mastery over these objectives when teaching, but this does not have to be so” (Meyers, 2009, p. 373).

Research supports how service learning positively impacts the intellectual and personal development of students. In a study conducted by Deeley (2010), (through semi-structured interviews and focus groups) students credited the experiential learning component with their intellectual growth. As students participated in the activities and reflected, they began to transfer their learning to their daily thoughts and living; they described truly “learning” due to their experiences (Deeley). In another study, 321 first generation college students shared positive takeaways of their service learning experiences, believing the experience had increased their growth both academically and professionally (Pelco, Ball, & Lockeman, 2014). In Moely and Illustre’s (2014) quantitative study of 250 students from Tulane University, students credit their experiences with their gains in problem solving, leadership, academics, and knowledge of the community. Service learning has a potentially transformative effect on students with the promotion of their intellectual and personal development through their own experiences and through the relationships they build with community members (Bureau et al., 2014; Deeley, 2010; Gross & Maloney, 2012).
Confidence in Career Decisions and Skills

With reports chronicling the expectations and disappointments of employers in relation to the preparedness of college graduates for the job market, service learning is positioned as a high impact practice that cultivates needed skills and attributes employers covet (Ramson, 2014). Astin et al. (2000) posit that service learning can play a powerful role in a career decision for a student, due to the impact they see on a community from that experience. Research shows that successful service learning experiences promote student confidence and acquisition of job skills and confirms career decisions (Astin et al., 2000; Ramson, 2014; Simons & Cleary, 2006).

Studies have shown that service learning experiences can specifically ignite interest and prepare students for their chosen careers. In a study involving pre-service teachers, they credited their service learning experience with their assurance in their abilities as future classroom teachers (Bernadowski, Perry, & Del Greco, 2013). The study also describes the potential of service activities to bolster the pre-service teachers’ ability to reflect on their practice (Bernadowski et al., 2013); this is a vital piece for successful teaching as reflection of instruction is vital to a classroom teacher’s success. Dewey (1938) reminds us that our true learning stems from reflection on an experience not merely the experience itself. In Long’s (2016) study where nursing students traveled on a two-week service learning trip to Belize, it was determined that the experience positively impacted their self-efficacy, self-awareness, and self-confidence within themselves and toward their roles in their chosen professions. Nursing students’ ability to transfer these attributes from their service learning experiences to their careers at home, further equipped them for success. They also
experienced a global perspective of their career that will serve them and their patients (Long).

The service learning experiences provide a tangible aspect to career pursuit. Students are immersed in a learning and teaching environment and have the opportunity to put learned career competencies to the test in real-time and real life situations. Often, when students choose a career path the outcome may be romanticized or glamourized with unrealistic expectations or ignorance about the necessary skills. The immersion and experiential aspects of service learning trips may allow students to gain first-hand experience and knowledge about the competencies needed to pursue and successfully navigate their chosen career. Ramson’s (2014) study revolved around two community college law courses. Her study highlighted students’ abilities to transfer classroom knowledge into real world situations, understand the demands of chosen jobs, and embrace their global responsibilities. Student responses indicate positive impacts for all three areas and Ramson encourages further studies to corroborate her findings.

Gross and Maloney’s (2012) study echoes the others as it chronicled 22 pre-service teachers who taught English to non-English speaking adults. The results of the study indicate that students learned more about themselves and others and found the experience heightened their desire to pursue education as a career. Service learning experiences can solidify career choices and validate students’ abilities to pursue their chosen careers due to the hands-on experiences they partake in through the practice (Astin et al., 2000; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006;).
Many studies concur with the findings of the benefits of service learning previously mentioned, but some also highlight the impact on self-efficacy (Astin et al., 2000; Bernadowski et al., 2013; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006). In a mixed method service learning study of 65 occupational therapy students the authors state, “Self-efficacy can be measured relative to a specific situation such as a service learning experience or relative to a trait that reflects one’s ability to perform across situations” (Sanders, Van Oss, & McGeary, 2016, p. 78). In Amerson’s (2014) study with nurses in Belize, her findings report an increase in trans cultural self-efficacy. Nickols et al., (2013) report an increase in confidence in their participants due to their contributions through service learning.

Civic Engagement, Cultural and Global Awareness

Hart Research Associates (2015) outlines the focus employers have on competencies that will prepare graduates for the workforce. According to this information, employers place value in student experiences such as service learning and study abroad for the cultural perspective that it provides and how it transfers into marketable skills for the student (Hart Research Associates). Study after study finds that students who participate in service learning encounter a marked impact on their civic engagement and community and global awareness (Astin et al., 2000; Bureau et al., 2014; Felten & Clayton, 2011; Warren, 2012). The real world encounters students have beyond the classroom provide them with an expansion not only of their classroom, but of their world. Students have the opportunity to connect and learn the needs of their surrounding communities. If they travel out of country, students gain a global perspective of needs beyond their communities, state, and country.
Students’ engagement with recipients in the community cultivate empathy, collaboration, and insight. Well planned service learning opportunities provide multiple perspectives for students to consider. By exercising higher order thinking skills such as analysis and evaluation, students heighten their awareness of communities beyond their own by considering problems and crafting solutions that require their involvement (Astin et al., 2000; Warren, 2012). Service learning that utilizes the scaffolds of the practice such as assessment, reflection, and collaboration progresses the improvement of the community and promotes a symbiotic dynamic between the student and the community members (Felten & Clayton, 2011).

One study of two service learning courses in a community college provided students opportunities to work with immigrants. Students felt a kinship with their community partners and began to understand the perspectives of the members due to their work (Ramson, 2014). This foray into intercultural intelligence is a coveted commodity for employers. Prentice (2011) presents findings that show increases in civic engagement among students involved in service learning versus those who are not. The study captured information from students from eight community colleges (Prentice).

Many students find they are faced with emotional challenges due to their service activities, but these activities position them to empathize and understand on some level the needs of the community. Carson and Domangue (2013) studied 42 students who worked with communities devastated by hurricanes in Louisiana. Students were initially frustrated by the challenges and the personal feelings they encountered as they had to work through barrier after barrier; many of the blockades due to the people they were trying to assist (Carson & Domangue). Ultimately, students ended the experience on a
positive note as they were able to measure the positive impact of their work and leave with a greater depth of knowledge and understanding of the victims’ points of view (Carson & Domangue). Service learning has the potential to challenge students to discover and consider societal problems across boundaries (Pasquesi, 2013).

While the benefits of service learning seem numerous, criticism and skepticism of the practice are noted. Students may encounter largely positive impacts from service learning, but challenges exist as well. As students serve in communities, divides between social classes may emerge even more as perceptions of students serving the less fortunate can perpetuate and distinctions between socioeconomic levels emerge (Schwartzman, 2007). Another issue that may arise is a student’s confusion when they are immersed in service. Students find that offering broad stroke solutions to problems outweigh their desire to be involved in the day to day activities where they truly get their hands dirty, but the activities provide the insight into the real problems (Schwartzman). The hope that service learning ignites a desire to serve one’s community in a life-long capacity may be short lived. Studies show that often beyond a service learning experience in college, students may not continue to pursue opportunities to serve their communities (Seider, Gillmore, & Rabinowicz, 2010).

Studies credit service learning with contributing to students’ increased civic engagement, but one study found that service learning does not guarantee activism or social justice activities beyond college (Butin, 2006). Butin, an advocate of service learning who lauds the transformative power of the practice, acknowledges that the practice is not the cure for all that ails higher education. However, he encourages practitioners to focus on the successful pockets of practice across institutions and
consider the positive impacts. For many students, service learning offers benefits that may have lasting impact for future careers and commitment to local communities.

**The Impact of International Service Learning and Benefits to Stakeholders**

International service learning shares the same tenets of service learning, but moves the focus and the activities to other countries and locations. International service learning is breeding service learning and study abroad together (Tonkin & Quiroga 2004; Pechak & Thompson 2009). For the sake of this review and this study, Bringle and Hatcher’s (2011) definition will be used,

A structured academic experience where students: participate in organized service activity that addresses identified community needs; learn from direct integration and cross cultural dialogue with others; and reflect on the experience in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a deeper understanding of global and intercultural issues, a broader appreciation of host country and the discipline and an enhanced sense of their own responsibilities as citizens, locally and globally (p. 19).

The term global service learning may also be used to describe local and global experiences. These experiences are characterized by outcomes and blueprints specialized for particular communities that include global perspectives and student participation (Whitehead, 2015). Participation in an international service learning may be a student’s first foray into the journey beyond their own culture allowing them to focus on new cultures; therefore, allowing a move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2015).

International service learning programs are gaining popularity in and can be found in many colleges and universities (Crabtree, 2013). International service learning programs similar to service learning programs can mutually benefit the various stakeholders involved in the experience. There is potential to positively impact the student, the community, and the faculty. Much of the literature presents the positive
outcomes of international service learning, such as how an experience in another
country can transform a student’s worldview and challenge him or her to re-evaluate an
inherent belief system, how a student can increase their cultural competence, and how
students can increase their capital as it relates to future careers (Crabtree, 2013;
Nickols et al., 2013).

International service learning removes students from their comfort zones and
exposes them to new perspectives and cultural contexts within language, values, and
beliefs. Nickols et al. (2013) acknowledge that few studies address the challenges
international service learning trips may cause, but shift focus to the work students do
with each other. Based on their study of nine students who traveled to Tanzania, the
collaborations with classmates and locals in country may be one of the best ways for
students to develop competencies such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and
flexibility (Nickols et al., 2013; Metcalf, 2010).

Increased cultural competence is a consistent reporting in the literature on
international service learning. In Curtain, Martins, Schwartz-Barcott, DiMaria, and
Ogando’s (2013) study with nursing students in the Dominican Republic, student
takeaways included an increase in cultural competence, increased confidence in
assessing medical conditions, and a shift from self at the center of their thoughts to
thinking first of others. In a study of medical students in Uganda, it was found that
students began to empathize with patients in marginalized populations, they also began
to understand the vulnerability of these patients with dire medical needs (Dharamsi,
Richards, Murray, Berland, Whitfield, & Scott, 2010). In Budny and Gradoville’s (2011)
study of civil engineering students who traveled to Ecuador they report multiple benefits
to the students. Students’ reflections focused on their primary takeaways that spanned personal and professional realms. Professionally, students found a deeper value in their roles as engineers and the services they provide to a community. Personally, students found their perceptions of daily life changed as they immersed in a country with a different language and a different culture (Budny & Gradoville).

Students may begin to find their internal belief systems shifting as a result of the international experience. Students may take on a more primary role in determining future career endeavors and may refrain from applying stereotypes to people. (Crabtree, 2013). Crabtree also presents the less glamorous aspects. The changes the students incur as a result of the travel may cause dissonance with prior belief systems. Careers that were previously pursued may be changed as a result of the trip, surprising and upsetting students and parents alike (Crabtree).

Communities stand to benefit from student projects and the relationships they build with the students. Great potential often exists for return trips and sustainability of ideas and projects. Crabtree (2013) again presents another side less popular to talk about with international service learning; communities may experience a kind of separation disappointment after students leave as often these trips are very short term. The community may also incur conflict among their own members as a result of the impact to their day to day schedules with the visitors (Crabtree). A positive impact not often discussed is the benefit to faculty who lead these trips. Faculty have the opportunity to see the transformation of their students due to the experience (Crabtree).

While many traditional colleges and universities have some type of international service learning program (Crabtree, 2013), community colleges have been slower to
integrate this practice into their institutions (Bradshaw, 2013). Community colleges have not fully embraced the global aspect of community. The mantle of the community college was to prepare students with job skill and entry into four year universities (Witt et al., 1994). The burden of exposing students to global thinking belonged to these institutions. Therefore, community colleges have been slow to embrace the international sense of practice in service learning. A study abroad experience is traditionally categorized as a practice for financially secure students, not the typical community college student. The job landscape has changed and employers have and expectation that students can work with customers, co-workers, suppliers across global divides.

Community college graduates are now expected to be prepared to communicate with people from all over the world and to understand complex global economic changes, and they are told to expect even greater global integration throughout the course of their lifetimes (Bradshaw, 2013, p. 40).

Employers expect to be prepared to “understand complex global economic changes, and should “expect global integration throughout their lifetime” (Bradshaw, p. 40).

Students can also benefit from the international experience as their cultural competence can increase. In Amerson’s (2014) study with 14 nurses who traveled to Ecuador and Guatemala, she found that the trips had positively impacted the students' self-efficacy with regard to the profession. Additionally, students made gains in their cultural competency as a results of their travels (Amerson). Engineering students who traveled to Haiti post hurricane gained a global outlook as a result of their travel and work; the issues that challenged other countries took shape for them and they saw the value in the work they did in country (Plumblee, Cattano, Bell, & Klotz, 2012). Bracci, Bella Owona, and Nash (2013) describe how service learning initiatives can produce globally
minded students, “a student becomes a global student, a student without borders” (p. 97).

García and Longo (2013) describe some shifts in thinking that took place in students from Providence college who participated in their programs. The goal is for students to perceive their local communities and the world at large through the same global lens; education takes place regardless of the setting. The intent is for students to see how all communities can be connected and with the focus on relationships in general (García & Longo). International service learning experiences carry similar benefits that local service learning experiences offer. The international component has the added potential to expose students to global issues that position them to better function in their future endeavors due to their immersion in other countries and cultures.

Community College Students and Service Learning

Nearly half of all students enrolled in college today attend community colleges (AACC, 2017). This population of community college students is representative of all ages, races, and genders. Community college has been a viable choice for non-traditional students for reasons varying from geographical convenience to cost effectiveness. According to Radford et al. (2015), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) defines a non-traditional student as “being independent for financial aid purposes, having one or more dependents, being a single caregiver, not having a traditional high school diploma, delaying postsecondary enrollment, attending school part time, and being employed full time” (p.7)

Community college students tend to be older than the traditional college student and intend to be enrolled part time, work full time, and be the first in their family to attend college; 40% of these students work full time and 25% of the women enrolled are
mothers (Mellow & Heelan, 2014). In a 1929 study of junior college catalogs, the motivation for students to choose these colleges included, time and financial economy, small class size, contribution to their homes, and acquisition of job skills (Witt et al., 1994). Some nine decades later the same can be said for those choosing the community college route for their education today. Students pursue community colleges to enhance their job skill set, earn certifications, earn associate’s degrees, or earn bachelor’s degrees (Martin, Galentino, & Townsend, 2014). The typical community college student is often described as the part-time older student seeking vocational training (Prentice, 2011). The time afforded a community college student to engage in extracurricular activities is limited in light of all of the responsibilities a community college student may shoulder (Morest, 2014). As such, priority is not always placed on community college students’ extracurricular activities, particularly for its older students. There is a need to purposely design service learning activities to align with the lifestyles of the non-traditional student (Butin, 2006; Largent, 2013).

The majority of the literature about service learning focuses on traditional students and the four-year university or college experience (Largent, 2013; Traver & Katz, 2014). The dearth of research available about service learning in community colleges is notable (Traver & Katz, 2014). Taggart and Crisp (2011) found 17 studies that reported on the empirical nature of service learning in community colleges, but the majority of available research about service learning focuses on four-year institutions. Some research as previously mentioned, does exist about the community college student and service learning, but very little can be found on community college students and international service learning (Bradshaw, 2013). Hence, the need for this study.
Approximately 60% of community colleges offer some form of service learning (Jeandron & Robinson, 2010). In Prentice’s (2011) study, the majority of students who participated in service learning were younger than 25, enrolled part time, and had no caregiving responsibilities. These findings suggest service learning opportunities should be designed with the constraints of the community college student in mind to garner more participation. If local initiatives draw little response, international opportunities draw even less. This could be due largely in part to the assumption that these kinds of experiences are typically for the young, financially sound, and unattached student (Bradshaw, 2013). This student is quite the departure from the community college student.

Community colleges have made strides in the area of service learning. About two-thirds of community colleges offer some level of service learning within their institutions and many are adding more service learning courses to their catalogs (AACC, 2017; Cohen et al., 2014). Community colleges acknowledge the practice and describe it as impactful to intersect a college student’s classroom training with real life community issues, challenging students to find their role to contribute (Cohen et al., 2014; Prentice & Robinson, 2010). Students who seek opportunities such as service learning as part of their college experience are likely to experience more personal gain and development as a result (Martin et al., 2014). Given that community colleges draw students from marginalized populations, providing experiences typically offered at four year institutions has the potential to produce a tremendous impact (Kisker et al., 2016). These experiences can address the challenges that community college students face throughout their academic years, not just in the classroom but in their lives as well. “For
many students, the academic under preparedness with which they arrive on their community college campuses may be matched, or perhaps exceeded, by their psychosocial under preparedness” (Miranda, 2014).

The “community” in community college lends itself to the obvious fit that service learning has within the institution. Students who live and work in their school communities have the opportunity to connect with their local agencies in ways that have a reciprocal and substantial impact (Vaknin & Bresciani, 2013). Students at community colleges because they do live in close proximity to their institutions report a meaningfulness toward their contributions in their own communities and a more informed understanding of the needs outside their own doorsteps (Largent, 2013). Largent proposes that these interactions may position students to continue contributing after their college years.

**The Process and History of Self-Authorship**

College is often touted as the time for students to find their way or find themselves. Students tend to approach the college years as a portal into the next phase of life. Students may find that college is not solely a place to learn and socialize, but a time and place to acquire content and career knowledge to transition into particular roles and responsibilities that may shape their future (Baxter Magolda, 2014). Upon graduation, students and employers learn that students are much less equipped to face the realities and responsibilities of the real world.

There are added challenges of the 21st century and the need for graduates to emerge with finely honed skills within the areas of knowledge, identity, and relationships is important (Baxter Magolda, 2014). Unfortunately, students often graduate without achieving a strong sense of identity to navigate the challenges of the workplace and the
world (Baxter Magolda). Employers depend on colleges to prepare students with the employability skills that will translate to success on the job (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Hart Research Associates, 2015).

Baxter Magolda (2014) draws from the work of Kegan and Lahey (2009) to explain how successful navigation of the challenges is dependent on our ability to define our world through the development of our knowledge, our identities, and our relationships. The ability to self-author prepares individuals to develop the internal voice that defines who we are, what we believe, and how we interact with others; these ideals define and shape a person. “Self-authorship, or the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” (Baxter Magolda, 2006, p. 269).

Grounded in Kegan’s work (1994), Baxter Magolda’s (2014) research about self-authorship is based on her 27-year longitudinal study of traditional aged college students at a four-year university. Kegan (1994) regarded self-authorship as a crucial element to an individual’s growth in order to approach the varying challenges of everyday life such as work and school. Baxter Magolda’s (1992) study originally focused on the epistemological development of her participants and then evolved into a multi-structural study encompassing epistemological/cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 1992; Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). The process of self-authorship translates to self-motivated and self-accountable people who successfully foster relationships and craft their own life journey (Kegan, 1994). “Adopting increasingly complex meaning making structures represents the developmental growth that underlies transformational learning and assists students in
achieving the complex learning outcomes of liberal education” (Hodge et al., 2009, p. 18).

Baxter Magolda’s (2008) study proved this as her participants’ stories depicted the demands of the workplace and home life. Their abilities to critically think, hone their internal voice, and manage relationships accounted for the successful navigation of their life journeys (Baxter Magolda). Self-authorship is a phase in self-evolution where one develops an internal voice detaching from external influences that predominantly shaped the belief system (Boes, Baxter Magolda, & Buckley, 2010). Described as “the internal capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations” (Baxter Magolda, 2001, p. 269) self-authorship is a theory where individuals author their lives through dimensions of meaning making based on their lived experiences. These dimensions as previously mentioned are: epistemological/cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The dimensions can be framed using the following questions, what do I know; who am I, and how am I in relationships? (Pizzolato et al., 2012).

Promoting meaningful and successful relationships with diverse others is paramount for the world today; the ability to accomplish this lends to the advancement of meaning making through the three dimensions (Baxter Magolda, 2008). In her longitudinal study, Baxter Magolda (2014) notes that her participants begin the road of self-authorship in their 20s and then develop more strides toward self-authorship in their 30s. The participants in the study were predominantly white and attended a four-year university. Some research does present adults who self-author in their 20s; many of these students were in marginalized populations (Hispanic, LGBTQ, high risk) and faced experiences early on to develop and trust their internal voices and self-author
early if supportive elements were present (Abes & Jones, 2004; Barber et al., 2013; Carpenter & Peña, 2016; Pizzolato, 2007; Torres & Hernandez, 2007).

While students may not complete the self-authorship process by the time they leave college, studies indicate that particular experiences in college may start and contribute to a student’s self-authorship (Pizzolato, 2007). The majority of studies about self-authorship have examined the experiences of traditional college students from four year colleges and universities. Very little research is available about the development of community college students’ self-authorship. “The potential of self-authorship to help adults meet the challenges of adult life effectively warrants a better understanding of the nature of self-authorship, how it evolves, and how it can be fostered among the diverse array of students who currently attend college” (Baxter Magolda, 2008, p. 270). If this study is taken into consideration it can be argued that community college students and non-traditional students can benefit from self-authorship experiences. Non- traditional students may have already begun their journey toward self-authorship due to the idea that many of them have returned to college and have already experienced moments on their journeys that prompted them to make meaning within their worlds and to cultivate their internal voice thus crafting desired skills (Coughlin, 2015).
Table 2-1. The Self-Authorship Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Following External Formulas</td>
<td>Trust authorities to decide what to believe, follow others’ visions for how to succeed. External voices drown out internal voice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Absence of self-authorship)</td>
<td>Torn between following others’ versus own visions and expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crossroads</td>
<td>• Listening to Internal Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Emerging Self-Authorship)</td>
<td>• Recognize importance of hearing one’s internal voice and begin to work to identify it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultivating Internal Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use internal voice to sort out beliefs, establish priorities, and put the puzzle of who you are together. Work to reduce reliance on external authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Authorship</td>
<td>Trust yourself to decide what to believe, follow your vision for how to succeed. Internal voice in the foreground coordinates information from external voices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Trusting the Internal Voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Realize that reality is beyond your control, but you can control your reaction to reality; use internal voice to shape reaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Building an Internal Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Use internal voice to make internal commitments and build them into a foundation or philosophy of life to guide action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Securing Internal Commitments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Live out internal commitments in everyday life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Baxter Magolda 2009, p. 4)

The three stages in self-authorship, are: following external formulas, the crossroads, and self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2014). The acquisition of full self-authorship could take years, and as previously stated, and may not even begin when a student is in college. Developmentally effective experiences, or even painful experiences can cultivate and grow an individual’s self-authorship (Pizzolato et al., 2012).
The first phase in self-authorship is called following external formulas (Baxter Magolda, 2014). As individuals mature, they encounter belief systems along the way. These belief systems may be generated and passed down from parents, teachers, or other influential adults. Individuals relying on the direction of others, may opt to follow the beliefs and values set before them because they essentially do not have any other option to follow or consider. College is a prime opportunity for professors to design educational experiences that challenge students to begin to craft their own belief and values system (how this can be accomplished will be discussed later in the chapter). Purposefully planned academic experiences designed with self-authorship at the core, can ignite the discovery of a student’s formulation of their own purpose and meaning; these experiences can then lead to crossroads moments, the second phase of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Pizzolato et al., 2012). One of the participants in Baxter Magolda’s (2014) longitudinal study comes to terms with following external formulas her second year in college. It was one of the first times her opinion was invited; she began to realize her reliance on the opinions of others, her propensity to follow external formulas, and listen to the voices of others. In another study with college students considering career options the participants shared how their families and society influenced their decisions over their own voice (Pizzolato et al., 2012).

The second phase of self-authorship is called the crossroads (Baxter Magolda, 2014). When individuals begin to disagree or depart from the voices and beliefs around them, they are starting this phase. Individuals may find that values and beliefs they held close and true for a significant part of their lifetime may not hold the weight they once did. A dissonance may begin to occur and they try to make sense of their conflicting
thoughts and beliefs; a divide is created between expectation and experience (Barber et al., 2013). In Carpenter and Peña’s (2016) study of first generation undergraduates, one of their participants was encouraged by family to drop out of college after her mother was diagnosed with a challenging medical condition. Though she was concerned about disappointing her mother, she chose to rely on her own voice and stay in college. The experience of dissonance led her to embrace her internal voice.

