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How the Chameleon Overcame its Complex: ENGAGE and the Formation of a Prefigurative Social Movement

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**How the Chameleon Overcame its Complex:
ENGAGE and the Formation of a
Prefigurative Social Movement**

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Abstract

U.S. students who participate in justice-oriented study abroad programs face great challenges reintegrating to life in the United States. In addition to working through culture shock, these students ultimately confront the dilemma of putting into practice a newfound transformed worldview that runs counter to hegemonic norms. Faced with the challenge of negotiating this dissonance, students can choose to blend in and conform to the status quo while struggling internally with their un-actualized perspective transformation – like a chameleon with a complex – or they can find ways to resist assimilation by acting on their transformation and taking action in the world.

This study utilizes a case study approach to understand the efforts of one returned study abroad alumni network – the Educational Network for Global and Grassroots Exchange (ENGAGE) – to work with students who return from justice-oriented study abroad programs, and assesses if these efforts are an effective strategy for helping students overcome or resist the malaise of the chameleon complex. This paper concludes with a series of recommendations for how ENGAGE might improve its efforts to work with this particular subset of students.

The tool for assessing ENGAGE was developed by reviewing the theory of transformational learning, existing research on the transformational learning process of study abroad students, and key programmatic components unique to justice-oriented study abroad programs that contribute to student transformation. The assessment framework is used as a lens to ‘read’ ENGAGE as a ‘text’ to determine whether or not its efforts to support returned study abroad students aligns with what theory says is best practice for nurturing ongoing perspective transformation and social change.

This study concludes that ENGAGE has an emergent approach to education (albeit in need of being formalized and better articulated) that does provide an outlet for students to act on their newfound perspective transformation, as well as better negotiate the dissonance caused by conflicting and competing worldviews, the byproduct of the justice-oriented study abroad experience. Factors that contribute to this assessment include ENGAGE's commitment to experiential learning; its efforts to build and maintain solidarity with grassroots peoples' movements in the U.S. and abroad; its campaigns and projects in which returned study abroad students can participate; its commitment to social justice; and its self-articulation as an educational movement that is not issue or topic oriented.

The results of this project will be used by ENGAGE to formalize and refine existing programs and to help conceptualize new programmatic offerings that might better meet the needs of returned study abroad students. This study also contributes to a larger discourse within the field of study abroad by offering insights into how the unique needs of a small subset of study abroad students can be better served.

Key Words: Study Abroad, Transformational Learning Theory, Service-learning

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Introduction/Research Overview

The purpose of this project is to explore and assess the Educational Network for Global and Grassroots Exchange's (ENGAGE) efforts to meet the needs of recently returned study abroad students who have participated on justice-oriented study abroad programs. This project was largely prompted – and influenced by – the work of Richard Kiely (2005), who has conducted extensive research on the transformational learning process of students who participate in justice-oriented international service-learning programs. This project is also informed by this author's own experience and observations from having worked for four years with students participating on a justice-oriented study abroad program in Northeast Thailand.

Kiely argues that justice-oriented abroad programs can have a profound influence on participants and can elicit dissonance between a person's once taken-for-granted worldview and the emergent worldview that is the result of the abroad experience. Oftentimes high-intensity dissonance is triggered by exposure to “poverty, hunger, scarcity, and disease” as well as inspired by working with people engaged in social movements or engaged in a struggle to preserve livelihood (p.11). While Kiely says that some forms of dissonance tend to fade away over time, “data consistently shows that experiencing high-intensity dissonance creates permanent markers in students' frame of reference” (p.11).

Triggering a dissonance in worldview has the potential to be a powerful and transformative experience as it offers a student the opportunity to think critically about the way he/she understands the world, and to question what his/her role in the world should be. These are important questions, and indeed, it is these types of questions that anyone on the path towards developing a global consciousness must struggle with. The challenges emerge, however, when students who participate in justice-oriented abroad programs are confronted with the reality of

returning to the United States. Once home, students must decide alone how they will apply the knowledge they gained while abroad. Beyond the process of re-acclimating to U.S. cultural norms and experiencing reverse culture shock – two things that are commonly associated with most forms of intercultural exchange – students who participate in justice-oriented programs experience a qualitatively different process of readjustment whereby they must make decisions about how they will act on their newfound worldview. Kiely writes,

They feel disillusioned that people seem detached from issues of global poverty and/or get annoyed when they question cultural norms that value consumption and materialism, capitalist ideology, and U.S. foreign policy. Frequently, students feel compelled to hide their “true colors,” and blend in as a defense mechanism to avoid being chastised for having “radical views.” (Kiely, 2006, p.15).

This disillusionment is what Brookfield (1994) calls – and Kiely (2006) affirms – the “dark side” of transformation. It is important that people develop the capacity to think deeply and critically about the world around them, but this critical reflection can also “trigger extremely powerful visceral, emotional, cognitive reactions from students who begin to critically reflect on...unjust hegemonic dimensions of the world around them” (Kiely, 2006, p.18). It is during the process of reintegrating to the United States that Kiely says potential problems emerge. This is when students not only feel unable to clearly articulate their experiences or find people willing to listen, but also find it difficult to act on the lessons they learned while abroad. Kiely says that students often conform to the status quo, like a chameleon blending into its surroundings, but this still results in a ‘complex’ because the student has not yet resolved how she/he will act on her/his emerging global consciousness, “which often means going against the opinions of friends, family, and coworkers” (p.16). Kiely’s (2006) *Chameleon Complex* thus poses a challenge for anyone interested in how to best serve the needs of students returning to the United States from justice-oriented abroad programs. It also poses questions: How can we best support students’

ongoing global consciousness development when they return to the United States? What are appropriate models and programs for working with students who have undergone profound perspective transformation? How do we offer opportunities to students so that Kiely's *chameleon complex* is not an inevitable phase of reintegration? How can the chameleon overcome its complex?

This paper attempts to answer these questions by assessing the actions and program offerings of the Educational Network for Global and Grassroots Exchange (ENGAGE) to identify whether or not ENGAGE helps returned study abroad students actualize and apply their newfound global consciousness. ENGAGE is an organization that works specifically with returned study abroad students who have participated in justice-oriented study abroad programs. This paper will begin by offering basic background information on ENGAGE's history and origins, as well as its organizational structure, current campaigns, and projects. Next it will explicate the general characteristics/components of justice-oriented study abroad programs and the corresponding theories that support the argument that these components contribute to transformational learning in study abroad settings. This will be followed by a literature review that explores the theories that inform transformational learning and the components of educational programs that nurture transformation.

These theories will then be used as a lens to assess the work of ENGAGE and to determine if ENGAGE's programs, projects, and campaigns align with what theory suggests is best practice for helping students act on their newfound perspective transformation. The paper will end with a series of recommendations for how ENGAGE can create better educational programs that are in line with what theory suggests will best meet the needs of returned study abroad students.

Methodology

This study utilizes a case study approach to understand the efforts of the Educational Network for Global and Grassroots Exchange (ENGAGE) to work with students who return from justice-oriented study abroad programs, and assesses if these efforts are an effective strategy for helping students overcome or resist the malaise of the chameleon complex. This paper concludes with a series of recommendations for how ENGAGE might improve its efforts to work with this particular subset of students.

The assessment tool for evaluating ENGAGE was developed by reviewing the theory of transformational learning, existing research on the transformational learning process of study abroad students, key programmatic components unique to justice-oriented study abroad programs that contribute to student transformation, and the theories/research that inform these programmatic components. The assessment framework is used as a lens to ‘read’ ENGAGE as a ‘text’ to determine whether or not its efforts to support returned study abroad students aligns with what theory says is best practice for nurturing global consciousness, ongoing perspective transformation, and social change.

Background Information

The Educational Network for Global and Grassroots Exchange (ENGAGE) is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit organization committed to creating educational programs or campaigns that nurture lifelong connections and cooperative action between peoples and social movements working towards a just and sustainable world. ENGAGE was founded in 2001 by alumni of the Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE) Thailand study abroad program as a mechanism for linking the struggles of Thai communities to grassroots movements in the United States, and to create a global network of students turning their abroad experiences into lifelong action for social change.