The final step in the process is self-authorship. A person grasps their internal voice and begins the process of using it and trusting it. The participant, Stacy, in Couglin’s (2015) study is a married mother of one who works as a consultant. Stacy is overworked and even though she is accomplished she struggles to hone and trust her internal voice. In Baxter Magolda’s original study, one of her participants Gwen, discusses her contentment with life and her years of searching for her voice had come to fruition as she now makes her own judgements and decisions, she has made a departure from listening to what external voices tell her to do (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Baxter Magolda’s participants who attained self-authorship demonstrate through their testimonials that they exercise their internal voices. This is not to say that individuals disregard the advice and guidance of others, what it indicates is that “although reality was beyond their control, they could control how they reacted to it” (Boes et al., 2010. p. 16).

Three elements of the final process in self-authorship exist: trusting the internal voice, building an internal foundation, and securing internal commitments (Pizzolato, 2007). When one shoulders the burden of determining what one know, believes, and builds relationships, the internal voice has emerged and the person then looks inward
for guidance rather than outward; he or she trusts their internal voice (Baxter Magolda, King, Perez, 2012). When that internal trust is established, a person then builds an internal foundation by transferring their belief system into their system of commitments. The final step is the securing of internal commitments which effects the action piece as the person demonstrates their belief systems through how they live. (Baxter Magolda et al., 2012).

The Learning Partnerships Model (LPM) emerged as a result of Baxter Magolda’s (2004) longitudinal study where she posits that self-authorship opportunities in the college setting can be maximized by adoption of the LPM. The advancement of self-authorship is potentially increased when students are provided with support to assist them to make meaning of their lived experiences and assimilate them to further their self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Learning partners for college students can range from professors, advisors or other staff who purposefully design experiences in tandem with the students to provide optimal developmentally experiences for students to learn (Baxter Magolda, 2004; Baxter Magolda, 2012; Meszaros, 2007). The idea is to support and challenge the student through the experience (Olsen, Bekken, McConnell, & Walter, 2011). The LPM consists of supporting the learners through “validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructed meaning” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 41).

Self-authorship can be advanced by students engaging in developmentally effective experiences. While the majority of college students do not self-author by the time they leave college, through appropriately designed experiences that assist students in changing their meaning-making and perspectives, students can find
opportunities to develop their self-authorship (Hodge et al., 2009). When college faculty and staff craft these experiences, students can begin to develop their internal voice and intersect their beliefs with actions with the support of a faculty member or advisors (Baxter Magolda, 2008; Carpenter & Peña, 2016). Construction of ideas by students sets the stage for active participation and active learning (Hodge et al., 2009). Many developmentally effective experiences stem from purposefully designed opportunities for students, including courses and study abroad (Barber et al., 2013; Meszaros, 2007; Baxter Magolda, 2014; Barber & King, 2014).

In a study focused on the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education, the authors present the effects of developmentally effective experiences for students. The categories included:

- Increasing awareness, understanding, and openness to diversity,
- Exploring and establishing a basis for beliefs, choices, action,
- Developing a sense of identity to guide choices,
- Increasing awareness of and openness to responsibility for own learning (King et al., 2009).

Characteristics of developmentally effective experiences that emerged from the study included experiences that:

- Challenged student beliefs and provided a strong support structure for exploring new territory that was intellectually or emotionally challenging,
- Helped students practice, own, take responsibility for, and become comfortable expressing opinions,
- Challenged students to develop a comfort level with information grounded in realistic appraisals and direct feedback as well as opportunities to continue to grow by challenging themselves and taking risks (King et al., 2009).

Service learning and study abroad trips can be considered developmentally effective experiences if they help alter a student’s meaning-making that will expose
them to new perspectives and challenge them to reconsider their current views of their internal belief systems (King et al., 2009). Developmentally effective experiences can yield a positive impact on students’ self-authorship (Barber & King, 2014).

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented literature of the practice of service learning, international service learning, and the theory of self-authorship. In light of community colleges educating approximately half of the population who attend college, it is reasonable to expect community colleges to participate in high impact practices that will prepare students for their lives beyond college. Service learning and international service learning experiences provide students experiential opportunities to: learn content material, develop personally and intellectually, and develop perspectives beyond their classroom and world. The experience of service learning positioned as a developmentally effective experience grants students opportunities to self-author. Self-authoring allows students to define and cultivate an internal voice that will guide them in shaping their internal belief system that will in turn allow them to hone skills that will contribute to their future successes in work and life.

The subsequent chapter provides an overview of the scope of this study and the process by which it will determine how and if an international service learning experience impacted community college students’ self-authorship.
CHAPTER 3
METHODS

The review of the literature exposed the need to specifically study community college students and the potential impact of an international service learning experience on their self-authorship. This study employed a qualitative phenomenological approach. Seven community college students enrolled in a six-week service learning course with a seven-day international trip, participated in four semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted before the seven-day trip, during the trip, after the trip, and then approximately eight months after the students returned from the trip. A phenomenological analysis modified by Moustakas (1994) along with constant comparative analysis were utilized to determine emergence of themes. This chapter will present the methodology of the study as well as an explanation of the research methods employed.

A phenomenological approach was chosen as it best suits the goals of the study to capture the essence of students’ experiences, cognitions, and perceptions. Creswell (2013) denotes that a phenomenological study will “describe the common meaning for several individuals in their lived experiences of a concept for phenomenon” (p. 76). Cilesiz (2009) describes the goal of the phenomenological approach in her study to “uncover the essence of a specific phenomenon” (p. 241). Utilizing this approach, semi-structured interviews were the key form of data collection. This form of data collection was employed due to the interest in the lives and experiences of the participants (Seidman, 2013).

The prior review of the literature discussed in chapter two, provided insight that initiated the pursuit of information about community college students in particular, and
how an international service learning experience might impact their self-authorship. This study sought to extend the current literature and empirical understanding of the value of an international service learning experience and the potential effects on an under researched subset of the college student population.

Service learning is a notable practice proven to contribute to a student’s attributes (Prentice & Robinson, 2010; Cohen et al., 2014). Students who participate in service learning experiences are often able to make more informed decisions about their careers, benefit from multiple perspectives, develop community and global competence, and boost intellectual and personal development (Astin et al., 2000; Gross & Maloney, 2012; Simons & Cleary, 2006).

Experiences such as service learning and study abroad can be tailored to serve as developmentally effective experiences for students (Barber et al., 2013; Meszaros, 2007; Baxter Magolda, 2014; Barber & King, 2014). Developmentally effective experiences can further self-authorship because they produce meaning making for the students which shifts their perspective (King et al., 2009). Self-authorship occurs when an individual develops an internal voice to guide their beliefs regarding what they know, who they are, and how they will function in relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2014).

Guiding this research is Baxter Magolda’s (2008 & 2014) theory of self-authorship. Built on the prior on the work of Kegan (1994), the theory of self-authorship (a single phase in the life-long process of self-evolution) explains a person’s ability to generate an internal voice that assists in creating a system of beliefs and self-identity (Baxter Magolda, 2014). A person’s ability to filter, critique and decipher the myriad of voices and experienced based information will develop and position their own individual
voice, value and belief systems; therefore, self-authoring is the fruition of exclusive identity and the process of growth and learning (Baxter Magolda).

The study was steered by the following research questions: How does participation in an international service learning experience impact a community college student’s self-authorship? What components or experiences of the trip contributed to students’ self-authorship? What are the predominant takeaways for community college students who participate in an international service learning trip?

**Qualitative Research Design**

“Qualitative inquirers find meaning in it. When in doubt, observe and ask questions. When certain, observe and ask many more questions” (Patton, 2015, p. 93). One of the central principles of the qualitative inquiry is to learn how a person’s experiences are crafted within their world and how they perceive these experiences (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods are used to learn, “how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experience” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). This explanation is consistent with the goals of the current study. The use of qualitative methods was the most suitable to effectively explore meaning making experiences that shaped the perspectives of the participants. Meaning making experiences are central to the guidance of the study of self-authorship and have a distinct overlap with the goals of qualitative inquiry, specifically phenomenology (Baxter Magolda, 2007; Patton, 2015). The perceptions of the participants were used to guide and drive the study (Creswell, 2013). Access to the world of the participants was vital as they encountered the international service learning program in order to observe and learn of their experiences and then interpret these
experiences. Qualitative research places the researcher in the world and allows he or she to observe (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013).

Specifically, for this study, a phenomenological approach was used to frame the design, the analysis of data, and the discussion of findings. The purpose of phenomenological study is to understand our connectedness in the world with other people and other things (Vagle, 2014). Phenomenology is the platform to study lived experiences; it provides a significant well of information to draw interpretations based on an individual’s account of their participation and perception of their own involvement in a life experience (Patton, 2015; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The phenomenological research approach explores a person’s experience through their own words and description (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994; Polkinghorne, 1989). In the words of Vagle (2014), “when humans experience the world, they, again, find themselves in the experience” (p. 21).

**Epistemology and Theoretical Perspective**

“The gendered,multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology), which are then examined (methodology, analysis) in specific ways” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2013, p. 23). Theoretical perspective and the epistemology of a study should elucidate the research process (Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes, 2009). The ontological assumption enucleates we understand the nature of reality and what comprises that reality; it asks what is the nature of reality? (Creswell, 2013). The goal was to elicit and discover many different realities through the series of four semi-structured interviews. The study approached the acquisition of the varying actualities community college students face by interviewing participants a total of four
times; before the trip, during the trip (in country), after the trip, and then again eight months after the trip. An aggregate of these interviews expounded the perceptions of the students during their experience in a service learning course and an embedded international trip to pursue projects; all of their views are individual and garnered different results (Moustakas, 1994).

The epistemological assumption asks the question, what counts as knowledge? Vital to gaining this subjective insight is to enter the living and working space of participants. The goal of the study thus became to gain access to participants’ experiences in order to collect testimonials of each participant, and thus describe the essence of these experiences (Creswell, 2013). I worked, lived and traveled with the students and became fully immersed in the contributors’ environs, and through proximity, I was able to catechize and observe them prior to, amidst, and subsequent to the experience.
### Table 3-1. The Interpretive Paradigm of Constructivism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Perspective</th>
<th>Ontology (What is the nature of reality?)</th>
<th>Epistemology (What counts as knowledge?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiple realities represented through different perspectives of participants (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994)</td>
<td>Researcher discovers different perspectives by immersion in the world of the participant and gleaning views through proximity research (Creswell, 2013; Guba &amp; Lincoln, 1998)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose Statement</th>
<th>The purpose of this phenomenological study is to discover how an international service learning experience impacts students’ self-authorship.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical Frameworks</td>
<td>Self-Authorship &amp; Constructivism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>RQ1-How does participation in an international service learning experience impact a community college student’s self-authorship? RQ2-What components or experiences of the trip most impacted the development of self-authorship? RQ3-What are the predominant takeaways for community college students who participate in an international service learning trip?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis Method</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
<td>Purposeful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
<td>Semi-Structured Interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge Producer</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Researcher</td>
<td>Interpreter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Synthesized from Creswell (2013), Bess & Dee (2008), and Koro-Ljungberg, Yendol-Hoppey, Smith, & Hayes (2009)

### Constructivism

This study is based upon a constructivist interpretive paradigm. Constructivism presents the diverse and personal experiences of individuals. It focuses on the meaning making ability of the person (Patton, 2015). Multiple realities exist and are constructed through experiences with others (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Creswell, 2013). Through constructivism, individuals draw meaning from their interactions with each other and
with their personal experiences; researchers then collaboratively construct the reality
with the individual (Creswell, 2013). Rich data of individual experiences is produced by
asking broad open-ended questions to encourage participants to draw meaning from
their encounters; special attention is placed on individual’s history and culture to
understand the complexities of the interactions (Creswell).

Through the four interviews, the participants described their experiences of their
encounters in Nicaragua. These rich portraiture aided with interpretation as they
related to individual self-authorship development. Constructivism is predominant in the
phenomenological research as the primary goal is to attain perspective through the
description of the individual’s experience (Moustakas, 1994).

**Phenomenology**

Another overlap within the constructivist paradigm is present within
phenomenological designs. Phenomenological researchers are challenged to describe
the essence of an individual’s experience within a phenomenon (Creswell, 2013;
Maxwell, 2013, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). The researcher and the
participant share an understanding and expectation that the experiences shared
through interviews will be presented as they were expressed (Starks & Brown Trinidad,
2007).

Phenomenology focuses on interacting with individuals who have lived
experiences and then provide testimonies explicating those experiences (Moustakas,
1994). A phenomenon is identified and then researched to determine what multiple
perspectives individuals commonly share with their experiences (Creswell, 2013).
Creswell describes seven features to be included in a phenomenology. A single
phenomenon packaged as an idea or concept should be studied with a group of
participants expected to experience this common idea (Creswell). A philosophical discussion should take place focused on the core of the study. Bracketing must occur, as the researcher acknowledges and discusses his or her personal history with the studied phenomenon and then sets it aside in order to channel all focus on the experiences of the participants (Creswell). Implementation of a data collection method using interviews is the most commonly used form of collection (Creswell). Data analysis should include a system of prescriptive procedures that take narrowed pieces of information to rich descriptions. This analysis is then described in terms of the participants’ experiences with focus on the what and how of the experiences (Creswell). Finally, a description of participants’ experiences highlighting the essence of the phenomenon should culminate the study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). I traveled with, observed, and interviewed seven community college students during their international service learning experience. I then provided dilation of these experiences through their information rich depictions of the journey. Moustakas (1994) describes the goal of phenomenological research, “the aim is to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13).

**Study Design**

Because phenomenological research methods seek to uncover the essence of individuals’ experiences, this approach aligned with the goals of this study to discover how the experiences of these students’ involvement in an international service learning program impacted their self-authorship. Through a series of four interviews conducted over an eight-month period of time, students shared descriptions of their individual experiences. This data was read, analyzed, and subsequently categorized through
phenomenological analysis using the constant comparative analysis as well. The analysis of the interviews took place in two phases. The interviews produced a series of categorized themes that were captured from the students' described experiences, then through analysis of those themes, identification of movement, growth, or no movement through the various stages of self-authorship were identified. Particular experiences that impacted self-authorship and takeaways from the service learning projects were discovered as well.

In order to meet the requirements to complete the study, the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative program (CITI) was completed in order to engage in study with human subjects. Permission from the Institutional Review Board of the university and from the Institutional Review Board from the community college was obtained prior to the study. The participants were provided with informed consent forms (Appendix A) which confirmed their agreement to participate in the study, and acknowledged their ability to refrain from the study at any time. Pseudonyms were assigned to contribute to confidentiality.

**Sample Selection**

**Institutional Setting**

The study focused on the experiences of community college students; therefore, it was imperative the study take place within a community college setting. In addition, the chosen institution had to offer a service learning study abroad class and trip opportunity. The site chosen was a community college in Florida with approximately 18,000 students served across six campuses; this count included all programs at the college. The population demographics were identified as: 61% White, 15% Latino, 12% African American, 2% Asian, and 1% 2 or more races.
Three professors in the college of education at the community college, formed a small organization entitled Teaching Beyond Borders in 2013, to provide opportunities to administer fortuity to students to work in tandem with global partners to design service learning enterprise identified in country and in community where students contribute to sustained practice. In 2014, the three professors led nine students on a trip to Cap Haitien, Haiti, to work with the students and faculty of a K-12 school. Students contrived strategies predicated on the needs assessment conducted during a site visit in 2013. In 2015, a return trip was made to Cap Haitien, Haiti. The group partnered with a non-profit organization to instruct over 200 Haitian teachers and to equip students and community members with some English speaking competency. In the summer of 2016, the same three professors and a group of eight students ventured to Salinas de Nahualapa, a small community in Nicaragua. Similar to the previous year, the contingency worked with a non-profit agency within the community and served identified needs of the students, community members, and teachers.

In the 2014-2015 school year, a little over 300,000 college students participated in a study abroad for academic credit; about 2% of this number represents community college student (Institute of International Education, n.d.). This college offers several study abroad experiences per year; however, only one study abroad trip containing a service learning component has been offered per year in the past three years. Study abroad could be considered as an exercise that contributes to the movement from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism (Cushner et al., 2015), as these experiences broaden a student’s perspective of the world drawing them outside of the sole perspective of their own culture. The addition of a service learning component to a study abroad
experience has the potential to capitalize on the study abroad aspect as experiential empiricism plausibly augments perception of their surroundings. Additionally, an international service learning trip has the potential to capitalize on the study abroad piece, and then further engage the students in global contributions marking their headset, individual maturation, and vocation aspirations.

The seven students interviewed took part in a six-week international service learning class with a seven-day embedded trip to Nicaragua. The opportunity was advertised across the community college and all students regardless of program of study were invited to participate. Students attended class one night a week for three hours. On week four of the class, the students traveled to the country to complete their planned projects. Students paid tuition for the three-hour class, and then paid a separate fee for travel costs. The total cost of the trip was approximately $1,700. The costs of the trip were defrayed by student co-curricular fees given to each student in the amount of $1,000. This significantly lowered the price for the students to approximately $700.

**Participant Recruitment and Sampling**

As a faculty member in the College of Education who has taught an international service learning course and who has attended several trips as an ancillary member, I had the opportunity to learn of an international service learning course that would take place in the summer of 2016. For the purpose of this study, I collaborated with the lead faculty who taught the class, to meet with the participants prior to the start of the six-week class and inquire if they would be interested in participating in my study. A total of eight students (6 females and 2 male) attended the course and the trip, and seven out of the eight agreed to participate in my study. All eight students were invited to
participate, but one student opted to refrain; the student was male; he did not provide a reason for abstaining, and I did not inquire. His decision to not participate did not negatively impact the study in any way. According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological design can include groups of size ranging from 3-4 to 10-15.

Quantitative studies typically employ random sampling, whereas qualitative sampling employs purposive or purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015). For the scope of my study, I employed purposeful sampling; therefore, all but one student who participated in an international service learning experience at this college were interviewed for my study. Patton (2002) describes this sampling as information rich and paramount to discovery of themes within the research. Maxwell (2013) provides five possible goals for purposeful selection of participants. Two of these goals are consistent with the choice of purposeful sampling in this study. The first goal is the choice of a particular set of participants as they represent the theory of the study. The study focuses on the impact of an international service learning trip on a community college student’s self-authorship. To execute the study, I needed a group of community college students who were traveling on an international service learning trip. Maxwell’s (2013) second goal describes the need to choose participants who will garner the most productive relationships and information. Creswell (2013) states that for the purpose of a phenomenological study, “the participants need to be carefully chosen to be individuals who all have experienced the phenomenon in question, so that the researcher, in the end can forge a common understanding” (p. 83). The students were eager to attend the trip and excited to share their experiences. To expound further, Seidman (2013) describes the phenomenological approach when choosing participants
to interview. Ideally, to meet the goals of the study, it is best to find participants who are immersed in experiences described in the study.

I was forthright and candid about the parameters of the study and the time commitment. All seven students willingly participated and all signed informed consent letters. Participants were privy to the fact that at any time they could recuse themselves from the study, but none did. I presented the protocol for the study and explained that three to four interviews ranging from 30-90 minutes would be conducted over the course of approximately eight months. Of the seven participants, there was one male, and six females. Students represented a broad range of ages from 19-46. The average age of a student at this institution is 26, the average age of the participants in this study was 28.

Table 3-2. Participant Descriptors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capri</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rex</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tripoli</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deja</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constance</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorde</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data Collection

Semi-structured open-ended interviews served as the primary data collection method, as this is a recommended approach deemed efficient to gather information for a phenomenological approach (Creswell, 2013). The use of focus groups was initially considered for data collection, but due to the individual nature of self-authorship, it is imperative to draw from information and conclusions participants have constructed personally from their own experiences. The framework of self-authorship was not explained to the students.
Four rounds of individual interviews were conducted with seven participants for a total of 28 interviews. All 28 interviews were recorded and then transcribed; all students agreed to have each of their interviews recorded. All but two interviews were conducted face to face. Two interviews with one student who lived out of the country were conducted via Skype. Recordings and transcriptions were all stored on password protected computers accessible only to me. The recordings were then deleted. The first interview was conducted with the students prior to departure on the trip, the second was executed intermediately on the trip, the third was conducted within one to two weeks of return from the trip and the fourth was conducted approximately eight months after the return from the trip; one student was interviewed ten months after the trip due to a family emergency. I initially followed Seidman’s (2013) model of the three interview process, but tentatively planned (and subsequently conducted) a fourth interview as I predicted that students would provide even more insight which might particularize if they were distinctively impacted by the trip or not given a longer expanse of time. Reflection is a key piece of recollecting and determining the impact of the experience. Patton (2015) explains that only after an experience can a rich depiction be shared as phenomenological research is retrospective not introspective. A person cannot truly appreciate the essence of the experience episodically until they express true reflection after (Patton). It is important to note the impact interviewing may have on the interviewer and the interviewee if interviews are too lengthy. Patton posits that even a short time of as little as two hours can have an altering impact. All interviews were under 90 minutes. 

Consistent with Seidman’s (2013) recommendation for phenomenological research designs, I conducted three rounds of interviews with all seven of my
participants, and then added a fourth interview. According to Seidman, interview one should focus on life history, interview two on details of the experience, and the third interview should serve as a reflection of the experience. This strategy aligned with the phenomenological design to discover individuals’ experiences.

Students met once a week on Tuesday nights for the class portion of the experience. Each class met for approximately 2-3 hours so students could learn about the country, design group projects, learn introductory Spanish, and bond. Stateside classroom experiences can also be counted as an important piece of their development. It was originally in the classroom where students began to identify and create projects, assign or be assigned roles on the trip, and form connections with their counterparts. Only 3-4 students knew each other prior to this experience and their association would be considered as acquaintances. Only one intimate relationship existed among the students as a male and female were involved in serious relationship. One student was related to the lead professor on the trip, the professor was his father.

Interview one, took place on campus in an available office space before students left for the trip, and asked students to recall aspects of their history and examined what drew them to this particular opportunity. Interview two was conducted during the trip in Nicaragua. This one proved to be my fondest with regard to location as all of the interviews were conducted outdoors because of the open air accommodations. One of my favorite aspects of listening to the recordings of the interviews was the intermittent night sounds of animals, bugs, and whistling wind. The environment promoted a very informal atmosphere that lent to relaxed and open dialogue. The third interview was again carried out in a campus office once all the students returned from the trip. These
were scheduled and concluded one to two weeks after the return. This interview served as the reflection piece of the experience. I vacillated with my decision to add a fourth interview, and upon great reflection of my own, made the decision to add it. My own experience with short term service trips has shown me how some participants lose their enthusiasm or regard for the experience over time. My curiosity about this fueled my pursuit, and as I reread research from Patton (2015) I was struck by his thoughts about the retrospective nature of phenomenology, and how a person does not effectively reflect on an experience concurrently, but rather after the experience has occurred. The fourth interview provided more rich data and further cogitation in order to glean information about the participants’ actual life events.

Early interviews were used formatively to improve on data collection. After each interview, I listened to the recordings to familiarize myself with each interview and to garner a fresh perspective on what the participant said. This exercise also allowed me to listen for any of my behaviors that would bias the data collected; therefore, I listened to the recordings to determine if I needed to make any adjustments for subsequent interviews. For example, did I interrupt, or talk too fast, or ask questions in a confusing manner? I found this extremely helpful for the future interviews, and made notes about how I could modify my techniques for future interviews. The exercise also allowed me to think of follow-up or clarifying questions. The desire to make my participants comfortable and at ease to encourage them to be candid was always in the forefront of my mind. After each of the three interviews, I reviewed the transcripts and crafted follow up questions. I directed specific questions to specific participants based on their previous responses. I designed a guide to take to all of the interviews, but altered and
added questions to address the organic nature in which some of the participants answered their questions. Many answers prompted and necessitated follow up questions for clarity of thought or to further explore what the experience meant to the participant. For interview four, I had a few questions that I posed to all of the participants, but I also created a list of unique interview questions crafted specifically for each participant. It is impossible to fully determine who someone is or how they think without being in their minds. Building on previous interviews to reduce bias and encourage rich data collection was important for reaching the goal with phenomenological research, which is to get as close as possible to the “is” of participants’ experiences (Seidman, 2013).

The class met for six weeks, and I attended every week of the service learning course as an observer and as a participant when needed (to offer experiential insight and knowledge for the students). I also assisted teaching the students beginning Spanish during the on campus classes. I traveled to Nicaragua with the students and lived and dined among them during the seven-day trip. As such, I developed rapport with all of the students, and became more familiar with the students whom I knew prior. My attendance to the classes as well as traveling with the students on the trip, allowed me to observe the participants in various aspects of the trip, particularly their service projects and in their interactions with each other.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for the study took place in several stages that included two major analysis phases. The initial phase applied Moustakas’ (1994) modified method of phenomenological analysis. The second phase involved examining the data through the framework of self-authorship. This method of analysis follows the example of one
conducted in Carpenter and Peña’s (2016) phenomenological study about first generation students and self-authorship experiences. Although most of the attention garnered in a data analysis is that of the coding process, Maxwell (2013) describes value in all facets of the analysis process from reading transcripts, thinking about the transcripts, writing memos, creating categories, and designing layouts for the data, and this approach was applied to the data in this study. To describe a phenomenon from the point of view of another is a nonlinear process that included iteratively thinking about the phenomenon at hand during all steps of the process.

After each recording was uploaded to Dropbox, I would wait for the contracted transcriptionist to upload the transcriptions. Once transcriptions were uploaded, I would print and read through them (Maxwell, 2013); the constant comparative analysis method was employed at this point (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Constant comparative analysis can be defined as looking at the new data that emerges to find parallels with data already collected (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process assists with determining new categories or dismissing categories that may not be essential to the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As I read through a transcript and made a memo or a note, I would return to my previous notes when I thought there was a correlation with a category or meaning unit I had already identified. This helped me keep a fresh perspective on my data and allowed me to keep my process organized. As a practical measure, I color coded the questions and the answers. I am a visual learner, so the use of colors was another measure that assisted me with the intimacy of the data. All printed interviews were kept in a binder in chronological order of when the participant was interviewed,
and then in chronological order of the four interviews. All of my data was ultimately organized and categorized within an Excel spreadsheet.

The first major phase of the analysis was conducted using the modified method from Moustakas (1994). This method allowed me to find and document the captured experiences of the participants (Moustakas). I first read through all of the transcripts to find relevant statements about the international service learning experience. I took these statements after I made a memo and converted them into meaning units. Then, I looked at what meaning units were shared between the participants. For example, when I went through the data I would find a description that was relevant to the participants’ perceptions of the international service learning experience and made a memo on the statement. For example, I read this statement from a participant, “Normally if I was told no I wouldn’t push harder, but I learned that if you keep pressing towards the mark you can enjoy the outcome of it.” I made a note on it called “learned about herself.” Then, I examined the what and how of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Asking myself, what did she learn? And found that she learned that perseverance was key to accomplishing a goal. Then, I asked myself, how did she learn that? She learned it on the trip when she was told no, and encountered dissonance with the answer and the situation and persevered to accomplish her goal. I found through my analysis of the data that this meaning unit was consistent with all of the participants, so I transferred this into a theme, entitled “learned about themselves” and then went through each of the other relevant statements to determine if there were other participants who shared this same experience. This process produced multiple notes that were then converted into meaning units and later themes. In phase two of the analysis, I reviewed the themes by
applying the framework of self-authorship to determine if the students had any movement in the process as a result of the international service learning experience. This was achieved by comparing the student reflections in this study to the experiences in the literature about the self-authorship framework; the dimensions of the theory and the emergence of the internal voice were the points of relevance that were used for this study in questions one and two. Referring to the earlier example of “learned about herself,” I took this theme and applied the self-authorship framework to it and found that the intrapersonal dimension could be applied to her experience. This allowed me to categorize and present the data in terms of the dimensions of the framework. This phase of the process can be described as using a priori coding as I used the preexisting codes related to the dimensions of self-authorship: epistemological (E), intrapersonal (Intra), and interpersonal (Inter), for the second phase of the analysis (Creswell, 2013).

For research question two, I followed the same process. I reviewed the data for key words and phrases related to the experiences of the students to the international service learning experience. I noted specific experiences, for example, one of the students described the experience of leading a group. She had never considered this as any part of her identity prior to the trip. In examining the data, I asked what the experience was, and how it related to the relevance of the experience. I found similar experiences with other students and created a meaning unit entitled leadership. This evolved into a theme which I categorized under “experiences.” I then compared these experiences to the framework of self-authorship and determined that five of them could be applied through the framework, again a priori coding was appropriate here as well, as I used the preexisting codes based on the dimensions of the self-authorship
framework: epistemological (E), intrapersonal (Intra), and interpersonal (Inter). Multiple experiences were identified that initially were key to their experiences within international service learning, but only five of these were found to contribute to the students’ self-authorship in terms of dimension and emergence of internal voice.

For research question three, I solely used the phenomenological analysis method. With this question I looked at the key phrases and words of my participants related to the international service learning experience and listed their relevant statements. I then formed meaning units that translated into the themes representing takeaways the students had with the international service learning experience. All of the relevant data is presented in chapter four through descriptions that represent the experiences of the students.

Moustakas’ (1994) modification of the Stevick-Colazzi-Keen method of analysis of phenomenological data involves considering each statement with respect to significance for description of the experience, recording all relevant statements, listing each nonrepetitive, non-overlapping statement, relating and clustering meaning units into themes, synthesizing the invariant meaning units and themes into a description of the textures of the experience, reflecting on your own textual description, and constructing a textural-structural description of the meaning and essences of your experiences.

Before, during, and after the interviews and throughout the study, I engaged in the Epoche and bracketing processes. Moustakas (1994) describes the Epoche process as a time where we “set aside our prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (p. 85). Bracketing is the practice of reflecting and sharing my experience with
the phenomenon so I can set aside my personal experiences to focus on the experiences of my participants (Creswell, 2013). As I have some experience with service learning trips (I have attended them as a student and as a faculty member), the process of Epoche and bracketing was particularly essential to my study in order to exercise proper positionality and address my background experiences, judgements, and biases.

**Methodological Rigor**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that the establishment of trustworthiness relies on the following: credibility, authenticity, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Maxwell (2013) further presents that validity “depends on the relationship of your conclusions to reality, and no methods can completely assure that you have captured this” (p. 121). This being said, validity is essential to the study and strategies for use (Maxwell). Creswell (2013) recommends that multiple strategies for validation be employed in a qualitative study. There is distinct value in the strategies for validity. Proper execution and utilization of validation strategies contribute to the worth of one’s study.

Maxwell (2013) discusses bias and reactivity as two potential threats that a qualitative researcher may encounter. Both should be acknowledged for the sake of this study, as I participated in the class and the trip. It is important to be aware of the threats to exercise strategies to evade the threats (Maxwell). Both Maxwell and Creswell (2013) provide checklists for validity tests. For the purpose of this study, I used recommendations from each the respective sources to ensure the recommendation of the use of multiple strategies. The recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) are also used.
Creswell (2013) and Maxwell (2013) both recommend a long term commitment to the study. For the purpose of this study, I met all of the students four months prior to the trip during a pre-planning meeting for the class, where I presented the opportunity for their voluntary participation in my study. Once the class began, I attended all of the class meetings as well as the international service learning trip. I had the opportunity to build longer term relationships with the participants over the course of a year. I conducted multiple interviews over an eight-month time period and conducted constant observations during the six-week course and the trip. Traveling with the students and immersing myself into their world fostered relationships that instilled bonds of trust and rapport and assisted with the production of rich data from the interviews.

Throughout the interviews, I also employed member checking to ensure my data was representative of the descriptions provided by the students. Creswell (2013) describes an example of the exercise of member checking by providing participants with "preliminary analyses" (p. 252) of their accounts of the experience. Through this process, participants provided feedback regarding the authenticity and accuracy of what he or she conveyed through the interview process. Interview summaries were shared with the students to ensure accurate accounts of their stories were portrayed. Member checking is one of the most important strategies to ensure credibility (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The use of rich and thick data description allows the reader to make the decision as to the transferability of the data (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It allows the reader to consider how this study may apply and transfer to other settings and groups. Through vivid descriptions the reader has the opportunity to judge
how or if the results of this study would apply to other areas. The interviews were crafted in order to garner detailed testimony from participants. After each interview, follow up questions were designed for particular participants based on the information provided by preceding interviews. Each participant's story was described with strict attention to detail and nuances.

One of the strategies that served me extremely well and contributed to authenticity and dependability was the implementation of peer reviewers and debriefing sessions. These external reviewers posed the difficult questions and challenged the data and the findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Peer reviewers ranged from colleagues within my college, fellow doctoral students, my doctoral committee chair, and a professor from an out of state research 1 university. These individuals served in all of the roles described by Lincoln & Guba (1985). They read and questioned my findings, listened to my interpretations and questions, challenged me with the hard questions, and kept me honest. This process was an extremely beneficial component of the process. The constant feedback allowed me to refine my questions, data collection, analyses, and findings. The questions posed for clarification incited necessary reflection and editorial attention.

The final strategy I employed was “clarifying researcher bias” to promote confirmability (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Using this practice, I identified and reserved my background, history, bias, and prejudice in relation to the study; this is also called Epoche. For phenomenological studies Epoche is employed to reduce the risk of not influencing the experiences of our participants because we have clouded our receptors with our own judgements, biases, and preconceived notions (Moustakas,
My goal for the study was to authentically represent the participant with analyses of their words and descriptions of their experiences. I was careful to exercise the necessary reflexivity through memos and field notes.

**Researcher Subjectivity Statement**

Patton (2015) reminds us of the personal nature of qualitative research. I as the researcher, am the primary instrument to gather data (Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002, Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015). My own experiences matter. My background matters. My methodology, data collection and analysis are all representative of my personal nature. I will, on some level be acquainted personally with my participants; there are not merely numbers. Qualitative research employs the human researcher as the primary instrument for data gathering to decipher nuances and underlying points within the analysis phase of a study by drawing from the reported experiences of others. Simply stated, the best data collection instrument for a qualitative design is a person (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Within the personal context and connection, the researcher has to a qualitative study, it is imperative that he or she compartmentalize his or her own background and experience in relation to the phenomenological approach; this is known as bracketing (Moustakas, 1994).

I have served at the community college level for over eight years. Post high school, I attended community college before pursuing my degree at a four-year institution. My roles at the college have vastly changed over the eight years from when I started as a professional employee and rose to the administrative role as a director. I had the opportunity to return to the classroom (my career started as a high school teacher) as a faculty member. My love for the community college student runs deep. All of the positions I held, afforded me the opportunity to work one on one with students.
Working with students to assist them achieve their goals is one of my strengths. A benefit to me throughout my years at the college has been the relationships that have grown out of my work with students.

The practice of service learning is one that I have personally seen impact students, community members, and faculty in unequivocally positive ways. Students in particular, have experienced personal transformations as a result of their participation. I would encourage any interested student to pursue opportunities to engage in service learning or international service learning.

Since the age of fifteen, I have traveled extensively as a student on service learning trips, including international service learning trips. I recall the magnetic draw these trips had on me. I wanted to serve; I wanted to collaborate with people in other cultures. I deeply desired to be part of introducing others to sustainable practices that would continue long after my departure. Each of these trips garnered an introspection that transformed me. I reminisce about these experiences and am now grateful for the role I play as a faculty member leading and accompanying students on service learning trips today. My experience has challenged my curiosity as I seek to learn how today’s students are impacted by their choice to travel in the spirit of service and work. A seven-day trip can assist a student with their perception of themselves within a broader global scope. It can impact their career decisions. It can produce relationships that will last a lifetime. It can produce a self-realization beyond anything they expected. I desire to serve as a conduit to champion a student to discover their potential through observation, dialogue, and relationships.
Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a guide to the methodology that drove my phenomenological study. Procedures for participant recruitment, sampling, data collection, data analysis were presented in detail. The qualitative study employed frameworks of self-authorship and constructivism to explore the impact of an international service learning trip on community college students. Through semi-structured interviews, the essence of the students’ experiences was chronicled in the study. This study contributes information specific to community college students unlike the majority of the literature that focuses on traditional four-year students.
MULTIPLE STUDIES PRESENT THE VALUE OF CONTRIBUTING TO SELF-AUTHORSHIP ADVANCEMENT THROUGH IDENTIFIED DEVELOPMENTALLY EFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES IN COLLEGE (PIZZOLATO, 2007). HOWEVER, FEW, IF ANY HAVE SPECIFICALLY TARGETED COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS’ SELF-AUTHORSHIP JOURNEY IN TERMS OF STUDENT REFLECTIONS OF PARTICULAR COLLEGE EXPERIENCES. THE OVERARCHING GOAL OF THE STUDY SOUGHT TO DETERMINE IF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS’ PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING TRIP CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR SELF-AUTHORSHIP. A SECONDARY GOAL WAS TO DETERMINE IF THE TENETS OF SERVICE LEARNING OUTLINED IN LITERATURE WERE CONSISTENT IN COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS.


SEVEN STUDENTS AT A COMMUNITY COLLEGE PARTICIPATED IN A SIX-WEEK SERVICE LEARNING COURSE WITH A SEVEN-DAY EMBEDDED SERVICE TRIP TO NICARAGUA. THROUGH A TOTAL OF 28 INTERVIEWS (FOUR INTERVIEWS WITH 7 PARTICIPANTS) STUDENT PERSPECTIVES OF THEIR INDIVIDUALIZED EXPERIENCES WERE ANALYZED.

PRESENTATION OF THE INFORMATION THAT FOLLOWS, CONSISTS OF VIGNETTES OF EACH STUDENT THAT INCLUDES BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ALONG WITH THEIR IMPETUS FOR PURSUING THE INTERNATIONAL SERVICE LEARNING EXPERIENCE. THIS PIECE IS FOLLOWED BY A BREAKDOWN BY EACH RESEARCH QUESTION, WITH FINDINGS RELATED TO EACH QUESTION INFORMED BY STUDENT PERSPECTIVES USING THEIR OWN WORDS AND EXPERIENCES. QUESTION ONE IS PRESENTED IN
terms of the three dimensions in self-authorship growth: epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal; these dimensions were gathered from the initial phenomenological analysis which garnered five themes. These themes were then examined through the self-authorship framework. Question two presents specific experiences that contributed to students’ self-authorship development. Similarly to question one, five experiences were identified through the phenomenological analysis and then examined through the framework of self-authorship. Finally, question three is presented with wrap-up stories of the participants that chronicled their experiences with relevant themes consistent with service learning; the findings were determined through the phenomenological analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-1. Findings by Research Question</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question 1:</strong> Impact on Self-Authorship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emergence of Internal Voice</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Intrapersonal</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Interpersonal</strong></td>
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**Participants’ Stories**

**Tripoli**

Nineteen-year-old Tripoli is in her second year of her Associate of Arts degree. She lives with her dad and boyfriend. Unsure of her ultimate career goals, Tripoli is leaning toward a science based field possibly in physics or chemistry. Tripoli explained that on her own accord she would not have pursued an opportunity like this; between the encouragement of her boyfriend who also attended the trip along with his father (a professor on the trip) Tripoli was talked into going. Even though the initial idea to go
may not have been her own, Tripoli thoughtfully describes her draw to the trip “I would like to help people and I need to be pushed out of my comfort zone more because even people that I’m acquainted with I have a hard time with I guess.” She is hopeful that her experience on the trip will coax her out of her shell, “I think that just being out there and helping everyone and just everyone having good feelings and everything would help me kind of like open up more. It helps me while I’m helping them and I don’t know; I think it’s great.” A self-described introvert, Tripoli viewed the experience as one that would challenge her “Mostly just helping me get out of my shell. I’ve never had a real job either so I definitely need to be able to communicate with people better so that it’s not such a shock to get a job.”

**Deja**

Deja is 28-years old and has never participated in a service learning experience. Her travel has extended to Mexico and to Belize, where she has family. Deja is earning her degree in Elementary Education; she has completed all course work and only lacks her senior internship. She made the purposeful decision to stop out for a semester to focus on passing the required state exams. When asked about her decision to join the class she said, “adventure; for me it was definitely I wanted to take the opportunity to do something different and do it in a way that I know I would learn something from it, and hope that I was helping people, and that allured me.” She later reflects after the trip and hopes to incorporate helping others back in the states, “I kind of had fun with that and I’ve been trying to figure out how I can do that after I graduate as well; figure out how I can still help people and still have that little bit of adventure.” Deja shares that she thinks about the regret people have not doing this, “because they always say that the things that you’ll regret the most are the things you never did; they things you never try,
and I can believe that.” As a future elementary education teacher Deja hopes the experience can help her work with ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students because in college she has yet to really be exposed to ESOL students, “I can learn ESOL while I’m there, and it will help me…I don’t feel like I’ve been able to connect that entirely in this program because I haven’t worked with any ESOL children.” Deja also hopes the trip will help her develop more independence, “I hope to grow as an individual. I definitely want to be able to do things a little bit more on my own because sometimes the person that I feel like I am, I feel like sometimes I forget that I need to step out of my own shadow and just go and do it.”

Capri

Capri is a 21-year-old student from Bermuda. Capri lives with her mom, stepdad, and sister. She currently works in a jewelry store on her home island. Capri is finishing her second year in community college and is close to completing her Associate of Arts degree. She initially planned to study medical technology, but negative experiences in chemistry quickly changed her plans. She worked with children once and determined that she really enjoyed it and felt that she would be a good teacher. Capri toyed with a study abroad opportunity to Ireland but then learned of the service learning trip to Nicaragua. Knowing the trip had a service component she wondered if the trip would inform her plans to pursue teaching. “I was taught that I would be a very good teacher at the same time so I was maybe this is what I’m supposed to be, and what led me to here.” Other than some summer volunteer experience Capri has never participated in a service learning project. Her interest in humanitarian work and learning the construct of educational systems in other countries served as a catalyst the class and trip. Capri also articulated her vision that the trip would impact her growth and take her out of her
day to day experiences, “yeah, so I think I’ll be learning a lot. I don’t know yet. I just feel that there’s a real lot of growth there and experience, like I said, getting out of my comfort zone and being thrown in.”

**Rex**

Rex was 18 years old at the time of the class and trip. He is interested in engineering and environmental sciences. He currently lives with his girlfriend who also joined the experience. Rex is attending an international service learning trip for the second time; he was sixteen at the time of his first trip to Haiti. With his first experience he was drawn by the allure of travel, he admits this trip is predicated by a different desire, when he went on the first trip he was just excited about traveling, his second trip allowed him to better appreciate the value of the trip, “not to say that traveling isn’t also an incentive, but the actual goal of Teaching Beyond Borders is clear to me and that’s something that I want to be a part of.” Rex articulated the goals of the trip and was complimentary of the goal of sustainability representative of the mission of the trip he likens the experience to planting a seed,

I’d say a good analogy would be like planting a seed; instead of just going to a community and say giving clothes or access to food where the benefits only last for a certain amount of time, with aiding in the education of somewhere you give them the tools to improve their own community, diversify their fields of study and their exports and the things that make their community their community.

His goals were thoughtful as he described his own goals for the experience, “I just see new experiences in any way as a way to improve myself…I can probably take away from Teaching Beyond Borders in some of the more personal aspects of my life.” He also desires to view the country through his own eyes to help him make some future career decisions, “As a student I think it will help me in my decision process for what I
want to do after school; seeing it might show me exactly where my services might be most required.” He goes on to predict takeaways from the experience, “I can’t imagine not gaining some empathy from experiencing something like this and also just general knowledge. It’s hard to perceive life outside of a developed country when that’s all you really know, so it would be nice to get a better grasp on that.”

**Victoria**

Victoria is 35, married and a mother of two. She graduated with a degree in Secondary Earth Space Science Education. Upon graduation she was heavily sought after by area principals to fill open science positions. Victoria, however, chose to work at the college in admissions and registration. When asked about her aspirations to be a teacher Victoria described that she was vacillating on the idea,

I go back and forth, but it’s seeming more and more like something I don’t want to do. I think I started the school year wanting to be a teacher because that’s what I always wanted to do, but actually getting into the classroom and getting the experience I realized it was a dream I had but it wasn’t something I could necessarily make a reality just because of where I was at that point in my live. I kind of decided to put it on the back burner and I think eventually it’s just not going to be an option at all.

The trip to Nicaragua would be Victoria’s second foray into an international service learning trip, she went to Haiti last year. When asked about her desire to go again she said, explained that she wanted to help people and also experience a new country. While she was nervous last year, her first trip gave her the courage to go again, “even though last year I was nervous and I was scared and I came back so grateful to be home I signed up for this one again because I really felt like the experience made me a better person, made me realize more of this is what I want to do in the world.” She sees the benefit of not only helping others, but helping herself,
I want to help people in any way I can, even if it’s just teaching English; I’m still helping them become a better person and it’s helping me become a better person and really expanding… I won’t say expanding my horizon but making me realize that there’s more that I can do besides go to work every day and go home and cook dinner with my kids. I can still have an effect on other people even though I may never see them again.

Victoria was thoughtful about how the experience may impact her current job and relationships with the students she encounters, “as a professional, the College has a lot of students from different backgrounds, different countries, and I think it could make me more sensitive to where other students are coming from.” She imagines herself in the place of her students and explains that she now has some ability to relate to them, “being able to say that I’ve taken myself out of my comfort zone, out of the areas where I feel comfortable and I feel safe and put myself in these places willingly.” She explained how it impacted her in her work, “I think as a professional that makes me more flexible, probably a little bit more… I don’t want to say worldly, but like more than just outside of this city; I have more than just what happens here.”

Constance

At 47, Constance was the senior member of the group. Constance is a mother and grandmother who lives with her husband and daughter. Constance recently graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Exceptional Student Education and was on the search for a job. She is now currently employed at a local charter school where she is a 6th/7th grade integrated teacher with all subjects. Constance said growing up she always wanted to go on a missions trip, but was never able to make it happen. She describes her desire to participate in this experience, “I want to go because I think it’s important that I see the other side of the coin. I’ve struggled in my life and I don’t have everything.” She imagined how the experience would impact her as a classroom
teacher “there are people that are living with less than what I have right now and I understand that. I want the experience because I want to be able to go into a classroom and say, what would you think about having to haul your water for a mile every day?”

She hopes her students would value her experience in Nicaragua,

I want to be able to show them that there is another side to this coin, that you not having an X Box or you not having an IPhone is not the end of the world, and I really feel like this is something that I can use in my classroom or even as a support facilitator, that can use this experience to get my kids to understand that it’s not the end of the world if they don’t have that; that there are other people that have a lot less and they’re just as happy.

Lorde

Lorde at 22, recently graduated with her degree in Elementary Education. Her international travel experience extends to Germany and Haiti. Her trip to Haiti was also a service learning opportunity. Lorde was deeply impacted by her trip to Haiti where she taught beginning English to adults and students. When asked about her desire to participate in trips like these she said,

I think I’ve always wanted to do it; my entire life I’ve just been like I want to go teach in another country; it’s something I want to do. I like the idea when I think of people…it’s good to be prideful in your country but I think of us more as like a planet and less of individual countries, so even though it is going to a different country that’s definitely different than ours, it’s still… We’re all people and we all live on the same planet so it just feels like yeah, you’re traveling, but you’re still kind of at home if that makes any sense.

Lorde based on her experience the prior year, decided to go again. When asked why she chose to do this again she explained how it contributed to her overall happiness, “I love it. It’s something that just brings you so much happiness; I want to do it every summer forever because it’s so life-changing and it’s such a different experience than teaching here.” As a new third grade teacher she is able to compare the students in
Nicaragua to the students in the U.S. She explains, “teaching here is fun, teaching here is great, but when you go into another country the students there – regardless of what age they are – they’re just so appreciative and it’s good to see passion in countries where they don’t have as much as we do and a lot of times here we don’t realize that.” She appreciates the attitudes of the locals and seems affected by how they live, “we look at those people and we feel bad for them and they don’t feel bad for themselves. It makes you happy; they’re so passionate about everything they have, even though it’s not a lot compared to us.” Lorde also looks forward to how the trip will impact her teaching career, “I think one way it’s going to benefit me as far as career-wise, I’ve worked with ESOL students before in a classroom here.” Lorde noticed that principals focused on her study abroad travel and asked how it would impact her own classroom here in the U.S. “It definitely gives me different teaching strategies. As a teacher I think, especially working with ESOL students, it will definitely give me more patience and it will give me more experience working with students that don’t speak English. “She talked about her undergrad experience in the classroom and how teachers often struggle with accommodating ESOL students, “during my internship, I would see students that don’t speak English put into a regular classroom without any type of assistance and the teachers do the best they can to hold on and keep them going.” She feels like she is better prepared to help future ESOL students, “I think experiences like this give me – not that I’m going to be completely prepared when an ESOL student comes into my classroom – but I’ll already have experience; I can do it and I can achieve and my students are going to learn.”
Table 4-2. Participants' Initial Stories and Decisions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Why they chose the experience</th>
<th>First time on an International Service Learning Trip</th>
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<tr>
<td>Tripoli</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>To help others Personal growth</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deja</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Career information Helping others Personal growth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capri</td>
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<td>Career information Personal growth</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constance</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>See how others live Develop career skills</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rex</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Contribute to mission of the trip Experience Personal growth</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Helping others Personal growth</td>
<td>No, 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorde</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Career resource Personal happiness</td>
<td>No, 2\textsuperscript{nd}</td>
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</table>

Findings by Research Question

Research Question One: How Does Participation in an International Service Learning Experience Impact a Community College Student’s Self-Authorship?