The ENGAGE network puts forth the following principles as the primary values that influence the work of its network and members:

- **Collective Action** – *We support local, grassroots solutions for global challenges.*
- **Education for Solidarity** – *We use experiential, community-based education tools that encourage learners to become change agents within larger social movements.*
- **Reciprocity** – *We nurture diverse and mutually-beneficial relationships to support a just and sustainable world.*
- **Anti-Oppression** – *We work to illuminate and challenge unjust systems of power and oppression on personal, institutional, and societal levels, striving to recognize assets within our network and to leverage these in support of our allies.*
- **Equity of Power** – *We build collective responsibility through shared leadership, equal participation, and consensus.*
- **Reflective Practice** – *We highly value our collective process and therefore continually evaluate and refine our goals, projects, communication, and decision-making systems (ENGAGE, 2010b).*

While initially taking the form of a solidarity network for Thailand's grassroots peoples' movement, the Assembly of the Poor (becoming akin to other US-based solidarity networks such as the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador), in subsequent years ENGAGE's membership has diversified and the purview of its projects has expanded to include work with

peoples' movements in the United States and the creation of educational programs intended to nurture the next generation of critically engaged global citizens.

While the ENGAGE network is comprised of hundreds of former study abroad students, its work and projects are largely informed by three leadership bodies. These include:

- **Network Coordinator** – The Network Coordinator's role is to monitor and support the day-to-day operations of the network, check in with network members who may/may not be members of the leadership bodies, recruit new members to join ENGAGE, identify grant opportunities, and oversee all accounting and management issues. At present the ENGAGE Network Coordinator is based in Barron, WI. The Network Coordinator is the only paid position within the ENGAGE network.
- **Board of Peers (BoP)** – This is the representative body of ENGAGE. Its 6-8 members each serve three year terms and are responsible for advising ENGAGE campaigns, fundraising for the network, and developing an annual network strategy for organizational development. This body also maintains the network's 501(c)(3) status and monitors network activities to ensure that no member initiatives will jeopardize the network's nonprofit status or invite legal scrutiny. To become a member of this committee a person can either apply during the annual application period, or be nominated by someone from within the network. The entire network is granted opportunities to offer feedback on candidates and final decisions are made at a leadership meeting at ENGAGE's annual Convergence (its annual meeting).

- **Steering Committee** – The ENGAGE steering committee is comprised of ENGAGE members who are actively involved in grassroots organizing work in their personal lives, or are helping coordinate existing ENGAGE campaigns or projects. To become a member of the Steering Committee, a network member must complete an application to become an ENGAGE “base.” ENGAGE bases are hubs of place-based and community-based education. Organizers at ENGAGE bases are creating models of experiential learning and critical pedagogy where they live. ENGAGE bases support local community organizing by working to bridge social divides and build new relationships, generate shared analysis, and link the local to the global.

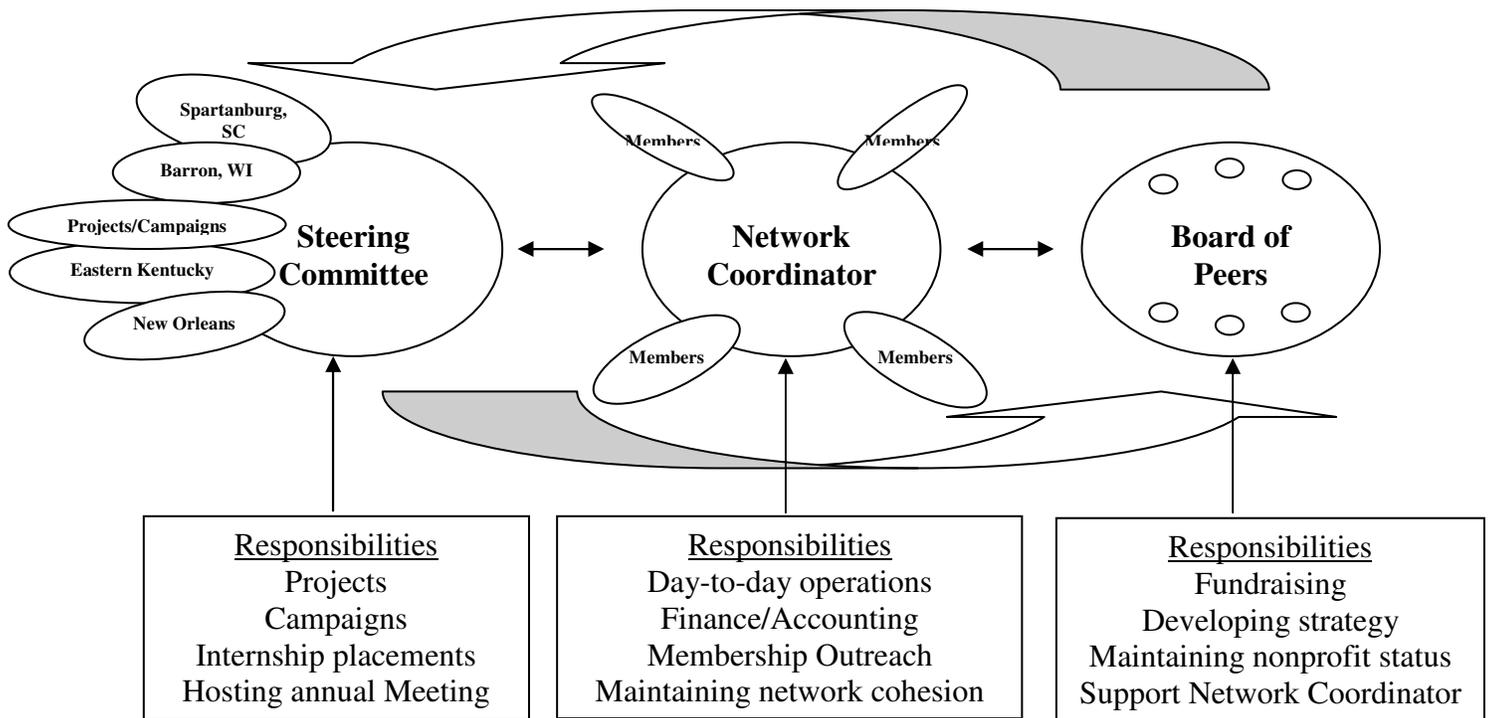
At present, ENGAGE has four bases: one in Spartanburg, South Carolina, working with community members in a former mill village; one in Kentucky, working with Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) on anti-mountaintop removal coal mining initiatives; one in New Orleans, working on post-Katrina organizing work around sustainable food systems; and one in Barron, Wisconsin, that works on food justice issues with the local Somali diaspora.

Current ENGAGE campaigns also have representation on the Steering Committee. Once a month, representatives from all bases and projects come together as the ENGAGE Steering Committee to discuss strategy and project ideas for how they can support one another’s work, as well as develop experiential education opportunities that will connect their work and offer educational opportunities for returning study abroad students to plug into.

The ENGAGE bases are used as platforms for hosting ENGAGE sponsored educational activities such as its internships, annual Convergence, and summer experiential learning programming. The ENGAGE bases maintain the ongoing community relationships and trust that are essential for building rich learning experiences for students and community members. Because students or interns eventually leave, it is the responsibility of the base to ensure that all work and projects are maintained and all stakeholders happy with the relationship.

Because ENGAGE places an emphasis on equity of power within the organization, the overall leadership structure is liable to change and develop depending on the needs or concerns of different members of the network. Just because there is a hierarchy of leadership does not mean that decisions cannot be contested and deliberated until consensus is reached.

Visually, the ENGAGE leadership structure looks like this:



ENGAGE projects & campaigns are characterized by their emphasis on helping participants “see the struggles of others, develop empathy, and make commitments to work in solidarity for social change” (ENGAGE, 2005). Past ENGAGE projects have included the coordination of four Thai farmer speaker tours that educated U.S. consumers about fair trade rice and its benefits – a campaign that ultimately brought fair trade rice to U.S. store shelves – and in 2006 Oxfam America sponsored the ENGAGE network to bring Thai activists to the U.S. to promote awareness of its anti-U.S.-Thai Free Trade Agreement campaign (ENGAGE, 2010a). Since 2009 ENGAGE has worked as an ally with grassroots people’s organization Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC), and has published two action reports on the effects of mountaintop removal coal mining on Eastern Kentucky communities; coordinated numerous mountaintop removal witness tours to help promote awareness and develop relationships with Appalachian communities affected by mountaintop removal coal mining; and connected communities resisting mountaintop removal with several Thai communities resisting similar mining projects in NE Thailand (ENGAGE, 2010c).

At the end of 2007 two new emphases – the local and the global - emerged within the network. In 7 years ENGAGE had proven that study abroad students could organize, implement, and win effective campaigns reciprocal to the communities they studied with while abroad. As a result, in 2008 ENGAGE began efforts to affiliate with other global justice-minded study abroad programs to see if it could replicate the success of its model, expand the organization’s membership, and create the potential for linking social movements throughout the Global South via returned study abroad students. In addition to CIEE Thailand, ENGAGE is currently in negotiations to develop relationships with several other study abroad programs and is currently

working with students returning from study abroad programs in the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

As ENGAGE continues to pursue efforts to affiliate with other study abroad programs, there is also another movement within the network – coordinated by the Steering Committee – that aims to support U.S.-based grassroots work of members and to develop educational programming that links these efforts together. As of 2011, ENGAGE is pursuing a strategy of developing an internship program for returned study abroad students that will place them with ENGAGE members working on grassroots work, as well as a summer experiential learning program called *ENGAGE University* that aims to “immerse college students in a variety of community development initiatives across America to stimulate civic engagement through grassroots engagement and collaboration. Through experiential learning activities, students will explore topics such as American identity and culture, complex social and economic development issues, community organizing, student empowerment and alternative education” (ENGAGE University, 2010).

Lastly, ENGAGE has its annual meeting – the ENGAGE Convergence – that has become a forum for returned study abroad students to come together, exchange stories and project ideas, and to learn from local communities. The Convergence is typically hosted at an ENGAGE base location where strong relationships already exist with local communities, thus allowing for authentic and exchange-based learning to occur between guests/participants and communities. The Convergence is an event that brings together “grassroots organizers, educators, students, volunteers and citizens working for just and sustainable communities by engaging them in solidarity building, workshops, exchanges, and service projects that emphasize the collective learning process as a means for positive social change” (Convergence, 2011).

ENGAGE Programs and Projects/Campaigns

ENGAGE Programs

- Summer Internships at bases
- Annual Convergence at a base
- Midyear retreat at a base
- ENGAGE University: A summer community-based experiential learning program

ENGAGE Projects/Campaigns

- Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights Campaign. This project team has produced 3 human rights reports
- Food Justice Campaign, which has coordinated farmer tours and helped bring Fair Trade Rice to U.S. consumers
- Internships at bases

Council on International Educational Exchange: Development + Globalization

The origins and philosophy of ENGAGE can be best understood by exploring the nature of the study abroad program from which most of ENGAGE's membership is derived. The Council on International Educational Exchange's Development & Globalization program in NE Thailand (CIEE Thailand) is a community-based, experiential study abroad program that was started in 1995 and is currently based at Khon Kaen University in Northeast Thailand's regional capital city Khon Kaen. The catalogue description of CIEE Thailand reads: "The program in Thailand is designed for students wishing to learn about a broad range of issues – effects of dams, urban slums, persons living with HIV/AIDS, organic farming, pollution, social movements, human rights, NGOs – primarily from a grassroots perspective within the social and political context of a developing country" (CIEE Thailand, 2006, p.5). The program, in its fifteen years of existence, has fostered close relationships with many of the marginalized communities in the Northeast, as well as the nationwide peoples' movement, the Assembly of the

Poor. *Isan*, as the Northeast is known, has historically been the poorest region of Thailand, and, as a result, it has consistently been the benefactor of numerous development plans created by the central government.

Development policies have overwhelmingly benefited the interests of Bangkok and its businesses while either overlooking or destroying small-scale agricultural and fishing livelihoods in the Northeast. Dams have flooded fishing communities; logging and the establishment of national forests have relocated forest communities and stripped others of their source of food and raw materials; export-oriented agriculture policies have led to huge debt for small-scale farmers; and the codifying of land rights has ignored familial and communal land claims.

Grassroots resistance to centrally planned development projects has not only been due to the number of ill-planned development projects in the region, but also a product of the student and communist leaders who fled a violent military coup in October 1976 to hide in the region's once lush forests. As the political atmosphere improved, many members of this radical contingent stayed in the Northeast to build nonprofit and community organizations. This work is based on the theories of the student movement which sought to transform Thai society by educating and organizing the rural and urban poor (the majority of the population) to demand democratic change.

As this movement has grown, networks such as the Non-Governmental Organization Coordinating Committee on Rural Development (NGO-CORD) and the Assembly of the Poor have linked slum communities, indebted farmers, people living with HIV/AIDS, landless farmers, and others. Representatives from these communities and community organizations have played an active role in creating, shaping, and guiding the objectives of CIEE Thailand today. The CIEE Thailand's stated program goals are to:

- *Provide a space where students can learn to struggle and grow together as a community.*
- *Provide a space for meaningful cultural exchange.*
- *Provide opportunities for active learning by giving students first-hand experience with the interconnected issues of globalization and its impact on the communities of Northeast Thailand.*
- *Foster global responsibility by helping students reexamine their roles in globalization*
- *Challenge students to re-examine their perception of what education is and how they learn*
- *Connect present and previous students to help transfer lessons learned while abroad back to the U.S. context*
- *Be an empowering presence and ally to communities (CIEE Thailand, 2006, p.3).*

To accomplish these goals, CIEE Thailand provides contexts and opportunities whereby students can understand the varied positions and worldviews of the stakeholders involved in a variety of development-related projects. On a typical semester, students will learn about rural and urban trends and regional development schemes via five different week-long community-based excursions. During these trips, students live in communities and engage in daily livelihood rituals as a means to understand the local culture. Throughout the duration of a typical community stay, students will have what CIEE Thailand refers to as ‘exchanges’. During these exchanges students sit down and engage in dialogue with the various stakeholders of a particular issue. For example, if students are learning about dams they will likely exchange with communities affected by a dam, the government agency responsible for operating and maintaining the dam, a local NGO/nonprofit that works with community members, and potentially a regional office that oversees the implementation of regional water management and power schemes.

These weeklong units are student facilitated with a strong emphasis placed on peer-to-peer learning and group process. Before each unit, there is a briefing session coordinated by student facilitators, and at the end of the unit these same student facilitators guide the student group through a workshop to process what has been learned. Each unit includes a lecture given

by a faculty member at Khon Kaen University, as well as reading packets that brief students on the larger themes and issues of what they are studying and include details specific to the Thai context. Program staff and interns provide facilitation, logistical, and translation support, but the learning process is primarily guided by the student group.

CIEE Thailand articulates its learning model as having four stages of student development: *Awareness, People-to-People Exchange, Being in the World, and Connectedness*. During the *Awareness* stage students are introduced to the themes of the program and see how they are situated in global and local structures of power. This phase of development generally occurs in a classroom setting and is focused on consciousness raising about issues students typically have not studied in traditional academia (CIEE Thailand, 2006, p.53). The second stage, *People to People Exchange*, is where the abstract concepts and ideas students are studying (development, globalization, etc) are humanized. During this stage students meet with people directly involved or affected by the particular issue being studied. This is also where students begin to interact with local communities and participate in local livelihood/service activities (such as harvesting rice, fishing, or collecting garbage from a landfill) (p.54).

When awareness is connected with real people, the general effect is a stirring of the conscience. One begins to not only be conscious, but develops a conscience in terms of various issues facing the majority of humans and the environment today. However, being aware, making preliminary friendships with those who suffer, and coming to have a "conscience" in terms of these issues is not enough. Students have been moved intellectually and have felt the pain of others. Hopefully, this phase begins to move the learning process from the individual to the group, and from thinking and feeling to action (p.55).

Stage three, *Being in the World*, is perhaps the most difficult for students to attain, but when successful it is within this stage that students begin to organize themselves and realize their power as a group. "What drives [students] forward is a sense of being part of a collective vision, laying out a plan, and acting...The individual student, having already gone through a change

intellectually and emotionally, now makes changes necessary for her own empowerment to happen” (p.56).

Program literature claims that the final stage is rarely reached by most student groups on the CIEE Thailand program; this is the stage of *Connectedness*. This is when students begin to develop an “appreciation for the relationships that the program has nurtured through the years and past groups” of students and the projects they have passed down over the semesters. At this stage, students begin to dream about how they can continue to work together as a group when they return to the United States. Groups in this stage realize that the group learning process they have co-constructed is as valuable as any project they could have worked on during the semester, and see it in many ways as a powerful, inspiring, and generative process that is not easily re-created, and thus worth preserving. Students in this stage form the backbone of the ENGAGE network’s membership; it is also students in this stage who often return to Thailand at the completion of their undergraduate studies to intern and learn how to facilitate the CIEE Thailand learning model for new generations of CIEE students (and future ENGAGE members).

Characteristics of Justice-Oriented Study Abroad Programs

The typical justice-oriented study abroad program – like CIEE Thailand explained above, or the Nicaragua service-learning program that Richard Kiely's (2004, 2005a, 2005b) research is based on – generally incorporate several common programmatic components that make them unique from traditional direct-enrollment study abroad programs. When combined, these components create learning contexts whereby a transformational learning process can emerge.