Question one is presented through the interpretations of individual experiences as they relate to the theory of self-authorship: epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Within these dimensions, student perspectives assisted to determine contribution to self-authorship through this experience, in essence, when students move from looking to external influences to internal influences and developing their internal voice (Baxter Magolda, 2013). The initial phase of the analysis provided five themes which were then examined through the self-authorship framework in terms of dimensions of self-authorship. The original five themes were: changed perspective, impacted by culture, learned something about themselves, moved into action, and impacted by others. The themes were then categorized and presented by dimension for the individual experiences of the students. The following findings will first be organized by dimension: epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Driven by student
quotes and perspectives, the emergence of their respective internal voices is documented.

**The epistemological dimension of self-authorship**

The epistemological dimension is driven by the question, how do I know? As students grapple with the acquisition of knowledge and what they believe and value, their descriptions lend insight to their self-authorship journey within the epistemological dimension. Their words naturally illuminate how their individual experiences contribute to self-authorship development as their experiences describe their emerging and developing internal voices.

Tripoli’s first trip to Nicaragua, and first service learning experience piqued her interest as far as her foundational knowledge of the needs of others and her role in that equation. Traveling as a student to serve the community challenged Tripoli to consider how she needed to be informed in order to contribute effectively. She desired to learn first-hand how she could contribute effectively. Tripoli is beginning to look beyond external factors to inform her and yearns to find this information on her own so that she truly knows for herself.

As a student I would like to change the world around me in the most efficient way possible and to do that first I need to see what most needs to be changed, and I believe that’s what this trip is doing is helping me assess the world’s problems before I can try to solve them. So in short this trip is helping my growth as a student by showing me where my help is needed most.

Tripoli describes her decision to attend the course and the trip to Nicaragua. She is looking to shift her beliefs from external sources to knowing what she knows in a first-hand manner, “I think that it will help me be more interested in what I am learning instead of just kind of blindly reading. I would understand more and want to understand
more.” While she has previously relied on these external sources to inform her, she is starting to recognize the need to acquire knowledge for herself.

Working with a particular town and group of people showed Tripoli the value of information and preparation prior to the experience. She placed value on the exercise of learning about the culture and the people she planned to work with in the town. Tripoli now desires to research her destination prior to her travels, “when I think about traveling now and stuff I want to know about the place first because it helped with Nicaragua to learn about the place and the people and the culture first rather than just jumping into it completely.” She found that her prior research contributed to the depth of her experience, “it’s just more fascinating that way. If you go travel somewhere with no background then you’re just there, but if you understand oh, that’s the monument from whatever you appreciate it a lot more.”

Deja’s experience is indicative of her struggle throughout her bachelor’s program. She used this experience to begin to learn that she needs to trust her instincts and experiences to make decisions for herself. There is a shift from recognizing and trusting external sources to entertaining the value of her own ideas.

I feel like because I have that knowledge of what I’m supposed to be doing I can breathe a little easier and go and think about it and say ok, remember this scenario? It’s a lot about adapting and learning my own behavior and how my own feelings are interacting. I had a lot of nerves coming into the program so I think that added to how anxious I continued to be throughout the program, not completely believing in myself and what I could accomplish. Doing the Nicaragua trip was kind of one of those things that said ok, you need to start believing in yourself a little more; just a little bit.

Deja describes how she really observed her professors and thought about ways to adapt what they do and apply it in to her future teaching career, “I felt like there was an opportunity to help kids, and I watched kind of Dr. Dew and I watched you guys and
how you guys were helping the teachers and working with the teachers. “Throughout the program, she has struggled to trust her instincts about teaching in the classroom, “if I could do something like that, if I could actually get comfortable enough to share what I know and create that… it would be awesome to be helpful to that community, or any community that needs it. “Her experience in Nicaragua helped her begin to find ways to exercise her internal voice in toward her future teaching opportunities, looking externally and finding ways to internally position her thoughts and beliefs.

Lorde was a type of veteran on the trip as this was her second time on an international service learning trip. She was pensive about how people who have not encountered other cultures assume “those” people are automatically at a disadvantage because they have less. As her knowledge and beliefs were altered through her experience, her internal voice about the issue emerges more. Her understanding of culture and how it translates back to her own captivated her thoughts.

I think like I mentioned earlier that people think so much of a third world country and they don’t realize how prideful, how proud of themselves that they are, and everyone there was just so open and welcoming. We went and ate lunch in someone’s home and Gabriella was so all about the hospitality. I think you don’t get that a lot here but it’s like every person there was happy to see you; they were all excited, the kids were excited, the adults were excited, and so I think just the way they feel about people and interacting with people that are there to help them, it shows you that there is a lot of good in the world, especially in an area that people just assume would be bad or rough because of the poverty and stuff.

Deja also encountered new understanding related to culture. She found herself conflicted when she encountered children begging for money in the streets. “I think the main thing about the trip that may have kind of got me a little flustered was some or what the interactions we were having as a tourist, so the constant tipping and the constant being… kids coming up to us” Even though the students had been instructed
not to give in to the children, she still felt conflicted, “I wanted to help them but I know
that part of me says that… I know that’s part of the culture to want to get money for the
family, want to do this and it just… it’s a different type of world there.” Acclimating to the
culture was an area of discomfort. Interestingly, she struggled with trusting her internal
voice and questioned whether she would have followed the sage advice of the
Nicaraguans who advised the students on how to interact with children in the city. Deja
explained, “there’s just different aspects to that world that kind of made me go, “how
would I react to this if I wasn’t with them? Culturally if you guys weren’t there what
would I do? I guess I learned a lot about myself; I learned a lot about various customs
that are part of that culture.” She further wrangled with her understanding of her own
background and the expectations she perceives that are placed on her to represent her
culture. She strongly desires to properly contribute due to her heritage. She is
concerned about the possibility of letting others down. Here she looks to those external
influences to determine her worth in this area.

When I go on a trip to a Latin American country or meet Latin American
people, especially my elders, sometimes I feel like I have an obligation to
them to do what’s right by them and to help, and if I don’t feel like I’m
being helpful, then I don’t feel successful. I will pull back. There’s this huge
thing and I don’t think a lot of people understand what it means to be
almost driven by your culture a little. you’ll hear people who are connected
to their culture say, “I can’t go against my people.” There’s a little bit of
that in me. That is my biggest thing, is doing what’s right by the people. I
think that’s what makes me the most anxious, not feeling like I had it all
together.

Deja shares more in her reflection continuing to look to external influences as she is still
working through confidence issues. Even though she has completed all of her
coursework for her bachelor’s degree she still struggles to ascertain her ability to teach
and finds that she overthinks the opportunity, one of her classmates encourages her to
have confidence, “I’m reflecting on what I knew and not thinking that I can really perform the way that I need to there, and she’s just like, “stop thinking too much,” and I was, I was thinking a lot like I am right now.”

Capri was struck by the familial nature of the community. She noticed that families took responsibility for their neighbors’ children and vice versa. She was moved by the action of the hosts of the experience and how they sponsored a student to pay college expenses and train an interpreter. She compared the customs to those of her home island and the U.S. and wished that communities would emulate the actions of the community in Nicaragua. Through her experiences, she is flexing her internal voice to shape what she values in a community.

Ok, well I was culture shocked by a lot of stuff. I noticed a lot of stuff geographically and with the people. I thought I came from a friendly country; everybody says good morning, good afternoon, but there it’s basically like it takes a village to raise a child. I got that type of feeling from it; everybody’s close with everybody; everybody cares for somebody there. If you’re there and you’re struggling they’re not going to leave you there to struggle alone. That was amazing. It would be nice if we introduced some of those type of cultures back where we are now because it feels like everybody forgot; it’s not a one-man show.

Capri describes her new found knowledge born from the experience. The trip inspired her motivation and seeing the ambition of the Nicaraguan students to acquire their education and knowledge. “I would say I was already humbled, but it humbled me more. It also made me content with what I have but also taught me that these people will work hard to get where they want as well.” Through this, Capri’s internal voice is developing as she uses the experiences to newly define motivation,

it taught me that nothing’s too hard if you want it that bad. I could not stand the word motivation because everybody’s always talking about it – you need to be motivated for that, you need to be motivated for this – but where do you get the motivation from? What it was is desperation equals motivation but being in Nicaragua it also means passion plus desperation.
equals motivation because you need to be desperate enough to want something bad but you need to be passionate enough to also want it as well because you just can’t have one without the other. If you’re passionate enough then you’re going to fight for it no matter what. If you’re desperate enough you want it really bad. And that was one thing that was definitely missing from my life.

She is conflicted toward the external voices who discouraged her from teaching. This feeling may draw her into a crossroads experience where she encountered dissonance and chose to listen to her internal voice to define her and her experiences, “where I worked last summer I ran across a few people who told me I was into the wrong career, so that really hurt me.” Teaching the high school students in Nicaragua has helped her with the emergence of her internal voice and to believe in herself, “being on this trip and actually getting that extra boost that I needed to become even more passionate for it and desperate for it… I was thinking you know what? I can do that; I can do that.”

The teaching experience and the venture to Nicaragua overall has impacted Capri to empower her to not take no for an answer, something she had previously not know about herself. In an original somewhat comical exchange, Capri explained that her friends considered her “boogie.” “I can’t say I’m still boogie. I don’t feel stuck in my ways.” She explained that boogie means you are rigid and reject change. “Boogie means stuck in your ways and don’t want to change…Yeah. I don’t want to say I’m still boogie but going straight to the man and getting what I asked for. That requires some dirty work [laugh]. So no I’m not boogie anymore.”

Rex was just 16 when he ventured out on his first international service learning trip. His choice to return was more developed cognitively than his initial venture which he admits was primarily to travel. His choice to return on a trip was deeply connected to the mission of the experience and his role and responsibility within it. Two years later,
Rex’s reflection describes his developing internal voice as he describes how he now knows what he knows due to his first-hand experience. He lauds the value of learning for one’s self and acquiring knowledge through experience rather than through second hand sources.

I guess there’s a lot of value in experiencing things firsthand, seeing the way people live. It’s easy with how connected the world is not… it’s easy to see secondhand pictures and hear accounts of people across the world but there’s something different about seeing it firsthand; you don’t really have to trust a third party to be truthful when you just go and experience it yourself. Now I feel like I know more and I’m more confident using the knowledge that I found there because I know from my own experience for it to be true.

He further described the value of knowledge and information in his interviews, “I can’t think of a single scenario where not having information…you can benefit from that.” He describes how taking responsibility for the acquisition of knowledge impacts one as a person and expands the epistemological capacity, “I feel like it would be hard to come away from such a new experience not feeling empowered just from having… gaining knowledge and just the experience in general I guess.”

Rex’s emergence into self-authorship can be detected through his developing internal voice and how he can continue to grow, “it’s definitely helped me to know how best to learn new things when I see others trying to grasp new concepts. When I study other students I feel that I learn things that help me grow my knowledge and understanding.”

Victoria was also on her second international service learning trip. Admittedly, she was scared on her first trip the prior year to Haiti. Her preparation for this experience was much more involved and she did not hesitate with her decision to go to
Nicaragua. She trusted herself more and put careful thought into her preparation with information regarding politics, tourism, and the language of the country,

I didn’t even think twice about it…I’m going to give Nicaragua a chance and I did a lot of research beforehand. I read a lot of the political news, what was going on, how the tourism was really big over there so I was a lot more prepared for what it was going to be like. I think that made a difference too, and the fact that I already knew some Spanish, I think that helped a lot too. I didn’t feel so much of an outsider because I could understand some of what was being said while we were there and that made me feel even more like I’m going to have a good time there. I wasn’t as scared as I was going to Haiti.

Later in the interviews, Victoria describes how the opinions of others regarding her travel mean little to her and she has little patience for those who do not understand why she would choose an experience like this. She regards her work with deep value and explains the importance of experiencing it first-hand. Her desire to help others is a strongly formed value that she feels no need to explain to others. The development of her internal voice is clear with her reflection, she describes how people in her life question her motivation,

Why would you go to another country and want to teach English or something? I guess you have to be the kind of person who doesn’t have to ask that to understand. If you have to ask that then you’re not the kind of person who would ever do something like this. It’s really hard to explain to somebody why you feel the need to help other people or to help other countries or to just go somewhere and try to do what you can and kind of leave a mark. People who would never do that, they’re never going to understand.

Constance was the senior member of the trip at 47, and the sole grandmother. From a young age, Constance had the desire to go on a missions trip, but could not afford it. As a brand new teacher, Constance thought deeply about the differences between American students and students in Nicaragua. She found herself making comparisons and thinking about how to reach her American students.
Yes, because even with everything that they have going, the kids in Nicaragua, even with what they have they really want to learn; they want to know how to do things. They like the idea of learning new things, I think. It seemed that even with the language barrier and everything else that could stand between them learning something and us being able to teach it to them, that is more impressive to me than the ones that I’m teaching now that can understand everything I’m saying and still look at me like they don’t get it or they don’t want to get it – more that they don’t want to get it. This is not important; I don’t understand why we have to learn this.

She continues to use the experience of teaching the students in Nicaragua to encourage her during times of frustration in her own classroom. Using her internal voice, she is able to encourage herself with the knowledge she gained on the trip and apply it to her classroom to motivate her students in their learning. Even though the students may lack fundamental similarities, she finds that drawing from the positive experiences.

Sometimes when I get a little down about the kids I have now I sit back and go back and look at what happened in Nicaragua. It’s encouraging for me because I see that and I know that I can use that. Ok, I’ve just got to reason with myself and say ok, you know they can do this and when they talk to you you know they can do this. They just don’t want to make the effort sometimes. I’m trying to encourage them more, especially in teaching, to make that effort and then... “I don’t feel like doing this right now. Oh, I’m sorry that you don’t feel like doing this right now but you have to do this right now.

Constance shares her own perspective on the trip and how the experience ultimately impacted her, “you can push yourself further than you think you can; you can learn things faster than you think you can. You have to just get focused on it. I don’t know, there’s just so much. I could turn this into a three-hour speech.”

The intrapersonal dimension of self-authorship

Figuring out one’s identity encompasses the intrapersonal dimension. It is driven by the question, who am I? Through experiences, the internal voice emerges to
determine how the self is viewed. The most informative data regarding question one was related to the intrapersonal dimension.

Student perspectives provided a great deal of insight about how they viewed themselves and how they shaped their identities within the international service learning experience. As with the epistemological dimension, the development of self-authorship emerges with the evolution of the internal voice.

Tripoli started the experience reliant on external voices. For Tripoli, the idea of going on the trip would not have occurred to her on her own. Her boyfriend and his father strongly encouraged her to go. “A huge part of it really was Rex and his dad convincing me you’ve got to go; I’m going to make you go, but I’m glad that they did because I did really want to.” When asked if she would have made the decision for herself she admitted, “honestly, probably not. I would now, but if I didn’t have Rex and his dad I would not have known anyone I was traveling with, and I would have just been too scared to do that. I was just afraid of being in this completely new world.”

As Tripoli reflected midway through the trip she talked about what she wanted for herself; her internal voice begins to emerge,

I kind of already had the idea that I needed to come out of my shell more, but even in this new world with new opportunities and everything I still just kind of did what I was comfortable with. But also some new things...I saw the other people helping the kids and interacting with them and I thought that it was pretty neat. I found that I want to work on that aspect of myself and I feel that I have worked on it.

It was clear that Tripoli had spent a great deal of time reflecting on the experience and contemplating her identity. The experience motivated her to learn more about herself and thoughtfully consider areas in which she desired to grow and change. She shared, “mostly the motivation of wanting and knowing what I want to be changed about myself
and kind of more how to go about doing that change. It’s mostly the drive of this is something that I need to work on and it became very evident that I did."

In Tripoli’s first interview she talked about how she had never held a job and hoped the trip would give her some access to skills that would prove helpful in a job. She discussed how the experience gave her the courage to go on a job interview at a local grocery store. This was a big decision as Tripoli would have preferred to work at a venue that did not require her to interact with others. She was extremely nervous about the skills required to take on a customer service position. Tripoli, however, determined that the harder road was the right road for her. A few months after she returned from the trip she followed up with a job inquiry at the local grocery store.

It did take a bit of courage and breathing and standing outside by myself for a little bit before I went into Publix to talk to the manager, but I still got myself to do it; I still talked to her and it really wasn’t that hard and it was even easier the second time, so if I just keep doing what I need to do, what I want to do, it will just be easy, so I’m waiting for that.

Tripoli used the experience to inquire about the position and talk to the manager about a possible position. She credits her time in Nicaragua for the bravery she exercised; it challenged her, she said, “It made me want to step out more. “Tripoli’s personal experience tremendously impacted her self-awareness. She further commented on her time on the trip explaining how she was challenged to grow, “Mostly the motivation of wanting and knowing what I want to be changed about myself and kind of more how to go about doing that change. It’s mostly the drive of this is something that I need to work on and it became very evident that I did.” Tripoli is making decisions about how she views herself and how she wants to grow, the emergence of the internal voice is at play. She counts the negative experiences of the trip as important at the positive ones, “Some of the experiences were a little discouraging and negative so it’s more
encouraging to turn them into positives and just grow.” As Tripoli thought about herself in terms of her identity she built relationships on the trip that helped how she viewed this element of herself. She connected with another student on the trip and spoke of her respect for the student’s characteristics, and her desire to emulate some of those characteristics.

Immediately she was just like really open and she seemed to be very comfortable and confident with herself and just was very loving and accepting to everyone, especially the children; she’s really high energy and it’s just really nice and refreshing to be around. It would be cool to be refreshing and fun to be around. I aspired to be that way. It’s kind of like you surround yourself with what you want to be.

Tripoli faced a difficult situation during swim lessons at the beginning of the trip. All of the students paired up with Kindergarten students to teach survival swimming. Tripoli tried to come to terms with her fears as she was working with a little girl. Her internal voice does not surface during the following reflection. Her vulnerability with her story is clear as she pulls back when another student forcefully stepped in,

I was trying to help this little girl name Malady get in the water because she was scared, but I was scared too and I just wasn’t sure what to do and then “someone” came and just kind of took over and I kind of went into the background, I think about that a lot. I wish that I could have helped her because once Malady was comfortable with us she was more comfortable in the water, but I was kind of uncomfortable so she was uncomfortable and I feel bad about that. I would like to be a more comfortable person.

The initial takeaway for that experience would seem to be a negative one. Tripoli was directly asked if that exchange negatively or positively affected her. Until the question was posed, she had not thought about it. She recounts an experience with little children after her return home,

I didn’t realize it till now you were just explaining, but I have interacted with little children since then and I interacted much better that time. It was my nephew’s birthday party and there were a bunch of other little kids there,
five and younger and they were all super loving on me and I was kind of like, “Why?” I was more comfortable with them and when they asked me to pick them up I picked them up and they got stuff stuck in a tree and I helped them get it out. I didn’t really realize that until now that it probably was that experience that helped me be more comfortable with my nephews and their friends.

When Tripoli told the story, she said it was that memory that stands out to her about the trip. Even though she had not dwelled upon it, her explanation seems to indicate that she subconsciously directed that memory to use in a positive manner. Her internal voice has come through to determine that she can work with children. The swimming lesson experience challenged Tripoli to draw internally and reflect on how she perceives herself. She longs to be more involved and begins to develop that internal voice to decide how she will pursue what she wants. It has ignited a spark in her to reach out and help others.

Really just one thing that I keep thinking about is I wish I was more involved so hopefully next time, because I’m planning on going again, I’ll feel more comfortable and can jump in. I was really proud watching everyone else; it just made me happy watching everyone else so I can only imagine how good I’d feel doing it myself. I wasn’t really entirely sure if it was something I was into before we went, but afterward I want to keep doing it. I just want to help people now.

Nicaragua was Deja’s first international service learning trip. Deja was an extremely reflective participant and was able to articulate much of her conflict of the experience. The trip seemed to serve as a platform for Deja to become more self-aware. She consistently references the external voices that drive her decisions and her critiques of herself “When I’m thinking about doing something I have to confirm it in my head that I want it because they’ll talk me out of it; they’ll find every which way to talk me out of it.” When she decided to go on the trip she was met with some pushback from her family due to the dangers they perceived would be a part of the experience, “those
are the biggest things with them. They think of all the things that could go wrong to make sure that you know all the things that could go wrong, and if you’re still dead set on it, ok; we’ll help you a little.” Deja admits that her family will sometimes overrule her decisions. Deja struggles to find that internal voice to guide her gut instincts and decisions.

I’m a little bull-headed sometimes. Sometimes I can be swayed and you’ll see that in my character; sometimes it’s if somebody’s telling me this, this this, I’ll think about it for a minute and oh crap; that is true. Then I’ll have to think about it. I’m like but… I try to think about all the positive that could potentially happen, what I’m actually doing, what it actually is and I just go with it. A lot of the time some people think that my head’s in the air but it’s just like I’ve got to think of all the positives because I know that everybody’s going to hit me with all the negative, so that’s what I do. I think about everything that could happen and that’s where I keep myself.

During the trip Deja encountered experiences and people that challenged her to think about her view of herself. She reflects on her role within the group, “There were sometimes I felt like I stood back, like I let the group kind of take over because I wasn’t certain what to do. My role though… I think sometimes I tried to listen, I tried to just enjoy it, tried to enjoy the experience. I don’t even know what my role was.”

The trip afforded the students with many opportunities to teach. They taught English, swimming, art, cosmetology, first aid, and journaling to the local children. Deja participated in several of the activities and just wanted to teach, she describes the experience of teaching swimming,

I didn’t care who I taught as long as we were teaching. But I was learning with them; that’s what they wanted to teach the kindergarteners because those were the people that they end up dying the most because they’re there and they don't know how to paddle or get to shore.

Deja grappled with her teaching identity and the persona she projected to the children. The search for her internal voice is represented in her accounts,
So with the little bit that we did get to teach them hopefully they’ll not be as at risk. But there were moments in time where I kind of felt like watching Dr. Dew work, watching some of the other teachers work, it was kind of like ok what is my body language sending out and how can I change my body language to get the kids excited? Those were things that I was learning from them; those are take homes.

Deja desires to take lead some of the activities but finds herself holding back. She looks to the experiences as training ground for her upcoming senior internship in the Education program, as recounts an experience with a fellow student while they were teaching English she works to apply what she learned to her current job in an after school program,

I think Lorde kind of took control of that one, and I don’t mean that in a negative way, because if it comes out negative I’m sorry. I feel like she just knew what she was doing more when she was doing that. There were some times when I felt like I was taking a back burner and I didn’t want to take a back burner, it’s just I was not certain what to do.

Notice in the following statements, Deja begins talk through her identity as a teacher and how she struggles with the lack of confidence she may portray, she identifies how she needs to grow as a teacher and she reflected on how she knew she needed to work on them even throughout her teacher training,

Kids, they don’t know that I’m nervous unless I show them I’m nervous. They don’t know that if I tell them to do something and I’m firm about it like, “We’re going to do this and we’re going to get excited,” they’ll get excited, but if I’m not excited, if I look like I’m a nervous wreck they’re going to know that. They’re going to be like, “Ugh, she’s not in control right now.” That’s the little things that I’m trying to learn so that when I do internship I don’t feel that way. Those were take homes from doing it in Nicaragua and they were things I knew I needed to work on even throughout the program.

Deja had the opportunity to work closely with a fellow Education major. They developed a bond in which her classmate encouraged her throughout the workshops they
conducted. As they would plan together her classmate talked her through some of her misgivings. She over analyzes her decisions and it affects how she comes across,

When people point things out about me I already know about them; it’s just sometimes it’s the working-through process of dealing with and figuring out the best action for me to kind of work through those things. Lorde has definitely mentioned to me about, “You’re very nervous; stop over-thinking,” and it’s hard. It’s one of those things that I am… I’m a heavy thinker and I don’t necessarily like it because I feel like it drives me crazy, but it’s almost like I have to reflect on those things because I have to figure out better ways to handle those things.

She describes how she has a need to listen and please others, Deja relies heavily on the external voices,

I don’t like hurting people; that’s the second thing. It’s just like I could handle it and be like, “Whatever,” but that defeats the purpose of who I am and it almost demoralizes you to have to kind of go, “I don’t care about what you think;” it’s not part of me. I like to care about people; that’s the part of me that I have to emulate to be the person that I am on the inside.

In the following, notice how she admits that she questions herself, and she talks to people to seek guidance or approval,

“Did I do that right?” and when I stop to think about it… it kind of becomes one of those things that becomes easier to work through the process and say to myself ok, that didn’t go as planned but maybe it’s for the right reason, or stop to think about what the person said to me and go, ok, it makes sense what they’re saying but do I need to take that advice? I do talk to people a lot and it just is.

Deja finds that the experience has improved her confidence level. She ponders her abilities to teach and finds that her confidence is starting to build,

Before the trip I had a lot more nerves; after the trip I was still on a high; I felt like I was floating in the air. I just did that; that was awesome. Now I feel like I’m a bit more confident; just a little bit. It’s not like other things couldn’t derail me and I couldn’t… I feel like I’m a bit more like, “I can see this; this is a possibility.” It’s more cemented in some areas what I can do and what I’m capable of and how I can figure this out. I know I’m going to need work but it’s one of those things where I’ve seen it, now maybe I can do it.
Deja’s prime takeaways represent her reflection of her identity and the inception of that internal voice working its way to the forefront. She identifies that she has to be immersed in something to truly understand it and to understand why she is doing it and how it shapes her as a person,

I feel like it’s not the trip that completely changes me, it’s the opportunity to engage; the opportunity to see it and the opportunity to continue to repeat the process that helps me to change and adapt and become better…sometimes I’ll get flustered when people just tell me, tell me, tell me, because…You can tell me all day but till I do it myself I will not completely understand it. I think that it helped me in Nicaragua to see it done. I think it helped me to do it a little, but then to come back and cement it is the thing. Can I go back and do that again? I’ll probably be better now because I got a little experience.

Capri’s prediction of her experience seemed to be an intuitive notion that she would incur some personal growth. In her initial interview she describes herself as shy and meek, but as the interviews progressed over the eight months she came to terms with various aspects of her identity, even describing a leadership role. The emergence of her internal voice is consistently present in her accounts of the experience.

Yeah. Definitely when I first started…you wouldn’t think that I was shy but I was really shy and I didn’t have much confidence at all, especially in myself. None whatsoever. I wouldn’t take risks… I did take risks but I didn’t take enough of a risk; I didn’t challenge myself with risk. Looking back, I’ve changed so much. I never used to take responsibilities; Like I said getting the leadership skill, like being able to talk with everybody and having… I started taking charge with more projects and the stuff that I never knew I would want to do or want to lead…

The emergence of her internal voice is at play as she continues to identify some growth she has experienced,

I always wanted to be the person who just sat and did what they were asked. I never thought of myself as actually taking charge and actually completing stuff. Another thing that, like I said, was taking risks. Even now I applied for that job with no experience. I still did it. I felt it was a risk in myself because I felt like every time I do something I end up looking
stupid, but I still tried it anyway and I'm glad I did because once now that I've taken that risk I'm experiencing stuff that I've never done.

The exercise of taking risks is impacting her self-confidence and helping shape her identity,

I'm even getting confidence – well more confidence – because since being in Nicaragua I did get a lot of confidence. I wouldn't go up to strangers and start talking to them or having full conversations, but since being down there I've gained a lot of confidence, especially in myself and my capabilities.

Capri developed an ease with herself. Her confidence in who she was and how she communicated with others has grown since the experience in Nicaragua,

Because I'm in a job it's required for me to actually engage with the customers and I've even started doing it outside of my job as well. I thought I was approachable and at the same time I would feel shy and it was making me look like I wasn't someone you could talk to, but at the same time now I've become more relaxed and more casual in situations I wouldn't normally find myself in.

Capri may have also ventured into a crossroads experience during the trip. Previously, the external voices would have placed her in a position to acquiesce to the attitudes of others. Capri had spent several weeks planning her project to teach journaling to the local high school students. Upon arrival to the work site, Capri was met with many questions about the benefits of journaling. She was initially told that the project may be scrapped as the outcomes were questioned, “I think if I’m told “no” I think I should still pursue it if I feel that it’s something feasible and that even if people doubt me or tell me that I’m doing something wrong I’m going to try a million ways to do it the wrong way until I get it right.” Capri’s internal voice begins to emerge in this experience, she determined the value of the project and refused to take “no” for an answer. She learned something about herself, “I think if I’m told no I think I should still pursue it. If I feel that
it’s something feasible and even if people doubt me or tell me that I’m doing something wrong I’m going to do it a million ways to do it the wrong way until I get it right.”

When asked about the experience and having the gumption to pursue her project, she describes how she used to respond when told no. The experience in Nicaragua has equipped her with a strength in her voice to appropriately reject situations where she knows she has made the right decision but the external voices disagree. She shares of an experience of rejecting the no when she returned from the trip,

...like I said I’ll be in the dark shadows... Well I wouldn’t say dark shadows, but I did have the background; literally I was told what to do and I would do it and the only contributions I would make would be if they asked without actually putting any input or ideas because I was too scared of what people might think.

Rejecting the push back she encountered in Nicaragua has equipped her with the confidence to trust herself and reject the pushback at college,

I’ve changed a lot in that whole sense; I’m not afraid to be told no but at the same time like I said when told no I’m going to find a way where that no will be coming back. [Laugh] Like another time with the newsletter we needed computers and because it’s not an official school club...We needed computers for the newsletter and our advisor, he’s like, “I don’t think it’s possible you can get it,” and then I emailed the lady who’s in charge of giving laptops to students and she hasn’t responded to me; I’ve called her and you know what I did? I marched myself right up to her office and told her what I need and she gives me what I wanted right then and there. She could have gave me a crappy laptop but she actually gave me a decent one, a really good one.

Her reflection in the final interview is a lasting one that she will continue to foster, and a realization of the power of her internal voice,

Before I went on this trip I was very shy and meek and not really forthcoming, but when I saw something that needed to be done there I actually went for it. Normally if I was told no I wouldn’t push harder, but I learned that if you keep pressing towards the mark you can enjoy the outcome of it. If somebody tells you “no” you keep going for it anyway; don’t listen to the outer critics, just be your own person and do what you want. When you see the passion; go for it. I learned a lot though.
Sometimes I do need to sit back and watch and not always be in everything; that’s definitely something, but for me just having faith in myself and letting go of my inner and outer critics, yeah.

Rex’s experienced service learning on an international level for the second time with this trip. At the time of the final interview Rex was 19 and looked forward to his upcoming birthday in July when he would turn 20. He was only 16 on his first trip and seemed to experience a great deal of self-awareness and personal growth between the two adventures. As this was his second trip his priorities for going had radically shifted from the allure of travel to the commitment to the mission and vision of the experience. He concluded that this trip would equip him with a degree of personal growth that would challenge him beyond what he normally experienced. He begins to find discomfort gratifying, “yes, I feel like I had the confidence to try something new while I still hadn’t even adjusted to what I had just got myself into. I feel like strangely getting outside of my comfort zone in general just became more comfortable.” Rex was growing more comfortable in his own skin and his abilities to make decisions.

Over the past few months, Rex has been working in the kitchen of a popular local restaurant. He is one of the younger employees, but knows that his work ethic and his ability to produce is competitive with some of the seasoned employees. His words below represent his growing confidence and value in himself. His internal voice emerges as he purposefully advocates for himself when negotiating a pay raise,

Before this decision I was actually proud of myself because at least at work advocating for myself was kind of a new concept. Until now I just kind of kept my head down and survived and this time around I said I deserve ten dollars an hour; I am, in my opinion, your best worker and that idea was solidified by Travis saying that he didn’t want to lose me to Home Depot so he would make a counter offer. I was proud of myself for advocating for myself whereas now I should still advocate for myself, just for the right things.
Further reflection of the trip garnered some insight into Rex’s identity as an artist. Rex had the opportunity to teach art and drawing on both of the international trips he attended. He still keeps a picture created by a student from the first trip. He is inspired by their creativity and looks to their example to shape his artistic identity,

I’d say it’s definitely improved at least my drive to create because I usually get so bogged down in the minutiae of what I’m trying to make when I start a new project. I see these kids just pick up art supplies and make whatever they want to in a matter of minutes and it reminds me that sometimes it’s nice to just go as an artist and not plan so much but just create like they do.

Victoria also ventured into an international service learning experience for a second time. Initially, Victoria seems to struggle finding her internal voice and exercising confidence in her thoughts and actions. At the last minute, just prior to leaving on the trip, the Nicaraguan hosts contacted the student group with a project request. The young ladies and women in the town wanted classes in applying makeup. Victoria was thrilled at this idea because this is an area she has a deep personal interest. She often experiments with her own makeup and hones her self-taught skills with YouTube videos and tutorials. Victoria understood immediately the power that the makeup could have on the self-esteem of the females of the town. She also found that leading the experience empowered her and begins to strengthen her view of herself, even with some lingering doubts,

I always feel like I doubt myself and that I’m not capable of doing certain things, but if I can go to Nicaragua and do four days of makeup with a zip lock bag of random stuff that people brought and still make it work, I feel like I could probably do pretty much anything. I still… I would like to believe that myself and trust in myself that that’s possible. I would like to be able to say yes, I know I can do everything and believe in that but I still doubt myself; I can do anything, but I just can’t really believe I’m capable, even though I know I did it.

Victoria found herself in new territory with one of the roles she embraced on the trip.
She naturally rose a leader within the group with her experience and the ease in which she related to the other students. She initially rejected the notion of identity as a leader,

I wouldn’t say I was like the leader but I had everybody bring me their ideas and we kind of sorted through them. I was kind of like the... I don’t know what the right word is for that. Like we all came back with ideas and I’m kind of the one that went over like ok, what do you guys think of this? The mediator? I don’t know. I was kind of like what do you guys think of this and they were all ok... What do you guys think of this, and brought everything together in a way. But everybody brought their own thing to the table and I just kind of helped make it mesh well so that it was one cohesive thing that we had a plan to do. I did say I was not the leader but they brought everything to me and I made it work so that's pretty much what a freaking leader does. [Laugh] I guess I don’t really see myself as a leader and maybe that's part of where I second guess myself and I doubt what I do because I don’t think I have the capabilities to be a good leader, but I probably do.

Victoria reflects on her personal life and begins to recognize that her internal voice is emerging with some of her decisions. She describes that prior to the trip she was more inclined to overthink situations and was hesitant to venture out and do things she wanted to do. In Nicaragua, Victoria faced her fears of swimming in the ocean. She was empowered by overcoming her fear and brought the courage she exercised on the trip back with her. She finds that it is fueling her decisions in her personal life and helping shape how she views herself. She is encountered some dissonance,

I guess the thing with the water, like realizing that I have to change. I always think that the way I am is fine, but I know now that there are things that I can change and I should change to make myself a better... Not just make myself a better person but that would make things better for my family and things.

Victoria is increasingly gaining confidence in who she is,

I guess I’m realizing instead of saying, “I’m going to do this; I’m going to do that,” that I should actually do it. Yeah, trying to be like... The thing I do is I overthink everything and I'll sit there and in my head... My head goes like four hundred miles an hour and I'll run through all the different scenarios of all the different things that can happen, but instead I'm just
like no, I’m just going to do it; just do it; stop thinking about it. Just do it; either do it or don’t do it.

She describes how she had purposefully made some changes in how she approaches things, she begins to flex that internal voice,

stop thinking. That’s something that before, sometimes, I’d make that impulse decision… I’m trying to be more now like don’t overthink stuff, just be open and just go for it and whatever my first thought is, yeah, we’re doing this. If there’s something I want to do I just do it. If there’s something I want to get I get it. If there’s something I feel I need to say I just say it, and that’s something before I would sit there and think about it and stress myself out over it and then I would just bottle it up and forget about it, whereas now if my husband is doing something I’m like, “You need to stop because you’re being a dick right now and it’s pissing me off.” Before I would just sit there and bottle it up and ignore it. [Laugh]

Lorde was also another member of the trip who had traveled to Haiti in 2015. Lorde was deeply impacted by her first trip and found that teaching in other countries was something she would continue to pursue. Lorde was a natural leader within the group and exhibited the confidence of a seasoned educator on her first trip. The happiness she draws from the trip feeds her on a happiness level. Her internal voice is quite progressed as her focus on the trip is the reciprocal happiness between her and the students she teaches. She also conveys a confidence as a practitioner as she is confident the students have learned and will continue to build upon what she has taught them.

But it’s definitely making me feel like I’m doing something. I felt that in Haiti too but with the little kids you can just see it so much more with them. It’s impacting me because it makes me feel like I’m doing something for them but they’re also making me so happy. They don’t know that, but it’s making me feel accomplished and it’s making me feel things I am teaching them they’ll remember and they’ll continue to build on the stuff that they learned. It definitely made me happy. So it definitely impacts me that way and I’m happy to be there and I feel like I’m making a difference in their life but they’re also making a difference in mine
Lorde also exhibits growing confidence in her identity as a teacher. She is able to recognize that the skill of teaching is more about the art teaching and less about the supplies typically needed in American classrooms.

I definitely think that it makes you appreciate what you have a little bit more, but it also helped me realize that they were doing all this stuff with the minimum compared to what we have, especially in the classroom and stuff, so while I was teaching I didn’t have anything like I have here, like computers and stuff, so it definitely made me realize that even though I’m used to having all this stuff that I don’t need it; that I could survive without it. So I think that’s really how it helped me grow as a person and it made me realize that even though I am used to having all this stuff that there’s things that I went without there and I survived just fine. So I definitely… that made me realize things that I think I need that I don’t really have to have them all the time.

Interpersonal

The interpersonal dimension addresses how we are in relationships. Through the cultivation of relationships, we determine expectations we have of others and how we understand and respond to expectations others have of us within our relationships. The interpersonal dimension is guided by the question, how are we in relationships?

This dimension is not so much about the relationships students built on the trip, as the longevity of those relationships may not extend beyond the duration of the trip, but rather the student determining how they are in the relationships they have built that are in their daily circles.

The inception of Tripoli’s internal voice was represented in the epistemological and intrapersonal dimensions. Through her awareness of her shaping identity as a result of the experience, she addressed how she typically functions in relationships; she recognizes how she wants to change,

yeah, even with friends I used to be more like you make all the decisions, which I’m still working on, but I am more like ok, I want to do this because it would be pretty annoying to try to be friends with someone that never
knows what they want and so I’m like ok, I feel bad for you, friend; I’m going to give you an answer this time so that you don’t have to sit there and be like why do I have to make all the decisions all the time?

Deja describes herself within relationships and in times of conflict. She questions her actions and decisions when trying times emerge in working relationships. Her internal voice may drown out with the external foundations.

So my confliction is I don’t want to talk bad about anybody; I don’t. I think that’s where, even on the trip, I felt conflicted…navigating those situations, because how you handle those situations, if you know how to handle them, really determines later on what you can go through with that person and how you can work with that person. That’s the thing; for me what I constantly look at, what did I do; what could I have done differently that would have changed this situation? You just kind of see it sometimes and it goes back to what we talk about, building up that culture and making those connections; wanting to do the right thing with them.

This experience also provided Deja with a separation from her family. She and her mother live together and there is a tight family bond. She drew empowerment from her time apart and begins to desire some separation to grow. Her internal voice begins to emerge as she is beginning to define what she would like from familial relationships.

Yeah, I feel like it came back a little bit different. Just the experience, just knowing I could do it, knowing that I made it in one piece and didn’t die and catch Zika, there was no volcanic…I was away from my family; that’s the biggest thing. That’s the biggest thing for me is like I love you guys but if I could just have thirty feet…That was nice; that’s a confidence booster.

Capri reflected on the impact the trip had on her relationships and her personal growth impacted her expectations of herself and of others in her relationships. Her internal voice emerges here,

just being more confident and more vocal. I think I used to be the person who would just sit down and do what they were told without giving any input or being too shy to put forth any ideas and never taking any lead in anything, but now I do that more often in my relationships with people. Instead of them telling me what to do, like to contribute if I do this… I like this for it, or I’d like this done as well. It’s not so much me just sitting there and I feel like I don’t have a say. I contribute now.
Victoria describes how the trip has impacted her relationships with the students she serves at the college. Prior to the trip she felt as if she had to hold back and not be as open with students she helps. Her self-awareness and growing confidence in her identity has shaped her role in relationships and she begins to identify what she wants to bring to relationships; she is growing more comfortable in her own skin.

I feel like I’m more myself. I kind of feel like before I had this work persona and then my real persona and I would separate the two, but I feel like now because I don’t overthink things as much I’m more of myself. I think that’s why I’ve had more students be more open with me and have more of a connection with them. Like the homeless student who comes back and sees me, the only reason is because he was wearing a Pokémon shirt and I was like, “Omigod, I love your shirt,” and normally at work that’s not something I would have done because I have my fake work persona, because I had to be like all customer service and proper and I overthought everything and thought about every word that I said.

The trip has helped her to view herself in terms of relationships, and to allow her personal identity to come through in her professional identity. “I had a student who came in – he’s from Haiti – and as soon as I saw he was from Haiti I was like, “Omigod, what part of Haiti are you from? I went there two years ago and I taught English,” and he comes back and sees me."

Victoria begins to change her perspective on relationships in the workplace and how she can maintain professionalism, but still make connections with those around her,

He told me he used to be the mayor of his little city and he’s here now getting a degree in business because he wants to go back to Haiti and he wants to open a business and he wants to help other Haitians open businesses. I started to get a little emotional when he was telling me all this stuff because that was one thing I remember from Haiti was how passionate the people were about Haiti. I told him I’d been to Haiti and what I did and he was so excited to talk to me about his time there and growing up there. That’s not something I would have done normally; I wouldn’t have said, “Oh, I’ve been to Haiti!” I would have just been like, “Oh, you’re from Haiti?” typed it into the computer and gone on to the next
thing. So I think it’s definitely made a difference in how I treat students that come into my work that I have to help. Yeah, I definitely feel like I’m more real with them than I was before.

This experience challenged Constance to reflect on her role in relationships and in particular how she responds to conflict. Her experience on the trip as she phrases it, “as the older student” gave her the perspective of the benefits of life experience. Her internal voice is somewhat developed in this area as she is confident to address situations and explain her point of view, but still remains open to diverse points of view,

Sometimes I’m not very diplomatic; I tend to just get to the point and say it and sometimes I try to soften that as much as I can but sometimes it just doesn’t work that way. So having I would say a mild disagreement about how things will work, presented or not presented or anything like that… Sometimes there’s those who have more experience might know better but I can get it wrong, and that’s been known to happen.

Interestingly, she begins to almost think aloud about her role in relationships with conflict,

I can be wrong; I can accept when I’m wrong; it’s not a problem. I don’t even know how to describe it; I just don’t want to be offensive but I want to be helpful. If I see something that looks like it might not work… But then again who am I to say that it’s not going to work? I don’t want to be negative Nancy about everything but I don’t want to be like… I’m a realist; I don’t want to be super positive and I don’t want to be negative if I can help it. We know this is this and we know this is this; now we need to figure out how it’s going to work and how we’re going to deal with it.

The epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions are comprised within the journey to self-authorship. The journey is invoked and advanced by movement in all dimensions. Paramount within the journey is the inception, emergence, and fruition of one’s internal voice. Research question one, asked how does participation in an international service learning experience impact a community college student’s self-authorship? The journey to self-authorship is an internal one and one that typically takes place over decades; however, developmentally effective experiences in
college can contribute to a student’s self-authorship; this occurs when students incur change of their meaning making orientation as a result of the experience (King et al., 2009). The participants in the study each conveyed at least the inception of their internal voice within at least one or more of the dimensions. This begins or continues each student’s journey. Through interviews and reflection students provided insight that illuminated the evolution of the internal voice.

**Research Question Two: What Components or Experiences of the Trip Contributed to Self-Authorship?**

Question one of the study sought to answer if the overall experience of an international service learning trip contributed to a community college students’ self-authorship. Findings were presented by epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimension by analyzing the testimonial experiences of the seven students who attended the service learning course and the trip to Nicaragua. The findings for question two will be presented by experience and then linked to dimension. Question two sought to determine specifically which experiences within the trip represented contributions to self-authorship development. This information can inform future expeditions about which student specific experiences should be included in a service learning experience to forward self-authorship development. While question one contributed to the determination of the impact of the experience on self-authorship development, question two provided insight into which tangible experiences were contributory to the development.
Table 4-3. Participants' Initial Stories and Decisions

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**Students positioned as contributors of knowledge**

All of the students in the study were responsible for participating in a group to teach the students or adults. Each group had a lesson plan for their particular subject or task and each college student had a role to serve within their group. The groups taught: survival swimming, English, first-aid, journaling, art, and cosmetology. The students in the stories emerged as contributors of knowledge and described their experiences with the local students and adults within the teaching experiences. Their experiences as contributors of knowledge are then connected to the respective self-authorship domain as their internal voices emerge.

In the last interview for the study, Rex was asked about his perception of the experiential component of the trip. Having now completed two of these experiences, he was asked to compare this college course experience to his other college course experiences. His articulation conveys the value he places on experiences such as these, and his surprise at how this experience garnered such a different and impactful result. He described, “whereas outside the classroom it was more a selfless…In Nicaragua for the first time I felt like the goal wasn’t just to gain knowledge or just a grade. There was an end goal that we wanted and effect outside our group. I felt like that was a first.” He begins to understand the impact his teaching role has in the overall experience. His contribution of knowledge to the students impacts his epistemological
domain by his overall understanding of the experience. Rex is further impacted after he teaches English to the local children. In an epiphanic way he finds deep value in the experience due to his observations of the children learning. He believes through this experience that the mission of the trip is embodied.

I noticed some of the kids were guessing or actually trying their hardest for the candy whereas there was a table right up front with three girls and they seemed to be less interested in the candy and more just learning English and that seemed to stand out when I think of the trip. That was one of the few moments that encapsulated the whole meaning of the trip at one time.

Rex's internal voice emerges as he works to define his identity from the teaching experience with the local students. He ponders where his life is going and how he will hone in on his direction. At just 19 years old, Rex is looking to find the answers to what he will do with his life, although he expresses frustration, the experience has not deterred his drive and he is ultimately encouraged. His internal voice emerges and he offers insight on his developing beliefs,

I want to put my efforts toward where they’re needed most and right now where I am just doing a part time job and finishing school it’s easy to see I’m doing what I should be doing but when I’m thinking about after that stage in my life where I should be going, it just seems there’s so many options and none of them seem to be clearly the best one. It definitely encourages me; I need to finish this part of my life and get to that part of my life. It is frustrating trying to find out what to do when I get there, but it hasn’t decreased my drive to get there at all.”

Capri led the group that taught journaling to the local high school students. Capri has always been drawn back to teaching after pursuing other interests, “I went to the medical technology but I never felt so strongly as being an educator.” Teaching the local high school children provided insight into Capri’s teaching identity coupled with the discovery a passion she had not previously identified, “I’m likable... [Laugh] I know what type of teacher… not a strict teacher, but people can talk to about anything. I could
make any dull project seem really cool and fun and feel like they’re actually investing in it themselves and they’re not being told what to do.” She acquires some new beliefs about herself and her abilities, “I’ll be a good teacher; a likable…One that can connect with their students while also helping them learn their skill and find what they want to do and what they want to be. At the same time, I was finding a passion that I didn’t know was there.” Teaching the journal writing has cemented her beliefs and confidence in her decision to pursue education. She also drew personal growth and confidence from the teaching experience, “it made me grow as a person definitely to become more vocal and helped me probably speaking a lot especially because I would talk too fast or there’s always that language [inaudible] because my accent is really thick sometimes.” Capri’s internal voice begins to emerge as she draws confidence and begins to trust herself and the decision she has made to pursue teaching.