These components can be generally described as:

- Community partners are seen as 'teachers,' and the challenges they are struggling with are the course 'texts';
- There are opportunities to engage with local communities in service/livelihood activities such as harvesting rice with a farmer or scavenging for scrap metal with an urban scavenger;
- Opportunities are made for mutual exchange of knowledge and stories between students and community;
- Students live and learn from communities that are engaged in forms of resistance or struggle (e.g. anti-dam or mining movements);
- There is an emphasis on group process and student group learning;
- Students are encouraged to take action by working on projects that are meant for the public sphere or are reciprocal to a community partner;
- Lastly, all of these components are embedded in an iterative experiential learning cycle.

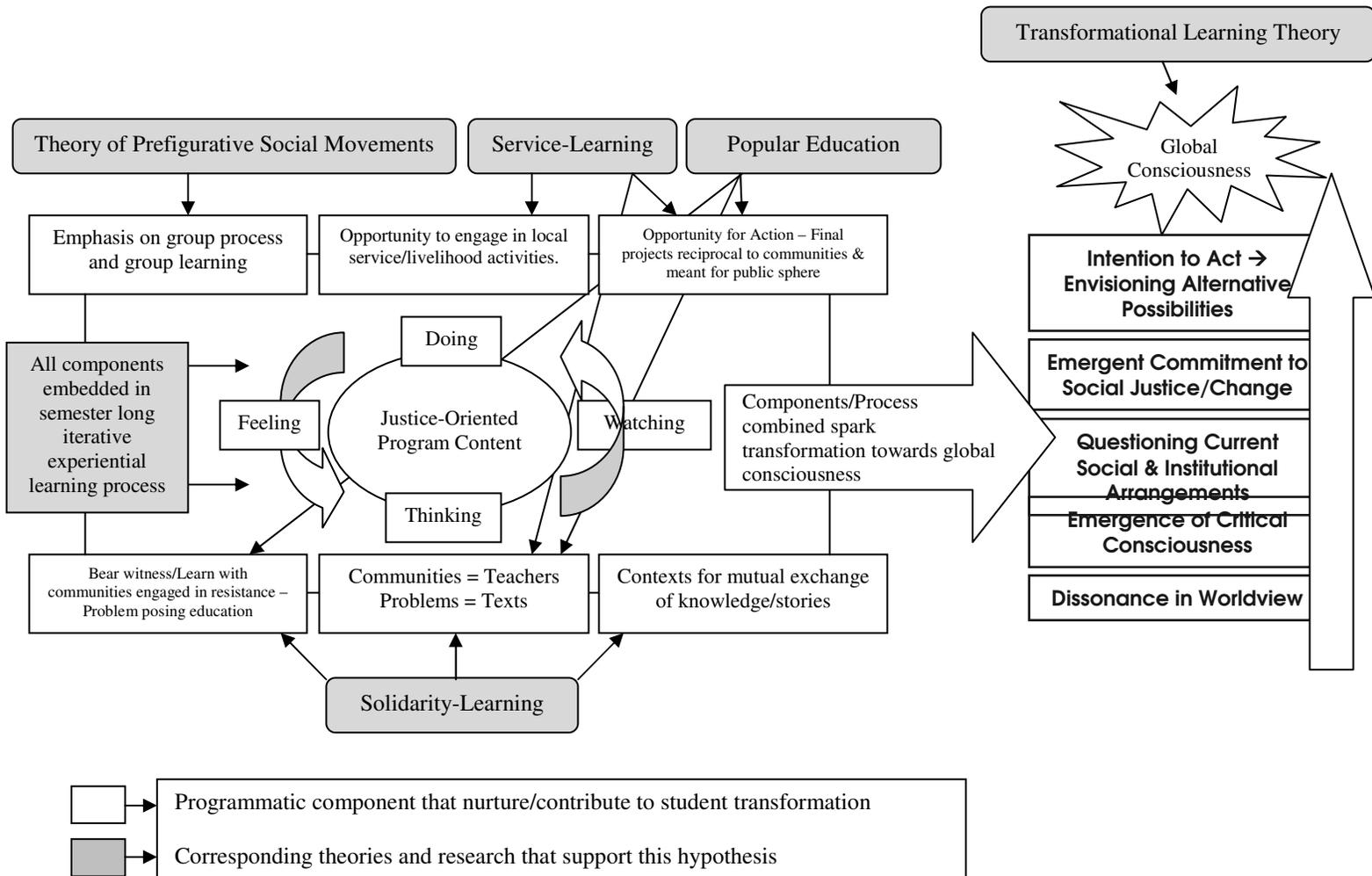
Over the course of a typical program, these components play themselves out and inform the overall transformation that a student goes through as he/she works towards developing a global consciousness. Many of these component's transformative potential is well documented by research and supported by theory in fields ranging from service-learning, experiential learning, popular education, solidarity education, prefigurative social movement theory, and, of course, transformational learning theory.

It could be argued that any organization hoping to work with returned study abroad students – to support their ongoing transformation and movement towards global consciousness – would also need to retain some of the programmatic components that helped instigate the

transformative potential to begin with. The transformational learning process is not a static one-off event that guarantees a learner will arrive at universal truth, but it does provoke epochal shifts in understanding that can be profound. Nonetheless, there is no reason why this type of learning must come to an end at the conclusion of a study abroad program.

Theory suggests that each of the program components outlined above holds the potential to contribute to student transformation. The following section is a literature review of the relevant theories that inform the transformative potential of the various components of the study abroad experience.

Visually, the components and corresponding supporting theories look like this:



Review of the Literature/Theoretical Discourse

Transformational Learning Theory

Transformational learning theory is largely informed by the pioneering work of adult educator Jack Mezirow and his concept of “perspective transformation” (1978). The theory focuses on how learners come to identify, negotiate, and act on *their* frame of reference (Mezirow, 2000), or meaning perspective (1991), and the values and beliefs that inform it, “rather than those [that are] uncritically assimilated from others” (Mezirow, 2000, p.8). Mezirow (2000) argues that people absorb dominant cultural paradigms or systems of belief from the social milieu they grow up in and that “one’s frame of reference may include intentionally or incidentally learned philosophical, economic, sociological, and psychological orientations or theories” (p.17). These systems of belief, which inform a person’s habits of mind and resulting point of view, come to constitute a learner’s worldview, which, if not critically interrogated, can ossify and thus hinder the possibility for individual and social emancipation.

When transformational learning occurs, a person reformulates “reified structures of meaning by reconstructing dominant narratives” and becomes more critically reflective (p.19). Through the process of transformation a person may come to critique or abandon premises that function to prop up a worldview no longer useful for deriving meaning from the world. Transformative learning, therefore, is a process whereby a learner expands her/his worldview in a manner that is more “inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that [she/he] may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action” (pp. 7-8).

For Mezirow (2000), transformational learning processes often begin with a ‘disorienting dilemma’ that occurs suddenly (i.e. a large discrepancy between a person’s experience and

his/her meaning perspective and taken-for-granted assumptions “acquired uncritically during childhood” (Taylor, 2000, p. 288)), or it can transpire incrementally in a manner that leads to incongruence between a person’s prior worldview and a newly emergent understanding of the world. Following an initial disorienting dilemma, Mezirow argues there are at least nine other “phases of meaning becoming clarified” that a learner will go through which include: self-examination, a critical assessment of assumptions, awareness that others share this experience, exploration of options, planning a course of action, acquisition of knowledge and skills to implement plans, provisionally trying new roles, building self-confidence and competence, and a reintegration into one’s life on new terms (Mezirow, 2000, p.22).

Mezirow (2000) acknowledges that education is a political endeavor in that educators cannot be neutral, but an educator’s goal can never be to indoctrinate. Instead, educators are what he coins “cultural activists” who strive to nurture a world of “freer participation in reflective discourse, transformative learning, reflective action, and a greater realization of agency for all learners” (p. 30). In other words, an educator should never guide learners to adopt a particular stance on an issue; rather, he/she should strive to inculcate general values of greater participation and freedom in the learning process. Mezirow cautions that an educator, while driven by a higher goal, must not lose sight of the objectives of the learner he/she is working with. It is quite possible that a transformative learner with an objective of social change will “seek out others who share their insights to form cells of resistance to unexamined cultural norms” (p30), or identify with social movements that Mezirow (1991) says reinforce a “new way of seeing our own dilemmas” (p. 188), but a learner’s objective may also be much more personal and mundane, such as learning how to drive a car. The transformational educator is ultimately responsible to meet a learner where he or she is at and work from there.