Victoria was impacted by several aspects of the trip. She led a workshop, swam in the ocean for the first time, and confronted a difficult situation with a classmate. All of these experiences convey Victoria’s internal voice developing and she seems to grow increasingly confident due to her experiences.

The women in the Nicaraguan town do not have the resources to buy and learn about makeup. At the urging of the Nicaraguan hosts, Victoria led a makeup workshop for the local females. Many of the college students wondered about this workshop and questioned the place it had within the program. Victoria was all in from the moment she heard about the opportunity. She was struck by how excited they were and could tell how the makeup impacted their self-esteem. Victoria drew on her own identity and how she views the power of makeup in her own life; she felt a responsibility to share this with
the local women. This experience empowered Victoria within her self-esteem and how she views herself and others,

    When I do my makeup I put makeup on and I think about how it’s something so simple but it makes me feel like a different person and how something like that, when I put that blush on her and I was like holy cow, that blush looks amazing on you, and I was just taken. That stuff was made for you. Some people think it’s silly; some people think makeup is stupid and it’s silly, but something so simple can just make somebody feel like a better person.

Victoria’s description of her relationship with makeup and the exchange she had with one of her students may at first glance read superficially. Her experience teaching the girls and the women of the town to put on makeup allows her to experience the power of makeup on a female’s self-esteem. She is struck by her new knowledge and begins to develop a deeper understanding of how simple things can change a person’s perspective about others and themselves. She describes the culmination of the classes and how the ladies and girls all came together for a photo,

    They just had a beam; they all looked so happy and so confident with what little makeup we had to put on them. That made me really proud because I do my own makeup and I don’t think I do a phenomenal job but I do a pretty good job, but to see how something so simple like some eyeshadow can make somebody feel like they’re a better person or a different person, I was pretty proud of myself that I helped them do that."

Constance returned to school after a career in medicine to pursue teaching. She recently began her first teaching job in a local charter school. Constance experiences some personal growth with regard to the pride she has in herself due to the response to the first aid class she taught.

    I was kind of shocked when the teachers really liked us being there and they really liked the different things that we did and she said something about the first aid class that I did and I was like, ok. She said they really liked it; they really enjoyed it. They want to do more and I was like oh, ok, good. I was proud that I survived the week without too much trouble.
When probed further about how she felt about the feedback, she admitted that it positively affected her, “It made me feel good. I was a little surprised. I don’t know why but I’m not… I’m just not… that’s not me; I do what I do because I want to do it and I like to do it but I’m not one of those people that needs recognition for everything that I do.”

**Students positioned in leadership roles**

A few of the students on the trip emerged as leaders within their groups. Some instinctively took on the title, while some struggled with embracing the role and title. In the stories below students share their views on their leadership positions on the trip.

Capri was most impacted by her role in leading the journaling project. She worked to overcome some initial pushback about the project and finds that her confidence has grown “literally leading that classroom to do the journaling project. I’ve never been in any type of leadership position. I’ve always been the one to do as their told or like never really contribute other than what’s expected of me.” The challenge of taking that role and teaching the students has deeply affected her, “but through the whole journaling thing, speaking in front of people that don’t even speak English as well as trying to communicate with them and learn who they are as a person, that was my biggest takeaway.” She interprets her ability to lead and teach as a manifestation of her alter ego, “that’s something I look back and yeah. When I was there I wasn’t Capri; I was my alter ego or something like that…” Her internal voice is at play as she determined it was something she can do and still feels the impact of that experience.

This was Victoria’s second international service learning trip. Victoria struggled on her first trip and even admitted that she was quite afraid when she was in Haiti. Victoria encountered a different experience in Nicaragua and emerges as a leader among this group of students.
In the interview, Victoria reflects on the interviewer qualifying her description of her role as leadership, “yeah, because I was the one that everybody… We brought everything together and made it work and I was the one that meshed it all together into a doable thing and everybody was able to go and do what they intended to do. “She is still reluctant to fully embrace the title, but seems to warm up to the idea that she in fact functioned as the leader of the group. She begins to view her identity within that lens, I mean, yeah, when you put it that way… Yeah, I guess when you put it that way it’s kind of hard to argue with the fact that I was a leader and it was successful because everybody did what they set out to do. I guess I just don’t see myself… I see myself usually as more of a follower. Maybe that’s how I used to be and I’ve just become a leader and I just haven’t realized it yet. So yeah.

Deja also had the opportunity to emerge as a leader. Deja spoke beginning Spanish while the rest of the group had very limited Spanish speaking skills. Deja’s family is Hispanic and she had an interest in practicing the language while she was in country. Deja was called upon by the group to serve as the lead translator when the group taught swimming to the kindergartners. She described this experience as stepping out of her own shadow, and even though she was nervous she counts it as a successful moment on the trip, being forced into a situation where I was the leader. When our professor wasn’t there, they were like hey, we’re going to need you and depend on you for translating. I wasn’t great but I did it. I get scared being in leadership roles because I always feel like…I’m always afraid to fail, so if I feel like people are frustrated with me I usually pull back.

Capri, Victoria, and Deja eventually embraced their roles as leaders, predominantly through reflection. They described how their intrapersonal dimension is affected as they identified as leaders within the group.
Lorde was the most natural leader of the group. She had attended a service learning trip to Haiti the year before and led one of the groups that taught English to the local children and adults in Haiti. Lorde had also been hired as a third grade teacher right before she left for Nicaragua. Consistent with Lorde’s reason for the trip, she explained how leading the group contributed to her happiness and she appreciated the opportunity to encourage the newcomers to confidently join in the group activities, “as far as the teaching-wise I did take lead in planning what we were doing and organizing all of that stuff, but I also really tried… I don’t know if this is considered overall, but I tried to make people that hadn’t done it before more comfortable.” She would assist and then take a backseat, “I know they basically looked to me for what to do as far as leading them, but once they started teaching I stepped back a lot. Rex did his art thing and he was nervous at first but I was just like go for it, just do it.” She exhibits some traits representative of a seasoned leader, “so originally my role was to organize everything and I did help organize everything, but once I actually got there my role was really to just step back and facilitate because they knew what they were teaching, they were passionate about it, so I was just there to help them if they needed it.”

**Students exposed to unsheltered experiences within country and culture**

While the majority of the trip was scheduled and planned, students were impacted by the experiences that were not planned or perhaps not labeled as academic. Victoria had an impromptu encounter with a classmate where she relied on her internal voice to guide her actions. She was conflicted when she was with another classmate and the classmate wanted to veer off of the beaten path when the group was walking toward an extracurricular activity. The group had been advised to never venture off alone, “we were walking to the yoga shack on the beach and she wanted to go off
course and do something and I was kind of conflicted. I wasn’t really conflicted if we should go; I definitely said no, we should not be going and doing this.” Victoria was conflicted but ultimately decided the best course of action was to speak with a faculty member. “I was a little conflicted about that but I felt like saying something was the right decision just so everybody there was aware of and knew what was kind of going on.” When asked if she felt like she made the right decision, she recounted that she did, “I felt like I made the right decision because I had been worried like what if I didn’t say anything and she ended up going off and nobody knew that she had already tried to do that, so I felt like I made the right decision, yeah, doing the right thing.” Victoria’s internal voice emerges and she forgoes old habits of going with the flow and now trusts herself to make hard decisions.

Rex’s reflection of the trip has stirred up some conflict and confusion. As he spent some time surfing and engaging with the culture on his own time; he is faced with a conundrum. He may have embarked upon a crossroads as he is at odds with his takeaways. He predicted the trip would produce clarity for his future; he is confused as it did not determine his future, but produced more options and questions. His exposure to a different culture has produced some dissonance regarding his future. He wrestles with what he will do with his future and challenges his identity in relation to the intrapersonal dimension. Rex explains his surprise with his newly found insight,

yes, there has definitely been an impact; it just wasn’t the one I thought it would be. I like to think that when I have new experiences that reflecting on those new experiences might clarify some things that didn’t seem clear before, but it just seemed to make things more confusing… being exposed to new things…

Cognitively, Rex is discovering new knowledge that is helping him define who he is, and want he wants to pursue in his life.
I just like seeing other cultures and other problems outside of what I would see in daily life. When I think about what I should put my time and energy towards it just seems like there’s more options now and it just seems to kind of muddy the waters. I do feel like I was slightly more confident in general during and before the trip; things seemed clearer then. Now it’s, like I said, a little bit muddier. I wouldn’t call it a negative change really, just a change.

Students were divided into groups by project before they leave on the trip. Students are given a great deal of autonomy once projects are approved by the faculty member. Everyone has their projects and tasked and they are expected to execute on their own. They work in tandem with their group members and seek advice from faculty if needed. Students had to deal with the “unscheduled” aspects of the trip. Every day the itinerary changed and students were faced with making last minute adjustments to their plans or in some cases overhauling their original plans entirely. Deja talked about how she had to figure out navigating her role in Nicaragua and learning to “roll” with the changes; she struggles with her lack of experience in the classroom and being immersed in this new setting. Prior to the trip she sees herself as spontaneous and flexible, but in this situation she works to come to terms with how she functions in this new environment, “being here in the classroom to finally getting there with the projects impacted me. I kind of was worried before we got there and started doing.” She describes how she had to make changes from the original plan crafted before the trip, “half of that went out the window, and we just kind of rolled with it when we were there. That’s something that I have to learn how to do better, rolling with it…have I prepared enough in my mind for this circumstance?” She questioned her spontaneity in this environment, “I think sometimes I get a little bit kind of, can I roll with this? Do I know enough?” Her discomfort allows for some introspection to set the stage for that eventual emergence of her internal voice to guide her through uncomfortable situations.
Living so close the ocean, it was surprising to learn that Victoria has a deep fear of the water. With the assistance and encouragement of one of the professors, Victoria learned to body surf. She recounted the experience often throughout the interviews and talked about how bodysurfing has changed her attitude about the choices she makes in life. Again, Victoria is learning to trust her internal voice and find her identity. She makes strides in the intrapersonal domain. Her impromptu decision to go into the ocean produced a new outlook on her life,

well more than anything was to be open; to be open to new experiences, to not be afraid to try stuff. I've always been afraid to go in the water, like in the ocean. I won't go out past my knees, maybe my waist if I'm feeling really adventurous. It's just not something I do, but I did in Nicaragua and I had fun. I enjoyed it and it made me really want to learn how to swim so I didn't have to be scared to do something that I might like or that would be fun. I'm in another country; I'm going to try everything I can, but why would I only do that in another country? I should do that when I'm home too.

The experience has empowered her to put the adventurous side of herself she discovered in Nicaragua into practice once she returned home,

since I've been back I've been trying new foods, I've been cooking new stuff and trying different things to do like hobbies. I'm trying not to be just like I'm in another country and I'm going to do all this new stuff and it's going to be awesome then go home and do the exact same thing every frigging day like I always do. That's like one big thing that I got from all of those experiences because it was all new stuff to me. Teaching a makeup class, I would have never thought that I would be able to teach a makeup class for an hour, let alone for four days. That was kind of crazy and I did it, you know? I was probably making half the shit up but I did it.

**Students assigned to groups for projects**

Every student on the trip was part of a project group. Groups were responsible for teaching swimming, first aid, English, art, or journaling. Students chose their groups and topics at the first live class at the college and used the subsequent weeks to flesh
out their plans. The students encountered various personal experiences within their roles in the groups.

Tripoli described herself from the beginning as someone who preferred to stay out of the limelight and work on her own. Her original task was to document the trip through photos and video. She describes her role within the group, “I see myself more in the background documenting.” Although she desires to work in the background, all of the projects were designed for the students to work in groups. Through this experience she had to work in conjunction with other members. Her attitude shifted about group experiences and her function within the group began to change as the days progressed, she begins to find her identity within the group. She shared,

also with group experiences I still kind of pull back sometimes but the other people will help you…they pull you in. They ask for your help and your input and so it’s easier when they ask for your input to give it and then they give your input so then you get more information. It is easy to be by myself kind of but it’s a lot easier to be with other people.

Tripoli begins to view her role and the roles of others in a different light. She begins to embrace the benefit of working within a group; therefore, she looks at the relationships within the group as a positive.

Rex reflected on the group projects and his involvement. As the schedule produced so many challenges the students had to quickly adapt and choose flexibility or frustration “I’m learning more about how I can work with a group and adapt to changing circumstances.” His work within the group also challenges him to view the world around him in a different light. One of his original predications of his takeaways from the trip was gaining empathy. In Rex’s post trip interviews, he confirms that the projects indeed impacted his empathy and he regards this as an aspect of his personal growth and identity, “just gaining empathy as opposed to just sympathy for those who live in third
world conditions and learning about the world around my home so that I can better make decisions about how to change my home and the world around it.”

Capri describes her evolution with group work and how she viewed her identity within. She transitions from only seeing her contribution to seeing the contributions of others.

Well before I went on this trip I was not good… well I was ok when it came to teamwork; I was always just a go with the flow type of person and never really put in my own opinion; if I contributed I was only just doing my part but not doing my part actively, but on this trip I had to actively work with other people to see that their passions can be done as well and whatever they wanted to do with the students can be done. It wasn’t a one-man ship; it was a group ship.

Capri talks more about the group dynamic and what it brings to one’s life and experiences. She talks about the importance of learning to work within a group dynamic.

In the real world you’re not going to be able to choose who you work with or choose who you want to be part of your team; you’re going to have to learn how to work with everybody and people you don’t like. They drill that in your head here. So working with others in that case… I learned how to talk and listen to other people’s opinions and ideas and to put them into consideration with mine, and I also learned how to accept criticism. Not necessarily criticism but if I came up with an idea or plan and other people pointed out flaws and actually fixing them instead of throwing them out.

Victoria’s work within her group gave her an appreciation for the relationships she built. Even though she was with the group for a short time she is confident about the strength in the relationships she built on the trip. She maintains contact with her classmates. Her interactions and the long term affect has impacted her interpersonal domain.

What do I value the most? I would say the friendships I made…You know it’s hard when you get back to your real life and into reality to keep that going, but I still feel like if ever I message them or whatever and say hey, can we hang out, they’d be like yeah, let’s do it. But you just kind of get back into your routine and you kind of forget because they have their own
lives and they have their own friends back here. I'll never forget I made those connections with pretty much everybody that was on the trip.

Capri’s experience made her realize the power she can draw from working in groups. She claims that prior to the trip she wasn’t inclined to interact with others. “I wasn’t very social… yes, I’m not very social, but meeting these people encouraging me and sometimes when I didn’t think things would work out or be too much of a risk they always had my back.” She seemed surprised at the support her classmates offered her during the experience, “that was something that really shocked me because when growing up you had to fend for yourself or support yourself if nobody else is there for you.” When she encountered some challenges on the trip her classmates quickly came to her aid and encouraged her, “they were there and that was really awesome to know that there are people out there… They can be complete strangers; you can know them for a week and you can become really good friends with them and people that shared these thoughts and emotions, It's amazing.” Interpersonally her internal voice emerges to allow her to trust others in situations.

**Students encouraged to interact with people within country and culture**

Students’ spontaneous interactions with the people and hosts proved lasting effects on the college students. Rex’s interactions with the in country hosts of the group helps him garner more information about how he views the world in order to find his place in it. Rex found value in the information about the area he would visit. His interaction with the hosts of the trip allowed him to ask questions about the sustainability of resources and the needs of the community. He reflects on the value of the experience and the first-hand information it has provided. Rex contributes to his cognitive growth by adding to his knowledge base.
As a student who is studying a subject that... I’m studying environmental sciences and chemical engineering to try to improve the world around me and tackle my generation’s biggest problems, and as a student I need to see how best to do that, so seeing how the rest of the world lives...

Victoria’s experiences within a new culture has helped her change her mind set about how she views those around her. She describes her growth and feels that the experience with the locals and the hosts has changed her, “yeah, I think it did. Like I mentioned earlier not making snap judgements about people, being more open to new things. I really think that has made me a better person because people like to say they are one way but you have to actually do it, too.” She elaborates more and thinks about her job at the college and her interaction with students,

it’s really hard for when students come in and I have to help them and I have to explain stuff to them. They might be in a bad mood because they’ve already talked to somebody and they’ve already had a bad experience which happens a lot, and they’re already frustrated and I have to kind of take a step back and say I don’t know this person. I have to put myself in their shoes and just try to fix it and make them feel better and not just assume that they’re a bad person and they’re lying to me because I don’t know them.

Victoria credits the trip with providing her with expanding her views in terms of the diversity of others,

I have to put all of that aside and use my customer service smile and make everything right and that’s something that I think that this trip, with the diversity of people that were there, has really helped me do a better job.

The students in the study demonstrated movement toward self-authorship development through specific types of experiences within the trip. Teaching in groups allowed students so serve as contributors of knowledge. Leading and working in groups challenged students to view their identities differently and to also value the contributions and support of their colleagues. Finally, unsheltered experiences and interaction with
Research Question Three: What are the Predominant Takeaways for Community College Students Who Participate in an International Service Learning Trip?

Question three is presented in terms of the participants' stories after the experience. Each student had purpose and goals for themselves when they joined the program. Primary themes emerged from their testimonials and many of the themes are consistent with the benefits of service learning presented in literature. Themes that emerged included: confidence, cultural competency, appreciation, pride, career/skill affirmation and acquisition, discomfort, and empathy. Themes are not representative of all participants, but each theme represents at least several members.

Tripoli would not have chosen this service learning experience had it not been for her boyfriend and her father. She was quite hesitant to go even with encouragement, “I was just afraid of being in this completely new world.”

She admits that she lacked the confidence to go, and she did not know anyone. Her personal goals for the trip were to grow personally and to help others. She believes in the importance of educating yourself to be able to contribute, “you have to learn and you have to know and you experience and you understand what others need and how to help them, and I think if you get more experience with that you can do it anywhere in any situation.” The experience has challenged Tripoli to expand her thinking, when asked about her personal growth she explains, “just being more open minded and more willing to help other people no matter really what the circumstances.” She admits that she was hesitant about the experience as a whole, “I wasn’t really entirely sure if it was something I was into before we went, but afterward I want to keep doing it. I just want to
help people now.” She was impacted by the people of the country and compares their attitudes to the people from home, “I know that they seemed mostly like high spirited even in the conditions that they lived in and no one was directly rude to any of us and it was nice just not having people be rude to you all the time. I liked that.”

The experience has helped to draw Tripoli out of her shell; this was actualization of one of her goals for the trip. Since her return, she mustered the courage to apply for a customer service job, and was hired,

At first I was going to try to work at a library where I didn’t really have to talk to many people, but… I guess because Publix will help me with those skills. Anywhere in life you need to know how to be polite to anyone you meet and if you meet a bunch of people and have to constantly be nice it will be more programmed in you. For example, my friend that works there, now she says, “Have a nice day,” and everything to pretty much everyone. That’s just a nice gesture, and me, I’m kind of like, Don’t look at me.

The experience has increased her confidence and given her more of a sense of herself. She is now contemplating teaching as a career option, this was not a consideration for her prior to the program,

but I’m growing more confident and I can do it. It is definitely giving me more insight as to career… I guess my desired career. I’ve never really considered working with children and now I can make an educated decision on a career in education and also I do like to have experience with the world around us. As one of my teachers used to say, “We don’t live in a bubble,” and it’s nice to know what the standard of living is around the U.S.

Tripoli also shared that she has increased appreciation for what she has,

I definitely learned to appreciate the things that we do have more. Like at my house I have boxes of crayons; I don’t really care, but the kids, they didn’t really have crayons before so they really enjoyed them. I think enjoying things that you have is, you know, a must. If you don’t enjoy what you do have then you might as well just give it to someone that will enjoy it.
Tripoli talked about her multiple takeaways over the course of the four interviews. This six-week course with a seven-day trip to Nicaragua increased her self-confidence, challenged her to think about different career options, and allowed her to become more appreciative of the things she has. Tripoli shared one last thought in the final interview, she was asked about the interviewing experience, she experienced a shift in how she went about answering the questions from the first interview to the last, “I'm trying not to say what I think I should. This time I feel like I've probably been even more honest, so I think that the interviews have kind of made me just be like she needs to know what I'm thinking, not what I'm supposed to say. “Tripoli’s self-confidence has increased and she trusts herself.

Deja’s first international service learning trip proved to be a solid choice for her. Deja’s goals included: preparing for her chosen teaching career, helping others, and growing personally. She describes how she felt fulfilled from the experience, “each day going by, having it filled up with things that you knew were helping and you felt like you were doing something at the end of the day…and they appreciated you just being there. That’s the fulfilling part.” She also shared that she struggles to get her nerves under control when working with students and how she really embraced the opportunity to teach the children in Nicaragua, “I feel like it’s not the trip that completely changes me, it the opportunity to engage; the opportunity to see it and the opportunity to repeat the process that helps me change and adapt and become better; I’ll probably be better now because I got a little experience. “Deja explains that through her Bachelor's program she was anxious about her abilities as a teacher, the trip has eased her mind a bit, “doing the Nicaragua trip was kind of one of those things that said ok, you need to start
believing in yourself a little more; just a little bit.” She describes herself post trip, “I feel like I’m a bit more confident; just a little bit. It’s more cemented in some areas, what I can do, and what I’m capable of and how I can figure this out.” Deja speaks about the empowerment she felt from the trip,

I can come back and I can tell people what have you don’t in your life? I helped a community in Nicaragua; something as silly as that. And that’s the thing; I want to be able to do more of that. This is kind of what I’d like to focus on; I’d like to focus on helping people.

Interestingly, Deja gains insight on how to navigate professional relationships. She describes herself as a light hearted individual, but has grown more cognizant of the importance of maintaining a level of professionalism with work relationships, “I realize that no matter what you should always keep your professionalism. When it comes to your job or co-workers if you make a friend that’s great, but even that friend is still a professional friend. “She also admits that the trip helped to bolster her confidence in herself and in her ability to be away from her family,

yeah, I feel like I came back a little bit different. Just the experience, just knowing I could do it, knowing that I made it in one piece and didn’t die and catch Zika, there was no volcanic…I was away from my family; that the biggest thing. That’s the biggest thing for me is like I love you guys but if I could just have 30 feet…That was nice; that’s a confidence booster

Capri ventured on this experience by happen stance. She initially saw flyers at the college and then kept running into advertisements for the trip, she classified it as a sign that she should go. In her first interview she shared that she hoped the trip would help solidify her career choice; she planned to be a high school math teacher. Capri also hoped the trip would help her grow personally. One of Capri’s biggest takeaways is her increased confidence, “but since being down there I’ve gained a lot of confidence, especially in myself and my capabilities. “She continues and explains how proud she
was of the work she did with the high school students, “I felt proud of myself when they actually understood what I wanted them to do and they actually were enjoying the whole journaling project. “Capri elaborates on her pride, “That was a proud moment because sometimes people don’t think their ideas are cool and they don’t listen to them, but actually completing the journal thing, I was proud of that.” Capri experienced a positive shift in her confidence level and also gained confidence toward her chosen profession, she talks about her identity as a teacher,

That I’m likable [inaudible] me. [Laugh] I know what type of teacher… not a strict teacher, but people can talk to about anything. I could make any dull project seem really cool and fun and feel like they’re actually investing in it themselves and they’re not being told what to do. As a teacher I really think I’ll be a good teacher; a likable… One that can connect with their students while also helping them learn their skill and find what they want to do and what they want to be.

She shifts her perspective and begins to think like a teacher and what she the knowledge she will share with her future students,

At the same time I was finding a passion that I didn’t know was there. I went to the medical technology but I never felt so strongly as being an educator. I think that will show students that even if life throws you a lemon… I don’t want to say make lemonade with it but there’s a lot of potential to be good things.

Capri expresses that trips like these can help students with the hard life decisions, such as career decisions, as it did for her.

If you’re not sure what you want to do career-wise or if you’re not sure what you’re good at go for the trip because it’s not just learning out how to be a good teacher it’s also learning who you are and strengths; nothing to do with weakness but finding what characteristics you have that you didn’t realize you had and also to develop those characteristics.

She also looks at her role on the trip as an important one, as a commitment she made not only to herself, but the group overall
But as for being put out of my comfort zone I would definitely say that definitely happened. When I had to go and lead the lessons I was never strong and public speaking or taking leadership for fulfilling a responsibility, such a big responsibility; it wasn’t small or slight, it was the promise that I made to myself as well as to the Teaching Beyond Borders.