In recent years, some of Mezirow's associates have developed and critiqued his theory of transformation to expand its relevance in light of postmodern, feminist, and social justice theories. While most of these theoretical developments are beyond the scope of this paper, one theorist, Stephen Brookfield (2000), warrants mention for his efforts to fuse transformational learning theory with critical social and cultural theory via the notion of *ideology critique* (p.128), and the understanding that critical reflection must focus on both overt and "submerged power dynamics" (p.136).

Whereas Mezirow's theory of transformation has the learner developing critical reflective capacities in terms of external political, economic, or social ideologies, Brookfield has argued for the need to look at the internalized "dimensions of ideology" and how they shape "sets of values, beliefs, myths, explanations, and justifications that appear self-evidently true and morally desirable" (p.129). Brookfield also challenges the idea that any person can develop through a series of linear phases towards knowing a true core self; this notion of arriving at truth, or 'finding yourself,' is internalized deception that a learner tells to him or herself by constructing false narratives that are (albeit unwittingly) socially and culturally laden. For Brookfield, transformation can occur, but it is not a process with an endpoint and it is impossible to transform to a point where a learner can find him or herself outside of power relations or at a truth that is not permeated by cultural and social influences. Brookfield's work has shown that transformational learning theory can still be relevant in a postmodern theoretical context, as long as transformational learners and educators are conscious of engaging in critical reflection that intentionally incorporates ideology critique and the interrogation of internal and external influences of power.

More recently, Richard Kiely has augmented Mezirow's transformational learning theory to understand the transformational learning processes of undergraduate students participating in international service-learning programs with social justice orientations (Kiely, 2004, 2005a, 2005b). Kiely's longitudinal research explores the transformational learning process of twenty-two students representing five separate cohorts from 1994-2001 who were participants in an international service-learning program based in Nicaragua. From this study, Kiely generated a transformational learning model that identifies five distinct elements that characterize the international service-learning and study abroad experience. These include: contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting (Kiely, 2005, p.8).

Kiely's Five Phases of Transformation in International Study Abroad Settings

Theme	Meaning & Characteristics
Contextual border crossing	There are personal (i.e., biography, personality, learning style, expectations, prior travel experience, and sense of efficacy), structural (i.e., race, class, gender, culture, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, and physical ability), historical (i.e., the socioeconomic and political history of [host country] and US-[host country] relations within larger socioeconomic and political systems), and programmatic factors (i.e., intercultural immersion, direct service-work and opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue with diverse perspectives, and curriculum that focuses on social justice issues such as poverty, economic disparities, unequal relations of power) which intersect to influence and frame the way students experience the process of transformational learning in service-learning.
Dissonance	Dissonance constitutes incongruence between participants' prior frame of reference and aspects of the contextual factors that shape the service-learning experience. There is a relationship between dissonance type, intensity, and duration and the nature of learning processes that result. Low to high intensity dissonance acts as triggers for learning. High-intensity dissonance catalyzes ongoing learning. Dissonance types are historical, environmental, social, physical, economic, political, cultural, spiritual, communicative, and technological.
Personalizing	Personalizing represents how participants individually respond to and learn from different types of dissonance. It is visceral and emotional, and compels students to assess internal strengths and weaknesses. Emotions and feelings include anger, happiness, sadness, helplessness, fear, anxiety, confusion, joy, nervousness, romanticizing, cynicism, sarcasm, selfishness, and embarrassment.
Processing	Processing is both an individual reflective learning process and a social, dialogic learning process. Processing is problematizing, questioning, analyzing, and searching for causes and solutions to problems and issues. It occurs through various reflective and discursive processes such as journaling, reflection groups, community dialogues,

	walking, research, and observation.
Connecting	Connecting is learning to affectively understand and empathize through relationships with community members, peers, and faculty. It is learning through nonreflective modes such as sensing, sharing, feeling, caring, participating, relating, listening, comforting, empathizing, intuiting, and doing. Examples include performing skits, singing, dancing, swimming, attending church, completing chores, playing games, home stays, sharing food, treating wounds, and sharing stories.

Kiely uses the phrase “Emerging global consciousness” to describe both the outcome of the transformational learning outlined in the table above, as well as the emergent process of reintegration a student faces when he/she returns to the U.S. (Kiely, 2005b, p.278). According to Kiely, there are three key categories and corresponding characteristics that are suggestive of an emergent global consciousness. These include:

- *Envisioning* – “an emerging critical awareness of complex relations of power and of how identity, position and the ability to act autonomously are socially and culturally structured” (p.278).
- *Transforming forms* – characterized by “Ongoing and significant changes in the political, moral, intellectual, cultural, personal, and spiritual aspects of students’ worldview” (Kiely, 2005a, p.10).
- *Chameleon Complex: Re/Dis-integration*: Equipped with a newfound “heightened awareness of global inequalities and disparities,” participants return to the U.S. excited to continue exploring their emerging global consciousness and to organize actions for social justice, only to be confronted and demoralized by the resistance and apathy maintained by the hegemonic “mainstream ways of thinking and acting” (Kiely, 2005b, p.278).

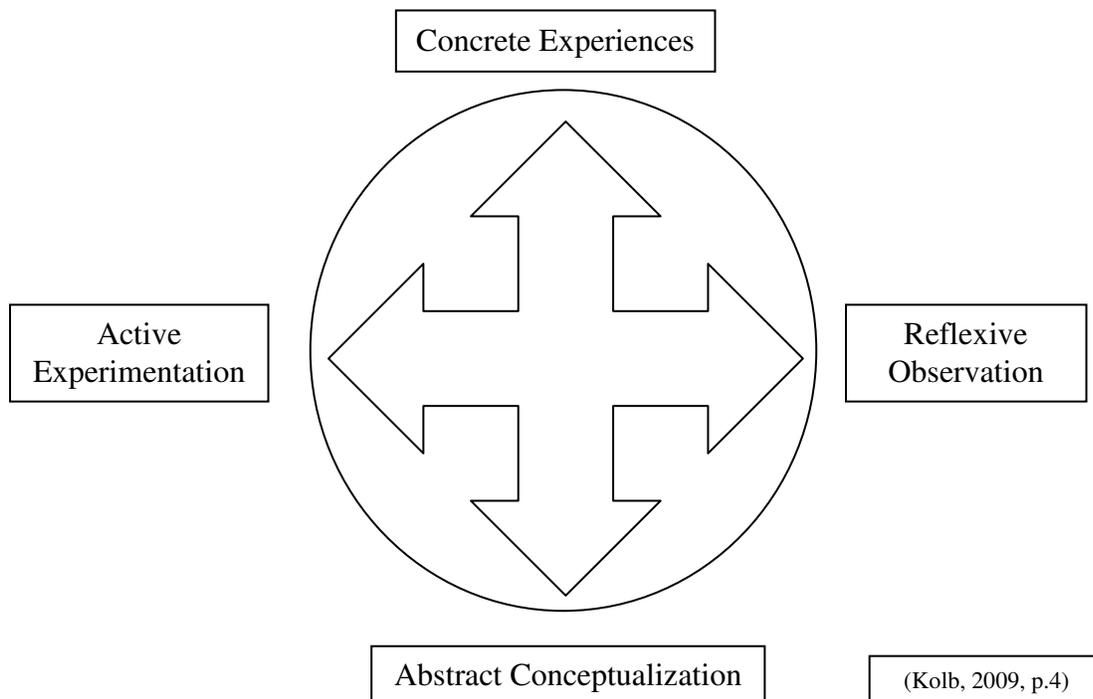
Experiential Learning

Education theorist David Kolb (1984) is most known for his contributions to the field of adult education with his theory of experiential learning and corresponding learning styles. In Kolb’s most influential work, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*, Kolb reviews original works of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget to draw conclusions about the nature of learning. Kolb synthesizes the key principles and proposes six key characteristics about the nature of experiential learning: 1) Learning is best conceived of as a process, not in terms of outcomes; 2) Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience;

3) The process of learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world; 4) Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world; 5) Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment; and, 6) Learning is the process of creating knowledge (pp. 20-38).

From this synthesis, Kolb proposes that within the experiential learning process there are four capacities for adapting to the world. Adult educator Matthais Finger and Jose Manuel Asún (2001) have describe these capacities as: “1) the capacity of having concrete experiences; 2) the capacity of making reflective observations; 3) the capacity of making abstract conceptualisations; and 4) the capacity of making active experimentations” (p. 43). A simpler way to think of these capacities is feeling, watching, thinking, and doing. From these four capacities emerged Kolb’s now well-known process of experiential learning (below). Learning, according to Kolb, happens with the combination of these four capacities which amounts to a “holistic process of adaptation to the world” (Kolb, 1984, p.31).

Kolb’s Process of Experiential Learning



From this synthesis Kolb proposes a working definition of learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p.41). From this framework Kolb developed corresponding learning style categorizations that can help learners locate their preferred learning style within the process of experiential learning. The four individual styles of learning have been called: accommodators, divergers, assimilators, and convergers. While a significant amount of Kolb’s work has been devoted to these learning styles, they are not as relevant for the purposes of this paper.

Popular Education

In Paulo Freire’s (2005) seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he articulates his critique of the banking style of education, which positions students as mere receptacles to be filled with information by a teacher, and argues that this imbalanced relationship is indicative of an oppressive and static society (p.72). For Freire, this form of education is dehumanizing and only serves to perpetuate a society of domination and oppression that stifles curiosity and human potential. Freire spent his life articulating a vision for what a different kind of education could look like; one based on hope, love, emancipation, liberation, and freedom (Freire 1996, 1998, 2005). Freire argued that people need to embrace the “unfinished” nature of humanity and to approach life and learning as an unending process of becoming, rather than a prescriptive process with predetermined ends (Freire, 1998, p.55). In lieu of the teacher “as the sole dispenser of knowledge,” Freire proposes a pedagogy “intended to render learners active participants in the process of their own learning, to render them ‘subject’” rather than mere ‘objects’ within an oppressive system” (Mayo, 1999, p.63).

In order to reach a point of becoming ‘subject’, Freire believes that the learner/teacher dichotomy must be broken down to the point that all people can be seen as both teachers and learners (i.e. even a villager or peasant can be a teacher), and the ‘learner’ must develop a critical consciousness via a process of “problem-posing” education (Freire, 2005, p.79). Problem-posing education necessitates communication, reflection, dialogue, engagement, and is the essence of Freire’s famous *Praxis*, or, the iterative process of reflection and action in the world. By engaging in such a process a learner will be involved in a “constant unveiling of reality” and from this unveiling a critical consciousness will emerge and the desire for a “critical intervention” in reality – to transform the world – will overtake the learner and compel her/him to respond to the challenges she/he has borne witness to (p.81).

Service-Learning

Research on the field of service-learning has shown that service has a great potential for helping young adults develop critical thinking skills, desires to be civically and politically engaged, a sense of social responsibility, and motivation to be active and engaged global citizens (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich & Corngold, 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hamrick, 1998; Kiely & Nielsen, 2002). Service, writ large, has helped the ivory tower re-envision its role and relevance for local communities – both in the U.S. and abroad – and has been a key tool for invigorating campus/community relations. The so-called service-learning movement within higher education has transformed lives and institutions; it has served millions of meals to the hungry; it has nurtured literacy; it has matched abused children with mentors; and, at times, it has laid bare the violence of poverty and the lived reality of marginalized communities who would otherwise go unnoticed.

Nonetheless, service-learning does have its detractors. Many argue that service-learning, as it is traditionally understood, is rooted in a liberal individualist philosophy that fails to incorporate social justice pedagogy into its theoretical grounding, and as a result fails to address structural inequity in society through its reliance on applying “stupid Band-Aids” to systemic problems (Schultz, 2007, p. 172; Vogelgesang & Rhoads, 2003). This type of work is characterized by organizations like Habitat for Humanity, and one time short-term activities like serving soup at homeless shelters. Cipolle (2010) argues that the majority of service-learning programs rarely move students beyond a charity model of giving back or doing things for a community. In other cases the service experience becomes “an unhelpful time sink” (Tryon et al., 2008, p. 16) that re-channels precious community resources towards ensuring that students have valuable service experiences. Mitchell (2008) says that traditional service-learning does not place enough emphasis on social change, the distribution of power, or the development of authentic relationships with community partners, while countless other critics have skewered service-learning’s inherently paternalistic nature of “servicing” that reinforces “dominant deficit perspectives of ‘others’ and substantiates the unquestioned norms of whiteness for students engaged in service-learning” (Butin, 2010, p. 11; Eby, 1998; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Illich, 1968).

While the theoretical critiques are only slowly sinking in, there is an emergent vision for where service-learning needs to go. Vogelgesang and Rhoads (2003) believe that a “different conception of student engagement, one that incorporates the wide range of views captured by traditional notions of service and more radical conceptions of activism, is needed,” and “suggest that social change is more likely to occur through service projects that involve collective struggle and specifically address structural elements of society” (p. 6). Others have articulated a vision of

a post-service era, one that will help us move beyond conceptualizations of service-learning that harbor “modernist, liberal, and radical individualistic notions of self, progress, knowledge, and power” (Butin, 2010, p. 10), towards new models that will help students ask “fundamental questions about justice, to hear voices rarely heard...and reveal the “‘deep divisions’ within which and through which we think about content knowledge, cultural openness, and oppression” (Hollander, 2010, p. ix).

Solidarity-Learning

Solidarity-learning is an emergent approach to learning that has as of yet only been vaguely and disparately theorized. In many ways, it is a response to the challenges leveled against service-learning by its critics. The concept of solidarity is useful for addressing the modernist and individualistic notions of help and servicing other people because inherent in its meaning is a notion of camaraderie with others in a common struggle to challenge or resist oppression.

In 1950, American philosopher Baker Brownell wrote extensively about the collapse of rural life and what he perceived as the dehumanizing aspects of modern society that were rapidly replacing the values found in U.S. agrarian-based communities. Brownell’s work explored the differences he observed in the human relationships found in rural communities, and those found in modern urban communities. For Brownell, solidarity was important for giving meaning to life and offered “spiritual coherence” and a “sense of unity of value” within groups (p.107). He argues, however, that the nature of solidarity can take on variations of two different forms – agglutinative and organic solidarity – depending on an urban or rural context.

At the time that Brownell was writing, he saw agglutinative solidarity as ‘of the city’ and that it “refers to the kind of coherence found among members of an anonymous public” (p.108).

While this form of solidarity can be found in the common interests people share with one another, and can at times elicit sensations of great passion and feeling, it is held together and maintained via infrequent moments of public (albeit semi-anonymous) communion, characteristic of modern society (p.108). This form of solidarity can exist within any authoritarian setting, organization, or school where a person becomes merely a functional instrument, and it can rely on dispersed and irregular events to bring people together for brief moments of union (such as watching a baseball game). Conversely, organic solidarity, while also about a sense of belonging, is also about coming to understand people in more holistic ways. An organic solidarity concerns itself with the “basic problem of human orientation towards communal groups” and understanding people holistically through developing bonds that can extend a lifetime (rather than the duration of a baseball game) (p.116).

Brownell criticized community organizers of his time for not approaching communities with an ethic of nurturing organic solidarity and instead accused them of dispersing the specialization and objectifying nature of modern society with its emphasis on individualism and agglutinative solidarity. For Brownell, modernity brought with it the end of authentic relationships, community, and meaningful solidarity and paved the way for paternalistic notions of development and the minions who peddle its wares to save the so-called undeveloped. Today the concept of solidarity in the United States has become tainted in the public consciousness due to its close relationship with the labor movement and socialism, but some work has been done within the field of service-learning to reclaim the term solidarity in order to address the shortcomings of service-learning and its modernist and pragmatic ways of approaching social problems. Renewed interest is emerging to explore how authentic relationships and better processes for engagement can emerge for people to connect and organize around. For Streckfuss

& Giorgetti (2010), in discussing how solidarity can be incorporated into study abroad service-learning contexts, they argue that solidarity learning is about learning the human perspective and coming to feel “the other as sibling and assuming his/her circumstances as one’s own” and emphasizes “the importance of sharing into the reality of the dispossessed over ‘doing something’ for them” (Streckfuss & Giorgetti, 2010, p.1).

Theory of Prefigurative Social Movements

In many ways, the challenges that past political and social movements have faced have resulted from their narrow focus on achieving specific goals, such as toppling a government or advocating for specific causes. Mao’s idealistic vision for a communist revolution ended in the death of millions, and global capitalism has led to the spread of neoliberal ideology that leaves nothing un-objectified in its path (and its insatiable appetite for natural resources may also be judged by history as responsible for the death of millions). Activist work and organizations are often criticized as hypocritical for wanting to create a more egalitarian and democratic society when the organizations themselves are hierarchically organized (often with white male leaders). Kaufman’s (2003) work shows that many organizations often place greater emphasis on growing an organization and pursuing narrow political agendas that can ultimately cripple the transformative potential of the organization itself (p. 277). In other words, organizations can often fall victim to becoming static and rigid and thus deny the revolutionary potential that may have been imbedded in their initial formation.