One of Capri’s final takeaways was her feeling toward the people she served. She talked about the privilege that comes with living in the U.S. and how the people there share a happiness that is missing among more privileged individuals. “No if you swap the third world with the first world… You literally take them from America living there for X number of years and put into a third world country to live there, I don’t think we’d be happy; I don’t think we’d ever be satisfied with it.” She predicts that the Nicaraguans would rather live in their impoverished country, “We’d be mad and angry while them, I honestly believe that they would probably miss living in that sort of place.” Capri was asked how she arrived at this conclusion, why would people be satisfied with living with less, “Because theirs was such a closeness; they didn’t have fences up, everybody knew each other, they all knew their neighbors and in America it’s different. You have fences around your house, you don’t know all your neighbors, the streets aren’t safe for kids, whereas down there the kids all walk to school together.” She studied their habits while she was there and paid attention to the relationships they shared with each other, “they knew their neighbors, there weren’t no fences separating them. They had a very… they had a closeness about them. Some of that we lack in today’s society. It was authentic there; they generally cared for each other, genuinely happy for what they have.” She noticed how the Nicaraguans treated her and her classmates, she is humbled by their attitudes, they could have been jealous, they could have been angry or mean to us or think of us as privileged people whereas they welcomed us with open arms, invited us into their homes, knowing full well that our standard of
living is different and that we might even judge them for the way they live, but they still welcomed us with open arms. When you think about if these are the same people that came to America and go to schools like we do, I wonder would be so open to them coming... would we welcome them with open arms or would we look at them as below us?

Capri gains insight and some global perspective from the relationships the people had with each other and with the members of the group, “they viewed us as human beings; they don’t look at our statuses or what we had and that we’re doing much better than them, they looked at us as people they can genuinely care for.” She now seems to view privilege in a different light,

I want to say that they’re very privileged because even though they have less they’re still happy, content and thankful, whereas we have more and we’re still not happy. Should we feel sorry for them or should they feel sorry for us because we still complain about the little things but with the little things they have they make do and make more than with what they have.

One of Capri’s final thoughts had to do with the experience of interviewing, which produced the act of reflection, an important piece to a service learning trip.

Definitely a lot of reflection; it really makes me think about what I’ve been through and... I can talk to you about everything I’ve experienced without you actually your eyes glossing over, like, “Oh God, not this story again.” But it’s actually made me think in detail of everything instead of just being generic and actually reflect... Not just reflecting but doing a whole self-evaluation from then until now, and actually making me picture and see the actual growth that I’ve had. I remember our first interview I couldn’t answer not one question; I was so nervous. I was like, “What? What?” but now it’s like... I understand more. It’s been real.

Rex had a bit of veteran status as this was his second international service learning experience. He believed his second trip would further his contributions to the mission of the trip and help him to experience some growth personally. He was pleased that he ventured out and tried new things, working with children was one of the new things, “I guess just trying the new things that I did and I’ve never really had a history of
being good with children but I’m proud of myself for doing it anyway and doing it to the best of my ability, not doing anything half-assed if that’s alright to say.” He talks about his expectations versus the reality of working outside of his comfort zone, “I definitely expected work and being out of my comfort zone. We still worked; the work was more satisfying than a drain though and when we weren’t working we were definitely having fun, so it was brighter than I thought it would be.”

At home, Rex has worked as a beach life guard, he is an avid surfer and strong swimmer, but teaching 5 year olds who only speak Spanish further drew him out of his comfort zone, “yeah, I went out of my comfort zone and I’m glad I did it. Definitely trying to tell children to jump into the water with broken Spanish was something that took some courage from me and I guess just interactions with people in another language was fun and scary, which kind of contributed to the fun.” Rex finds that he is transferring that feeling of being out of his comfort zone to his life back in the states. He further described this feeling as, “yes, I feel like I had the confidence to try something new while I still hadn’t even adjusted to what I had just got myself into. I feel like strangely getting outside of my comfort zone in general just became more comfortable.”

He worked another job in a popular local restaurant as a dishwasher. He finds that he is looking for other challenges within his work. His confidence has increased and he looks for opportunities to be out of his comfort zone back at home, at work I started as a dishwasher which was a job that I’ve never had before and within the first couple weeks I picked up a few skills from the line cooks when I was still trying to learn how to do my job correctly. I’ve never made food professionally and I’ve made very little recreationally, but I just… I thought why not?

He capitalizes on his growing confidence by engaging in some self-promotion to receive a raise at work,
Before this decision I was actually proud of myself because at least at work advocating for myself was kind of a new concept. Until now I just kind of kept my head down and survived and this time around I said I deserve ten dollars an hour; I am, in my opinion, your best worker and that idea was solidified by the manager saying that he didn’t want to lose me to Home Depot so he would make a counter offer. I was proud of myself for advocating for myself whereas now I should still advocate for myself, just for the right things.

Some of his personal growth stems from how he has learned to purpose stress into a positive experience. He describes a challenge when he was teaching a lesson to the children, “I especially wanted that to feel right and of course not everything goes to plan. I feel like it definitely went well overall but any deviations from the plan did make me feel some sort of stress, but I feel like I used that stress more than I let it hinder me.”

Rex describes his value in the experience of teaching children and how teaching may be an option for him due to his experience teaching in other countries, “Yes, even though I had my first teaching experience in Haiti just getting another one of those under my belt, even if I don’t go into that career, I feel like there’s just something in there that I will get use out of and I do value that experience of teaching in the classroom.” When asked about the chance of him pursuing a teaching career he responds, “I will be honest, I’m not strongly considering it but it is now on the table whereas before it was not.”

One of Rex’s deepest takeaways was what he learned about the attitudes of the people he worked with in Nicaragua. He explains in through a picture he was asked to provide from the trip that captured the essence of the trip, it is a picture of children walking to school, he describes his choice, “I feel like a picture in or of the classroom would have summarized the trip more but that picture stood out to me the most because
one of the things that surprised me through the trip was how friendly the locals were with one another. Rex describes what he means,

I feel like that’s the kind of cohesiveness that we don’t have so much in our culture. We of course have friends in our classrooms but I saw surprisingly little conflict. It feels like the people in that country are friendly but it’s hard for me to transfer that to over here. I can’t just judge a whole group of people and say they’re all friendly. Of course there’s going to be exceptions that and exceptions here. I guess it’s hard to take that one back home with me. It just felt like it was so unique to…

Through the interviews, Rex was asked about his relationship with his dad, who he has now traveled with on the two international service learning trips. He reflects on how their relationship has evolved with the trips, “Being travel partners, I haven’t thought about this until now. I was still a student in his class, but I was just another member of the group like him, I guess it was the first time we felt more like-equals is a strange word to use, but just partners.” Rex explains how the interviews have challenged him to reflect, reflection is an important piece to the service learning experience.

Yes, in this interview alone I feel like there are things that I never thought about. I guess I’m just not good at reflecting about the trip. I didn’t really think about how my relationship had changed with dad until now and it does help to say my thoughts out loud. Sometimes I get the answer to a problem just by explaining it to someone.

Victoria was also a veteran on the trip as this was also her second international service learning trip; she joined the trip to help others and to experience some personal growth. Victoria’s biggest takeaway was a career decision. She was not one of the students who was initially looking for career direction or validation through the experience. Victoria earned a teaching degree, but chose to work at the college even though she was heavily sought after to join several district schools. Before the trip, Victoria dismissed the idea of going into teaching choosing to instead continue at the
college and apply for promotions; however, after the trip she has a change of heart and is now pursuing her master’s degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. She recounts her experiences teaching English to the students in Haiti and Nicaragua,

Part of me still wants to teach; my degree is in teaching and I still want to do that but I wasn’t sure on what level and I was thinking about how much I enjoyed English classes and how the students there in those classes really wanted to learn because they wanted to come to America and live the American dream and part of that involves speaking English.

Victoria’s job at the college puts her in contact with ESOL students on a daily basis. She began to think about her experience and her desire to help them beyond a quick admissions interaction in her office. “Then seeing the students that come into my college, because I sign them up for the ESOL classes, and even just me saying, “Hi and how are you?” and they get to say hi in English.”

She uses her experience on the service learning trip to help inform her about what she would really like to do with her life. Her passion for the decision is present through her words, After the trip she decided to do some research to pursue a master’s degree, she learned that earning her degree to teach ESOL was a possibility,

It’s something I could get to teach; I was like holy cow; I can really do this. I was like ok, I’m going to do this. I still get to teach but I get to teach adults – well maybe kids, too but mostly adults – and I get to teach people who came to America who want to have that American dream and have a life here and buy expensive houses and expensive cars and have jobs and send their kids to public school and they have to be able to speak English for that.

She has a deep empathy for those who come to the United States and are not yet equipped with the language skills,

There’s so many people who have said, “This is America; speak English,” and they get upset when people are speaking in their native language
when it’s not their fault that they had to leave their country for whatever reason and they’re here and they don’t have the opportunity to learn.

Her experiences on the trip gave her insight on what she could become and how she could contribute to others,

Well I could teach English and give them the opportunity and help them follow their dream that they came here to do. I feel like right now that’s my goal now to finish my master’s and to get a job teaching English so I can do that. I could be that person who gives these students that are coming in from other countries that don’t speak English and really motivate them to go all the way through so they can have a better life for themselves and their families.

Victoria similarly to Capri is captivated by the content nature of the people of Nicaragua,

“I guess it’s one of those things where you see what they have and they’re still happy and they’re not saying, “I want to go buy a nicer car,” which is what I keep telling myself.” She compares it to her perceptions of American attitudes,

There’s nothing wrong with the car I have; it’s fine, it’s just the American thing to say: it’s old and I could get a nicer one and I have the money so I might as well, but then you see people who live in a house with no windows and no doors and no AC and a dirt floor and they’re just as content as can be. They don’t say, “Oh, I’m going to go buy another house,” or you know; to them it’s perfect. If it works for them that’s all that matters, and I come home and… Why? Why can’t I just be happy with what I have when I have so much more than other people have, and to them it doesn’t affect them at all. I’m trying to keep myself from being as materialistic as I’ve become.

Victoria has done some soul searching through the reflection process, which is an important piece of service learning experiences. “I guess for me, because I’m not somebody who generally thinks about… I don’t know how to say this… I’m not good with like emotions; I’m not an emotional person at all.” She recounts how one of her classmates describes her ability to not emote, “I remember in Haiti [she] was like, “Look at Victoria because she’s not crying and she’ll never cry. Just look at her and you won’t cry,” and I’m like yeah, I won’t cry. I kind of took some pride in that. I’m so unemotional.”
She begins to see a shift in how she perceives her experiences and her personal growth due to her participation, “and having to reflect on all this, even though it’s not super emotional it’s kind of been hard because it’s not something that I normally…that I would sit and reflect upon or that I would say, Yeah I went there and I was a leader and I did an excellent job. That’s not something I would ever say.” Victoria is hesitant to accept her success in her roles, particularly her leadership role, but through the act of reflection she begins to assimilate her new identities.

Constance recently earned her degree in Exceptional Student Education just prior to leaving on the trip. Since her graduation she has secured a teaching position in a local charter school. She was the senior member of the group at 47 and also the only grandmother. Her goals for the trip were to see how others lived and to develop her teaching skills. Throughout the interviews Constance reflected a great deal about her desire to teach and her role in the classroom. She has an enthusiasm for her students,

I get warm fuzzies inside. I love it. That’s my thing, because I see that, that spark that goes off and that recognition of, “I’ve got this!” That’s what I live for every day and I can see it in some of my students now when I talk to them. That one, she has a hard time with math and I told her yesterday everybody is not brilliant at everything; math is not my best subject either, but you know what you need to do? Go and do it over and over again, because if you don’t do it over and over again you’re not going to experience the “Hey I got this,” and then you’re never going to want to do math again anyway because it gets too hard and you can’t get it.

During the trip, Constance notices the attitudes of the students in Nicaragua, “they’re so eager to learn here. They don’t seem to… maybe it’s different because we’re here, but it seems like in the States they’re like… it’s like pulling teeth to get them to at least try to do something on paper.” She notes that the students are willing to work in class, “whereas the first day when we went to the bibliotheca the kids automatically started reading the white board where someone else had started an English lesson. We didn’t
even tell them to do it; we were waiting to make sure all of them were there and they just automatically started reading the board.” She is encouraged by their attitudes and begins to think about how to apply this to her classroom when she returns, “that’s why I want to teach; I want to see that engagement and excitement. If I can just keep a little bit of that in the back of my head when I go back to the States and start trying to teach my students, that is probably one of the most impactful things, just to make sure that I have that memory of the students being excited and engaged about learning something.” After the trip, Constance is still impacted by the enthusiasm of the students she worked with in the country, and continues to think about her how she will apply what she has learned to her own classroom in particular with her challenging students, “having the experience of enthusiastic learners helps me to not give up on some of the more let’s say difficult children, students.” Constance had such a positive experience teaching the students. She is encouraged because she saw first-hand the tenacity of the students in Nicaragua, and how they enjoyed the learning process and how hard they worked, “Because you could look at them and see that they’re getting it; that they were grateful to have that knowledge, particularly the older grades. They wanted it; they wanted to know more. I mean really it was funny because we’re checking the clock and they had more questions…”

Constance remarks that the experience has increased her confidence in teaching, and how this experience will give her the courage to persevere even when students become a challenge, “I really don’t want to not teach, just because they get too difficult because I feel like if I can just get them a little bit interested in what they need to learn that once they start learning stuff and they start seeing that they’re learning stuff I
think they’ll learn a little bit more.” The students in Nicaragua inspired her and she draws from their attitudes and aspires to emulate them in a way, “I kind of hope I’m going to be able to bring that same enthusiasm that the kids showed me in Nicaragua, that I can show that enthusiasm to the students when I’m a teacher.”

Constance was asked how the experience empowered her, and how she followed through on her original goal to see how different people live, “I left the country, I left my comfort zone; never been anywhere like this before. I was excited to go because I had never been anywhere like this before.” She explained how she had never traveled west of New Orleans and that she had been to the Bahamas, but this was a new adventure, with a unique purpose, “So it’s different because I get to see a whole different perspective that I never would have really been able to imagine even without having some kind of experience with it on a personal level. “Constance brings back what she has seen and learned and works to apply it to her life personally, even financially for her family, “We’ve been living on actually quite a bit more than they’re living on, so I know that I can make some changes and cut back in some places and that’s something I’ve been working on a little bit since I’ve been back; what do I need to have essentially, what don’t I really need?” She explains how the perspective she gained has impacted how she communicates with her own children, “I think I’m going to be much less tolerant of my kid telling me that she has to have something. I’m going to pull up pictures and go, “No you don’t; look at this. You don’t have to have it and if you want it you need to buy it.” Constance, like some of the others in the group, is impressed with the level of happiness of the people. Many of the college students including Constance are surprised at the level of contentment of the people within their
impoverished “having this experience… it narrows the field about what’s the most important; it’s that simple. They don’t have nearly as much as I do and they’re just as happy and they’re just as content.”

This was Lorde’s second international service learning trip. She traveled to Haiti the prior year where she led a group that taught English to local children and adults. She graduated in May with her Elementary Education degree and over the summer she was hired as a third grade teacher. Lorde’s purpose for this trip was to contribute to her personal happiness. She also looked to the experience to inform her more about how to help ESOL students in her own classroom. She reflects on her time teaching the students in Nicaragua, “I think it definitely impacted my growth as a teacher in many ways, one way being working with ESOL students, because a lot of times people think when they’re working with an ESOL student they have to know the language that they speak, and that’s something I always worried about.”

Lorde’s big takeaway was the attitude of the local people compared to Americans, “It definitely makes me appreciate the things that I have but it also humbles you because in America they get stressed about things. “She noticed that the local people in Nicaragua had a contentment about them that is different that Americans, “they’re overwhelmed about things that people in Nicaragua wouldn’t even think to be overwhelmed about, and the people here are just so happy with everything they have. She describes the change in her own attitude toward material things, “it’s helped me realize that I don’t need everything that I have in my life that I feel like is a huge necessity, like if I don’t have my computer or my phone. She begins to qualify happiness differently, “So I definitely think that it’s showed me as a person that you can
be happy with what you have and even happy without all the things that you think that you need. So I definitely think that is important.”

Question three represents the takeaways the students had from the experience. The majority encountered increased self-confidence and affirmation of their career choices. Some were challenged to consider other career choices they had not previously considered. Many were pulled out of their comfort zones and still use that experience to navigate their lives back in the states. All students reported some level of growth, learning, and enlightenment.

Chapter Summary

This chapter described the findings of the study. Student interviews were used to discover if an international service learning trip impacted self-authorship development. This was presented in terms of the three dimensions of self-authorship: epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. The evidence indicates that all participants encountered some movement in their self-authorship and their described experiences promote either the emergence or continued development of their internal voice. Information was then presented in terms of which specific experiences were the catalysts for self-authorship development. Five specific experiences were discovered through the interviews: students positioned as contributors of knowledge, students positioned in leadership roles, students exposed to unsheltered experiences within country and culture, students assigned to groups for projects, and students’ interaction with people within country and culture. Finally, student takeaways from a service learning experience were presented through their descriptions of individual experiences. Many encountered increased self-confidence, affirmation of career choices, new
knowledge about another culture, appreciation for what they have, and discovery of the benefits of working outside of one’s comfort zone.

The subsequent and final chapter will delve deeper into the findings of the study and present connections to literature. Implications for practice and future research will also be discussed.
The purpose of this study was to determine if and how an international service learning trip impacted the development of self-authorship within community college students. In order to gain insight into individual experiences, a series of four interviews was conducted with seven students enrolled in a six-week service learning course, with a seven-day international trip. Based on the interviews and guiding framework, this study examined changes in the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions as they relate to the theory of self-authorship to illustrate how an international service learning program has the potential for impact. Community college students typically face challenging circumstances in their lives that position them to serve in various roles outside of the one as student (Morest, 2014). The idea of these students engaging in activities that take them out of the classroom or away from their lives for even short periods of time are not typically financially, academically, or practically feasible. This provides evidence to why very few studies exist examining how community college students benefit from international service learning; this study may be the only one to present the transformative elements of international service on community college students as viewed through the lens of self-authorship.

This study highlights the life-changing impact of an international service learning program for community college students. Seven community college students who chose an experiential educational opportunity with individual goals of personal growth, cultural insight, adventure, career affirmation, and pure happiness, provided rich textural descriptions of how they grew in terms of what they know, who they are, and how they are in relationships. Furthermore, these students transformed their lives with their
increased confidence, cultural competency, appreciation, philanthropy, empathy, and career affirmation. The chapter will be presented in the following sections: relationship to prior research, significance of findings, presentation of findings by research question, implications for theory, practice and future research, and acknowledgement of limitations.

**Relationship to Prior Research**

To inform this study, a review of the literature was executed. The review produced research, supporting the topics independent of community college students. For example, service learning and international service learning topics are ubiquitous in the literature, but do not with similar volume, highlight how these high impact practices may pertain to community college students (Taggart & Crisp, 2014). Additionally, several studies address the framework of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda, 2014); however, the focus remains on the students who attend traditional four-year institutions. Therefore, it is likely that this study may be unique as it investigates international service learning through the theory of self-authorship on community college students.

The literature review produced information supporting the impactful and transformational potential of service learning and international learning. The theory of self-authorship was well represented as a sound framework in which students advance through a process to eventually forge an internal voice that guides them and positions them to trust and follow it through life (Baxter Magolda, 2014). Through a review of the available literature, comparisons were drawn between the existing scholarship and this study. This study supports and adds to the existing body of literature, but illuminates the impact for community college students.
The basis of the study is grounded in the theory of self-authorship. Student learning through the lens of self-authorship, is predicated upon providing students with opportunities that advance their ability to translate the external voices around them in order to create an internal voice that drives them (Baxter Magolda, 2014). Mastering internal applications that allow them to develop into contributory individuals who can navigate between a myriad of dimensions, positions them to successfully maneuver life personally, socially, and occupationally (King & Baxter Magolda, 2011). To this end, impactful life-changing educational opportunities contribute to a student’s ability to develop an internal voice and to decipher how to negotiate life challenges and their roles within those challenges (Barber et al., 2013). The findings of this study are consistent with the literature regarding theory of self-authorship particularly with how sound and purposeful educational practices can impact student development by providing them opportunities to reposition their thinking as a result of dissonance and make meaning to internally define how they construct their worlds (King et al., 2009; Carpenter & Peña, 2016). Interviews with the students demonstrated how the international service learning experience challenged them to consider and reconsider their individual beliefs about their experiences and how these experiences impacted either the emergence of their internal voice or their continued development of the internal voice (Barber et al., 2013). They chronicle these developments through their reflections of their experiences.

Consistent with the results of a study on developmentally effective experiences that promote self-authorship (King et al., 2009), students in my study through their stories, described how their internal voices began to emerge through their encounters
and how their perspectives were changed as a result of their engagement and interactions during the experience. For example, within the intrapersonal dimension many students explained increased confidence in who they were and how they became more comfortable asserting who they are. Student portrayals yielded examples of reflection about their knowledge, identities, and relationships through their roles as teachers, facilitators, classmates, and visitors. These encounters nudged them to be introspective and reframe how they considered what they believed about what they knew, who they are, and how they are in relationships. Their growth and life-changing meaning-making support the transformative properties of service learning (Mezirow, 2000).

Additionally, this study illuminated the benefits about the practice of international service learning. The results are also consistent with the existing literature about the benefits and takeaways of service learning for students. Previous studies produced results where students gained affirmation about their career choices (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Felten & Clayton, 2011; Taggart & Crisp, 2011). Every student in my study, linked their acquired knowledge to inform or affirm their career choices. Additionally, as reported by Crabtree (2011), international experiences can sometimes challenge students to investigate career options that were not previously considered. My findings were consistent with this idea as well. Two students in the study explained that due to their experience with the international service learning program, they were for the first time considering careers that previously were not viable options. This study supports the research of Ransom (2014), those in the current study who planned to be teachers (5 out of 7), described how the experience informed and better prepared them to
transfer their knowledge back into their classrooms. They cited how their work with
ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) students, preparation for classes, and
constant flexibility with the schedule as key transferable factors to their own classrooms
at home. Her study showed how students were able to transfer their career knowledge
to real world opportunities due to acquired insight on their chosen professions (Ramson,
2014).

All students in the study demonstrated some element of growth intellectually,
personally or relationally. This was captured not only from their testimonial takeaways of
the trip, but also through the lens of self-authorship which illuminated their development
within the theory. Students described increased confidence and overall happiness as a
result of their work. They reported pride in the design of their projects and how they
executed them under difficult conditions. Additionally, all students commented about the
positive experiences they had working with their classmates and the community
members. This finding supports the work of (Eyler and Giles, 1999) who describe
successful service learning programs as having the ability to promote self and relational
growth. Overall, similarly to the students in Deeley’s (2010) study, students credited the
experiential aspect of this educational experience with what they learned.

Students also described how they were impacted by the culture and their
interactions with the community members. They would often discuss their perspectives
of contentment and how their perspective changed and redefined their notions of the
concept as they were immersed in impoverished areas that they would deem
unsuitable, but the community members seemed happy in spite of this. This point
supports the findings in the literature that assert the potential of international service
learning to change a students' perspectives and belief systems and increase intercultural understanding (Crabtree, 2013; Nickols et al., 2013; Curtain et al., 2013).

**Significance of Findings by Research Question**

**Dimensions of Self-Authorship for Community College Students**

The framework of self-authorship articulates the various dimensions of epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development to analyze the fruition of one's internal voice. The emergence of self-authorship is characterized by the onset and presence of this internal voice to guide an individual's decisions about their beliefs, identity, and relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2014). The participants in this study each conveyed at minimum, the inception of their internal voice within one or more of these dimensions. Participants’ descriptions demonstrate the evolution of their internal voice as a result of the direct experiences with the international service learning trip. The epistemological dimension is driven by the question, "how do I know?" (Pizzolato et al., 2012). All the students in this study experienced some self-questioning of previous beliefs or knowledge, and substantial movement or progress in their self-authorship process within this experience. The nature of this international service learning experience, which challenged students to step out of their comfort zones and travel to an unknown country and contribute, may be best categorized as one that progresses students within three dimensions as their internal voice emerges and affects their views of their knowledge, identity, and role in relationships (Baxter Magolda, 2008 & 2014).