With the advent of the *posts*¹, efforts to conceptualize social and political change have become even more complex and challenging. Because of Foucault’s (1984) contribution to re-conceptualizing the way power functions in society, power can no longer be thought of as solely mediated via a centralized power that dictates social reality, and power is not something that can

¹ Shorthand for post-modernism and post-structuralism and the movement away from modernism and grand narratives

be escaped as power itself is pervasive and generative. In a review of Foucault's work, philosopher Michael Hardt (2010) lays out the challenges of influencing authentic social change in the age of the *posts*:

The first proposition is that in modern society there is no locus of power that dictates social order; rather, power functions in capillary form through decentred networks of institutions and apparatuses. Second, there is no 'outside' to power, such that the subjects over which it rules are constituted by the functioning of power itself. Accepting the first proposition, that there is no centre of power, clearly undermines traditional forms of political thought and action, particularly those aimed at social change. How can we identify the enemy and where can we direct our political campaigns? Revolution can no longer be thought in terms of storming the Winter Palace and toppling the locus of oppressive power. Accepting the second proposition, however, that there is no outside to power, creates an even more disorienting situation. If we ourselves—our knowledge, desires and goals—are produced in the arrangements and application of power, then we must stop thinking of politics in terms of repressed subjects struggling for emancipation from the state, oppressive institutions, or even the social norms of heterosexuality. How can we struggle for a different society when we ourselves are constituted by power? Who is the subject we are striving to emancipate? (p.152).

The problems and implications of this situation present a serious challenge to the possibilities for social change. It suggests that not only are old forms of resistance relied on by social movements irrelevant, but even concepts such as justice, human rights, and democracy are themselves false grand narratives used to paper over dangerous struggles for power (as cited by Wain, 2004, p. 242). His analysis suggests that there are no “essential, fundamental or invariant concept[s]...to anchor” us in this world, but “rather an infinity of contextualizations that provide multiple and contradictory readings” of what our world could/can be (J.K Gibson-Graham, 1999, p.4).

Faced with the challenge of re-conceptualizing what social change can look like, the concept of *prefigurative* social movements – a concept originally explored by the New Left movement of the 1960s – has reemerged as a way of accommodating for the emergent *post* theories as they begin to settle into the social consciousness. According to Kaufman (2003), a

prefigurative movement necessitates a process of “creating the new world we are advocating as we go” through a process akin to Freire’s *praxis* (p.276). Movements can no longer focus solely on a single goal (e.g. organizing to remove a despot or bring down a corporation), while also deferring the issues of gender and race dynamics within the movement to an undefined point in the future. Failure to address these dynamics will result in these dynamics influencing the creation of a new state once the old despot is gone. While ‘power’ cannot be willed away, it must be examined and explored in an ongoing and unfolding process or it risks getting the best of any well-intentioned social justice movement. A prefigurative movement is the process of “reweaving social fabric” in an effort to create an “alternative social world,” and the relations created along the way “lay the foundation for the relations we will have after we achieve our goals” (p.278).

As a result, it has become imperative for organizations and groups working for social justice to “pay attention to race, class, and gender dynamics within organizations, and to work toward democracy in group processes” (p.278). While this emerging approach does not account for all of Foucault’s critiques, it is a step in the direction of creating movements based on constant processes of ‘becoming’, nested in inclusive group processes committed to analysis and re-analysis of emergent socio-historical phenomena and the way power constitutes and shapes the cultural milieu. Foucault was not necessarily against activism and ultimately his analysis was meant as a warning about the pernicious ways power can manifest and re-manifest itself. He once remarked: “My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper- and pessimistic activism” that necessitates careful vigilance (as cited by Kevin McDonough, 1993, para. 4). And this, in many ways, is an

invitation from Foucault – the figurehead of post structural theory – to cautiously transform the world.

Application of Theory to ENGAGE

Having outlined the components that inform justice-oriented study abroad programs, and having explored the theories that inform the transformative potential of these components, it can be argued that any returned study abroad organization that attempts to develop programs and curriculum to meet students where they are at in their process toward global consciousness will need to employ programmatic elements that align with what theory suggests are best practice – and what justice-oriented study abroad programs have shown provoke students on a path of transformation. Thus, to evaluate ENGAGE, its activities must be viewed through a theoretical lens to see if ENGAGE programming is in fact aligned with what research suggests is best practice.

The following grid outlines the various theories and their key concepts that are relevant to this study. Next these are used as a lens to assess how ENGAGE’s work correlates with these concepts, and the implications are noted.

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
Experiential Learning	Concrete Experience (Feeling) Reflective Observation (Watching) Abstract Conceptualization (Thinking) Active Experimentation (Doing)	Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGE is committed to experiential learning. This is noted in the organization’s principles/values and its commitment to facilitate programs that place returned study abroad students in direct contact with local U.S. communities. • The learning model ENGAGE uses during its educational programs is closely aligned with the model utilized in Thailand and includes time for feeling/watching/thinking/doing. • ENGAGE facilitates experiential learning opportunities via its summer internship program, its annual Convergence, and its summer community engagement program ENGAGE University • Experiential learning cycle comes naturally/makes sense to ENGAGE members due to prior participation in experiential study abroad program • Organization is managed utilizing reflective approach to assess past experiences and set organizational goals for future Gaps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are limited programs to meet the 	ENGAGE is experienced in facilitating experiential learning and its actions/projects suggest that it facilitates experiential learning as the theory suggests it should be done.

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
		needs of returned study abroad students. Only 4-5 bases have capacity to host interns, and it is unclear if all bases participate in this program	
Transformational Learning	<p>Disorienting Dilemma</p> <p>Perspective Transformation</p> <p>Ideology Critique</p> <p>Emerging Global Consciousness</p> <hr/> <p>Learners who experience transformational learning are often attracted to social movements in order to actualized newfound perspective transformation (Mezirow)</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members of ENGAGE show signs of having had transformational learning experiences while abroad. Their involvement with ENGAGE may be an indication of this. • ENGAGE campaigns/projects/internships offer venue for students to immediately plug into fulfilling work upon reentry to United States. • Campaign work has a justice orientation that suggests students are attempting to put into action an ideological critique they honed while abroad • ENGAGE programs/projects have potential to help students make clear connections between the local/global thus cementing emergent global consciousness <p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGE itself offers little in the way of programming that can spark a transformational learning process, but it does seem to offer opportunities that could help students continue to work towards a global consciousness. 	<p>ENGAGE should expand and scale up its model of educational programming to allow for more in-depth learning experiences in U.S. context.</p> <p>ENGAGE University program shows potential and should be supported. This could hold potential for developing transformative learning models in the future.</p> <p>ENGAGE lacks generative mechanisms within the organization to elicit transformation and this could lead to death of organization if CIEE Thailand ceases to exist. More formalized relationships with other justice-oriented study abroad programs should be negotiated.</p>

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGE efforts are more directed at supporting students who have already gone/going through a transformational process and seeking reintegration to US context and engagement with US grassroots movements 	
Popular Education	Problem-posing Education Praxis Critical Consciousness Development Taking Action Nurturing a process of “becoming”	Strengths: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGE takes action – examples: human rights report in Kentucky, bringing fair trade rice to US store shelves; challenging Thai/US Free Trade Agreement • ENGAGE Convergence serves as annual reflective space where members reflect on challenges of past year and set goals for upcoming year. ENGAGE is constantly in a state of being re-envisioned and “becoming” • ENGAGE approaches social change as ongoing iterative process – lifetime movement that allows flexibility in how it defines itself and the work it takes on • ENGAGE’s praxis nature suggests it is committed to emancipatory practices and freedom • ENGAGE does not perpetuate hierarchical teacher/student relationship – focuses on collective learning process 	<p>ENGAGE is a network that implicitly incorporates much of the values of popular education</p> <p>ENGAGE should explore how it can incorporate more problem-posing and critical consciousness development into the curriculum it develops for its educational programs.</p>

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
		<p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGE does not explicitly engage in activities that foster critical consciousness development. Programs & Projects/Campaigns allow venue for students to take action (albeit imbedded in a reflective process), but there is not a specific ENGAGE curriculum that allows this to happen yet. • Popular Education, its themes, and critical pedagogy are not foregrounded, but are implicit in way organization operates. • ENGAGE largely builds off students' existing knowledge and analysis of problems that they develop while abroad. ENGAGE does not actively pose problems to the network as a method for developing analysis of social/political problems 	
<p>Service-Learning</p>	<p>Standard Service-Learning:</p> <p>Civic & Political Engagement</p> <p>Social Responsibility</p> <p>Global Citizenship</p> <p>Best Practice Service-Learning:</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENGAGE internships and Human Rights Campaign work place participants in direct relationships with community partners to work on community defined projects. Participants end up working with marginalized communities in U.S. context and make global/local connections due to prior study abroad experience 	<p>ENGAGE's service efforts/outcomes indicate ENGAGE is performing service how it should be done and its efforts do not perpetuate a charity-based approach to service.</p> <p>ENGAGE should proceed with its approach to service and consider scaling up its programs.</p>

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
	<p>Students ask fundamental questions about justice, hear voices rarely heard, see divisions within society and see how oppression plays out.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students create projects that serve local US communities and attempt to connect these issues/communities with issues/communities they learned from while abroad • ENGAGE’s Internships, Convergence, and potentially ENGAGE University appear to be pushing students beyond a “helping the poor” mentality towards working for justice. • Via ENGAGE service projects, close relationships have been formed with local communities in the US and abroad. 	
<p>Solidarity-Learning</p>	<p>Understanding the human perspective</p> <p>Sharing in the reality of the dispossessed over doing something for them</p> <p>Commitment to developing authentic relationships</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within organization ENGAGE places emphasis on collective learning that strengthens interpersonal relationships. • ENGAGE strives to build relationships and coalitions with peoples’ organization engaged in struggles for justice. • Network is based on relationships and friendships that nurture long term commitment to organization • ENGAGE community work is made possible due to effort made to build relationships and friendships and then solidarity in the hopes of contributing to development of peoples’ movement • Community partners approached as 	<p>ENGAGE’s emphasis on solidarity makes its actions closely aligned with what solidarity-learning theory espouses. This may be a central ingredient that makes ENGAGE unique.</p> <p>ENGAGE should articulate what it means by solidarity-education and how it sees it as different from service-learning. The concept of solidarity seems implicit in ENGAGE’s work, but little documentation exists that explains what ENGAGE means by this term.</p>

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
		<p>teachers/learners and not as people who need to be helped</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service projects used as tool for building solidarity and not primary goals (process/relationships over project outcomes) • Emphasis in all projects is focused on people-to-people, exchange-based learning and understanding human perspective behind issues. • Group process and community building integral <p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Few if any • Lack of information or organization notes that delineates what exactly ENGAGE means by solidarity-education found in its principles/values section. Nonetheless, ENGAGE's actions seem aligned with what theory suggests is best practice 	
<p>Prefigurative Social Movement</p>	<p>Reweaving of Social Fabric</p> <p>Conscious of the Danger of Power Relations</p> <p>Iterative Pessimistic-process of Becoming</p>	<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on network power dynamics is examined annually at the Convergence. Anti-Oppression is explored and effort is made to address how systems of oppression play out within network leadership • Leadership of network is diffuse with three separate bodies responsible for contributing insight, leadership, and 	<p>The prefigurative nature of the ENGAGE network allows for a space of inclusiveness and consensus</p> <p>In attempt to be diffuse and rely on network membership for project ideas, the organization of ENGAGE can suffer and appear to be stagnant to outsiders</p>

Theories	Key Concepts	ENGAGE Strength/Gaps	Implications
		<p>guidance to achieving goals. Emphasis is placed on ensuring maximum participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decisions made through democratic process of consensus undergirded with trust • ENGAGE goals and structures come and go relatively frequently – leads to organizational instability, but also ability to dream about new possibilities and different ways to organize membership <p>Gaps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tension between doing projects/campaigns in name of justice and human rights vs. becoming too process oriented and doing nothing “in the world” 	<p>Not having clear campaigns and projects could make ENGAGE seem irrelevant to outsiders, but if ENGAGE focuses too much on issues or campaigns it will risk becoming too issue-oriented and lose its iterative educational component.</p>

Discussion of Implications/Findings and Conclusion

Based upon this analysis, this study has found that ENGAGE's programs, projects, and campaigns *are* aligned with what theory suggests are best practice. As a result, it can be said that ENGAGE's efforts *do* help students overcome the *chameleon complex* and continue onwards towards honing a critical global consciousness. ENGAGE's nature as a prefigurative social movement offers returned study abroad students a community they can connect with that is responsive to their emergent ideological critique and desire to take action in the world. The desire to take action in the world is met by ENGAGE's projects which are easily accessible by returned study abroad students and allow for immediate opportunities to act on their emergent worldview in solidarity with local U.S. communities. Because the approach to learning is very much similar to what students experience abroad, and the issues the communities are facing have similar structural roots, students easily make connections between the local and global and are able to fully actualize a global consciousness awakening. Students' natural attraction to a network like ENGAGE is also affirmed by the works of both Mezirow and Kiely, who have noted that people who undergo transformation will often seek out social movements as a means to find support in taking meaningful action (Kiely, 2004; Mezirow, 1991).

Moreover, the programming that ENGAGE facilitates seems to be focused on reciprocity, trust, and developing human relationships instead of a charity-orientation that can reinforce deficit perspectives. This aligns ENGAGE's internships and campaign work with what service-learning theory considers best practice, and what solidarity-learning considers standard fare. In addition, ENGAGE projects are very much rooted in local community organizing work, which ensures that students are working and building solidarity with marginalized communities. This inverts the teacher/student relationship and repositions poor marginalized communities as

teachers and co-learners working alongside students. This inverted teacher/student relationship is the opposite of the banking education model that Freire abhorred and aligns ENGAGE's approach to education somewhere in the realm of popular education.

As an organization, ENGAGE has positioned itself as an educational network that does not focus solely on any particular activist issue; rather, it is concerned primarily with the socially transformative potential of education itself. While ENGAGE does focus on explicitly social-justice oriented content, it wraps it in a learning process that places greater emphasis on developing relationships and solidarity than honing ideological or political visions. The idea seems to be that motivations for action will emerge out of a form of love for the people who students see as victims of structural inequality and oppression. This orientation produces students who are not necessarily political activists, but more akin to Mezirow's "cultural activists" who are interested in prefiguratively rebuilding a new culture and world that is based on values of equity for all (Mezirow, 2000, p.30).

There are some challenges that ENGAGE must overcome. For starters, ENGAGE seems to rely primarily on students' pre-existing transformation that is the byproduct of the study abroad experience. ENGAGE's programs and projects are all short term in comparison to a semester-long study abroad program, and this suggests that ENGAGE's efforts are ameliorative, but perhaps not generative. While ENGAGE's efforts seem especially effective at meeting the study abroad students' immediate need for a community that understand them, it has not yet developed educational programming that can continue to involve its members in a long-term learning process that will provoke further transformation. ENGAGE's internships, annual Convergence, and soon to be launched ENGAGE University do hold the potential to accomplish this to some extent, but it would be in ENGAGE's interest to begin developing its own

educational programs. This is especially important so long as ENGAGE relies primarily on one study abroad program to provide new membership. Without an internal mechanism that is generative of the types of learning outcomes the CIEE Thailand program produces, ENGAGE will be precariously dependent on this relationship.

Lastly, ENGAGE seems to have an ‘approach’ to education that is largely implicit within the organization’s approach to learning, working with communities, and its theory of social change. While the leadership of ENGAGE has attempted to articulate this vision in the form of a mission statement and more recently in its values and principles, it is nonetheless unclear what ENGAGE’s theory of change and approach to education are. It would be in ENGAGE’s interest to more clearly articulate what it means by solidarity-learning and put forth a vision for what it sees as the role of education in the world. As it currently stands, it is difficult to determine what ENGAGE actually works on even after reviewing its website and program materials. The network seems to have a potentially powerful vision of education for social change that is still inchoate and not yet clearly articulated.

In summary, ENGAGE’s efforts seem to be more than adequate for addressing the demonstrated need for an organization that can help students take meaningful steps towards acting upon their newfound perspective transformations, thus avoiding the malaise of the *chameleon complex*. ENGAGE’s greatest challenges now lie in formalizing and scaling up its existing programs, and developing new programs that are generative in nature and not just reactive and responding to the needs of returning students. By offering programs that can both produce transformational outcomes in students, and continue to work with them as they develop a global consciousness, ENGAGE will have a model that demonstrates how the field of study

abroad should be working with returned study abroad students who participate on justice-oriented abroad programs.

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