Throughout the interviews, students expressed how their interactions within this new culture shaped how they made meaning of what they know. They used their experiences on the trip to contribute to their knowledge and to figure out how and what they knew. Tripoli and Rex found value in their participation on the trip. Tripoli explained
how someone can learn about other places through reading, but until you travel and visit a country and culture, you cannot truly know what it is like. She has expanded her knowledge base through the experience and now appreciates the actions of traveling and learning. Rex learned that he had to encounter different countries and cultures to become better informed about the challenges they face and this showed him how he can make a greater contribution to the world through his future career. He has advanced with his certainty of knowledge and believes that it will shape how he pursues what he is supposed to do with his life. All seven students presented rich descriptions of their experiences that evidenced the emergence or development of their internal voice as it related to the epistemological dimension.

The intrapersonal dimension yielded insight and movement in each student’s self-authorship. This dimension is guided by the question, "who am I?" (Pizzolato et al., 2012). It captures a sense of who the individual is and what they believe about themselves. Six out of the seven students shared multiple examples that translated into their intrapersonal development with the experience. The most common theme threaded throughout each story were the acknowledgement on behalf of the participants of their growth in this area. Many of the participants were able to link to specific events that led to changes in their identities, how they viewed themselves, and how they would answer the question, who am I? Victoria links her experiences on the trip with some changes she has made about herself. She described how before the trip she would bottle things up and not say how she felt. After the trip, she has developed that internal voice that she says has allowed her to have a voice in her relationships. Capri described how the experience taught her not to take no for an answer. She has
developed the internal voice, and she says it gives her courage in her interactions with others; she is evolving in her ability to listen to and act upon her internal voice.

The final dimension is the interpersonal. This asks the question, "how am I in relationships?" (Pizzolato et al., 2012). Students reported that interactions with their classmates, in-country hosts, and people of the community provided insight into their interpersonal development. Students described how they enjoyed working in groups and how the roles of the group members helped shape their roles and their interactions within a group. They took the experience from the interactions with their classmates and community members and used them to reframe their roles in their relationships at home. For example, Tripoli explained that she used to not contribute in group situations and would remain a silent member when involved in group experiences. Working in groups on this trip helped her determine that she would no longer be a silent member; she acknowledged that those who are silent do not contribute. Another student explained how she drew strength from her classmates and described the power of successfully working alongside others. The examples produced in this study support the theory of self-authorship and its potential for community college students through the practice of international service learning.

These findings are key because they answer questions related to the applied framework for community college students. Can these students initiate or continue the self-authorship process through a developmentally effective experience similarly to their four year counterparts? This study, similar to the findings in King et al. (2009) support that purposeful educational experiences can further students along the process. Consistent with Barber et al., (2013) these experiences are necessary to promote that
internal voice that advances individuals through the process. The findings of this study illuminate how this practice is effective for community college students. Furthermore, it produces questions about why community college students are overlooked or understudied using the theory of self-authorship and the practice of international service learning.

**Key Experiences Contributing to Self-Authorship**

Five specific experiences were discovered through the interviews that contributed to students' self-authorship: contributors of knowledge, leadership roles, unsheltered experiences within country and culture, group projects, and interaction with people within country and culture. All of the students participated in a teaching role which positioned them as contributors of knowledge. Students taught subjects ranging from English, survival swimming, and first aid to cosmetology and art. As they prepped for their sessions, they grew into experts in their subject area. The experience of planning, preparing, and teaching seemed to deeply affect each one of the students, particularly with their perception of their identity and in some cases helped to affirm their career goals. The exercise of teaching impacted the self-confidence of the students. Students felt a strong sense of responsibility in their roles as teachers. One student described the importance of the teaching role and how the project for him produced something much more valuable than a grade or knowledge; it produced a first time event for him within a college experience and end goal that effect a broader goal. A shift in ownership of teaching and learning was observed from the time students spent in the classroom in the U.S. planning to the time their delivered their lessons in Nicaragua. Students were organized, dedicated, and prepared regarding their teaching roles. Many programs across community colleges may offer service learning or even international service
learning programs. In order for these experiences to effectively impact students, they must commission students to tackle exercises in evaluation, decision making, and collaboration (Barber et al., 2013). This engagement was prevalent throughout the experiences of these community college students.

Several of the students were positioned in roles of leadership and led their respective teaching groups in terms of planning, preparation, and delivery. Some of these students quickly embraced the role while others hesitantly came to terms with the role by virtue of reflection. The leadership positions assisted students identify shifts in their identities. For those students, the emergence of the internal voice was seen through their leadership experiences.

For the majority of the trip, the activities, projects, and excursions were all meticulously planned. While these experiences proved beneficial and conducive to self-authorship movement, students additionally expressed their positive takeaways from the experiences that were not on the itinerary. Their impromptu conversations with locals, their encounters with their classmates, and their personal reflective moments alone contributed to their self-authorship.

Group work is not always lauded by students as a positive experience, as often one member is charged to complete all of the work, and others depend on the leadership of that member to carry the responsibility. The students in this study had a very different perception of their group experiences. In the interviews students reported extremely positive interactions with their group members. The students gained insight and progressed not only with their own identities, but with the relationships with their group members. They reported how they valued the contributions of their group
members and began to appreciate the relationships they formed. The group experience impacted the intrapersonal and interpersonal domains of self-authorship.

The interactions with the people of Nicaragua also had an effect on the students. Their conversations and one on one time brought forth adoptions of new perspectives on their world, their identities and their views of others. They began to see the world around them through a new lens and their internal voice emerged as they embraced new perspectives which began to shape their beliefs about themselves and their relationships with others. This is similar to what is known about how traditional college students in an international service learning program respond to the Learning Partnership Model (Baxter Magolda, 2004). This model “supports learners through validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructed meaning” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 41). The student testimonials in the present study provided concrete examples of experiences that progressed students in self-authorship and further support the purposeful educational practices. While the LPM was not formally used to design this study’s program, the tenets indicate the value of its implementation as they coincide with the design of the program in this study. As found in the study by Barber et al. (2013), students who are effectively engaged in educational experiences movement in the self-authorship process takes place.

**Student Takeaways from the Service Learning Experience**

The predominant takeaways for community college students who participate in an international service learning trip are captured as a before and after portrait of each student. Each student, through various interactions and experiences, provided rich descriptions of the impact of their involvement in their projects and with the people of
Nicaragua. Each student, without hesitation, stated that they would encourage other students to pursue similar opportunities due to the takeaways they had from their participation. They raved about how deep of an impact the experience had on themselves and their future that they had never anticipated.

Having been immersed in such an impoverished area, several reported a shift in appreciation for the things they have. That realization increased understanding of the new culture they had entered. Several students talked about the contentment of the people in the area. Their perception was that the people had so little, yet yielded such significant degrees of happiness. While grappling with this new found knowledge, students experienced a degree of dissonance and recognized this as a change catalyst for them. Additionally, students gained multiple perspectives of the world that furthered their knowledge base and challenged their responsibility as global citizens (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Bureau et al., 2014; Chang, 2015; Deeley 2010,).

These findings are consistent with Bringle and Hatcher’s (2011) explanation of how international service learning promotes course content acquisition and a student’s perception of his or her responsibility to their world in their own communities and beyond. While many of the findings were similar with existing literature on how college students transform as a result of service learning (Nikols et al., 2013; Mezirow, 2000), this study fills the gap in literature on how influential this experience can be for community college students. The current study shows that the assumption that community college students cannot have a similar developmentally meaningful experience is incorrect. Community college students may have meaningful experiences because of their age and live events that allow them to see their experiences in a more
complex light. The implication of this study for higher education planning is that international service learning for community college students impacts self-authorship and should therefore be considered as a strong part of the community college curriculum.

While this study was unique with its coalescence of parts (international service learning, self-authorship, community college students), the findings are consistent with prior research related to self-authorship (King et al., 2009), and how developmentally effective practices can further students’ development. This study combined two potentially developmentally effective experiences (service learning and study abroad) and produced positive results for all students related to the advancement of self-authorship.

Additionally, even though the service learning course and trip were not designed to specifically advance self-authorship or to align with the attributes of a Learning Partnerships Model (LPM); pieces of this model can be identified through the course design and the design of the international experience in Nicaragua. The LPM incorporates “validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructed meaning” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 41)

Much of the research indicates that students do not fully self-author in college, but may begin the process through developmentally effective experiences in college (Hodge et al., 2009; Barber, 2013). This study aligns with prior research about the positive impact of pedagogically sound practices and shows evidence that all of the
students commenced or continued to self-author. Further research with this same group may produce evidence that some of them are self-authored.

**Implications for Pedagogical Practice with Community College Students**

Service learning experiences and study abroad experiences can be categorized as developmentally effective, meaning they can contribute to a student's self-authorship (Hodge et al., 2009; Pizzolato et al., 2012; Barber & King, 2014). The findings of this study are illustrative of the combination of two developmentally effective experiences (service learning and study abroad) and showed how self-authorship is a useful perspective for considering the changes that can occur in community college students during such experiences. Even though the service learning course and trip were not designed to specifically advance self-authorship or to align with the attributes of a (LPM), pieces of this model can be identified through the course design and the design of the international experience in Nicaragua. The LPM incorporates “validating learners’ capacity as knowledge constructors, situating learning in learners’ experience, and defining learning as mutually constructed meaning” (Baxter Magolda, 2004, p. 41). The findings of the current study suggest that future planning for service learning courses may benefit from using these theories in planning the experiences that will support community college students in the changes they will experience.

The study also provided insight to the types of experiences that may posture students to develop their self-authorship. Purposeful design to include experiences that allow students to contribute knowledge, serve as leaders, function independently, work in groups, and interact with the community may further contribute to opportunities for students to self-author. Within this study, students also benefited from moments within the experience that were unplanned, impromptu instances with each other or
community members that initiated organic conversation and actions. While these are impossible to plan, the recommendation is to provide students with time with other students and community members to just converse and work together.

The literature revealed that many community college students do not participate in service learning due to lack of knowledge, time, or resources (Morest, 2014). Community colleges should adopt practices of working in tandem with students to determine how they could better accommodate students to encourage participation in these programs. This may also encourage students to be more involved with their campus communities. Experiential learning opportunities may require additional time; however, this initial investment of time on the front end or within a student’s academic journey may affirm their career trajectories and eventually save time and money as the student crafts a course of completion without wasting time and resources.

Community colleges should invest in a department dedicated to service learning. This department could be comprised of one to two staff members who also serve in the global education department. This dedication of staff could assist with advancing cultural competence locally and globally and could advance the mission of the community college to recognize the opportunities for its students to engage locally, nationally, and internationally. This would allow community colleges to embrace global education to further prepare intercultural competence of students (Bradshaw, 2013). The staff member could investigate study abroad opportunities and work closely with faculty to design the experience. Partnerships with international students from countries where there may be a need for service would be another avenue to pursue.
Many of the students cited in the literature for this study involved particular groups of students: engineers, nurses, teachers. Community colleges are uniquely positioned to integrate several departments to “join forces” to design experiences that may draw students from multiple programs across the campus. Emphasis for these partnerships would be the exposure and real-world experiences of their chosen professions and exposure to other professions.

**Implications for Theory**

Through a high impactful educational experience which lasted only 6 weeks, students produced results of their demonstrating their self-authorship growth. The effectiveness of a short experience such as this sets the stage for faculty to implement and develop curriculum to consistently foster and progress students’ opportunity to self-author and use this theory to design and augment their educational practices. (Baxter Magolda & King, 2007). Barber et al (2013) lauds the self-authorship potential for students who participate in developmentally effective experiences that promote self-authorship. Baxter Magolda (2014) argues, that students on the path to self-authorship are better equipped to successfully negotiate and navigate life after college. How do community college students purposefully engage in activities that promote this theory within their academic and professional lives?

Community college students as typically non-traditional students may, due to their life journey, be uniquely positioned to benefit from practices with self-authorship application. Research suggests that the majority of college students do not fully self-author by the time they finish college (Hodge et al., 2009). While Baxter Magolda’s (1992, 2008, & 2014) early studies presented the experiences of traditionally aged college students, perhaps community college students are better positioned when they
are in college to engage in the self-authorship process much deeper due to the non-
traditional characteristics they possess as a college student. In Carpenter and Peña’s
(2016) study they suggest that their first generation students have difficult
circumstances to overcome, similarly to non-traditional community college students and
may, due to the complications of life, begin to self-author, but they also look to
institutional resources to contribute to their success. Due to the external forces in their
lives, community college students may advance through the process of self-authorship
at an accelerated pace if they are partnered with educators who can augment the self-
authorship that may take place due to the dissonance and challenges connected to life
events, with purposeful teaching that espouses the theory.

Implications for Research

I teach students who aspire to be teachers. As I have studied the theory of self-
authorship, it has begun transform how I view all of my students and how I teach my
classes. Last semester a young lady who had just completed her senior internship (a
developmentally effective experience) sat in my office faced with the wonderful
conundrum of two job offers. She explained both, and in my mind I had the answer for
what I felt would be the better option; she was a perfect fit, the school wanted her, she
loved the school and she would not need to fulfill any further requirements. The other
would require her to obtain additional certification. I remained silent as I was eager to
hear her thoughts on the challenge. She went on to explain that she had worked hard
and she felt that she had come to the point where she should trust her own instincts to
make the decision, she said, “I’m going to trust my inner voice” …self-authorship in
motion.
This study extends ideas for theory and practice and draws conclusions for future research from the rich experiences of the seven students. This is a unique study among the prior research that chronicles the experiences of how community college students’ self-authorship is impacted by an international service learning trip; it demonstrated that experiences such as these can work for community college students. The majority of existing studies focused on college students at four year institutions. Community college students are typically considered non-traditional and often have very different experiences than their university counterparts. The students in the study ranged in age from 19-47. All worked an average of one to two jobs, many attended full time, two were parents, and one was a grandparent. According to the descriptions of their experience, all of the students’ stories aligned with some facet of growth in the journey of self-authorship. Every student shared that they would without hesitation, implore interested students to participate in a similar experience. Future studies would better inform and help practitioners understand the benefit of experiences that progress self-authorship in community college students. Students on the path to self-authorship are better equipped to enter their post college world and navigate the challenges of life and the workplace.

Recommendations for Future Research

More studies about community college students and self-authorship would begin to fill this gap in the literature. Drilling further down, more studies about international service learning opportunities for community college students would further the research. The research indicates around 77% of community college students are unaware of opportunities to participate in service learning (CCCSE, 2012). Are the opportunities not advertised because of the assumption that students will not have the
time and resources to participate? These studies should focus on the answering the question. Why do the students not know about the experiences? Why are they not participating? How can community colleges better accommodate their students to encourage participation?

The community college students in this study attended a seven-day trip to Nicaragua. Studies that followed students over a longer trip time would be beneficial to the research base to determine if longer exposure yielded different results within the scope of self-authorship. Do students' self-authorship development vary with length of a trip or more so from the experiences and interactions within the trip as their comfort level may increase and they may be more open to even more diverse experiences? Within the group of students who participated in this study, three of them attended their second international service learning trip. Longitudinal studies about students returning for multiple trips and measuring their self-authorship as it relates to the multiple trips would be valuable information to contribute to the literature. Do students continue to self-author from the same types of experiences or is it more beneficial for students to encounter different developmentally effective experiences? Students on this trip also had a broad age range, a study that focused on particular age brackets of community college students would provide insight into the development of self-authorship through international service learning trips at various ages. So, depending on the ages of the participants and their prior experiences, how does their age at the time of the experience impact their self-authorship?

This study was originally designed with Seidman’s (2013) three interview approach. The decision was then made to add a fourth interview to take place several
months after the experience. This decision provided more rich thick description of the students’ experiences. Future studies would benefit from this model as well to garner student perceptions and reflections well after the experience to determine growth and sustainability of takeaways of the experience as a whole.

More studies specific to developmentally effective experiences with community college students would broaden the literature about self-authorship development and provide more “how-to” guides for educators. While an international service learning trip was valuable, specific studies about the experiences of other faculty and students related to other developmentally effective experiences could provide faculty with processed driven ways to implement experiences into their classrooms. How do faculty purposefully and meaningfully design experiences within their classes to progress self-authorship for community college students? The literature indicated that many community college students do not have time to engage in opportunities outside of the academic classroom. Community colleges could work in tandem with students on the practical nature of the preparation and planning to accommodate student schedules and resources. Creative scheduling, fundraising, and resource investigation could all be planned collaboratively with students.

While the results of the study echoed findings synonymous with other studies in terms of takeaways and benefits the majority including this one was conducted soon after the experience. Even though this study interviewed students eight months after the experience, what lasting impacts will still be noted for the student 2, 4, and 6 years from now? Studies like mine could be expanded to follow the students for the next few years to determine if their takeaways sustained over the years. Did those students who
decided on a career during or after the trip follow through with that decision? Do students still view the world differently based on their international experience? Did their confidence in themselves sustain over the years? Is the impact of the experience indefinite? Did they continue the self-authorship process?

**Limitations of the Study**

The results of this study should be considered in light of its limitations. The study was conducted on one course at one institution; therefore, the transferability of the study results to other institutions may be limited. This limitation was addressed through the thick rich description provided within the study (Creswell, 2013). As self-authorship can develop over decades, another limitation is the short time period in which this study was conducted. This study took place over an eight-month period of time. While this is a limitation for studying self-authorship, this length of time could also be considered a strength of the study as participants had time away from the experience to consolidate thinking for months after they completed the course. This decision helped to inform the sustainability of the experience, as participants further added to the rich description of their experiences with their reflective perspectives.

Another limitation is that I traveled with the students on this experience and had a level of authority as a faculty member on the trip. It cannot be dismissed that students, due to social desirability, may have answered questions in ways in which they thought I wanted them to. My close involvement with the trip can also be viewed as a strength, as my relationships with the students built rapport and allowed them to feel comfortable in sharing their insight with me, thus providing richer data. One student commented that initially she was concerned about what I would think, but as the interviews went on, she determined that I wanted her to just be honest. This shows that over time, the rapport
made the data more valid and detailed. Future studies should consider the strengths and limitations of rapport building with the power differential that exists between faculty and students in thinking about the biased nature of the results.

Perhaps the biggest limitation is that it is not clear to what degree it was the international service learning experience or the act of reflecting done in the interviews or the combination of both that made the impact on the students' self-authorship. Future studies should consider each of these aspects in examining the pedagogical practices around international service learning in general and for community college students specifically.

One final limitation may be the inability to effectively gauge the degree and scope of self-authorship progress due to the internal nature of the theory. In agreement with Sattler and Turns (2015) researchers strive to determine the progress of self-authorship through interviews and observations, but may not uncover the true growth of self-authorship as it is such a personal and internal process.

Summary

This study, which recounted the experiences of seven community college students has expanded the knowledge base about community college students and their self-authorship development, and demonstrated the value of international service learning experiences for community college students. This research suggests that these experiences would meet the needs of community colleges in that it influences student growth, develops global citizens, may be an effective means for retaining students, helps them develop skills and perspectives that makes them more employable. This study provided demonstrate that participation in international service learning programs can be transformational for community college students. It is a worthwhile endeavor to
provide and develop more international service learning experiences for community college students.
The Impact of an International Service Learning Experience on Students’ Self-Authorship

Consent to Participate

Dear Participant:

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Florida. As part of my dissertation research, I am conducting interviews. The purpose of the interviews is to determine how a study abroad service learning experience impacts students’ self-authorship. I request your participation in the interviews as a student who has opted to travel on a service learning study abroad trip.

Interviewees will be asked to participate in (4) interviews lasting no longer than 60 minutes. Follow up interviews may be requested for clarification or elaboration. Interviews will be conducted in person in an office classroom type of space. With participant permission, I will audio record each interview. No one will have access to the recordings except for me, and I will also transcribe the recordings without any identifiers in the transcription. The recordings will be deleted at the completion of the study. Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law and your identity will not be revealed in the final manuscript.

Participation is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw your consent to participate and may discontinue your participation in the interview at any time without consequence. No risks or benefits are anticipated. There is no compensation for participation in the study.

If you have any questions about this research protocol, please contact me at [redacted] or one of my faculty chairs, Dr. Dennis Kramer at [redacted] or Dr. Dale Campbell at [redacted]

Questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant may be directed to the IRB02 office, University of Florida, Box 112250, Gainesville, FL 32611; (352) 392-0433.

Please sign and return this copy of the letter in the enclosed envelope. A second copy is provided for your records. By signing this letter, you give me permission to report your responses anonymously in the final manuscript to be submitted to my dissertation committee as part of my course work.

Sincerely,
Margie Hensler

I have read the procedure described above for the dissertation research. I voluntarily agree to participate in the interviews and I have received a copy of this description.

________________________________ ___________
Signature of participant   Date

I would like to receive a copy of the final manuscript published. ☐ Yes ☐ No
APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The Impact of an International Service Learning Experience on Students’ Self-Authorship

Interview Questions

Interview One Sample Guide (To be conducted prior to the International Service Learning Trip)

• How old are you?

• What is your current college status? (Freshman, Sophomore, etc.)

• How did you find your way to DSC? What has that journey been like and what are your goals?

• Have you ever traveled out of the country?

• How you ever participated in a service learning experience locally, nationally, or internationally? Please describe the experience if yes.

• What drew you to participate in an international service learning experience?

• What do you perceive as the benefits of service learning?

• How will this experience benefit you?

• What do you wish to accomplish and experience on the trip?

• How do you think this experience will affect your growth as a person? As a student?

• What are your predictions of the relationships you will build with your classmates and those you interact with on the trip?

Interview Two Sample Guide (To be conducted during the trip in Nicaragua)

• What have been your first impressions of the trip?

• How are things different than you initially imagined?

• How do you think your service learning project is impacting the students and community you are working with?

• How is the project impacting you?
• Are you learning anything about yourself personally and as a student? Please describe.

• How do you think this experience will affect your growth as a person? As a student?

Interviews Three Sample Guide

• What are your thoughts about the trip and what did you learn?

• How did the trip impact your growth as a person?

• How did this trip impact your growth as a student?

• How did your service learning project impact the community/students you worked with?

• How did the service learning project impact you?

• How did the relationships you built on the trip impact you?

• How did the beliefs and values of those you encountered on the trip impact you?

• Do you believe you will maintain relationships with those you met/traveled with? Please expound…

Interview Four Sample Guide

• Can you describe your role within the group? If you could stand outside of the experience and look in, how would you describe yourself to someone who asked about your role? What would you say about you?

• How has this experience given you a sense of yourself?

• When you think about educational experiences in your college career, how does this one compare to the others? Can you describe how it’s the same/different? Are there other experiences in college that have been meaningful? Tell me.

• When talking about this trip to others, have any people questioned why you went? Can you tell me about that conversation?

• So, it’s been 8 months, when you think back about your trip, what memories come to mind first, what do you think about, what comes to mind? Tell me about your experience last summer…can you describe it for me?

• How have these insights affected your personal life?
• Think about the people you are closest to in your life, when you told them you were going on this trip how did they respond? (follow up, how did you decide to go if they were opposed in any way?)

• Can you describe how you think this trip may have personally impacted you? (Do you look back on who you were before you went and who you were after, what does that look like, can you describe it to me?)

• Was there a point on the trip that you felt really proud of yourself?

• Do you feel like this experience empowered you? If so, can you describe why and how? If not, describe that as well?

• What do you value about the trip the most? Can you describe that for me?

• Was there a time on the trip that you felt conflicted or stressed? What was that like for you?

• If you met a fellow student interested in this experience, would you encourage them to go? How and why would you encourage them?

• How has the process of these interviews impacted you?
LIST OF REFERENCES


CCCSE (Center for Community College Student Engagement). (2012). A matter of degrees: Promising practices for community college student success (A first look). Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Margie Hensler earned her doctoral degree in higher education administration from the University of Florida in 2017. The focus of her research included how international service learning impacts community college students. She has a deep interest in service learning for community college students and has led several international service learning trips for community college students. Margie has worked in higher education for the last nine years, serving in administrative and faculty roles. Margie currently serves at a community college as an assistant professor and assistant academic chair of her department. Prior to her work in education, she served as a middle and high school teacher and as a middle and high school administrator. Margie holds a baccalaureate degree in English education and a master’s degree in educational leadership.